

Environment and Sustainability Committee

Inquiry into Energy Policy and Planning in Wales

EPP 21 – J Vaughan Gronow

Environment and Sustainability
Committee
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1NA

13th September 2011

Dear Sirs,

WAG INQUIRY INTO ENERGY POLICY AND PLANNING IN WALES: TAN 8 & THE MID WALES CONNECTION PROJECT PETITIONS

I am writing with regard to your inquiry into energy policy and planning in Wales and particularly the 2 petitions regarding TAN8 and the Mid Wales Connection project. I am very pleased that our Government has set up this Committee. I believe it has a very important job to do that will affect our lives in mid Wales greatly - for better or worse, depending on the outcome.

I believe TAN 8 has a number of serious flaws that were unforeseen at the time and will devastate Montgomeryshire. I believe the decision to create SSAs was poorly thought out and flawed. It consigns parts of Wales to be changed forever and turned into industrial landscapes without any thought for the communities who live there – we expect better policy from our own Government.

The large areas of landscape zoned for turbines as SSAs (Strategic Search Areas) were set with no upper limit on number or size of turbines for construction. The proposal for exporting this potential electricity from the area was a single wooden pole line that looped around all the SSA's, collecting the energy and running it across Shropshire on a single wooden pole line to the National Grid (no hub or 400kV mentioned!).

I recognise and support the need to move to renewable energy but it is clear that TAN 8 will have dire consequences for mid Wales that were not have been foreseen at the time it was drafted. For instance, during the drafting of TAN 8 there was limited engagement with National with just one paragraph devoted to 'possible reinforcement of the grid.' In fact the massive influx of turbine developers into the SSA (unforeseen) will necessitate huge new NG infrastructure – the Mid Wales Connection Project. The end result will be miles of huge pylons across our valleys.

These are not empty valleys, they are full of homes and tourists – there are 3 caravan parks by our village, what will happen to the no.1 industry in Montgomeryshire (tourism) when our landscape is industrialised? I attach a picture of Meifod valley so that you can see what I am talking about.

Similarly the TAN 8 policy gave traffic issues one paragraph. No study was done on how these mammoth wind turbines (600 feet) will reach their proposed sites on minor country roads. As I mentioned above - no consideration was given to the socio-economic impact these plans would have on mid Wales. Do you know the impact on our tourism industry or on our farmers' ability to take livestock to market (the biggest livestock market in Wales)? Do you know how many jobs will be lost by this proposal? Do you know if any jobs, even one, will be created for mid Wales?

TAN 8 makes no mention of EMF risks for those living near the power lines or hub. There is no consideration of the environmental impact this would have on our marvellous landscape.

TAN 8 failed to consider the cumulative impact of a 400kV power line, huge numbers of wind farms and new 132kV lines. Do you have any vision for what mid Wales will look like when this is all in place? Have you any models or simulations? Will these be discussed with the people of mid wales or just imposed on us, with no thought to the consequences for our region? Turbines in 2003 were far smaller than they are now.

TAN 8 has tied the hands of the planning system and has taken away from the people of mid Wales the right to determine our own future and to manage our own landscape. TAN 8 has been set up to encourage the sacrifice of large areas of landscape with no consideration whatsoever of the cumulative effect of all these developments. Is that what the WAG envisaged at the time?

Advances in technology since 2003 have left us open to facing huge number (600) of massively taller turbines which need a hub and 400kV. Figures show last year wind energy in Wales produced just 19% of its stated capacity because of reducing wind pattern. Will this permanent destruction be justified? I think there should be a judicial review of the TAN 8 policy.

TAN 8 states that not all land within the strategic search areas may be economic or environmentally suitable. I am concerned about the massive environmental impact of these farms could cause – particularly increased flooding in areas already prone to worse and worse flooding. Every single bit of concrete used to support these massive turbines will displace water which will cause increased flooding downstream affecting not only Mid Wales but Shrewsbury and towns along the whole of the river Severn. The cost of the increased need for flood defences has not been taken into consideration. This issue should be assessed and reviewed.

I would like to know if an assessment on the costs to local tourism and trade has been carried out as tourism is a major employer in this area. I have spoken to people who say they won't stay in mid wales if the proposals to industrialise Montgomeryshire go ahead.

I would like to see a cost benefit analysis of tax payer expenditure on turbines versus the benefits of these turbines as I understand that these turbines are less than 20% efficient. Taxpayers will be paying twice for their electricity, directly from the company and through the tax system. Everyone understands the importance of renewable energy but if individual homes were given more help to generate their own electricity and conserve energy then the energy savings can match the electricity of the turbines.

It is particularly offensive that yet once again, Wales is expected to be industrialised and destroyed in order to provide resources, this time electricity, mainly for England. At least the Victorians buried their water pipes from Lake Vyrnwy to Liverpool underground. I would like to know what are the benefits for mid wales of this proposal? Please enumerate them for us –what will be the benefits that outweigh our losses? New jobs, new industries...?

I am also concerned about the Health benefits of these power lines especially as children's cancer services are being moved even further away from this area which means that people have to travel many miles (25+ miles) for cancer care. Shrewsbury and Telford NHS Trust were happy to ignore the risks to the people of Mid Wales and move services further away in order to best suit themselves.

I repeat, we are not anti-renewables and would really welcome the chance to be part of a fantastic energy schemes across wales that brings real benefits to all the people of Wales not more problems. I hope you will dedicate yourself to creating such a fantastic scheme.

The picture I attach is of the Vernwy valley near Meifod. One route for the big pylons goes straight down this valley – taking the power away to Shropshire.

This is not an empty valley – it is full of families, communities, businesses, farms and many caravan parks. Please explain to us what this valley will look like when it is industrialised. Please explain to us how this will affect our lives? Please explain to us how this is good for Wales?

We need renewable schemes that are good for all of Wales, that are the best they can be, that are well thought out and positive –not crass and stupid and only benefitting the developers and the English.

Please understand that our campaign to fight for a better energy scheme and to protect our landscape is led by our local people, our local farming families who have looked after this land for centuries. We will fight to protect our valley from this.



Yours Sincerely,

J Vaughan Gronow