

Environment and Sustainability Committee

Inquiry into Energy Policy and Planning in Wales
EPP 229 - Isle of Anglesey County Council

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Dyddiad / Date: 22 September 2011

The Clerk
Environment and Sustainability Committee
Committee Services
Welsh Government
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1NA.

Dear Sir/ Madam,

Environment and Sustainability Committee: Inquiry into energy policy and planning in Wales

The Economic Development Unit, on behalf of the Isle of Anglesey County Council, welcomes the opportunity to participate in this inquiry into energy policy and planning in Wales.

The Isle of Anglesey County Council in partnership with key stakeholders has established the Energy Island Programme. The Energy Island Programme aspires to establish the Island as a world renowned centre of excellence for producing, demonstrating and servicing low carbon energy, which in turn will provide a sound base to encourage economic diversification and transition, which will delivering positive benefits over the longer term.

Against this backdrop the County Council fully supports the Welsh Government's commitment to renewable energy as outlined in 'A Low Carbon Revolution Energy Policy Statement 2010' and 'the Renewable Energy Roadmap' and the associated positive impacts on climate change.

However, during previous consultation responses the Isle of Anglesey County Council has noted concern that Welsh Government policies did not recognize the wider UK energy policy agenda, therefore the National Assembly for Wales' Environmental and Sustainability Committee's inquiry is welcomed. Due to the significant changes in the global energy sector the Isle of Anglesey County Council believe this to be a timely opportunity to review and better synergise the UK Government's Energy National Policy Statements and Welsh National and Local Planning Policies.

In response to the items raised within the consultation letter, we request that the following points are considered as part of the inquiry:

- a. Under the provisions of section 115 of the Planning Act 2008, associated developments (for Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects) are dealt with differently in England and Wales, with associated developments in Wales considered by the Local Planning Authority (rather than the Infrastructure Planning Commission). The Welsh Government and relevant Local Planning Authorities therefore have a tremendous opportunity to influence major developments through fit for purpose planning policies which can maximise opportunities and leverage community and legacy benefits. This illustrates the need for better alignment with UK Government systems and policies in order to ensure that Wales capitalises fully on future major energy development opportunities.
- b. The IACC fully supports the UK Energy White Paper's (Meeting the Energy Challenge) recognition that a mix of energy generating sources is essential if the UK's power needs are to be met which clearly supports the aspirations of '*A Low Carbon Revolution: Wales' Energy Policy Statements*'. However although these policies and strategies are aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions there is also significant opportunity for community benefits and legacy which also needs to be explored and underpinned by Policy. We believe that a National Policy vacuum currently existing in relation to this area which could have major negative consequences over forthcoming years.
- c. The development of the Energy Island Programme, which includes the proposed new nuclear build at Wylfa Head and round 3 offshore wind farm, will significantly contribute to meeting both the UK and Welsh Government's low carbon energy requirements. Developments such as these provides a once in a generation opportunity to transform the social, economic and environmental fortunes of Anglesey and North West Wales. It is therefore essential that they are recognised within Planning Policy (at all levels) and creating legislative guidance on how to best deal with, and maximise opportunities from, such major energy schemes should be seen as a Welsh Government priority. The existing Policy framework does not recognise such major developments, consequently it is very difficult for LPAs to negotiate s.106 agreements etc as they do not have the necessary planning policies underpinning them.
- d. There are significant employment and environmental opportunities associated with current developments within the Energy Sector. However, the Economic Development Unit are concerned that there is not enough direction, guidance, and leadership from the Welsh Government on how the opportunities should be translated into positive local planning policy frameworks (which are both conducive in encouraging the necessary private sector investment whilst enabling regeneration).
- e. Large scale energy infrastructure developments impact across all planning policy areas. Alignment and integration is therefore essential. The Welsh Government focus to date has been on synergy between energy and environmental/ emissions policy. It is suggested that broader policy integration and alignment is required (i.e. energy, economic development, housing, transportation etc), to ensure the major opportunities offered by new energy developments are not missed. This is essential at both a national and local level.
- f. The Energy Island Programme is, we are of the view, a good practice example of locally driven formal collaboration and joint working which brings together the issues outlined in point b (above) to enhance regional and National benefits. All key stakeholders support and participate in the Programme, whilst the statutory responsibilities of consenting organisations are recognised. Please see attached constitution document.
- g. The Isle of Anglesey County Council has initiated the Energy Island Programme to pursue and deliver transformational benefits to the Island and North West Wales. To be

successful, the Energy Island Programme must attract investors whilst also protecting the natural environment and the interests of the residents it serves. The Planning System provides the mechanism to do this. A robust Planning Policy framework is therefore essential to inform and influence potential developers and take full advantage of future opportunities. If the Welsh Government were to have appropriate legislation in place (e.g. major energy infrastructure Technical Advice Note (TAN), which also deals with relevant associated developments), it would be very beneficial.

- h. Following the recent announcement of the Energy Island Enterprise Zone, future of energy policy and planning in Wales must be aligned. We believe that site specific Simplified Planning Zones (SPZ) are required to encourage and enable low carbon and renewable energy schemes. This will provide an additional incentive for developers, which would contribute significantly to meeting national and local targets and aspirations. Clarity is therefore urgently required on how the Welsh Government wishes to see SPZ's being utilized to generate economic impacts.

In summary, the Isle of Anglesey County Council welcomes the Assembly Government's Environmental and Sustainability Committee's inquiry into energy policy and planning in Wales. The energy sector offers unrivaled economic, social and environmental improvement opportunities for Anglesey and North Wales. It is essential that the current strong collaboration continues, and that the planning system embraces (and enables) the direct and indirect opportunities created by energy developments. We hope that the Committee's work will have clear outcomes which can be implemented quickly to ensure legacy opportunities are realized.

Please do not hesitate to contact me (tel. 01248 752 499/ e-mail: dwxpl@angelsey.gov.uk) should you require any further information or would like us to elaborate on any of the points noted.

Yours sincerely,

Dylan J Williams

Acting Head of Service - Economic Development

cc.
Arthur Owen – Corporate Director Environment and Technical Services
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Jim Woodcock – Head of Planning Services
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