

*Environment and Sustainability Committee,
Cardiff Bay,
CF99 1NA.*

19.09.2011

Dear Sir,

I think that a review of Tan 8 is long overdue. The first Minister Mr Carwyn Jones is on public record as stating that when Tan 8 was drawn up in 2005 the present threat of industrial scale wind farm development and the subsequent infrastructure of huge pylons was not what was envisaged. Therefore the Tan 8 policy document is a flawed document and not fit for purpose. It had not envisaged and does not protect communities in Mid and parts of South Wales from the predation of large, greedy multinational companies intent on financial gain rather than an altruistic desire to produce a 'green, clean, cheap, source of energy. Once again driven by subsidies, abstract targets and monetary greed, developers and politicians have shown little regard for communities or individuals, and absolutely no understanding or appreciation of the wider implications of their actions on the countryside, the ecosystem and the environment.

I don't know how this policy can have a beneficial effect. There are no positive outcomes, only negative ones. It is accepted that it is a stop gap attempt at bridging our energy needs, yet nothing is written into contracts with the energy companies to remove their detritus, the obsolete turbines, the concrete plinths and miles of roadways when technology moves on to something better. Who will pick up the bill then for clearing it all up, or will it be just left as an environmental disaster and an ugly industrial scar over the once beautiful uplands of Wales? Wind farm technology on this scale will not be cheap. It will be a very short term fix which is unreliable, extremely expensive, wasteful, and environmentally damaging. At the end of the day taxpayers and consumers will be facing a massive increase in energy cost for a technology which in some countries is even now being scaled down or abandoned, or at best has a huge element of doubt concerning it's future. Germany, for example, where wind farm technology was initially wholeheartedly embraced and developed is now

scaling back and looking for alternatives.

These proposed wind farms in the Mid Wales mountains are on a huge scale. The first of the sites covers many acres of virgin moorland, much of which is composed of peat blanket bog. I'm reliably informed that the number of massive turbines proposed for a comparatively small area is around 830, each standing on a solid plinth of concrete equal in volume to an Olympic sized swimming pool(or even larger in the Dyfnant forest where some of the proposed turbines are 606 ft high. These are 200 ft higher than the London Eye and I'm told are the largest onshore turbines in Europe) The turbines are to be connected by a network of concrete roadways lacing the mountainside for many miles. Huge areas of blanket bog are to be drained and excavated to accommodate these concrete plinths, the roadways and the pylons which carry the cables from the turbines to the hub. Peat lands are important ecosystems for carbon storage, provision of water resources and biodiversity. UK blanket peats represent 10-15% of those found worldwide. Such large scale activity will destroy precious acres of blanket bog that store carbon, thus releasing back into the atmosphere the very thing the turbines proclaim to be reducing, and replacing it with concrete, the production of which leaves a massive environmentally damaging footprint. It has been estimated that the blanket bogs store more CO2 than an equivalent area of rainforest. Just a few miles away from this site above the Lake Vyrnwy Nature Reserve, The RSPB, the Environment Agency Wales, The Countryside Council for Wales and The Forestry Commission Wales have just concluded a 56 month project of removing drainage from the peat bogs in order to try and restore them, culminating March 2011 in a major conference on upland blanket bog protection and sustainability attended by 68 delegates from across the UK, Europe and Scandinavia.

Back in the 1970's and 1980's drainage projects, often excessive due to the rush to cash in on subsidies that were on offer at the time, and designed to gain extra grazing land to meet the demand for food, led in later years to increased flooding after prolonged rain, but paradoxically the mountains became dry and brown after only a very short period without rainfall. In pre upland drainage times the mountains used to absorb and hold back the rainfall to some extent, releasing it gradually over a period of time. Subsequent drainage in the same areas led to the water rapidly flowing away from the mountains, an underlying reason for many of the problems we experience with flooding now in the Severn and Vyrnwy Valleys every year.

The Vyrnwy valley is prone to heavy and violent flooding during

winter months and Meifod village is protected by flood defences. The increased drainage for the wind farms, their road structure and the large concrete plinths under each pylon along the valley would inevitably exacerbate a bad existing situation which in recent years, due to changes in climate towards wetter winters and drier summers, could lead to flood defences being compromised.

The photographs were taken earlier this year from the flood defences around Meifod as a flood was receding and later in the same day when the flood had gone. This is typical of the flooding we get in the Vyrnwy valley, a rush of high water which rapidly runs off to lower more open ground downstream below Llansantffraid and on into the Severn.



During the six weeks of very cold weather last Winter, there were huge demands on the electricity system and even threats of power failures. Typical of this sort of very cold, prolonged weather there was a high pressure system covering Britain and no wind, and resulting in wind farms producing no electricity at all and provided no support to the National Grid when it was most needed. Paradoxically, in the last two weeks when the British Isles caught the tail end of hurricane Katia, due to overcapacity in the National Grid some wind farms had to shut down. These wind farms are to be compensated to the tune of millions of pounds. Ultimately I assume the cost to the National Grid will be by absorbed by increased consumer bills. Why do the wind farms not have to compensate the National Grid when they are unable to produce electricity when needed? When winds are too high and gusty the wind turbines have to be shut down for health and safety reasons. Apparently last year the wind farms only produced between 19% and 21% of their capacity. The wind farm companies live off alternative energy incentives/ subsidies not their own efficiency. Is this a price worth paying for the

destruction of large swathes of beautiful upland Montgomeryshire, and communities blighted by 150' high pylons required to take the electricity to the National Grid fifty miles away. The further the generated electricity has to travel the less efficient it becomes because energy is lost along the way. Wouldn't it would make sense to have smaller wind farm units nearer to where the electricity is needed?

There is no mention of local transport issues in the Tan 8 document. Already transport problems exist in both Newtown and Welshpool, The road infrastructure in this area is inadequate. Roads leading to the wind farm sites are narrow and twisting, many little wider than farm roads, yet we are told that there will be 3,000 abnormal loads and 22,000 loads of construction traffic over 5+ years in this area which will cripple communications. The ability of all emergency services to be able to respond to a given situation within a reasonable time will be questionable, given the nature of the local road infrastructure and the gridlock situation likely to arise from the huge increase in construction traffic. The nearest A and E department is over 25 miles away at Shrewsbury Hospital which is already a cause for concern for us here locally.

Since we first became aware of the magnitude of this development, house values have tumbled leaving some young house owners in negative equity. Estate agents are reluctant to value houses while the uncertainty goes on. People do not even have the option of selling up or leaving, and some villagers who have moved here for a peaceful and tranquil retirement are very distressed by what is going on. An Estate Agent friend of mine is considering closing his local office due to the fact that house sales have virtually stopped since the proposed wind farm/ pylon development became news last Summer. We all feel unhappy and unsettled by all of this. It's the constant topic of conversation when people meet, everywhere there are signs protesting against the plans and people are genuinely angry and frustrated by what is being imposed on us,

We were unaware of this development until a few months ago when the NG consultation documents dropped through our letterbox, therefore the learning curve has had to be very steep due to the short response period. If approved our local road infrastructure will be in gridlock, and the thriving tourist industry in this part of Wales will shut down. Caravan parks in the area, well hidden under local planning rules, are now facing giving up or struggling on through the next five/six years. A substantial number of the caravans on these sites are owned by fishermen, walkers and others who enjoy the peace, the tranquility and the general ambiance of this part of Powys. Being so

near to the large Midland conurbations this area attracts many thousands of people every year who enjoy the natural attractions it has to offer.

We've evaluated and learned a lot about wind farms and Welsh politics recently, and much of it leaves people in this rural community angry, disillusioned and disenchanting by how we are being treated. It's the massive industrial scale of this plan, concentrated within a relatively small but environmentally important, beautiful and sensitive area that leaves us breathless. This valley has a rich variety of bird and animal life. Otters have thrived along the river in recent years and have frequently been observed even from the road bridges at Broniarth and Newbridge, and there have been rare sightings of polecats. Kingfishers are fairly common at certain times of the year, as are curlews, snipe, woodcock, nightjars, varieties of waterfowl and raptors, and recently a pair of kites have made the locality their home. The river supports many varieties of fish, such as trout, salmon, grayling, chub, dace, pike and perch. The valley also provides an ideal variety of habitat for many other birds and animals and an important route for migratory birds at certain times of the year. National Grid have admitted that in order to fully implement this scheme they will have to cut down hundreds if not thousands of trees, thereby disturbing and destroying the habitat of many of these creatures. 154' high pylons would have a detrimental and irrevocable impact on the ambiance, the way of life, the economy, and the ecology of this largely unspoilt and beautiful countryside.

Having been brought up as a child in South Wales and as frequent visitors to the Swansea area we are mindful of the general ignorance and lack of awareness in parts of our own country as to what effect tan 8 in its present form will mean to all of us in the future if these wind farm developments proceed. We've learned a great deal about wind farms, wind turbines, pylons, cables, costs etc. in the last few months. We've learned not to trust the National Grid or the wind farm companies say. Time and time again we've been fed misinformation i.e. during the NG consultation meeting in Meifod the project manager informed us that burying the cables was not an option as it would cost seventeen times more than using pylons. We've now discovered that the real cost is more like three times as much since the development of new cable technology. Their figures were based on out of date underground cabling systems. We've had endless protests and meetings, and opposition has now grown to encompass large areas of Shropshire. Support has also come from other communities throughout the British Isles who are experiencing the same sort of threat, albeit on a smaller scale than that envisaged for Mid Wales. I'm sure it was the

protection of areas just like Montgomeryshire that Holford had in mind when he drew up his guide lines for the electricity industry. If pylons are erected the National Grid might as well rip up the Holford rules and throw them into the rubbish bin of history.

I think it is the responsibility of the Welsh Assembly Government to look again at this flawed document. It has it in its power to do something about it before it is too late. We do not see it as anything to do with Westminster. The blame lies solely with Mr Carwyn Jones and the original Tan 8 committee. To proceed with Tan 8 in its present form will leave a long lasting legacy for those who come after us, and the injustices of Tryweryn will pale into insignificance in its shadow .

I hope this letter goes some way to explain why Montgomeryshire, its community and surroundings are so precious, but I also feel strongly that other local communities who are experiencing a similar threat should not be subjected to these developments either, and I would wholeheartedly support them in their protest

Yours Sincerely,

A solid black rectangular box redacting the signature of the sender.

W D.J.Hicks and Mrs K Hicks.