

Notes from the Meeting of Representatives of Town & Community Councils with Representatives of Bute Energy and Green GEN Cymru held at The Strand Hall, Builth Wells on Thursday 20th April 2023. Regarding the Plans for Wind Farms and Pylons.

The Event was organised by Cllr Jeremy Pugh, Powys County Councillor.

1) Powys County Council:

Mr Peter Morris, The Professional Lead of Powys County Council Planning gave a talk about what the role of PCC's involvement was in the planning process, for both Wind Turbine Energy Parks and the Pylon Lines from Nant Mithil Energy Park and Carmarthen.

(Mr Peter Morris declared an interest as he has a property that will be affected)

It was stated by Mr Morris that PCC would not be responsible for any planning decisions in relation to the project and would only be a consultee relating to local issues. This is because the whole project will be classed as a 'Development of National Significance' (*Known as a 'DNS'*).

The overall planning decisions will be made by the Welsh Government Planning Authority (*Planning and Environment Decisions Wales, PEDW*), the Minister for Climate Change, MS Julie James (Labour).

Mr Morris further stated that he was developing a website section on PCC's website that will hold all the relevant information and all the relevant contact details for the different people involved.

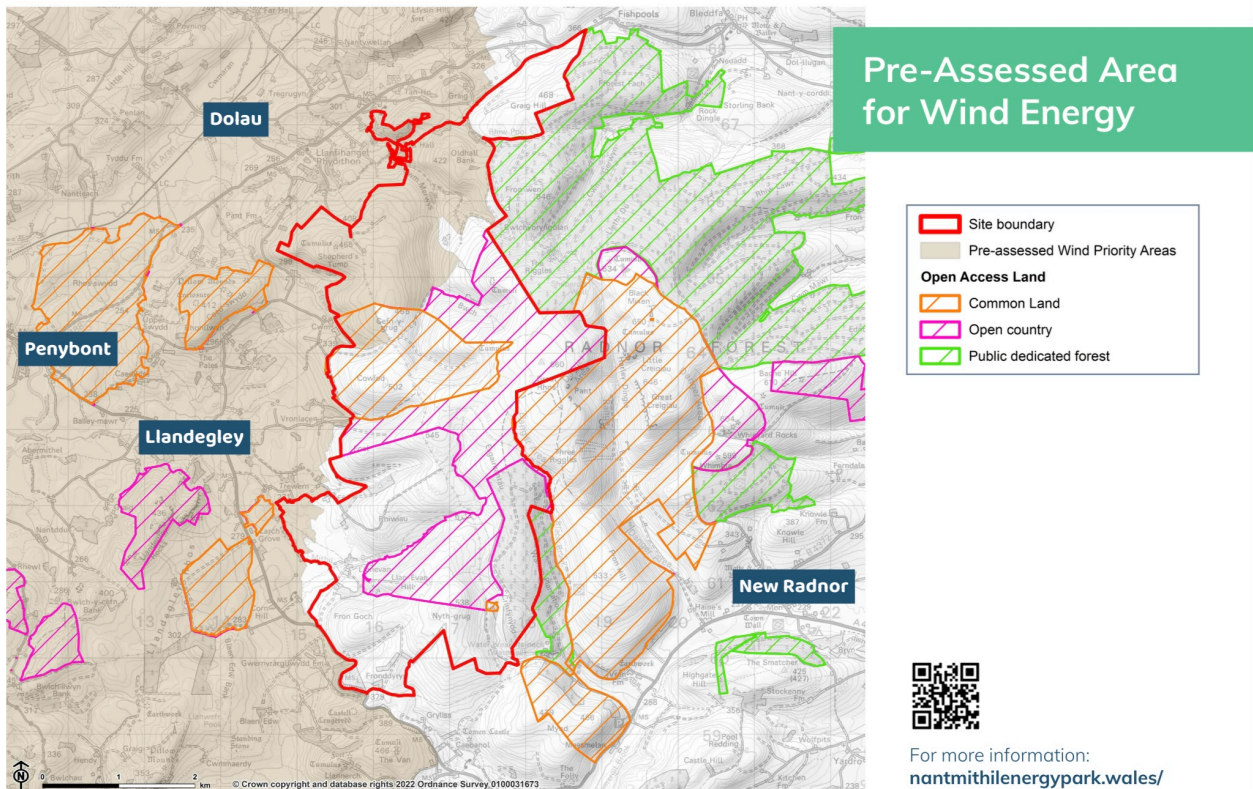
Note: It was requested by Cllr Jamie Jones that when this was achieved, if he could email all Town and Community Council Clerks with a weblink to announce it was live.

Mr Morris stated that it was important that Town and Community Councils can make Impact Report Statements. *I was not clear on the following, but I got the impression that they can be channeled through him for approval and submission with the PCC Impact Statement. (I would advise that this is checked).*

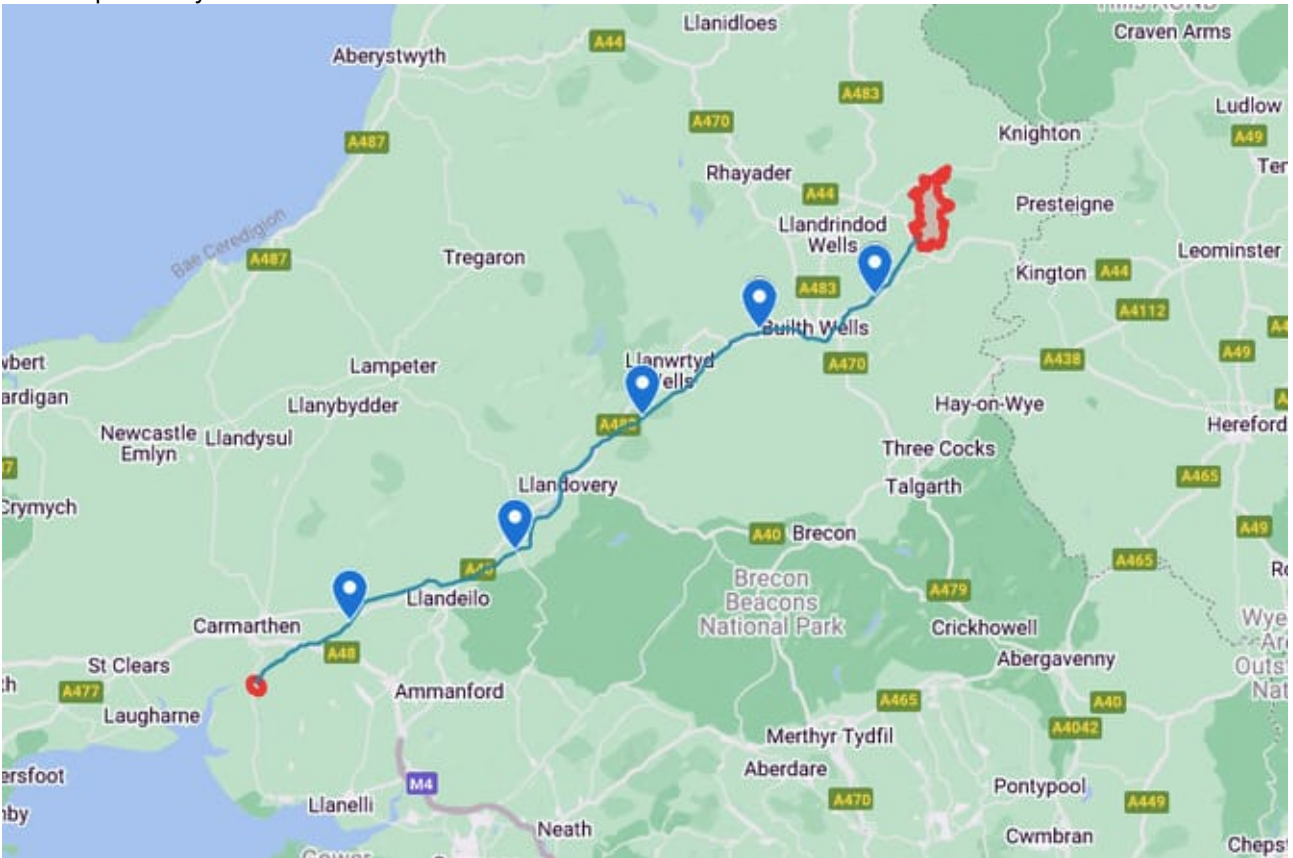
Mr Morris's contact details: Tel: 01597 827773. Email: peter.morris@powys.gov.uk

2) Maps:

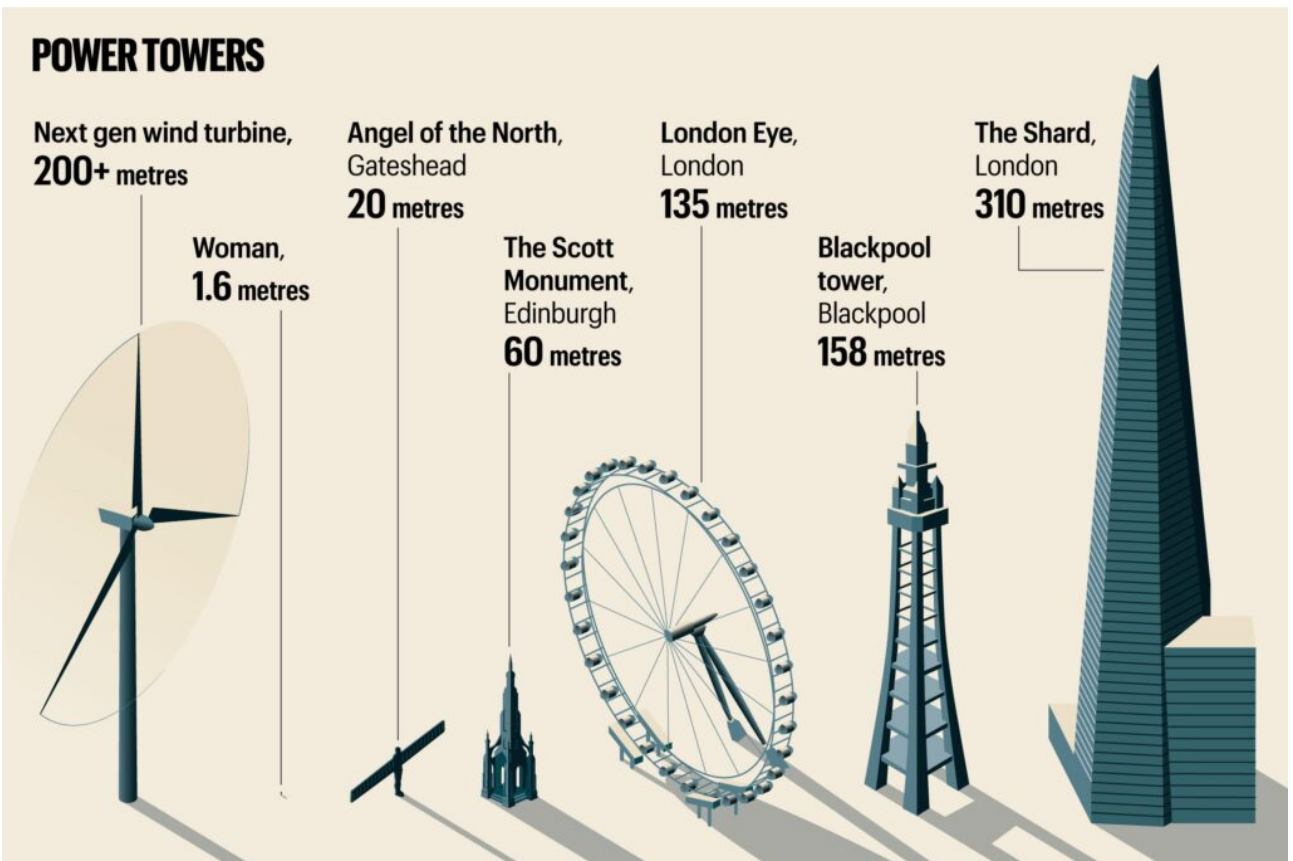
The Proposed Nant Mithil Wind Farm /Energy Park Site:



The Proposed Pylon Route:



Wind Turbines: (It should be noted that the wind turbines proposed for Nant Mithil are 225m, which are bigger than depicted in the image below.)



3) Bute Energy Engagement:

The process being followed is as follows:

Consultations:	8x Weeks, Ends at the end of this month (28th April).
Review of Feed Back:	
Environment Engineering Surveys:	Surveys on site locations.
Develop Proposals:	Based on Feed Back. Scoping Request Submissions.
Further Consultation:	To be undertaken in 2024.
Submission of DNS Proposal:	01/2025.
Completion:	2028 - Estimated Connection of Wind Farm and Network.

A) The discussions that Bute Energy wanted to bring forward in this meeting was mainly about the pylons and they were generally avoiding the other aspects of the wind farms.

During this discussions this was picked up on by one of the Cllr's who asked why this was, as Bute Energy was giving the impression that the Wind Farms were not for discussion as if they had already been agreed.

Note: A lot of questions were raised by different councillors. Where possible I will name them, but some didn't give their name and it was not always possible to catch others names. Where I can't name the councillor I will just state; 'A questions was raised by a Cllr (Unknown)'.

B) Network Provisions / Pylons:

Bute Energy stated that they would be applying to be a holder of a 'Network Provider Operators Licence' in their own right. This would mean that they won't be part of national grid. This also means that they will be operating as a 'Private Independant Network' but with National Grid Status.

It transpires that when they get this status they will have all the same powers as the national grid. While Bute Energy portrayed that they were a friendly company and they were applying a soft approach to this development. There was lots of talk about working in partnership with land owners.

From the discussions that followed it seem to transpire that there is lots of objections from land owners who completely oppose the whole project. Under greater scrutiny when questioned, it transpires that there is a very different story.

As Bute Energy / Green GEN Cymru are applying to be recognised as a 'Grid Company'. The resulting factors of this are:

- They will be running an independent private power and network structure, but they will have the powers of a national government body like the National Grid.
- Farmers who refuse to deal with them will simply have their land compulsory purchased and accesses for the surveys and installations will be forced upon them. Having the 'Network Provider Operators Licence' will mean that they can simply access peoples private land without permission under section 172, that enables the power of access and also compulsory purchase of land.
- It was also discussed that they had already highlighted where all the English side of the border substation were located that could take their network power supply. This begs the question of if the energy could be sold for a higher price to the English side of the border just by simply extending their network. Which as a recognised Grid Company would be easier to achieve. This has the potential connotation that power generated in Mid Wales may never power Welsh homes and may eventually be diverted away from Wales.

There will be large overhead transmission pylons every 250m apart from Mid Wales to Carmarthen. (4x Pylons per km).

Bute throughout the discussions kept stating that they wanted to reduce the impact of the pylons with sensitive screening and landscaping. This would be done mainly by tree planting.

It was raised by a Cllr (*Unknown*); That the trees being planted would not hide the pylons because they would not grow tall enough, and would take decades to grow to their maximum height anyway. The reality seemed to be that this was largely a smoke screen to try and appease people.

It should also be noted that there is also a proposal for a grid to also run from North Wales to South Wales. Once they have their Grid Licence they will be able to do pretty much as they please.

It was raised by a Cllr Laurence Weerdmeester-Price in a technical question;

a) Will new and updated distribution infrastructure be needed? As currently there is no infrastructure in this area that is capable of converting the transmission power from the proposed Nant Mithil energy park to distribution power for residents in this area via the current national grid!

b) Will you be transmitting the energy directly to the National Grid or part of it? And does that infrastructure exist yet to transfer the power in Carmarthen? So, if that national grid infrastructure doesn't exist, will you or do they have to build it? (*ie: a sub-station to receive the transmission power for distribution*).

c) You have a 132kv double circuit overhead line surely that voltage would be too low over that distance, which would cause outages, and would only deliver 800mva? (*note: A Independent District Network Operator (IDNO) is only allowed to produce 132kv and when transmitted all the way to Carmarthen the significant energy loss would only deliver 800mva. Which is not an effective return*).

The response was; This area is not able to generate the distribution energy so therefore we need to build new circuits which will be built by us not the national grid. The National Grid do have a proposal to build a site distribution network from North Wales to South Wales, But this is not planned for delivery until 2037.

They then went on to just say the electrons / energy created in Mid Wales will travel down to Carmarthen, then to Swansea. But he wouldn't admit we in Mid Wales were not going to be getting the power distributed locally. (*Note: They wouldn't admit that the power received by Carmarthen would be minimal and the only solution would be an even greater number of wind farms would be needed, that would probably exceed the other six that were being proposed. Unless they are also going to be massive sites or a continuous network of wind farms. All these wind farms would have to be sited along the pylon line route to be able to access them. This would create even greater devastation to communities and the landscape along the pylon route*).

It was raised by a Cllr (*Unknown*); That in North Wales and in England that Pylons are being Taken Down and located Under Ground, and that in England, it has become policy that power lines are now running under ground. The response was that the above ground pylons are being proposed basically because of the cost outlay only and they state that they are not considering any underground options.

It was raised by a Cllr (*Unknown*); That in the current proposed pylons route, there are a number of places where the pylons are located too close to houses and a school. This has raised health concerns over the effects from exposure to (ENF) Electric and Magnetic Fields. (*It is know that ENF exposure and cause a number of health issues, including cancer*).

C) Wind Farms:

It is currently proposed that there will be 7x Wind Farms locally (With plans for 16+ wind farms currently being proposed) with Nant Mithil being the only one named so far. Although the Llandegley wind farm will also be connected.

There is planned to be 36x very large Wind Turbines on the Nant Mithil site alone. These turbines are massive (Approx 225m high) and it should not be underestimated the impact they will have. There are also upto 6x other wind farms in our area that are being planned. The size of which and the locations are not yet fully known.

It was also stated that in time other wind farms will also be brought on line. This will potentially mean that Mid Wales could just become a massive Wind Farm.

It was raised by a Cllr (*Unknown*); That the Nant Mithil wind farm greatly far exceeded the original area scoped for wind farm sites. As large parts of the Radnor Forest was outside the original proposed area. There was no real response to this other than this is our plan.

It was raised by a Cllr Jamie Jones; That while most of their talk this evening had been about sensitively screening the pylons with tree planting schemes, and reducing the Environmental impacts of the different elements of the projects. Would they make public the development process of how they decided it was environmentally sensitive to decimate the Radnor Forest to create the Nant Mithil Wind Farm?

Bute's response was that the wind turbines would be placed within the forest and it would largely remain. Cllr Jones stated that this was disingenuous as all the wind farms he had seen were in open areas of hillside terrain and the trees would affect the wind, and therefore, the turbines effectiveness.

It was raised by a Cllr (*Unknown*); That In England that there was also a policy of not constructing further on shore wind farms and that they were all be located off shore. The response was that it was not Welsh Government policy. It was then raised, is this because it would be easier for Bute to do this proposed development in Wales, whereas they would not be allowed to in England? After skirting around the issue with some avoidance it was basically confirmed that they would not get permission to do this proposed project in England. (It was also commented on that if the project was located off shore that the Welsh Government would not benefit financially, as it would be the main government in London that would get the revenue).

This is why Bute Energy is proposing building this project on shore in Wales and the Welsh government has a vested interest where it stands to gain financially. What is most concerning is that The Welsh Government is not considering what is the best solution and how to least impact people and the communities of Wales. They would seem to be more interested in what funds their own pockets.

D) What Benefits will there be to local people:

Question raised by Steve Deeks D'Silva; I am being asked by my residents: 'What benefits will there be for local people from the construction of this wind farm and pylons?

After a lengthy response about funding for community projects (*Approx £ 7,000 per community*) and contributing towards green energy generation for Wales. There was a lot of avoidance of giving a direct reply. Bute Energy was pressed much harder on this issue for an actual answer. The response was eventually given that all the energy created from the Nant Mithil / Radnor Forest Wind Farm and six others Mid Wales sites that are currently in the planning, but remain unnamed. That all the energy will be sent to Carmarthenshire and will then be distributed to the South Wales Region and it was eventually admitted that none of it will in fact be supplied back to the Mid Wales Area. **Which Confirmed that the people of Mid Wales would suffer the impact on many levels and there would not be any real targetable benefits other than a few small one off payments'.**

Cllr Steve Deeks D'Silva then responded; 'So when I reply to the residents of our community, that there is no benefit to them from this project, am I wrong?' There was no response to the contrary.

E) Final Comments:

One of the comments that was made towards the end of the meeting by Bute Energy, was that they stated that this whole proposal is in line with Welsh Government Policy on Green Energy. Although they did not elaborate on this. It was made just after they admitted that they would be able to access farmers land and also compulsory purchase land once they have their Grid Licence Approved.

I would interpret this to mean that at this stage Bute Energy/Green Gen Cymru are only showing this soft touch and polite conversation approach until the point in which they get their network operators providers license, and then after that they can do what they want, and play hardball with landowners and farmers?

F) A summary of my thoughts from the meeting I had attended:

On reflection of how the overall meeting had gone, there was not a lot of positives if any that I took away from the meeting. The reality of what transpired from the presentation, and the following questions and answers left me in no uncertain terms that there is nothing positive for the people of the Mid Wales region that can be gained from this project in anyway. I will set out a basic summary of the Pro's and Con's:

The Pro's:

The pros from this project for people and communities within the Mid Wales area that would be affected by the wind farm, and also along the route of the pylons are as follows:

- Some communities and towns may benefit from a one off payment of up to £7,000.00 as a cash incentive to use towards a good cause.
- There was also some indication that there might be some other money for community investment in a good cause project.

The Con's:

- Although Llandrindod Wells is technically just outside the planning consultation area, our town and community will be affected greatly on many different levels due to the multiple wind turbine energy parks and the pylon transmission lines to take the energy out of our area.
- Radnor forest would be decimated to make way for a wind farm and substation to generate power. It must be remembered that there are a lot of areas of specific scientific interest that are already designated within this area. This will also have an affect on wildlife, and also setback the national tree planting scheme due to the volume of trees that would need to be felled.
- There will be many years of disruption and inconvenience to the area with the construction of this wind farm, along with the other proposed wind farms, and the Pylons.
- This will also have a long-term effect on the local economy due to the disruptions, and will have a knock-on effect to the tourism income that is generated for this area, along with developing tourism further due to the unsightly nature of the multiple wind farms, and the pylons. This will also affect all the other businesses that helps to service the main businesses dealing with tourism.
- Although this area is not currently a designated area of outstanding natural beauty (AONB), no one can deny that this area could not meet that criteria. The massive wind turbines and the miles of large pylons would certainly blight huge swathes of our skylines and valleys.
- None of the residents of Llandrindod Wells, or surrounding towns, and the wider Mid Wales area that also extends down towards Llandovery will benefit in anyway from the energy that is generated because it will all be transmitted out of our area to power homes in Pembrokeshire and the South Wales area.
- There will therefore be no cheap energy or reduced bills for the people of our town and the wider area in Powys, Mid Wales, because we will not be receiving any of the energy in any form of compensation for the damage it is going to be doing to our area.
- Landowners from our surrounding communities will have their land accessed without their permission, and where construction of pylons, and wind turbines are cited, their land will be compulsory purchased without their ability to oppose anything. From the discussions, they stated that land that is used in farming may, or also have to be turned over for tree planting to screen the pylons, which will further affect the farmers ability to use their land for farming purposes.
- The power transfer via pylons, could all be hidden underground. But, because it would cost far more and no doubt take longer, this is not being offered in any way to mitigate the unsightly pylons, and the effects it will have on our communities. This was especially disappointing, given that pylons have been taken down in North Wales, and in the rest of England, to be relocated underground.
- At this stage, there are six other wind farms to be located in our area (with 16+ wind parks being proposed at this stage_ that would be connected to this new pylon grid to South Wales. There are no details as to their size in height, or the amount of area these other farms would take up, or the exact locations of where they will be. This will create an even greater impact on the Mid Wales area and the people who live there.
- As power generated locally is not being distributed locally, there is a very good chance that the other 6x local wind farms will need to be massive, or a greater number will be needed. With plans for 16+ wind farms currently being proposed at this stage. Again, this will create an even greater impact on the Mid Wales area and the people who live there.
- The Mid Wales area surrounding our town will just become a giant wind farm for which we will have no benefit.
- There is therefore nothing to be gained by the people and the communities of Mid Wales from this project that will be forced upon them, and the power could potentially be sold to England for a better return when they connect their network to the English substations, which means Wales may never actually benefit from the power generated. (*which is a bit like the water from the Elan Valley going to Birmingham*).
- We also have to bear in mind that Bute Energy is not even a UK company and the profits will all be going abroad.
- My final thoughts are in relation to communities and towns potentially benefit from a one off payment of up to £7,000.00 as a cash incentive to use towards a good cause. I think that if we was to take this

measly sum, we would be selling out the very community that we represent. This is because there is no benefit to the local community from this project and it can only do great harm to our local area.

The reality is there are NO BENEFITS from this project for the residents and communities of the Mid Wales Area.

What is most concerning is that the Welsh Government has no tangible plans of their own for their green energy policy. How much the Welsh Government will listen to people is yet to be seen. But I would not bet any money on them doing so given the other issues we have raised with them. The project will just come down to just one person agreeing to the proposal. This is currently the Minister for Climate Change, MS Julie James (Labour).

Ends.....

Notes Taken By: Cllr Jamie Jones, North Ward, Llandrindod Wells Town Council.
(Submitted on the 28/04/2023)

This meeting was attended by the following Llandrindod Wells Town Council Councillors who have all had the chance of previewing this document and add their input:

Cllr Laurence Weerdmeester-Price
Cllr Steve Deeks D'Silva
Cllr Sian Meredudd
Cllr Jamie Jones

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