

Galar ecology volunteer group

Committed to the Conservation and Reclamation of the Ecology and Biodiversity of Wales
Chair: André Jacob Treasurer: Sylvia Maskelyn Secretary: Patricia Shepherd Foster

Attention Mr. William Powell – Chair Petitions Committee

Reference Petition P 04 419 Moratorium on Wind Turbines

Dear Mr Powell,

The clerks to the Petitions Committee have forwarded the letter from the Minister for Environment and Sustainable Development John Griffiths AC/AM, with regard to the above petition, to which I am making a direct reply, and will forward it to you, to pass to Mr. Griffiths if you feel it appropriate.

With regard to the petition itself we asked for a Moratorium on Wind Turbines because it was felt that developments are proceeding when aspects of the planning process are not clear, and fall short of good practise. In addition, there are aspects of development applications which, while being important to acceptability, are because of inherited rulings from DECC not considered by planning. Also, an increasing number of single turbine applications, which are not examined as rigorously as Wind Farms are being submitted, affecting local communities. Therefore, we asked that the Moratorium should be enforced, until a fair and comprehensive planning system, with regard to Wind Turbines is in place, or where applicable retrospective operation of matters arising is allowed. We would ask the petitions committee to allow us to make submissions on the following items

(A) This petition is not asking for the cancellation, or substantive variation of the Strategic Search Areas set out under TAN 8, but we are asking that developments in technology are acknowledged and become conditions of acceptance of a development, rather than at the choice or whim of the developer, in much the same way as building control regulations operates the standard for a housing development.

In order that the committee may evaluate the need for this type of planning variation we would like to submit evidence to the committee of an area where technological advance has exposed a weakness in the planning system; for this we have chosen **Site Monitoring for Wind Shear and the Distance Between Turbines.** In practise addressing this and other subjects, suitable for standardisation, would speed up the planning process because areas for debate and contention would be replaced with a compliance list, based on best practise.

(B) During the past twelve months we have monitored council planning meetings in Carmarthen and Powys, with regard to single turbine applications. The consensus is that the councillors judging these applications do not have a full and accurate picture on which to pass judgement, either positively or negatively. We are preparing a report which we would like to submit to the petitions committee, the conclusions of which could be applicable across Wales. Please note, this is not a castigation of the councils named, we are looking to make the present system more comprehensive and open.

(C) One of the most contentious issues on wind farm developments is the community fund offered by the developer, to local communities. The value of this finance varies between sites, and is fraught with difficulties. Accepting any individual payment affects the rights of families under ETSU R 97, a fact known to developers, but not to the general public. It is basically unfair to expect members of the public or stakeholders to undertake negotiations on this minefield. At

the moment nPower talk in terms of a price per installed MW, as you might expect that offered is far too low, but this could be a basis for equitable payment for all. We would like to present proposals to the petitions committee on how we see this finance being negotiated, and administered.

- (D) We would like the committee to look at our full submission with regard to the European Noise Directive 2002-49-EC. This important directive is enormously important to the protection of some rural areas, and we feel needs to be addressed prior to any development commencing. The Environment Agency Wales have been designated the competent authority for this European Directive and is fully devolved.
- (E) We would also ask that our submission with regard to back up energy required to make wind energy suitable as base load for the National Grid be examined and a clear statement by the Minister as to where, and what form this energy source will take.
- (F) Local Development Plans, which are, (as the Minister comments in his letter), the place where the public and stakeholders can influence devolved Wind Power. In practise these are ratified by WAG who control the speed of ratification, which is far too long. We also ask that, if there is an imperative, placed on local authorities, with regard to TAN 8, then in the interests of open and Devolved Government all WAG correspondence to CC's with regard to applications is available to the public, as part of the consultation process.

We look forward to presenting these submissions within the time frame the committee advises us on.

Yours Sincerely

James Shepherd Foster

Chief Petitioner and Technical Advisor To Galar Community Volunteers