

Huw Irranca-Davies AS/MS
Y Dirprwy Brif Weinidog ac Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros
Newid Hinsawdd a Materion Gwledig
Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Climate
Change and Rural Affairs



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-06-1395
Ein cyf/Our ref HIDCC/10099/24

Chair - Petitions committee
Government.Committee.Business@gov.wales

10 September 2024

Dear Chair,

Thank you for your letter of 26 June 2024 to the then Cabinet Secretary for Housing, Local Government and Planning, Julie James MS regarding the petition P-06-1395 which calls for a Halt regarding significant development on the Gwent Levels. Responsibility for the planning system in Wales now falls within the portfolio of Jayne Bryant MS, Cabinet Secretary for Housing, Local Government and Planning. The petition subject matter however covers part of the Cabinet Secretary's constituency. Therefore, on this occasion the matter has been passed for me to respond to as Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change and Rural Affairs.

I provide further clarification as requested with regards to the questions raised by the Committee as set out in your letter.

I reiterate the earlier advice given by Julie James MS in that Planning Policy Wales (PPW) provides a clear and robust position on Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs). Therefore, we do not consider that a CPO letter or a broadening of the proposed guidance on net benefit for biodiversity as suggested by the petitioners is necessary. PPW states that development in SSSIs is considered to be unacceptable as a matter of principle, and this policy position should inform any site selection process. The definition of exceptional circumstances in PPW is limited and rests on being established in advance through a development plan. For these reasons, I do not consider that the policy position in Chapter 6 on SSSIs requires further clarification at this time.

The Welsh Government provides clear and comprehensive national planning policy on renewable energy projects at Policies 17 and 18 of the National Development Framework: Future Wales. The next review period for Future Wales will commence in 2026, as part of the five year review cycle for the National Development Framework. Future Wales was devised through an extensive programme of engagement, consultation, assessment, evidence gathering and scrutiny. Any potential revisions identified as part of the review process would therefore need to follow the same extensive programme. In determining renewable energy projects, Future Wales should be considered alongside PPW, with all

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

relevant aspects of policy considered during the decision-making process. Significant changes were made to PPW in October 2023 strengthening the policy approach in relation to SSSIs. I do not consider it necessary therefore at this stage to further refine Future Wales.

Thank you again for writing on this important topic. I trust that this response addresses the questions raised by both the Committee and the petitioners.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several overlapping loops and a long horizontal stroke at the bottom.

Huw Irranca-Davies AS/MS

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