Alun Davies AC / AM
Y Gweinidog Cyfoeth Naturiol a Bwyd
Minister for Natural Resources and Food

Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-04-514 A
Ein cyf/Our ref AD-/02013/13

William Powell AM
AM for Mid & West Wales
Chair Petitions Committee
Ty Hywel
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1NA

15 January 2014

Dear Bill,

**PETITIONS COMMITTEE – SOVEREIGN WALES**

Thank you for your letter of 16 December on behalf of the Petitions Committee regarding the petition from Sovereign Wales which calls for the development of clean Welsh coal technologies on Anglesey as an alternative to the development of a new nuclear power station at Wylfa.

Our *Energy Wales: A Low Carbon Transition* document of March 2012 sets out the Welsh Government's ambition to ensure full advantage is taken of the transition to a low carbon economy to secure a wealthier, more resilient and sustainable future for Wales. The document recognises the role of a range of energy sources in the transition process.

Fossil fuels continue to have an important role in ensuring security of supply. Carbon capture and storage (CCS) technologies will be a vital component in ensuring fossil fuels, including coal, have a longer term role in a low carbon energy mix. We are supportive of CCS provided it can be successfully commercialised and is supported by the appropriate regulatory framework. However, the technology has yet to be deployed at a commercial scale. We continue to provide support to coal industry in Wales, whilst ensuring state aid compliance, to ensure we maximise benefits to the economy.

*Energy Wales: A Low Carbon Transition* also recognises the important role of a new nuclear power station at Wylfa in our energy future. *Wylfa Newydd* on Anglesey would provide a constant, reliable low carbon energy source which would complement the intermittency of renewable energy sources. A new nuclear power station could also provide significant long-term economic benefits to Anglesey and North Wales with the potential to contribute £2.34 billion to the economy over the period to 2025. An estimated 5,000 jobs could be created in the construction phase and around 800 long term jobs when operational.

The petitioner raises several additional issues in supporting information to the petition. With regards to the Fukishima incident, it should be noted that the Fukushima Daiichi reactors were constructed in the early 1970s to a 1960s design and these should not be compared with modern nuclear power station designs which incorporate 50 years of experience.

The Great East Japan Earthquake of magnitude 9.0 on Friday 11 March 2011 and the large tsunami it created caused considerable damage in the region. At the time, three of the six reactors were operating at the Fukushima Daiichi power station and all shut down automatically. The emergency diesel generators operated as required despite the earthquake exceeding their designed tolerances and continued to do so until the arrival of the tsunami which overtopped the sea defences and flooded the generators. This vulnerability had been identified before the earthquake but had not been operated on.

Dr Mike Weightman, the then UK Chief Nuclear Inspector, reviewed the safety of the UK's existing nuclear power stations following the Fukushima accident. Dr Weightman (who also led the international IAEA inspection at Fukushima) confirmed in his Report that the UK's nuclear power stations are fundamentally safe but identified lessons to be learned from the accident. These will be implemented for both the UK's existing nuclear power stations and any new stations that may be built.

The petitioner also raises concern of known health risks from nuclear power and references a major German government report which indicated increased rates of childhood cancers and leukaemia around nuclear sites. I understand this report is likely to be the KiKK study report published in 2007 which found an increase in childhood leukaemia in areas close to nuclear power stations in Germany. The independent UK Committee on Medical Aspects of Radiation in the Environment reviewed the KiKK findings using a much larger database of UK childhood cancers.

In May 2011 COMARE published as its 14th report a further review of the incidence of childhood cancer around nuclear power stations, with particular reference to the KiKK study and COMARE's 10th and 11th reports. In its 14th report, COMARE found no reason to change its previous advice that there is no evidence to support the view that of an increased risk of childhood leukaemia and other cancers in the vicinity of nuclear power stations due to radiation effects. (Paragraph C.4.126 UK Government National Policy Statement for Nuclear Power Generation (EN-6) Volume II.)

With regard to nuclear waste disposal, UK Government policy is that geological disposal will provide a safe disposal route for the UK's higher activity radioactive waste (HAW). This follows scientific advice and practice in other countries taking forward programmes for radioactive waste disposal. The UK Government is currently reviewing the siting processes and proposals for community partnership for hosting a geological disposal facility following a public consultation which ended in December 2013.

Yours ever

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