



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

WRITTEN STATEMENT BY THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

TITLE **Planning For Renewable Energy in Wales**

DATE **17 June 2011**

BY **First Minister**

The Welsh Government takes its responsibilities to deliver sustainable development, tackle climate change and deliver energy security very seriously. Our energy needs in a modern society will remain considerable and must be met securely from low carbon sources.

We have a number of obligations we must fulfil, both in terms of our sustainable development duty, and in playing our part in helping to meet the UK Government's targets for carbon reduction set out in European and UK law.

The Welsh Government's Energy Policy Statement published in March 2010 sets out the actions that will be taken to promote a diverse mix of renewable energy technologies, including onshore and offshore wind, biomass and marine, and we remain committed to promoting the widest range of renewable energy technologies we possibly can.

In addition, the Welsh Government has made significant progress to promote micro-generation of renewable energy, for example by removing planning restrictions for most forms of domestic micro-generation equipment, as well as supporting community based renewable energy projects.

However, while we continue to promote all forms of renewable energy, onshore wind is currently the most commercially mature form of renewable

energy. The Welsh Government remains committed to the principles of planning for onshore wind in a strategic way, which seeks to optimise the production of renewable energy whilst protecting Wales' environment.

Our policy in TAN 8 seeks to restrict the proliferation of large scale wind farms across the whole of Wales and focuses on the Strategic Search Areas which were derived following an independent assessment.

The indicative capacities set out in TAN8 in 2005 reflected a considered view of the potential impact of grid and transport connections. However, in a number of the SSAs, developer interest has now greatly exceeded those indicative figures. The Welsh Government believes this level of development is unacceptable in view of its wider impacts on the local area.

In our view the TAN 8 capacities should be regarded as upper limits and we call upon UK Government to respect this position when they finalise the Renewable Energy National Policy Statement and to not allow proliferation when they take decisions on individual projects in Wales.

It is this overcapacity which has led to proposals for major new overhead grid infrastructure. We contend that the level of capacity within the Strategic Search Areas which we set in 2005 would negate the need for the large obtrusive pylons which are causing such concern. My Government would not support the construction of large pylons in Mid Wales and my Ministers are pressing this case with National Grid Transmission and with Ofgem.

It has always been our position, as set out in our Energy Policy Statement that such connections should be delivered by less intrusive techniques, and as sensitively as possible, including the use of undergrounding. In cases where communities get the disbenefits of major infrastructure without the economic advantages high voltage power brings to city areas, we believe a new approach must be taken to the undergrounding of high voltage power lines.

In addition, I will be meeting with the British Irish Council on Monday where I intend to raise the impact of the UK Government energy policy on Wales and Montgomeryshire in particular. This situation amply illustrates why consents for major energy infrastructure projects must be devolved to Wales. We cannot accept a position where decisions made outside Wales will lead to inappropriate development for the people of Wales.