

Montgomery Town Council requested to make a representation regarding the proposed changes to the Renewable Energy Policy. Whilst continuing to maintain that the insertion of FFC79 was ill considered and based on a flawed and partial analysis rendering the Plan unsound by creating conflict with other Policies, we recognise and welcome the new RE Policy based on a completely revised and extended evidence base.

The Town Council wishes to commend the Planning Authority on taking note of the overwhelming consultation responses to FFC79 and in commissioning further evidence to better inform decision making. To a certain extent this has rectified the democratic deficit although we note that the identification of Solar Local Search Areas has not, as yet, been subject to public or landowner consultation.

The Town Council is broadly supportive of sensitively sited community energy schemes providing local benefit but would respectfully ask the Inspector to require that sufficient safeguarding of all strategic assets in the County are in place in the Plan to prevent detrimental and possibly unforeseen consequences, particularly with respect to our largely unspoilt, panoramic and historic landscapes.

Montgomery is highly dependant on tourism for its economic well being and the Town Council is actively developing and promoting the tourism offer. We are situated in a Registered Historic Landscape deemed 'Outstanding' and have a network of PRoWs, two National Trails and several Promoted Regional Trails in the vicinity. Montgomery is planning its first Walking Festival along with significant promotions around historic events which will support the LDP objective of promoting and growing all year round, sustainable tourism. It is very relevant that the Visit Wales Powys Booster Survey research¹ states: *The main reason for choosing to visit Wales given by visitors to Powys was the scenery, landscape and countryside - mentioned by 52% of visitors. Other main reasons included the sightseeing (35%), peace and quiet (32%), historic sights (26%) and the history/heritage of the area (25%).*

There has been some research into the negative impact of windfarms on tourism², transport infrastructure³, visitors to north Powys⁴; the local economy in rural areas in Wales⁵ and walkers in particular who may be subjected to a whole day in, or near to, wind / solar installations. There is no similar body of evidence regarding solar farms. The impact on tourists is likely to be less given the lower visibility; potential for 'hiding' small solar farms within landforms, and the lack of the disruptive element of movement or associated noise. Size, connection to Grid and cumulative impact of solar arrays both separately and in conjunction with existing / consented windfarms, proximity to walking Trails and other tourism assets as well as issues such as flood risk potential and loss of biodiversity all need to be carefully considered to ensure only optimum sites are selected. The LDP needs to have robust policy guidance in place to ensure positive implementation.

Thus for tourism, community well being and socio-economic considerations a Landscape Policy is essential and Montgomery Town Council commends the addition of such a Policy to the LDP as is being proposed at this stage in the Examination process. This will help ensure that the recognised outstanding and varied character of the Powys landscapes, correctly

¹ Beaufort Research (2009) for Visit Wales Powys Booster

² e.g. Visit Wales commissioned research : Impacts of Windfarms on Tourism in Wales NFO (2003); MCOS Survey of long distance walkers (2014)

³ Powys Windfarms - Access Routes Study (2008) Capita Symonds for Powys CC and WG raised considerable concerns regarding the ability of the mid Wales road system to cope with the volume and weight of construction traffic and the adverse impact this could have on residents and visitors alike. This research was predicated on SSAs alone without consideration of LSAs or transmission infrastructure

⁴ A Study of the Potential Economic Impacts of windfarms and Associated Grid Infrastructure on the Welsh Tourism Sector Regeneris Consulting and The Tourism Company (2014)

⁵ Windfarms in Rural Areas: How far do community benefits from windfarms represent a local economic development opportunity. Munday et al Cardiff Business School (2011)

identified in the LDP as our major asset, can be *protected, preserved and/or enhanced* as required by the LDP⁶.

⁶ LDP Objective 13 - Landscape and the Historic Environment Landscape