

## **Environment and Sustainability Committee**

**E&S(4)-13-12 paper 5**

### **Inquiry into energy policy and planning in Wales – Note from the Petitions Committee on its rapporteur visit on TAN 8**

#### **Note of meeting on TAN 8**

**27 February 2012, Mason's Arms, Gwyddgrug**

#### **In attendance:**

Mr Stephen Dubé, petitioner and Chair of Grwp Blaengwen

Mrs Janet Dubé, petitioner and member of Grwp Blaengwen

William Powell AM, Chair of the Petitions Committee and member of the Environment and Sustainability Committee

Russell George AM, Member of the Petitions and the Environment and Sustainability Committees

Joyce Watson AM, Member of the Petitions Committee

#### **Also present**

Abigail Phillips, Clerk to the Petitions Committee

William Powell AM explained that the meeting was being held as part of the Petitions Committee visit to Carmarthenshire to consider a petition on the noise from wind turbines, but that a note of the meeting would be submitted to the Environment and Sustainability Committee's Inquiry on energy policy and planning in Wales.

Mr and Mrs Dubé expressed their concerns that they had been unable to speak directly to the full Environment and Sustainability Committee.

Mr and Mrs Dubé explained to the Members that Grwp Blaengwen was formed after proposals for a wind farm in Alltwalis were made. The group has nearly 60 members who live in the Gwyddgrug area and its purpose is to monitor and study the effects of wind turbines on the local area. The group previously made a written submission to the Environment and Sustainability Committee's Inquiry into energy policy and planning in Wales.

Mr and Mrs Dubé felt that TAN 8 should have been updated before LDPs were commenced in 2011. They reported that Neville Thomas QC made the same point to the Environment and Sustainability Committee. In 2010, Jane Davidson, the then Minister for Sustainability, reiterated the commitment in TAN 8 to review the policy. Mr and Mrs Dubé shared letters with Members that show the commitment of the Welsh Government to consult on TAN 8.

However, such a review has not taken place and Mr and Mrs Dubé feel that it is this broken promise that has brought about the biggest demonstrations at the Senedd. They suggest that all applications for further installations should be halted until a review of TAN 8, including a full public consultation, has been carried out.

Grwp Blaengwen felt that more decisions relating to wind turbines could have been made in Wales if wind turbines generating less than 50MW were encouraged by the Welsh Government.

In 2010, a 'refresh' of TAN 8 was carried out, but as members of the public were not informed of, and were unable to respond to, a consultation, the group feel that the commitment to review the policy has not been met and the lack of action brings the Assembly into disrepute. It is not clear if the refresh exercise in 2010 considered raising the targets for energy. Russell George AM told Mr and Mrs Dubé that he would endeavour to include in the Environment and Sustainability Committee report a timeline of the letters in Grwp Blaengwen's possession that show a commitment to consult on TAN 8.

Grwp Blaengwen also felt that there was a failure earlier in the process as there was no consultation to which the general public could respond on the document from ARUP which shaped TAN 8.

Grwp Blaengwen feel that the control of wind turbines should be with local people so that they are able to turn off turbines when noise is a problem.

Members were told that the indicative targets contained within TAN 8 are seen as a big issue. Mr and Mrs Dubé told Members that the 90MW target for the Strategic Search area, which included Gwyddgrug, under TAN 8, was already exceeded by the Alltwalis wind farm.

Grwp Blaengwen shared their concerns that the money provided for community benefit as a consequence of the wind farm was not benefiting those most affected by the turbines. They felt that it was wrong that the Community Council could not be in receipt of the money and that a group set up by Statkraft, the owners of Alltwalis wind farm, decided how the money should be spent. That group, the Community Benefit Committee, is based on the county council ward and includes a community that cannot see the turbines and are not affected by the noise. No-one from Gwyddgrug was a member of the Community Benefit Committee at first as they did not want to be involved but some have since joined as they felt they had to. The group also stated that no carbon reduction measures are being delivered by the community fund. The group feel that as payments to this fund are voluntary, no mention of them should be made in TAN 8. However, the

group feel that the payments should in fact be obligatory, especially the carbon reduction aspect of the benefit.

The group also felt that the community fund was something of a bribe to communities and planners. Although TAN 8 says that planning authorities can be aware of the community benefits but not swayed by it, the wind farm company's newsletter always includes a section on local benefits, so the group feel that this must influence the decision makers in the local authority. They stated that local football clubs and pre-school groups outside Gwyddgrug were benefitting from the fund but that those most affected by the turbines – the residents of Gwyddgrug – had gained very little from the fund.

The group also felt that there should be compensation for those whose lives are affected by wind turbines. They do not feel that community benefits are compensation for those whose health has suffered because of the noise. Mr and Mrs Dubé described the case of the Davies family in Lancashire who took four years to settle their case for compensation and only then after moving out of their home to escape the noise.

The group strongly advocate a review of TAN 8 and the ETSU-R-97 guidelines as they feel these documents are out of date and that local people have no confidence in them. They stated that the quality of people's lives must be balanced against the benefits of a wind farm and that World Health Organization guidelines should be used instead, as these offer a more 'reasonable' upper limit on acceptable noise levels.

The group stated that although many people felt that their objections were rooted in a dislike of the appearance of wind turbines, this is not the case. They feel that this demeans their objections, as people dismiss their experiences of noise nuisance and blame their objections on a dislike of the view.

Joyce Watson asked if the group felt that the topography of the area caused specific noise issues but although some studies had been made by the group, they were unaware of any other detailed studies.

The group was concerned that landowners who speak out against wind farms are being silenced under the threat of legal action.

Mr and Mrs Dubé explained that the formally constituted group was formed after Statkraft were given planning permission for the Alltwalis site. Some

members had been pro-wind farms or neutral before the turbines had been installed, and others had been against.

The Members thanked Mr and Mrs Dubé for their time.

**Committee Service**  
**March 2012**