

Environment and Sustainability Committee

Inquiry into Energy Policy and Planning in Wales

EPP 224 - Neath Port Talbot Council for Voluntary Service



Neath Port Talbot Council for Voluntary Service

Supporting, promoting and developing the local voluntary sector

Cyngor Gwasanaeth Gwirfoddol Castell-nedd Port Talbot

Cefnogi, hyrwyddo a datblygu y sector wirfoddol leol

Neath Port Talbot CVS is the county voluntary council, which supports, promotes and develops the Third Sector in Neath Port Talbot. It is in contact with over 1000 Third Sector Groups.

Please find below comments on the consultation on Energy Policy and Planning in Wales:

The Welsh Government Energy Policy statement sets out ambitions for low carbon energy in Wales. It is a result of many consultations and draws on the work of many plans, strategies and groups. The statement also reflects the UK policy position.

The Welsh Government has set out the actions which will need to be taken to accelerate the transition to an efficient low-carbon energy based economy in Wales.

Currently, much of the consenting process for both major onshore and offshore energy development projects lays with UK wide authorities or UK Government. There are changes being considered, but they will not alter the UK wide nature of the consenting process.

Wales is the only devolved administration in the UK not to have the executive powers to grant consent for large power stations under the Electricity Act. This means that all the major onshore and offshore energy infrastructure projects which would bring the right balance and mix of energy resources are in the hands of UK agencies and Government, and that under existing arrangements, the Welsh Government does not have the power to deliver policy aspirations in an integrated and efficient manner.

The integration of major energy developments and planning processes in Wales in order to provide a framework for local economic, social and environmental progress is critical to delivering opportunities for the people of Wales.

Locally based projects, particularly those which benefit the community or are even part owned by the community are more easily achieved if all the factors involved in the project are under one regime that understands all the issues involved, planning issues are an integral part of this process. The need for locally sensitive and specific planning guidance is critical to successful local implementation.

The Welsh Government has a target for a reduction of 3% per annum in Green House Gas emissions from 2011. To achieve this, new energy generation projects will be a major priority. If the Welsh Government is not able to make the decisions on these projects without the permission of the UK Government then this will clearly damage its ability to achieve the required reduction.

It is critical that the necessary power is devolved to the Welsh Government to enable it to achieve its aim for an efficient low-carbon energy based economy in Wales. Recent events around Technical Advice Note 8 (Tan 8) have shown how out of touch with both national strategy and community needs the current system is.

Both the Irish and Scottish Governments have far more extensive powers than the Welsh Government and again there would seem to be no logical reason for this. There is cross party support for further devolution of energy powers. All four political parties are in favour of devolving the powers to Wales, and there is in principle support of many energy practitioners in Wales who see it as being consistent with local democracy and are keen to see a faster, more streamlined planning system, in line with our aspirations for a national infrastructure plan for Wales.

Energy policy and projects affect everyone, from individuals to communities, to organisations and groups in all sectors. The financial implications to industry, stakeholders and government of an energy policy outside the control of the devolved government mean that it is critical that all decisions affecting the policy should be made by the Welsh Government and not at a UK level.