

Environment Planning and Countryside Committee

Date: Wednesday 22 June 2005

Time: 9:30 am to 12:30am

Venue:

Planning and Renewable Energy – Report of Consultation

Purpose

1. To advise the Committee of the contents of the Report of Consultation on the Ministerial Interim Planning Policy statement (MIPPS) and Technical Advice Note(TAN) 8 and the progress on finalising the document.

Background

2. As I reported on 2 March and as summarised in the attached consultation report, over 1700 responses to the consultation on the MIPPS and TAN were received between 13 July to 5 November 2004. Following the consultation process, both Andrew Davies and myself offered to meet with any local authority wishing to discuss the proposed policies. To date I have met with representatives from Bridgend, Powys, Conwy, Neath Port Talbot and Carmarthenshire and held further discussions with the WLGA.
3. In response to concerns from respondents about the potential capacity of the proposed Strategic Search Areas for on shore wind, further independent work was commissioned to test the installed capacity figures in the draft TAN. The original consultants, Arup, considered this capacity review, re-tested the robustness of the criteria used to define SSAs and reviewed the issues raised during the consultation. A further technical report by Arup summarising their additional work will be published with the final planning documents. All of the consultants' work has been considered and incorporated into the revised MIPPS and TAN where relevant.
4. A recent report by the UK Sustainable Development Commission on on-shore wind power "Wind Power in the UK" was published in May. The forward notes that the report "confirms that wind is both the cheapest and one of the most abundant of the UK's renewable resources" . The report provides a very comprehensive assessment of the technical and planning issues associated with this form of renewable energy.

Consultation Report

5. You will note that a large number of consultation responses were directed at the principles of the Assembly Government's Energy Policy and not the planning issues. The three most significant planning issues raised and the WAG response are listed below. These and other issues are covered in more detail in the consultation report appended.

- There is too much emphasis on on shore wind and not enough regarding other forms of renewable energy and energy efficiency

The revised documents will re emphasise the need for the planning system to encourage all forms of renewable energy and consider energy efficiency/ conservation in policy guiding new development. The proposed annexes to the TAN will include a summary of the Assembly Government's energy policy.

- Detrimental effects of on shore wind on landscape, habitat, health, transport, tourism, heritage, common land and communities have not been recognised.

These issues will be covered in the proposed technical annexes to the TAN.

- The Strategic Search Areas (both for and against and the details of each one)

Arup, who produced the work defining these areas have been continuing to look at the issues raised by the consultation process and issues identified by the WDA commissioned consultants. Representations from local authorities with SSAs in their area have been considered carefully. The proposed technical annexes to the TAN will include information to assist local planning authorities in developing local policies to guide on-shore wind development in their SSAs including the valid consideration of community benefits.

Next Steps

6. Officials will be meeting with the WLGA and CCW shortly to discuss the revised MIPPS and TAN. It is intended that these will be published before the summer recess.

Recommendation

7. That the Committee notes the Consultation Report.