

MEETING	The Council
DATE	01 March 2012
TITLE	Nuclear Energy and Renewable Energy in North West Wales.
PURPOSE OF THE REPORT	Response to two Notices of Motion from Members
AUTHOR	Sioned Williams Head of Economy and Community
RECOMMENDATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To support the Development Scrutiny Committee's conclusion regarding the safety of the nuclear industry • Accept the Notice of Motion to call upon the Government to support the generation of electricity through green methods • Support the objectives of the Green Gwynedd Scheme and undertake the work to measure the economic opportunities from the energy sector before making any further statements to the Government
PORTFOLIO LEADER	Councillor John Wyn Jones

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Two Notices of Motion have been submitted to the Council in relation to the nuclear industry during recent months. This report aims to respond to each of these Notices of Motion in turn.

2. NOTICE OF MOTION (i)

- 2.1 You will note that this Notice expresses concern regarding the safety of the nuclear industry in Britain following the disaster in Japan. The Development Scrutiny Committee was asked to consider the results of the Chief Nuclear Inspector's report and to report back to full Council.
- 2.2 The report of the UK's Chief Nuclear Inspector, Dr Mike Weightman, was published in October 2011. Following this publication, at the Council's request, a report was submitted to the Development Scrutiny Committee on 6 December 2011 for its consideration. A copy of the report is available for Members and the minutes of this Committee summarises the discussion in Appendix 1.

2.3 From the information you will note that Dr Weightman reports that the Fukushima accident did not highlight any fundamental weaknesses in the UK nuclear industry. However, he does reach the conclusion that there are lessons to be learnt to make the industry even safer. He identifies 38 areas where lessons can be learnt in the UK from the experience of the events in Japan.

2.4 Dr Weightman reported:

"I remain confident that our UK nuclear facilities have no fundamental safety weaknesses. The Office for Nuclear Regulation already requires protection of nuclear sites against the worst-case scenarios that are predictable for the UK. But we are not complacent. Our philosophy is one of continuous improvement. No matter how high our standards, the quest for improvement must never stop. We will ensure lessons are learned from Fukushima. Action has already been taken in many cases, with work under way to further enhance safety at UK sites"

2.5 You will note that the Development Scrutiny Committee decided:

- (a) *To welcome the steps taken to investigate the safety of the nuclear industry following the impact of the Fukushima earthquake on the nuclear industry in Japan.*
- (b) *To especially welcome the proposal to implement a series of steps to make the UK nuclear industry safer*
- (c) *To receive regular updates on the progress*

Recommendation for Notice of Motion (i)

2.6 It is recommended that the Council supports the decision of the Development Scrutiny Committee and does not call upon the Secretary of State to postpone the Government's plans to build new nuclear stations on safety grounds on the basis of the evidence provided by the UK's Chief Nuclear Inspector

2.7 The position regarding the industry's safety will be regularly reviewed and a further report referred to the Committee based on any statement by experts which might give rise to concern and a change of standpoint.

3. NOTICE OF MOTION (ii)

3.1 The second Notice of Motion emphasises the promotion of the renewable energy sector in North West Wales.

3.2 Gwynedd's Regeneration and Economy Programme Board has developed and prioritised the Green Gwynedd Scheme in order to highlight and promote opportunities for Gwynedd's economy in the renewable energy sector. The Council has recognised the importance of the energy sector by prioritising this scheme in its 3 Year Plan.

3.3 The aim of the Plan is to *maximise the value of the investment in the development of Wylfa B and renewable energy generation initiatives across*

the county to the economy of Gwynedd, by preparing the workforce, developing supply chains, preparing the infrastructure and reviewing policies and regulations

3.4 You will note that the scheme refers to maximising benefits for the economy from the nuclear industry as well as to renewable energy. It is important to note that Gwynedd Council has not made any statement either in favour of or against nuclear energy in this scheme. If the Government and the private sector choose to invest in the region, the Green Gwynedd Scheme will work in co-operation with the Energy Island Programme to try and maximise benefits for the area's economy.

3.5 This Scheme has been challenged by the Development Scrutiny Committee. It is considered that Gwynedd Council would be very irresponsible not to co-operate with the Welsh Government and Isle of Anglesey County Council to maximise benefits for the residents and businesses of Gwynedd.

3.6 From the minutes in **Appendix 1**, you will note that the Development Scrutiny Committee, in its meeting of 6 December 2011 concluded:

(ch) To accept that suitable arrangements are in place to work with Isle of Anglesey County Council to take advantage of the economic benefits to the north-west Wales economy with the development of Wylfa B and Energy Island enterprises.

(d) To accept that the Green Gwynedd Project Plan achieves the objectives.

3.7 Over the next three years the Green Gwynedd plan will focus on two aspects:

A Low Carbon Energy

- Influence the strategic direction and development of low carbon energy projects in North West Wales
- Collaborate with Isle of Anglesey County Council and Wylfa B developers on the Energy Island programme
- Support Trawsfynydd and Wylfa site workers to take advantage of new employment opportunities in the future (*Shaping the Future* Programme).
- Raise the awareness of working-age people and the county's businesses, schools and colleges beforehand to prepare them for the opportunities and skills that will be required, and provide assistance to those interested in the industry.
- Identify and promote new opportunities for businesses in Gwynedd that derive from developments within the sector in the region.
- Strengthen contact between Wylfa B and Gwynedd businesses and promote tendering opportunities.
- Ensure that there are opportunities to locate the sector's supply and engineering companies in locations across the North West.

B Renewable Energy

- Support community and rural economic initiatives to establish renewable energy production and micro-production schemes.
- **Identify the potential of larger-scale renewable energy to the economy of Gwynedd, and scope and develop suitable opportunities.**
- Identify and promote new opportunities for businesses in Gwynedd that derive from developments within the sector in the region.
- Raise the awareness of working-age people and the county's businesses, schools and colleges beforehand to prepare them for the opportunities and skills that will be required, and provide assistance to those interested in the industry.
- Support the establishment of a renewable energy and engineering skilling site in south Gwynedd.
- Contribute towards establishing the image of the county as 'Green Gwynedd'.

3.8 Work has been commissioned to identify the potential for new renewable energy developments in Gwynedd in the future. This work will be key in terms of benchmarking the value of this sector in the region as it is today and in terms of identifying key energy generation opportunities so that employment can be created and economic benefits secured for the future. The aim is that this work will form the basis for Green Gwynedd's action plan and priorities for the future.

3.9 Gwynedd Council is working with the Welsh Government in this work and a Green Gwynedd event is planned for the autumn to promote these opportunities to partners both in communities and in the private sector. The report's conclusions will set the stage for the Council to be proactive with its partners in order to target growth in the renewable energy sector.

Recommendation for Notice of Motion (ii)

3.10 It is recommended that Gwynedd Council should accept the proposal to call upon the Government to produce energy through green methods.

3.11 It is of key importance that Gwynedd Members gain a better understanding of emerging employment opportunities in Gwynedd through the development of nuclear and renewable energy. It is recommended that the Green Gwynedd report's conclusions be scrutinised by Council Members before any statement is made to Government that might undermine efforts to create quality employment in the county in the future.