

CYNGOR SIR POWYS COUNTY COUNCIL

County Council
26th January 2017

REPORT AUTHOR: County Councillor Tony Thomas, Portfolio Holder for Regeneration and Planning

SUBJECT: Question from Christine Hugh-Jones

I welcome the opportunity to submit a question to County Cllr Tony Thomas, Portfolio Holder for Regeneration and Planning, for the Council meeting on 26th January 2017:

My question is:

Could he please identify the particular paragraph of Planning Policy Wales (Edition 9) or the major change in local circumstances, which requires the definition of local search areas and hence provides the justification for the Authority's designation of such "Local Search Areas" as a Further Focussed Change so late in the examination process?

Portfolio Holder's Response

Planning Policy Wales sets out the land use planning policies of the Welsh Government. It makes it clear that PPW is supplemented by Technical Advice Notes, circulars and policy clarification letters (Paragraph 1.1.1, PPW).

<http://gov.wales/docs/desh/publications/161117planning-policy-wales-edition-9-en.pdf>

Section 12.8 of PPW covers renewable and low carbon energy and states:

Paragraph 12.8.2: *"Planning policy at all levels should facilitate delivery of both the ambition set out in Energy Wales: A Low Carbon Transition and UK and European targets on renewable energy."*

Paragraph 12.8.8: *"The Welsh Government is committed to using the planning system to:*

- *optimise renewable energy generation;*
- *optimise low carbon energy generation; etc."*

Paragraph 12.8.9: *Local planning authorities should facilitate the development of all forms of renewable and low carbon energy to move towards a low carbon economy (see 4.4.3) to help to tackle the causes of climate change (see 4.7.3). Specifically, they should make positive provision by:*

- *considering the contribution that their area can make towards developing and facilitating renewable and low carbon energy, and ensuring that development plan policies enable this contribution to be delivered; etc”*

Although PPW refers to Strategic Search Areas, it refers to local policy (i.e. LDP policy) but does not specifically reference ‘local search areas’. PPW is, however, supplemented by policy clarification letters and such a letter was issued by the Minister for Natural Resources, dated the 10th Dec 2015, to all local planning authorities regarding his expectations for energy policies in local development plans.

<http://gov.wales/docs/desh/publications/151210energy-policies-in-local-development-plans-en.pdf>

The Minister wrote (partial extract):

“I am pleased that, since the publication of our ‘Renewable Energy Toolkit for Planners’ in 2010, many local planning authorities have undertaken Renewable Energy Assessments (REAs) as part of the Local Development Plan (LDP) evidence base. However, it is disappointing to note that no LDP in Wales has taken the results of the REA and formulated local policies (including allocations or areas of search) for local-authority scale (5MW – 25MW) renewable energy schemes or other low carbon technologies.

The designation of such areas would show leadership at the local level; give certainty to the renewable energy industry in making investment decisions; and, through the LDP consultation process, would give communities a say as to where renewable energy developments should be located. By designating these areas, developments can be guided to the most appropriate locations. This approach has been taken by the Welsh Government for large scale wind energy projects through the Strategic Search Areas (SSAs) in TAN8. I expect local planning authorities to take the same, proactive approach for all forms of renewable and low carbon energy generation.”

To conclude, PPW requires Local Authorities through their development plan policies to facilitate all forms of renewable and low carbon energy and to consider the contribution that their area can make towards developing and facilitating renewable and low carbon energy, and ensure that their development plan policies enable this contribution to be delivered.

The policy clarification letter from the Minister for Natural Resources in Dec 2015 sets out the expectation for local authorities to include allocations or areas of search within local development plan policy. It therefore provides clarity that an LDP’s renewable energy policy should be shown spatially on the proposals map.

This position was reflected in the comments dated 11th March 2016 made by Welsh Government to the Council in response to the consultation on proposed Focussed Changes to the LDP. [1084 WG Letter](#)