

John Griffiths AC / AM  
Gweinidog yr Amgylchedd a Datblygu Cynaliadwy  
Minister for Environment and Sustainable Development



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref: P-04-419  
Ein cyf/Our ref: SF/JG/3711/12

William Powell AC / AM

National Assembly for Wales  
Cardiff Bay  
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21 November 2012

*Dear William,*

Thank you for your letter, of the 10 October, regarding a Petition relating to wind energy development. As your query primarily concerns a planning issue, which is part of my portfolio, I am responding.

I am of the opinion that Planning Policy Wales and Technical Advice Note 8: Planning for Renewable Energy continue to provide an appropriate framework for the strategic planning of all forms of renewable energy in Wales.

Local planning authorities consider onshore proposals up to 50MW under Town and Country Planning legislation. Applications over 50MW are not devolved and are processed by the National Infrastructure Directorate, within the Planning Inspectorate, and decisions on such schemes in Wales are taken by UK Ministers.

It is noted that the Petition excludes wind energy applications controlled by the National Infrastructure Directorate, which is responsible for determining a large proportion of wind farm applications in Wales, and as such the proposal would have limited effect.

The Welsh Government accepts that the introduction of new, often very large, structures into the open countryside needs careful consideration to minimise the impact on the environment and local communities. However, the need for wind turbines is established through a global environmental imperative and is a key part of meeting the Welsh Government's renewable energy production aspiration and UK and European targets on renewable energy.

All wind farm proposals in Wales are subject to a strict planning process, addressing environmental, visual, noise and community impacts. Projects not meeting planning requirements should be refused consent.

An Environmental Impact Assessment may be required when a wind farm development involves more than two turbines or the hub height of any turbine (or height of any other structure) exceeds 15 metres. An Environmental Impact Assessment should consider the environmental consequences of the total development by virtue of factors such as its nature, size or location. Environmental Impact Assessments are a means of drawing together, in a systematic way, an assessment of a project's likely significant environmental effects. This helps to ensure that the importance of the predicted effects, and the scope for reducing them, are properly understood before a decision is made. I therefore believe that the planning system includes sufficient safeguards to consider the environmental consequences of wind farm development.

The public, and other relevant stakeholders, have the opportunity to be involved in the preparation of Local Development Plans and as such can have a say in the future development and use of land in their area. The views of the local community should also be taken into account in the decision-making process. It is however for the local planning authority, taking into account any relevant views on planning matters, to determine the planning application on its planning merits.

I therefore do not accept this Petition's proposals to suspend all planning applications for wind energy developments, to enable the examination of the effects of wind turbines, and for wind energy planning applications to be determined by a referendum.

Yours



**John Griffiths AC / AM**

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