

THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY FOR WALES

Labour's 1997 Manifesto included a pledge to devolve increased power to Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

‘The Welsh Assembly will provide democratic control of the existing Welsh Office functions. It will have secondary legislative powers and will be specifically empowered to democratise the quango state.’

In September 1997 a referendum in Wales resulted in the narrowest of majorities in favour of a devolved Assembly (50.3% for, 49.7% against). Only 50% of the electorate voted.

On May 6th 1999, further elections voted in 60 Assembly Members, representing 40 constituencies on a ‘first past the post’ basis, and 20 regional members on a proportional representation vote from party lists. 46% of the electorate voted, and the National Assembly for Wales (NAW) was duly established at Crickhowell House, Cardiff Bay, with civil servants, many from the Welsh Office, in Cathays Park, the administrative centre.

There were initial teething problems, relating to who should be First Minister. Ron Davies, the Secretary of State (SoS) for Wales, had been forced to resign and Alun Michael took his place, becoming the first NAW First Minister. Mr Michael was a Blairite appointment but not acceptable to the Wales Labour Party, and after a bitter internal struggle Labour stalwart Rhodri Morgan, MP for Cardiff West, replaced him. As Labour did not have an overall majority, it had been forced into a coalition with the Liberal Democrats and Mike German became Deputy First Minister. Soon afterwards, he was involved in a public investigation into expenses and the Welsh Joint Education Committee. Mr Morgan therefore took on Mike German's portfolio of Economic Development, which includes Tourism, in addition to his other duties.

Thus the NAW was born, in a climate of confusion and acrimony – which some would say has not yet resolved – a new administration, with limited legislative powers, funded from Westminster.

Since its inception further wrangling has taken place regarding the Assembly's name. Rhodri Morgan favoured the ‘Welsh Assembly Government’ (WAG) and this now appears on the official notepaper, although it has been rejected by Plaid Cymru, the Party of Wales. Another problem has been whether or not to spend millions on a prestigious new building next to Cardiff Bay. One campaigner wryly commented, ‘*They spend more time worrying about what to call themselves and where to live, than they do about really important issues*’. At the time of writing (May 2003) further elections have taken place, with an even lower 38% of the electorate voting, giving Labour 30 of the 60 seats. As the Plaid Cymru Presiding Officer

cannot vote, the resultant majority is 1. The Lib/Lab pact has been dissolved. It is clear that the majority of the population have not been very impressed with the new administration and that voter apathy prevails amongst a disaffected public. A lesson perhaps for the proposed Regional Assemblies favoured by John Prescott?

The Cefn Croes proposals involved several of the Assembly's departments and Ministers – Economic Development – initially Mike German (Liberal) then Rhodri Morgan (Labour) then Andrew Davies (Labour); Environment and Planning – Sue Essex (Labour); Rural Affairs and Forestry – Christine Gwyther (Labour), then Carwyn Jones (Labour). Edwina Hart (Labour) was responsible for Local Government Standards, and Lord Dafydd Elis Thomas (Plaid) was Presiding Officer.

If all this sounds confusing, in truth it is, and the 2003 elections resulted in a further reshuffle. Therein may lie part of the problem for Cefn Croes. The Assembly in 1999 was a fledgling institution, uncertain of its powers, unsure of its responsibilities, and with few experienced politicians to guide it through its early years.

In 2000, an application was made to Ceredigion County Council to approve the UK's largest land-based wind power station on Cefn Croes. By virtue of its size, the decision was not to be made locally, or even nationally by the new Assembly, but in Whitehall. Interestingly a letter to the Prime Minister, Tony Blair, demonstrated his confusion when the reply stated that the NAW would be making the decision! Ceredigion Council invited NAW to give their response, and subsequently, the DTI consulted NAW.

The NAW was presented with an interesting dilemma. How could it give an objective response as consultee, given that it legally owned the Cefn Croes site? Since devolution, Forestry Commission public land, managed by its Executive Agency, Forest Enterprise from headquarters in Edinburgh, had been transferred to the National Assembly. The NAW was to hold the land 'on behalf of the nation'.

Did they fully understand what was going on? Christine Gwyther in July 1999 had received 'verbal briefings' from Forest Enterprise in Aberystwyth relating to the discussions between local FE Wales manager and the developers, RDC, which had been taking place since 1997. If she had fully realised the implications for this major change of land use, on Assembly owned public land, and in the absence of public consultation, she might not have been so happy for the application to proceed through the planning process. We do not know what discussions took place behind the scenes, as there are no letters or minutes. At no stage was the legality of FE's proposals for NAW land questioned.

In 2001, disaster struck as the foot and mouth epidemic gripped the UK. Ms Gwyther, a vegetarian, was not thought to be the right person to deal with the farming unions at such a sensitive and difficult time, and Carwyn Jones took over her brief. He was no more persuaded against the use of the publicly owned forestry land for industrialisation than Ms Gwyther, because in rural land use matters, he was equally inexperienced. He was pre-occupied by the more pressing problems of a Government in Westminster seemingly determined upon a course of action which could decimate Wales's sheep population and destroy its agriculture. Why worry about another wind 'farm', somewhere in the middle of a sparsely populated area of mid Wales, when the National Farmers Union (NFU) and the Farmers Union of Wales (FUW) were breathing down your neck? (And, there were precious few Labour voters in mid Wales.)

Meantime, the NAW was busy keeping printers in business with numerous glossy consultation and policy documents – Better Wales, Sustainable Wales, the Rural Development Plan for Wales, a Winning Wales, Plan for Wales – to mention but a few. In the background, three important consultations were taking place – one for Forestry Policy, being developed by the Forestry Commission's Chief Conservator for Wales, Simon Hewitt, (promoted March 2003 to Director of Forestry in Wales), another on Energy (part 1 Renewable Energy) and a third on Planning Policy (under Sue Essex's department).

It is odd that the first consultation and subsequent review on energy should be confined to the development of Renewable Energy. One might have supposed that there would be more important matters for the Economic Development Committee, chaired by Christine Gwyther. If they were seriously concerned about global warming in relationship to energy, they should perhaps have concentrated on a report into energy conservation and efficiency – more greenhouse gas emissions would be saved through those measures, and more jobs provided than land-based turbines can ever produce.

However, the NAW was marching in step with its paymaster, the New Labour Government which was simultaneously producing its own Energy Review (from Lord Falconer 'the Dome' Performance and Innovation Unit in the Cabinet Office) leading to the February 2003 White Paper on Future Energy Strategy which heavily promotes 'renewables' i.e. land-based wind turbines. This is regarded as a political fudge, long on aspirations, short on specifics, and dodging the difficult nuclear question.

Correspondence with the National Assembly, either directly, or via our own Ceredigion AM, Elin Jones (Plaid Cymru) was to prove very frustrating. Letters were too frequently either ignored, merely acknowledged by a postcard, without any subsequent follow-up, or referred to another department. The 'hit' rate of a substantive, personal reply was about ten requests for

answers/information to one reply – even in those, awkward questions were never answered. One campaigner has enough ‘acknowledgment’ cards to wall-paper her loo!

It was unclear as to whom objections to Cefn Croes should be addressed. We initially understood that Sue Essex’s planning department was involved. Indeed, Rhodri Morgan had said *‘This is purely a planning matter.’* Yet letters addressed to Ms Essex were frequently ignored. It was pointed out to her that she had objected to a bungalow proposed for Goginan – a village close to Cefn Croes, on the grounds that it would adversely affect the Special Landscape Area. Ms Essex was reported in the Cambrian News in January 2001 as saying; *‘The site is clearly visible in the open countryside’* and *‘Its prominent position makes it particularly harmful to the character and appearance of that area.’* The bungalow would probably have been 30 feet maximum in height in a valley area. Therefore we surmised that she could not, logically, recommend thirty-nine, 300 foot structures in the same area on a 1,800 foot plateau. There was no response from Ms Essex. She neither addressed this inconsistency, nor replied directly to us.

Requests asking for details of the Cabinet meeting scheduled to discuss the response to the DTI re Cefn Croes, were also ignored, as were letters to Rhodri Morgan regarding the deleterious impact of turbines on tourism. Did junior civil servants even bring them to the attention of ministers?

Finally, after Ceredigion Council’s vote in September 2001, a mass mailing response arrived from Alun Cadwallader, Steel and Energy Branch, Innovation of Sustainable Growth Division. It is bland; *‘I can appreciate your concerns about the proposed development and can assure you that your letter is currently being carefully considered and a full response will be issued in the near future.’* But why was the Steel and Energy Branch fending the queries? Wasn’t it meant to be a matter for the Planning Department? Rhodri Morgan and Carwyn Jones had said so.

In a further mass mailing to the objectors after the NAW’s response had finally been sent to the DTI in October 2001, the Steel and Energy Branch wrongly stated; *‘In the case of Cefn Croes, the County Council considered all views expressed at local level and voted unanimously in favour of the proposal.’* A vote of 18 in favour, with 3 against and 3 absent is a clear majority, but not unanimous. The vote for the grid connection of 14 in favour, 5 against and 5 absent might be considered even less supportive.

An apology and correction was sent out a month later, again unsigned other than being from the Steel and Energy Branch – pretty shoddy responses from an organisation wanting to extend its powers to that of a national government.

The NAW response to the DTI was disappointing. After whingeing about the decision being made in London it had the opportunity to deliver a well presented, carefully considered analysis and recommendation. Instead, it was an almost apologetically bundled together collection of half-baked responses, delivered late from the 'different divisions within the National Assembly' – mostly transcribed verbatim. It also missed a golden opportunity to flex its 'political muscle' in demanding to determine the Cefn Croes matter itself, as being of material importance to Wales. It missed the opportunity to become a political force to be reckoned with in the future. How politically maladroit!

From the Farming and Rural Conservation Agency, the sole comment was the '*the proposal only affects very poor quality agricultural land – therefore would not significantly affect long-term national agricultural interests*'.

There was no mention or acknowledgment that the land is actually managed on behalf of the National Assembly by Forest Enterprise, for the Forestry Commission, and that FC were responsible for its agricultural degradation. There was no recognition that this land was the recipient of numerous grants for conservation and landscape improvement including European monies. There was no mention of landscape designations for the area. Fine landscape is not infrequently 'poor agricultural land'. Land is valued for different reasons, not all of them profitable intensive agriculture. Once again, the Forestry Commission's role escaped attention.

The Environment Agency report contained the word 'consultation' instead of 'construction' – did no one check the document?

From the Planning Department – (not detailed in the response) references were made to the Draft Planning Policy Wales document, but no conclusion was given, and no statement indicating that a public inquiry should be called. In spring 2003, the proposals for an off-shore wind 'farm' in the Bristol Channel, near Porthcawl, at Scarweather Sands, smaller than Cefn Croes, were called in for a public inquiry by Sue Essex. This was just before the NA elections, in an area with many Labour voters. Why couldn't she have recommended the same course of action for Cefn Croes – was it because Ceredigion is sparsely populated, with very few Labour voters? Or because of pressure from Central Government? Was Sue Essex's planning department side-lined? Other smaller wind 'farms' had been called in.

The Countryside Council for Wales's (CCW) conclusion was omitted from the NAW's response. Why? (See CCW chapter.)

From the Economic Development perspective, much was made of the developer's promised £9 million to the local economy over 25 years (which works out at a paltry £360,000 per annum) but there is no mention of the potential effects on tourism, which is a major contributor to the economy of the area, with a potential for growth and more jobs than any number of wind turbines could contribute. (See Wales Tourist Board chapter.) Professor Peter Midmore calculates that walkers in Wales contribute £55 million per annum to the gross national product.

The DTI civil servants were no doubt surprised by the Assembly's response, and failure to ask the SoS to call in the application for a public inquiry, as they had done with many other smaller applications. Given a final chance to alter the course of events, the NAW was asked if there were any plans to create a National Park in the Cambrian Mountains. The answer was negative. The Liberals have recently indicted that this is once more on the agenda.

Moves are now afoot with cross-party support, for any subsequent applications for large developments to be made by the Assembly, not Westminster. Cefn Croes was the first power station, in excess of 50 MW, to be decided by the DTI since devolution. It will probably be the last. Is Cefn Croes the price the Assembly had to pay in order to gain more planning powers for the future? A statement in April 2001 by Peter Hain then Energy Minister at the DTI had rejected calls by Ceredigion MP Simon Thomas *'that decisions on big wind projects be made in Wales'*. Maybe, now that Peter Hain is the Welsh Secretary, that will change.

A question from Nick Bourne, leader of the Welsh Conservatives, was posed to Rhodri Morgan. What would the NAW have decided on Cefn Croes if it had been in a position to determine the application? The question was ruled 'out of order' by the Cabinet Presiding Officer as it was hypothetical. Nick Bourne had in February 2002 succeeded in initiating the only NAW Cabinet debate on Cefn Croes.

Plaid Cymru - The Party of Wales

Many of us in Ceredigion are former Plaid Cymru supporters. We voted for Llandysul schoolteacher Cynog Dafis – elected on a joint ticket with the Green Party in the early 90s. He took over from the long standing Liberal member Geraint Howells upon his retirement. Subsequent to Mr Dafis's decision to concentrate on the Assembly, a by-election in 1999 resulted in Simon Thomas, one of his protégés, being voted in.

The Ceredigion Plaid Cymru trio was completed by Elin Jones (formerly with the Welsh Development Agency (WDA)), being selected as the local Assembly member in 1999. She was re-elected with a much reduced vote in 2003.

It is very hard for us to understand why Plaid Cymru supported the Cefn Croes proposals. We know that Cynog Dafis was committed to the development of renewable energy, but surely he could see that these plans were an exploitation, by the English in Westminster, backed by an American company, of Wales's last remaining precious asset – its landscape. To us, the exploitation was on a par with the notorious drowning of the Tryweryn valley to provide water for Liverpool in the 1960s and the English mine-owners 'Rape of the Fair Country' in south Wales. We couldn't see how the plans benefited Wales at all. It was the imposition by a New Labour government in Westminster as part of their evolving energy policy, to dump massive wind turbines in the Welsh heartland.

Where was the opposition to the rape of the Cambrians? Where were the howls of protest, and the demonstrations of activists? Where was the anger in their hearts, the fire in the belly? Even more insulting, the decision was to be made in London, by-passing the new National Assembly. Plaid Cymru activists have taken direct action before on matters of less importance, and whenever there is a perceived oppression by the English or a threat to the Welsh language. Why not now? Was everyone in Plaid Cymru mesmerised by the obsessional support for wind turbines by Cynog Dafis, and another Plaid AM from Aberystwyth, Phil Williams – who represented a south Wales constituency. In 1991, Gwynfor Evans 'Fighting for Wales' wrote; *'The Land of Wales is the homeland of an ancient nation. Its desecration should not be tolerated.'* He quotes Islwyn, the great Welsh poet; *'Everything is sacred, all these mountains have in them heavenly music.'*

Another Plaid Cymru ex-chairman, Dafydd Huws, a retired psychiatrist had made money out of windpower. He was co-owner of the Mynydd Gorddu wind power station, also in Ceredigion, although he did not himself live near the site. Possibly therefore, there was the mistaken perception that wind turbines would bring wealth to hard-pressed rural communities. Certainly, a few land owners would benefit from turbine rental income – but to the detriment of their neighbours who would lose their views and their tranquillity, and if involved in small-scale tourism diversification, their livelihoods. During construction, a few people would do well, providing accommodation for the work force, and some suppliers would get the contract for the building materials and others to put up fences. But once constructed, wind turbines require little maintenance, and there are very few local permanent full-time jobs. Perhaps they felt that Wales could lead the way in developing a home-grown industry for supplying turbine components to the rest of the UK – but this industry is a potential industry only and the reality is that most components are imported – with Denmark in particular trying to offload its surplus capacity now that its own grid is saturated. Maybe there was a genuine ideological commitment that Wales become a 'global showcase for renewable energy'. This phrase occurs frequently in National Assembly policy documents. We have asked exactly what it means, but no explanation has been forthcoming.

We do know that the Welsh landscape is not as important to the Plaid Cymru members who supported wind turbines, as it is to many Welshmen and women. The late Phil Williams admitted that he'd be happy to see the 'green desert' (the Elenydd in the heart of the Cambrians) covered with turbines. He also favoured a nation of 'scientists rather than poets'. None of Plaid Cymru's wind supporters appeared to attach any importance to the historical, cultural, religious, or landscape values of the area, which would be threatened by the turbines.

The rest of Plaid Cymru appeared to take their lead from Cynog Dafis. From Ieuan Wyn Jones – until recently leader of the party, Dafydd Wigley, Lord Elis Thomas, not a dissenting word was heard against turbines – officially. But unofficially, there was deep anxiety, and this has led to the defection of several Plaid supporters from the party.

At a Plaid branch meeting in Lampeter to discuss the policy towards Cefn Croes, there was no wish to support the proposals, but pressure came from Cynog Dafis, Simon Thomas and Elin Jones to do so. We hoped that the eight Plaid County Councillors who sit on the Development Committee would put their county first, and vote against giving Cefn Croes their approval, but they didn't – apart from the independently minded D.M. James from Llanon. It is our belief that a three-line whip had taken place, although this is illegal.

Cynog Dafis chaired the Wales regional sub-committee and Phil Williams was on the Economic Development Committee. Both had opportunities to promote their views in the Assembly. Simon Thomas brought discredit upon himself when he warned in the local paper – just before the Council's decision – that if we didn't accept wind turbines a nuclear power station would be imposed on us instead! There were no such plans for this. He also went on a sponsored cycle ride of Ceredigion, to promote the county as a tourism destination, but had no words of reassurance for small tourism operators. He had questioned CCW's view that Cefn Croes would result in loss of 'wilderness' and its visual impact on the landscape. He stated that he was *'convinced there is no serious environmental impact against the Cefn Croes development'*. And *'I do not believe that any of us even in the most remote and rural parts of Ceredigion have an inalienable right to live in an undeveloped countryside.'*

It was difficult to get across to the Assembly our dismay at the way things were being handled. The normal route for questions and information should be via one's Assembly Member. But we found that Elin Jones was very selective in the responses she gave and, latterly, ignored letters completely. She might remember that she is our representative and we pay her salary, before being so arrogant. The situation was complicated by Elin Jones's and Simon Thomas's support for their mentor, Cynog Dafis. Privately, they might have had reservations about giant turbines. Publicly they said they wanted the NAW to make the decision, and that they wanted a public inquiry. But, we reiterate the fact that pressure was

put on the Plaid Cymru County Councillors to vote in favour at the planning meeting. This therefore ensured that a public inquiry would not automatically take place, but only at the discretion of the SoS.

In June 2003, Phil Williams died suddenly. Both he and Cynog Dafis had announced their retirement from the Assembly in advance of the May 2003 election. Ieuan Wyn Jones had stepped down as leader of Plaid and Mr Dafis is now a candidate for his post. If he is elected, then Plaid's policy on wind power stations is unlikely to change in the near future – but without Phil Williams and Cynog Dafis able to wield direct influence on the Assembly, and Simon Thomas with his eye on future political progression, it is possible that Plaid Cymru will return to policies that do not damage the Welsh people and their country.

National Assembly for Wales Regional Sub-Committee

In order to take devolution further afield from its Cardiff power-base, regional committees meet every two months, and debate two or three major policy issues. The format is quite rigid, and anyone wishing to speak has to give advance notice. Questions from the floor are not permitted, so it is not clear how democracy is advanced. The meetings are not very well publicised.

On July 13th 2001, the National Assembly Mid and West Wales Regional Committee met in Llanidloes to discuss/debate the subject of renewable energy. In attendance were Cynog Dafis – Plaid Cymru (Temporary Chair in the absence of Elin Jones), Glyn Davies – Conservative, and Delyth Evans – Labour.

There were several presentations from various bodies including Ceredigion County Council, Powys County Council, the Countryside Council for Wales, the British Wind Energy Association, the Centre for Alternative Technology, the Environment Agency and the Campaign for the Protection of Rural Wales. There were also public presentations by Martin Wright, Dr Lance Mytton, Jon Isherwood and Colin Humphrey.

The presentation by Ceredigion County Council was conducted by Tim Ball and Councillor Alun Lloyd Jones.

It should be borne in mind that this meeting was two days after the fateful July 11th meeting when Ceredigion's Planning Committee gave their approval for the Cefn Croes development. However when he spoke, Cllr Lloyd Jones told the Regional Committee that Ceredigion had already over achieved its renewable energy targets and it was about time that someone told Ceredigion it had done its share.

This sentiment astonished those present who were opposed to Cefn Croes as Cllr Lloyd Jones was one of those councillors at the planning meeting who had spoken out vehemently in favour of the development only two days previously. He was Cllr Dai Lloyd Evans's chief supporter.

When the minutes of the meeting were published in August, objectors were surprised to find that although the other speakers presentations were minuted, Cllr Lloyd Jones remarks were omitted. In view of the contentiousness of the Council's decision, campaigners wrote to the NAW Regional Committee to ask why those comments had been left out. Julia Annand, Clerk to the Mid Wales Regional Committee wrote on September 18th:

'You were concerned about the omission of the contribution made by Councillor Alun Lloyd-Jones [sic] of Ceredigion County Council. The Assembly's Regional Committee meetings are not recorded verbatim and the Clerks have to make a judgement about what to include in the formal record. The minutes are intended to record briefly any decisions made by the committee and the main points of the discussion.

'I have received advice on this matter from the Clerks of the Mid Wales Regional Committee who attended that meeting. Their recollection is that Cllr Lloyd-Jones [sic] was part of the delegation from Ceredigion County Council and spoke only briefly.'

Whether he spoke only briefly or not is immaterial. His comments were highly significant in the light of the Cefn Croes decision by the Council only two days before, as they contradicted what he had originally said.

Unhappy with Julia Annand's response, a campaigner wrote again on September 25th 2001 and received a reply from Stephen Thomas, Deputy Clerk on October 9th. It read:

'As one of the Clerks present at that meeting, my notes indicated that Cllr Lloyd Jones spoke only very briefly at that meeting. However, in view of the correspondence that the omission of his contribution has engendered, I recently listened to the audio record of that part of the meeting. I now agree that Cllr Lloyd Jones brief contribution contained statements of obvious local significance, which the Clerking team would not have been aware of. I subsequently discussed the matter with the new Committee Chair, Delyth Evans AM who has agreed to table an amendment to the minutes – incorporating Cllr Lloyd Jones's contribution – at the next Committee meeting at Aberporth on 2nd November. If members agree, the minutes of 13th July meeting will be amended accordingly.'

On November 2nd the amendment was tabled and the details of that amendment were emailed by Delyth Evans AM on November 5th. It read:

‘.....No-one challenged the amendment and it was tabled and approved. The wording was as follows:

‘Cllr Alun Lloyd-Jones [sic] said that Ceredigion County Council was hoping to extend solar clubs, formed in partnership with Ymlaen, for small and medium enterprises that are involved in the tourist industry. He added that there was a need to look very seriously at renewable energy targets, as far as wind farms were concerned. In his view, had meaningful targets already been in place, Ceredigion would probably have exceeded them. The issue of target-setting was one that needed to be looked at seriously, because in his view, some local authorities were shouldering a greater load than others.’

‘The committee agreed that this amendment should be incorporated as an additional bullet point into the minutes of the previous meeting.’

Although the amendment was welcomed it still did not minute what Cllr Lloyd Jones actually said. An email was sent to Delyth Evans AM suggesting that as there was an audio tape of the meeting and that as it was an important issue she might listen to the tape herself and acknowledge what was actually said at the meeting. Her reply on November 7th 2001 was:

‘I have checked with the Committee Clerk on this. The minutes were amended to give a fuller account of what Cllr Lloyd Jones had said. They are not a verbatim account. The amendment was discussed with Cllr Lloyd Jones and approved by him. The amended minutes have now been approved by the Committee and there is no procedure for amending them again.’

Councillor Lloyd Jones was only too happy to agree with that interpretation of what he actually said at the meeting. But campaigners were still dissatisfied with this and continued to write to the Regional Committee complaining. A letter from Julia Annand dated 12th December indicated they did not intend to take the matter any further. It stated:

‘I am very sorry that you remain dissatisfied with the record of Cllr Jones’ statement to the Committee on 13th July. The amended version has however been approved by him and was ratified by the Committee on 2nd November. That being the case I am not sure how much further we can take this correspondence. Since both presenter and the Committee are satisfied with the record of the meeting, there is little more that the secretariat can do.’

Even a letter to the Presiding Officer at the NAW resulted in a copy of the above letter from Julia Annand.

Questions immediately spring to mind regarding this whole episode.

- Why was Alun Lloyd Jones's contribution omitted from the original minutes?
- Why, when making the amendment was it not minuted verbatim as the omission had caused a lot of correspondence?
- Why did the letter of September 18th from Julia Annand not mention the fact that there was an audio tape of the meeting. Surely the tape is used when the Clerks write up the minutes?
- How significant was it that Cynog Dafis, a renowned pro-wind AM was the temporary Chair at that meeting? He would have recognised the significance of Cllr Lloyd Jones statement.

This was not the first time that campaigners had taken issue with the way in which the Regional Committees were run. At an earlier meeting in Aberystwyth, chaired by Elin Jones, Plaid Cymru, Martin Wright, leader of the Cefn Croes Campaign was cut short in his presentation, although the preceding public speaker representing a Young Farmer's Group was allowed to speak for 10 minutes. The meeting was already in advance of its schedule, so there was no pressing time constraint.

As it was felt that Elin Jones had dealt unfairly with the speaker, a complaint was made to Dafydd Elis Thomas, Plaid Cymru, Presiding Officer. The response was the usual type of bland reply which we have come to expect from the NAW – failing to address the concerns raised and referring one back to the chairman.

A further meeting at which renewable energy was discussed took place in Dolgellau on April 9th 2003. The relevant brief minutes, which do not attribute 'concerns' to any one committee member are as follows and beg more questions than they provide answers:

'There was concern about a new National Park in the Cambrian Mountains being set up, as Wales is a small country, too much conservation of land could stifle growth in other sectors of the economy.'

We surmise that this came from Cynog Dafis. It would be interesting to know what CCW, or CPRW or WTB would make of the concept of 'too much conservation of land'. The NAW, by directing other agencies in Wales should take the lead by setting clear objectives, policies and strategies for green tourism in order to get effective results. One might think that 'green tourism' would be stimulated by a National Park!

On the subject of wind power stations:

'Wind farms were a benefit to the environment but they had to be located appropriately and be of an acceptable scale.'

What? Wasn't there any further discussion? More details? Is Cefn Croes 'located appropriately'? Is it 'of an acceptable scale'? It is interesting that the preceding Regional Committee meeting in Lampeter close to the Camddwr site, didn't get round to discussing renewable energy (and wind power stations) although it was on the agenda.

A further reference was made to the possibility of a Cambrian Mountains National Park: *'an interesting concept, and might be considered inappropriate because of the scale of planning restrictions'*. Once again, this dismissal of a potential National Park is unattributed, but Cynog Dafis is the chief suspect.