



July 2011

Dear Colleagues,

The Welsh Government's energy policy and aspirations are set out in "A Low Carbon Revolution" which identifies Wales' sustainable renewable energy potential to 2020/2025. We remain committed to pursuing these aspirations and promoting all forms of renewable energy with onshore wind as currently the most viable technology.

Within the aspirations set out in "A Low Carbon Revolution" is a specific reference to the contribution which can be made by onshore wind in Wales, which we believe has the potential to provide 2 gigawatts of capacity. These figures set the context for the revision of Planning Policy Wales (PPW) which was undertaken in February this year. PPW is the parent document to Technical Advice Note 8 (TAN 8) and both of these seek to facilitate Wales' potential output of renewable energy.

An important function of TAN8 is to restrict the proliferation of large scale wind farms in other parts of Wales. We also need to ensure that windfarm development *within* the SSAs is proportionate and balanced with other development needs in these areas. Our approach is to limit the development of large scale wind farms to the areas of Wales which were independently and empirically assessed to be the most suitable. These are the seven Strategic Search Areas (SSAs) in TAN 8. Further, wind farm development should not reach such a scale that it would necessitate other developments that would run counter to the policy positions set out in TAN 8, for example on transmission network reinforcement.

The Welsh Government remains fully committed to its planning policies contained in Planning Policy Wales and Technical Advice Note 8 and these, together with the policy clarification letter on transportation matters of 1<sup>st</sup> April 2009, issued by the Chief Planner, set the planning policy framework in Wales.

In the light of recent media coverage, I thought it would be helpful to write to stakeholders to provide further clarity on the issue of **maximum** installation capacities for onshore wind within the Strategic Search Areas (SSAs) identified in TAN 8 in 2005.

The potential estimated in the Low Carbon Revolution Energy Policy Statement was based on the **maximum** capacities that we considered appropriate for the SSAs in Tan 8 in 2005. The maximum capacities of the SSAs as provided for and referenced in TAN 8, were assessed by independent consultants Garrad Hassan and provide for almost 1700 megawatts of onshore wind across all our SSAs. The remaining 300MW are anticipated to come from a combination of developments under 25MW, brownfield sites as well as community and local schemes and a contribution from micro-generation. We remain committed to achieving this potential.

For ease of reference, the identified maximum capacities for each of the SSAs as identified by Garrad Hassan were as follows: SSA A 212MW; SSA B 430MW; SSA C 98MW; SSA D 212MW; SSA E 152MW; SSA F 430MW and SSA G 132MW.

TAN 8 fully recognised the reinforcement of the transmission network in Mid Wales as necessary to the realisation of additional generating capacity in the area, as well as providing a stronger more reliable network for energy users. TAN 8 set out the Welsh Government's view that connections from the individual turbines to a substation is "via underground cables". TAN 8 details that any connection from a substation to the nearest point of the distribution network would be "achieved by a standard 3 wire system on wooden poles or by undergrounded lines". This remains the Welsh Government's view and is reinforced by the approach set out within the Renewable Energy Route Map for Wales in 2008, and the Energy Policy Statement in 2010. Provided development is limited to the maximum capacities above, we do not believe that there is a need for the large, visually intrusive, high voltage grid network infrastructure and associated sub station of the kind proposed within Mid Wales. Where new grid is required, we expect the grid company and regulator to ensure that it is located, designed and installed as sensitively as possible, using appropriate techniques, including the use of undergrounding.

You will be aware that the UK Government has issued National Policy Statements for Renewable Energy Infrastructure for consideration by Parliament, which will provide the primary basis for decisions by the Infrastructure Planning Commission (IPC) on projects over the devolved threshold of 50MW in Wales. Nevertheless, we expect all decision makers in Wales, including the IPC and its successor, to recognise our spatially specific policy outlined in TAN 8 and to respect the fact that the Strategic Search Areas have a finite environmental capacity and output should not exceed the maximum levels as assessed in 2005 and outlined above.

I would remind you that in relation to those consents which are devolved matters in Wales the Welsh Government policy provides the primary basis for consideration for local planning authorities when producing Local Development Plans and is material when making decisions on individual planning applications.

For the avoidance of any future doubt, when determining planning applications under town and country planning legislation on energy related projects within Wales (other than certain energy installations), the key planning policy framework comprises the local planning

authority's adopted development plan, and where it is more recent, the Welsh Government's Planning Policy Wales and Technical Advice Note 8.

Our future well-being, both material and social, will be dependent on achieving sufficient supplies of affordable low carbon energy. This move to a low carbon economy is an essential part of our commitment as a Government to sustainable development. Done successfully it will strengthen our economic well-being, improve the environment and help to address key social issues such as fuel poverty, and we look to work with our key partners to help us deliver this.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "John Griffiths".

**John Griffiths AC / AM**

Gweinidog yr Amgylchedd a Datblygu Cynaliadwy  
Minister for Environment and Sustainable Development