

Mr David Rees MS
Aberavon Constituency
Water Street Business Centre
Water Street
Port Talbot
SA12 6LF

02 July 2021

Dear Mr Rees MS,

I am writing to you in relation to the proposed Y Bryn wind farm on forestry land west of Maesteg and east of Cwmavon. I believe we met briefly at one of the consultation events at Taibach.

I wanted to follow up from those meetings to provide you with some additional information in relation to the proposed project to address some queries raised in relation to the project. We note your recent letter to the Minister for Climate Change, Julie James MS, highlighted a number of issues, which have also been communicated to us through the consultation process.

We are still at an early stage in the development of the project, and we are still collating feedback received during the first phase of public consultation, which is due to close on the 16th July 2021. Once this work has been completed, we will publish an updated 'FAQ' document on the project website to respond to the key themes and questions raised through the consultation.

The project will be consented through the Developments of National Significance process. This process is established by statute and is heavily front-loaded. This means that we are required to consult extensively prior to submission of the application and take into account the feedback received. We are required to submit a Consultation Report with the application setting out how we have consulted, what comments were raised and how we have responded to those comments. The current consultation is the first stage of this process.

In the meantime however, I have included below some further information in relation to specific points you have raised:

Stage of the Project and available information: We appreciate that at this initial phase of informal consultation, some of the detail requested on specific issues such as environmental impact assessment, transport, noise, etc is not yet available, as the baseline studies have not yet been completed. We have sought to ensure that local communities and stakeholders have the opportunity to be involved in the development of the proposals from an early stage, which is why we wanted to consult on the information presented as part of the 'Scoping' process. This process is aimed at, firstly, introducing the project and initial proposals, and then seeking feedback on the scope of assessments and early 'in principle' comments on the project.

We will then collate this information, along with the further information from ongoing studies and assessment work to refine the design of the project before coming back in the Autumn for a second phase of informal consultation. At this stage we will have further detail from the various

environmental and assessment works, and hope to present a 'preferred' option for the scheme. Feedback from this second stage of consultation will then be fed into the final design of the project prior to the statutory consultation period, due to take place prior to submission of the application in Spring 2022. At the statutory consultation a full draft planning application with all supporting data and information will be made available for review for at least six weeks.

Visual Impact: Consideration of the visual effects of the project is a key part of the work we are undertaking, and feedback from this phase of consultation on this point has been extremely helpful. We appreciate that this is a key consideration for many living in the areas surrounding the site and we will be taking comments from the consultation into account, alongside assessment work being undertaken as part of the Landscape and Visual Assessment work, which is currently ongoing.

Air Ambulance: We note various comments about potential impacts on the Air Ambulance, and also other emergency air vehicles. We will be consulting closely with the Civil Aviation Authority and local emergency service providers over this point, and will seek to ensure that the proposals do not have a detrimental impact on these important services.

Height of turbines: The turbines being proposed for the site are 'up to 250m'. This is reflective of the anticipated availability of turbine components once the project would conceivably be constructed. The choice of this height of turbine is a response to both the effective absence of subsidies (pertinent if making comparisons to other operational turbines across the region) and accordingly the expected market availability of turbines, but also in response to the desire for efficiency of turbines; larger turbines are more efficient in terms of energy generated, and therefore require fewer turbines to deliver the same amount of renewable energy. We are also clear on the need to balance this point with the other environmental and visual assessments underway, and this is something we will be looking at very closely over coming months.

Access: As with other assessments, consideration of access to the site is ongoing. We are exploring numerous options, however our favoured approach for delivering large turbine components is to access the site from the M4 via a newly constructed slip road. I can confirm that we have discussed these proposals with SWTRA and have their agreement in principle, subject to design. The intention would be to use this exit only for large turbine components to avoid them travelling along smaller roads wherever possible. It is our initial assessment that this would be preferable than seeking to route the larger components through the various smaller roads and built-up areas around the site, however we welcome feedback, and will review our further technical assessments over the coming months.

Part of the work we are doing is looking at how this might be achieved, both in engineering terms, and also in logistical terms, to ensure minimal wider disruption to the area. We will be working very closely with the relevant highways authorities on this, and further information about these routes will be available at the next phase of consultation in the Autumn.

Cumulative Impact: We are aware of and closely considering the cumulative impact of these proposals, considering other developments in the local area. Cumulative impact assessments for every relevant topic will be prepared and consulted upon as part of the Environmental Impact Assessment process, and all feedback in relation to this point is gratefully received as it will assist in our refinement of the proposals over coming months.

We appreciate that many more questions were raised through the consultation process, and we are grateful for the feedback provided to us so far. We are working now on assessing the information received and considering it in the light of our continued refinement and further assessment of the proposals.

I will seek to keep you updated with the project as it progresses and we will be looking to publish an updated FAQ document following the close of consultation to address a number of recurring queries and themes raised through the process.

I'd be more than happy to discuss these points, and any further questions you may have over coming weeks, if that would be useful.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Trevor Hunter', written in a cursive style.

Trevor Hunter
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CC: Julie James MS – Minister for Climate Change
Lee Waters MS – Deputy Minister for Climate Change