

Environment and Sustainability Committee

Inquiry into Energy Policy and Planning in Wales

EPP 214 - NFU Cymru

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY FOR WALES' ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY COMMITTEE INQUIRY INTO ENERGY POLICY AND PLANNING IN WALES

NFU Cymru welcomes the opportunity to comment on the above inquiry into energy policy and planning in Wales. NFU Cymru represents 22,380 farmers, managers and partners in agricultural businesses including those with an interest in farming and the countryside.

With over 75% of Welsh land area taken up by agriculture, we believe that our members are well-placed to capture renewable natural energy flows, while maintaining our traditional role in food production as well as the delivery of other environmental and land management services. It is NFU Cymru's aspiration that every farmer and grower should have the opportunity to become a net exporter of low-carbon energy. Agriculture can help to mitigate climate change, while contributing to both energy security and food security

Farmers in Wales have a number of potential options in terms of land-based renewable energy resources wind power, solar power and heating, a wide range of bioenergy technologies (biogas, energy crops, etc.), small hydropower and ground source heat are some of the technologies currently in operation throughout Wales.

NFU Cymru remains technology-neutral with respect to choosing renewable energy options and projects. NFU Cymru strongly supports those technologies that are commercially sound and economic under present day market conditions and Government policy framework. We do think that the policy framework should be regularly reviewed as circumstances change in respect to technological developments associated with each type of renewable resource.

With regards to specific policy framework documents of the Welsh Government NFU Cymru would wish to make the following comments with regards to TAN 8.

NFU Cymru believes that much progress has been made with new technology since TAN8 was updated in July 2005, whilst we do not necessarily feel that there needs to be a full scale formal review of TAN 8 we believe that the Welsh Government should focus efforts on 5 specific areas of concern within and associated with TAN 8:-

1. Undergrounding of electricity transmission lines are preferable wherever technically feasible and without impacting unduly on the ability to farm the land during and after installation. Our priority is to ensure that major infrastructure projects do not damage agricultural land or negatively affect farming businesses. There should not be an automatic presumption that agricultural land can be sacrificed for large infrastructure projects.
2. Compensation packages must be an integral part of the equation and reflect inconvenience and effect of electricity transmission from renewable energy projects.

3. Technological advances in electricity transmission must be developed embraced and implemented without delay. This would include advances in high voltage underground cabling and monopole wooden pylons with a small footprint instead of the now out dated towers of the 20th century.
4. There is a case for extending the current strategic areas, particularly but not exclusively, where the existing high voltage transmission lines are already in place. Not only would this help meet Government renewable energy targets but would have the effect of reducing the intensity of developments in strategic areas and the associated infrastructure needed to take the electricity to the grid
5. A strengthening of the wording in section 2.12 of TAN 8 on connection to the electricity grid should be made immediately i.e. "*routing of high voltage lines by the DNO is usually dealt with separately to the planning application for the wind farm, developers are encouraged to provide details of likely routes*" The word encouraged needs to be replaced with *required* and transmission should be an integral part of the planning application and statutory notices for public scrutiny published.

ENDS