

Councillor

23 February 2006

Dear Councillor X

Maerdy Windfarm Proposal – Update for Councillors

Further to my letter before Christmas I am writing to provide an update on progress of the Maerdy windfarm proposals.

Public Consultation on Preliminary Proposals

The Public Consultation ran through December and January, closing on January 29th. Please find enclosed a full report on the Consultation, including all of the responses received.

The Consultation has been extremely useful for us with identifying the key issues of local concern, including some unanticipated ones. Our work has already been directed to some new routes and we hope the final Environmental Statement on the project will be more thorough and locally tailored. We have included the full text of all the consultation responses and our replies in the attached report. We hope this is a help to politicians and planners in understanding the particular issues of concern locally.

Many positive comments have been received from the public and politicians on the consultation work. We hope that with clear information about what is proposed, issues can be properly exposed, any misplaced fears resolved, and the proposals critically and properly examined.

A side benefit of the Consultation has been some information to indicate public attitude towards the proposals. Over ten thousand leaflets were handed out door to door around the area; two large press articles in the Rhondda Leader; two press notices (local and national papers) and four public meetings were held. Following this, four letters were received, nineteen emails received and four comment cards left at meetings. Of these replies, there is no majority in favour or opposed to the proposal, with opinions covering the entire spectrum.

It is inappropriate for us to determine conclusions on the public response to the consultation, which is why in the report we have included every single response so that readers can establish their own opinion. However, it is our hope that the overall public response to the Consultation, especially in the light of opposition to the Ferndale Windfarm proposal, is a reflection of the Maerdy site proposal.

We recognise that the definitive appreciation of public opinion should rest on the final proposals. We propose to provide further public exhibition, updated website and a similar opportunity for comment when the final design is submitted for planning application. We will similarly provide the results fully to the planning authority and politicians. We would welcome any comments for improvement of the consultation work to make it as effective as possible.

Environmental Impact Assessment

The Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) on the project is nearing completion and we anticipate submitting a planning application in the late Spring. So far the detailed EIA has supported the technical consultation exercise carried out across South Wales that lead to the Maerdy site being proposed.

The work is being lead by Entec UK Ltd, one of the UK's leading firms of environmental consultants, who have the strongest reputation for thoroughness and independence.

TAN 8 Area Definition Exercise

Arups are conducting an exercise for Neath, Bridgend and RCT Councils examining the TAN 8 strategic search area. We are encouraged by interim information about the location of the Maerdy site in relation to this work and hope the completed exercise will support the detailed EIA and public consultation findings on this site.

Grid Connection

Grid connection is likely to be a significant issue with any additional windfarms in the TAN 8 area. New and upgraded lines may be needed. The existence of local lines and a nearby substation was one of the reasons the Maerdy site was proposed. The local distribution company have now confirmed that capacity exists for the Maerdy site to be connected without the need for line upgrade to the existing infrastructure.

Forestry Extraction

The proposed access for the Maerdy site makes use of existing Forestry Commission (FC) tracks through the Tynwydd forest such that the site can be reached from the Heads of Valleys road without passing through any towns or villages and hence avoiding disruption.

The FC noted the potential of the windfarm to significantly reduce the impact of timber extraction from the Pentre Forestry Block on surrounding villages. Parts of the Pentre Block (please see plan overleaf) are approaching maturity. The current permitted timber extraction route takes lorries through the centre of Maerdy and Aberdare. It is proposed that if the windfarm were eventually built, the windfarm access tracks could also be used to extract the timber through the Tynwydd forest, thereby avoiding the disruption of many lorry journeys over several years passing through Maerdy and Aberdare.

Site Visit

Please could we offer to arrange a visit for you to see the site, access route, grid connection, etc. first hand, if it is of interest. If you would prefer to wait until after the planning application is submitted then we understand, but wished to offer at this time in case it is useful with the project being in the public domain.

It is our constant intention that the project proposals be developed in a sensitive and proper manner. Please do let us know of any necessary improvements or criticisms.

With kind regards,

Yours sincerely

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