

South Wales West Regional Committee

Minutes (SWaWR (2)-02-06)

Date: Friday 9 June 2006

Time: 9:30am to 12:30pm

Venue: New Community Hall, Gwaun Cae Gurwen, Ammanford

Assembly Members in Attendance

Assembly Member	Constituency
Peter Black	South Wales West
Andrew Davies	Swansea West
Janet Davies	South Wales West
Janice Gregory(Chair)	Ogmore
Brian Gibbons	Aberavon
Carwyn Jones	Bridgend
Dai Lloyd	South Wales West
Val Lloyd	Swansea East
Gwenda Thomas	Neath

In Attendance

Name	Representing (if applicable)
Dan McCallum	Awel Aman Tawe
Mark Thomas	Celtic Energy Ltd.
Dr Mike Gandy	Celtic Energy Ltd.
Roy Jones	Swansea Friends of the Earth

Kevin Mowbray	Welsh Energy Research Centre
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Committee Service in Attendance

Name	Job title
Jane Westlake	Committee Clerk
Sara Mansour	Deputy Committee Clerk

Apologies were received from:

Assembly Member	Constituency
Alun Cairns	South Wales West
Edwina Hart	Gower

Item 1: Welcome and introduction.

1.1 The Clerk welcomed Committee Members, presenters and members of the public.

Item 2: Election of Chair

2.1 It is the Committee's practice to elect a new Chair at the first meeting after the Easter recess. The Committee Clerk invited nominations. Val Lloyd nominated Janice Gregory. There were no other nominations and Janice Gregory was elected.

2.2 There were no declarations of interest.

Item 3: Energy.

3.1 Dan McCallum made a presentation on behalf of Awel Aman Tawe. He made the following points:

- Awel Aman Tawe is a social enterprise charity with a staff of 8 people;
- it has won a number of awards and it focuses on work that benefits local people;
- there are currently a number of local energy projects;
- although projects were given funding, money is needed for staffing;
- Wales should take lessons from countries such as Denmark and Germany in promoting wind

- power through schemes that directly benefit the community where the turbines are sited;
- on-shore farms are the way forward but stronger political consensus on a local level is needed;
- he would support wind farms as a source of energy in preference to nuclear power stations and the Severn barrage.

3.2 Mark Thomas made a presentation on behalf of Celtic Energy Ltd. He made the following points:

- he highlighted the importance of coal to the South Wales economy and explained the history of Celtic Energy;
- energy must be produced safely, securely reliably, and at an affordable rate;
- it should be used as efficiently as possible;
- the control of emissions in the UK in coal fired power stations should be looked at in a world-wide context - over zealous and misinformed effort could affect our long term commercial competitiveness;
- the coal-fired generating sector is committed to flue gas desulphurisation as a way of managing potential environmental impact;
- for this to continue a supply of UK produced coal is needed from both deep and surface mines;
- the Welsh Assembly Government's energy policy focuses on five equally important strands: energy efficiency, renewable energy, energy infrastructure, encouraging the production of electricity from new clean coal power stations and lowering carbon dioxide emissions;
- the Assembly should support the indigenous energy industry, the UK is blessed with abundant coal resources and there is no justification for placing greater controls on coal mining;
- planning restrictions often form the greatest hurdle to the coal industry;
- if it is agreed that coal is needed as a source of energy then the UK can produce it in a way that protects the environment and health of the workers and minimises the impact on the local environment;
- after coal extraction the site is restored;
- the coal supply industry does not produce CO₂, save for emissions from plant used in the extraction process. However, such emissions should be controlled and plant manufacturers are constantly working towards reductions in emissions.
- technology must be developed to find a procedure whereby coal is burnt in a more efficient manner so that CO₂ emissions are reduced;
- the Government must continue to support research into finding a more efficient way of burning coal;
- diversity is the essence of a successful economy.

3.3 Presenters then responded as follows to Members' questions.

Mark Thomas:

- Open cast mining is sustainable and does not have an adverse impact on health. It is a better alternative to importing coal from the third world. All other issues need to be looked at, open cast

- is not different from any other development, it is an important part of energy generation;
- although there would be a market for the coal, deep mining in South Wales is not viable because of geological factors, and the loss of expertise.
 - Celtic Energy and British Coal previously invested in community projects;
 - In response to a suggestion from Gwenda Thomas AM that any application for planning permission for opencast mining should include an assessment of the impact and the benefit of the development on the community, he said he had no objection in principle to the idea. However, the requirement should apply to other industrial development, not just opencast mining.

Dan McCallum:

community benefits of wind farms include:

- funding micro renewable projects;
- wind farm developers supporting a community energy trust;
- establishing joint partnerships, for example the Arts Factory in the Rhondda;
- a community energy scheme in Oxfordshire raised £4 million through share issue and he cited examples elsewhere of successful community based schemes;
- due to awareness of the problems of global warming Awel Aman Tawe is overwhelmed with projects;
- community schemes do not need to be small, but they need local support;
- we must be open to new technology;
- an energy mix is needed, wind power is not the only solution;
- the target is currently 20% but this is a long way from achievement;
- land, such as conifer plantations on former mining land, is available to build wind farms;
- solar panels should be made a requirement for new houses;;
- wind farms have proved to be of financial benefit.

3.4 Roy Jones made a representation on behalf of Swansea Friends of the Earth. He made the following points:

- energy is one of the biggest problems that governments have to face because fossil fuels are running out and climate change threatens our health, security and prosperity;
- it is vital that we move away from sources that emit CO₂ such as coal, oil and gas because the consequences would be catastrophic;
- the National Assembly must give more support to renewable energy systems and energy saving measures;
- awareness programme should be established to ensure both domestic and industrial energy saving is implemented;
- householders could be encouraged to use energy more efficiently;
- all new houses should have solar panels installed for heating hot and / or cold water;
- he would support the inclusion of electricity generating micro CHP and renewable devices in

regulations for house building;

- he supports wind generators as any negative impacts are outstripped by the amount of energy produced over the lifetime of each generator;
- he supports the proposals to examine the potential for marine, wave and tidal technologies in Wales;
- the Severn barrage concept should be dismissed as it would destroy a unique natural environment;
- no new nuclear power stations should be built in Wales as the risks outweigh the benefits;
- there are a range of safer, greener and cleaner alternatives to nuclear power stations;
- he is opposed to open cast strip mining;
- the capture and storage of clean coal and carbon could be investigated but there are risks attached;
- he pointed out that vehicle engines are very inefficient and are a huge source of CO₂ emission;
- changes to policy are essential to avoid problems of climate change.

3.5 Kevin Mowbray made a representation on behalf of the Welsh Energy Research Centre. He made the following points:

- the Welsh Energy Research Centre is a collaborative body formed by researchers from each of the Welsh Higher Education Institutes and other independent research bodies;
- the aims of the Centre are to:
- encourage interdisciplinary collaborative research, development and technology transfer;
- maximise research and development investment into Wales from external sources such as the UK Government and the European Union;
- provide independent authoritative advice to the Welsh Assembly Government in respect of its Energy Policy and related issues;
- support the Welsh economy in alleviating the barriers to delivering products to market;
- to be recognised by and to interact with other international centres of excellence;
- in order to keep the same life style as we enjoy now, (including transport) Wales needs to generate 16, 500 GWh every year;
- for all of Wales' energy needs, over 9.5 million tons of oil needs to be produced every year;
- placing photo voltaic cells for electricity and solar panels on the roof of houses could reduce the consumption of electricity and associated carbon emissions by a quarter;
- Wales should look at building a new industry in renewable and sustainable energy;
- a strong research and science base in Wales will attract industry into Wales;
- the Centre is due to initiate several projects on energy research, in partnership the universities and industrial companies;
- the Centre has nearly £4 million to spend on these projects;
- the Centre will be looking at increasing the use of the EU Structural Funds to support energy project in the future;
- there is potential in South West Wales for developing new and improved energy technology;
- more efficient and cheaper photo voltaic panels for buildings are being developed;
- there are currently projects in Swansea University developing power electronics, marine current turbines and bio fuels;
- there is increased research activity and he named a number of the projects taking place across

Wales;

- change is imminent and the Welsh Assembly Government recognises this and is using its scarce resources to encourage new and existing companies to seize the opportunities change will bring.

3.6 Presenters then responded as follows to Members' questions.

Roy Jones

- alternative sources of energy are being developed off the coast of Devon and should be generating electricity within 3 years ;
- it will take 4 to 5 years for the benefits of this work to be seen;
- standby functions on televisions should be phased out.

Kevin Mowbray

- photo voltaic panels are not as cost effective as simple solar panels for householders;
- there is a need for flexibility, and open mindedness about new technology;
- a campaign is needed to encourage people to be more energy efficient;
- electric motors in household appliances consume 20 to 30% of domestic electricity;;
- manufacturers could develop more efficient domestic appliances but there is a cost in doing this;
- Swansea University is engaged in research and development of more efficient technology for electrical goods and appliances.

3.7 Andrew Davies AM, Minister for Enterprise, Innovation and Networks made the following points:

- the Government's view is that a mix of technology must be used to generate energy, with more efficient use of gas and a greater proportion of energy generated from renewable sources;
- there is little incentive for greater energy efficiency;
- there should be a more efficient way of using coal and oil;
- the Welsh Assembly Government asked the UK Government to consider seriously the impact of a Severn Barrage before approving proposals;
- nuclear power does not have a future in Wales, because management of nuclear waste is not resolved;
- furthermore the development of nuclear energy would not be viable without subsidy that would distort the market;
- this generation will not feel the effects of global warming to the extent that the next one would and it is therefore our duty and responsibility to ensure that the effects are limited.

Item 4: Open Mike

4.1 Cllr Edward Page a local Community, asked why Planning Inspectors are accountable to the Minister. Carwyn Jones AM (Minister for Environment, Planning and Countryside) replied responded

that the final decision on an appeal is made by the Planning Inspector, not the Committee or the Minister.

4.2 Cllr Morlais Thomas, from Gorseinon Town Council submitted his concerns about companies operating open cast mining that sought to ameliorate their activities by offering gifts to the local community. Brian Gibbons AM, stated that it was not unreasonable for the community to receive such benefits.

4.3 Meirion Bowen, a Community Councillor, asked whether it was appropriate for the Committee to receive a presentation from an organisation which had a current planning appeal. The Chair advised that the presentations had not made any mention of current planning applications, nor had there been any discussion of them.

4.4 Rhys Madoc, a member from Awel Aman Tawe asked about enforcement of planning conditions for restoration of open cast sites. Carwyn Jones AM said that when coal was privatised, there was insufficient regard to restoration. Responsibility for securing restoration rests primarily with the local authority, and ultimately with the National Assembly.

4.5 Meirion Bowen expressed concern about the energy pipeline from Milford Haven to Aberddulais and Ms Linda Ware, secretary of Residents' Association at Cilfrew, asked why nothing had been done about the welfare for people affected by this. Carwyn Jones AM, replied that community benefit is considered as part of the planning application process. He could not offer a view offer an opinion on a specific case as he chairs the Committee of Assembly Members that makes a decision when a planning application is called in by the Assembly.

4.6 Linda Ware said phase 1 of the pipeline had been approved by the Department of Trade and Industry in London and asked why there was no reparation for those affected by the work. Andrew Davies AM, agreed that there had been disruption locally in Pembrokeshire with construction traffic. However the community would benefit from the new supply. Demand for energy is constantly rising.

4.7 Mr Jim Dunkley from Gorseinon submitted that the pipeline project was a surprise and asked whether there were any other secret projects taking place. He also submitted that it was the biggest project in Wales for years and whether the safety issues have been considered. Andrew Davies AM, submitted that there are no secret projects and the pipeline by the National Grid has been in the public domain for years. Local Authorities were consulted and got involved.

Dai Lloyd AM, submitted that the terminal and the pipeline has been granted planning permission by the UK Government, the decision was not devolved. The benefits would be to the whole of the UK and Transco should be required to make reparation for those in Wales who suffer from the construction work.

4.8 Ken Maddocks from Awel Aman Tawe said that the organisation had lost a good project officer European funding was withdrawn and was losing momentum. Andrew Davies AM, advised that more European funding would be available next year but he reiterated that the Welsh Assembly has limited

powers as this is not a devolved power.

4.9 Mr Terry Scales from Swansea Line Forum asked a question about the current housing standards. Andrew Davies AM, agreed that many houses are unfit. He is currently working with Edwina Hart AM, Minister for Social Justice and Regeneration and Jane Davidson AM, Minister for Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills on improving the standards. He also stated that it is harder to make old buildings energy efficient.

4.10 The Chair advised that there will be new standards in place for public housing in 2012.

Action:

The minutes of the meeting will be sent to Andrew Davies AM, Minister for Enterprise Innovation and Networks.

Item 5: Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 17 March were agreed.

Date of Next Meeting

The Chair announced that the date for the meeting is 20 October and the venue would be Swansea. Domestic Violence has been suggested as a topic but Members could suggest other topics through the Clerk.

The Chair expressed the Committee's appreciation to the Secretary of the Community Hall.

**Committee Service
June 2006**