

Powys County Council

Local Development Plan examination

3/6/17

Submission in response to Revised Renewable Energy Assessment for Powys ED059

Hearing session 15 renewable energy

Agenda item 3

3a With regard to involving the community this plan has been an absolute disgrace, falling far short of basic respect for community involvement. There has been a clear agenda by the council hierarchy to use every conceivable and underhand method to circumvent community participation and frustrate democratic principles. An example of this was the sudden and unannounced depletion of the list of participants due to attend Hearing 15, from 75 to a mere 22, for no apparent reason. People who had already confirmed their attendance had been removed without any notification of this and certainly no explanation, and additionally the final list became available over a bank holiday weekend when no one had the opportunity to discuss their concern with the council. Given this utterly cruel action by the council (causing distress, anxiety and in one or two cases almost a breakdown among people who have worked hard to safeguard their precious landscapes from industrialisation), and other outrageous misdemeanours, the whole examination should be stopped and started again from scratch to enable full community participation to take place.

3b The upland areas identified as 'suitable' for solar arrays are in many cases habitats for vulnerable species such as lapwing and curlew, and are also in most instances areas of peat blanket, and thus a carbon sink. Constructing solar arrays in these areas would disrupt the peat and thus release thousands of tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> into the atmosphere, which is precisely what we are not trying to achieve. For a similar example of this compare it with the environmental disaster at Cefn Croes when the peat blanket was destroyed in order to construct a wind turbine factory.

3c The grid connection in Radnorshire is virtually at full capacity, so there is little point in building solar arrays here when other parts of the country, such as South Wales, are better served in this way. Additionally, Powys is already supplying far more 'green' energy than any other part of Wales. Solar power does not work at night-time, therefore backup is vital 24 hours a day, as power stations cannot be switched on and off as we would an electrical switch. With so much solar power systems now attached to the grid (and at the same time producing miniscule amounts of power) further loading will only destabilise the grid.

3d The plan displays little concern for the Wellbeing of future generations of Powys residents or visitors. Tourism is by far the largest economic factor here, despite the

poor attempts by both Powys and Wales tourist organisations to advertise our stunningly beautiful scenery, but will be devastated if massed arrays of solar panels and wind turbines are built. Powys is a landscape of gently undulating hills and vales, mainly unspoilt and with a quiet beauty that is loved by a great many people, not just from the UK, but from abroad. They come here *because* it is unspoilt, to relax and enjoy countryside that has changed little over the centuries, to walk along our splendid footpaths, and indulge in other outdoor pursuits. Constructing massed solar arrays will undoubtedly cut off some of these paths, but the very nature of this undulating land will highlight the solar panels, making them highly visible from most directions, bringing an overwhelming sense of vast industrialisation to a rural location. Not only would this destroy the tourist economy (and it is not good enough to state that there is no evidence to suggest this will happen, as there certainly is now), but it will bring misery to those living in the areas concerned with its strident and unnatural design.

4a The proposal is at odds with the Wales Environment Act 2015 given that it takes no account of the need to maintain and enhance biodiversity.

4b Incredibly, the policy has completely ignored the need for adequate connection to the grid in Powys, even though this is now almost at full capacity. This renders the whole proposal pointless, and beggars belief that grown-up individuals supposedly with some experience have been responsible for drawing up this derisory plan.

4c Given the deeply confused and inadequate nature of this proposal as outlined above, it most certainly fails to provide a clear and consistent framework in which to assess development proposals. It poses a severe threat to many important landscape assets, apart from the inherent beauty of the region. How do Enplan quantify their evaluation of upland areas as being of 'low landscape value' when these places are rich in biodiversity, natural habitats and outstanding natural beauty? They fall far short of creating a professional survey, so how can one continue under such appallingly inadequate information?

5 The plan shows utter contempt for the landscape, the natural environment of Powys and the historic aspects, and fails to address inevitable ecological problems.

In summary I would point out that I cannot understand the reasons for Powys County Council's continual deviousness in its relationship with the community – it must be clear to them that they are causing extreme distress to many, who now regard PCC with complete distrust. Additionally the machinations of PCC have caused massive unnecessary expenditure at a time when they are claiming impoverishment. It must, however, now be clear to every officer in the council that their actions are now under the most intensive scrutiny by so many in the community. I urge you to throw out this despicable proposal.

David Bellamy