

Carl Sargeant AC / AM
Y Gweinidog Cyfoeth Naturiol
Minister for Natural Resources



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Ein cyf/Our ref: MA-P/CS/1303/16

To: Planning Lead Members
cc. Chief Planning Officers
Planning Inspectorate Wales

15 March 2016

Dear Colleague,

Following on from the United Nations Conference on Climate Change (COP21) in December, last week Wales hosted the International Green Growth Forum which brought together leaders of States and Regions from across the world and included the launch of *The Business of Becoming a Sustainable Nation* – our prospectus for green growth in Wales.

Green Growth is about ensuring sustainable growth and jobs across the whole of our economy, not just in the environment sector.

When taking decisions on local planning policies and individual development management decisions consideration should be given to the overall context of helping to tackle climate change and delivering the sustainable development duty placed on all public bodies by the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act. This needs to happen for all renewable energy and low carbon technologies and at all scales from nationally significant projects to community and individual building scale schemes.

Our planning policies in Planning Policy Wales (PPW) are clear that the planning system should support the transition to a low carbon society and that local planning authorities should facilitate the development of all forms of renewable and low carbon energy. In addition, PPW states that the economic benefits associated with a proposed development are understood and these are given appropriate consideration in the decision-making process.

I appreciate that visual and amenity impact on surrounding communities and properties is an important issue (and policies are in place to protect against unacceptably adverse impacts) and that discussions of this nature can become quite emotive during the planning process. However planning decisions need to be taken in the wider public interest and in a rational way, informed by evidence, where these issues are balanced against other factors.

At the larger scale, the new Developments of National Significant (DNS) system, introduced on 1 March will consider these issues on a strategic level for energy projects, taking into account policies in development plans and Planning Policy Wales.

At the local authority level, in December 2015 I wrote to you asking you to be more proactive in developing positive local planning policies towards renewable energy developments through local strategies and spatial allocations.

On a community scale, in December 2013, I wrote to you to ask that you be as accommodating as possible when dealing with community projects to take into account the level of knowledge within community organisations of the planning system. This request still stands today and will be facilitated by the introduction of pre application advice services by all local planning authorities this month.

In support of this, the Welsh Government has commissioned the Energy Saving Trust (EST) to deliver training to local planning authority Members and Officers on community renewables. This training will seek to brief decision makers of the issues faced by community projects so that they may be more informed of and considerate to the position of community groups as they navigate their way through the planning system. If you are interested in attending one of these events and have not already been notified, please contact the Energy Saving Trust directly on 029 2046 8345 or trainingwales@est.org.uk

Finally, at the buildings-level scale we are investigating possibilities to further extend development rights for non-domestic properties to install solar panels. In England permitted development rights for commercial properties have increased so that up to 1MW solar panels can be installed on roofs subject to a prior approval procedure. I want to see if there is an alternative option available in Wales that will be less cumbersome for developers and those in the business community seeking to generate their own energy. We recently commissioned Arcadis to carry out research in this area and this is due to be completed by the Spring of 2016.

The Welsh Government is committed to using all using all possible levers it has to increase the supply of renewable energy in Wales for the benefit of the next generation and I expect local planning authorities to take the initiative in delivering sustainable outcomes for future generations.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading 'Carl Sargeant'.

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