

## **Carmarthenshire Unitary Development Plan**

### **Supplementary Planning Guidance for Major Wind Farm Development in the Brechfa Forest Area**

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Carmarthenshire County Council

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## **1.0 Introduction**

1.1 The Brechfa Forest Area has been identified by the Welsh Assembly Government as an area suitable for major wind farm development in the period up to 2010. The Area has two components, the Strategic Search Area (SSA), as shown in WAG's Technical Advice Note 8: Planning For Renewable Energy (TAN8). This is shown on Map One. Map One also shows a Buffer Area, defined as land within 5kms. of the boundary of the SSA. The reason for including the Buffer Area is to accord with statements in TAN8 to the effect that the boundary of the SSA may be refined by the local planning authority, during which process any technically feasible areas within 5kms of the SSA are also considered. TAN8 also notes that scope to increase the SSA has been identified to the north/north-east and it is assumed that this land would be within 5kms. of the SSA. It may be noted at the outset that much of the land within the Buffer Area is not technically feasible for wind farm development.

1.2 Major wind farms will have a significant impact on the character of the areas on which they are sited, and will also have a significant visual impact over wide areas around them.

1.3 In order to accord with WAG planning advice this supplementary planning guidance is only applicable for the period ending in December 2010.

## **2.0 Purposes**

2.1 There are three main purposes of this supplementary planning guidance:

- To provide information on the character of the Brechfa Forest Area and its short term development pressures and prospects;
- To encourage developers to design their proposals with maximum sympathy for the local environment;
- To assist determination of applications for major wind farm development.

## **3.0 The Character of the Brechfa Forest Area – past, present and future**

3.1 The central part of the Brechfa Forest Area comprises largely flat-topped hills separated by deep, narrow valleys. Underlying rocks have given rise to mainly acid, unproductive soils. The land remained largely unenclosed until the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. The earliest Ordnance Survey maps show that in the 1820's the area was very

sparsely inhabited, with few roads and often well-wooded valleys. Unenclosed land is likely to have been moorland, over large parts of which common grazing rights are likely to have been exercised.

3.2 The Core Area mainly comprises high ground above 250m, about two-thirds of which is conifer plantation, and the remainder is a single block of grazed common land and fragmented areas of enclosed farmland. There are no settlements, including villages and hamlets, within the Core Area. Land within the Buffer Area is generally lower-lying and includes parts of the valleys of the rivers Teifi, Cothi and Gwili. Several towns and villages are located within these valley areas. A few villages are located on higher ground, notably along the A485 between Rhydargaeau and Llanllwni. The Buffer Area contains several areas of higher ground. The predominant land use is enclosed farmland, although some fragmented areas of unenclosed land remain on higher ground. Substantial areas of forestry, mainly managed by the Forestry Commission, also occur in the Buffer Area.

3.3 The most striking characteristic of the Brechfa Forest Area is the extensive area of continuous forest, ranging from conifer plantations across upland plateaux to ancient broadleaved woodland in steep, narrow valleys. Almost all of this land is managed by the Forestry Commission. The Forestry Commission was established in 1919 with a remit to secure commercial afforestation, or re-afforestation, on a large scale. Mainly poor-quality farmland, including rough grazing land, was acquired and planted. In Carmarthenshire the main areas which have been affected are the Brechfa Forest area, the north-eastern uplands near the headwaters of the Tywi and Cothi, and the Pembrey Peninsula. In the Brechfa Forest area, a major forest was established between the 1930's and the 1960's, by planting almost entirely conifers, particularly spruce and larch, and management of existing broadleaved woodland. The Census of Woodland carried out by the Forestry Commission in 1947-49 indicated that over three-quarters of the area of Brechfa Forest was occupied by planted conifers, and that the remainder was mainly oak woodland, including coppice and scrub. Currently an even higher proportion of the Forest is under conifers or is land from which conifers have been harvested. Large areas have by now been felled and replanted. The latest forest design plans show a move away from blanket even-aged conifer planting and clearfell, towards restoration of broadleaved woodland and harvesting whilst retaining continuous cover. Substantial areas of commercial conifer plantation will however remain an important feature of the area for the foreseeable future.

3.4 In recent years Brechfa Forest has developed an important outdoor recreation role, providing a resource for horseriding, mountain biking and car rallying. Additional investment in mountain biking facilities is currently underway.

3.5 A high proportion of land in the Core Area remains as a single block of common land comprising Mynydd Llanybydder, Mynydd Llanllwni and Mynydd Llanfihangel Rhos-y-Corn. The area is mainly grazed by sheep. This land is agriculturally unimproved and contains a wide variety of semi-natural habitats, some of which are priority habitats for biodiversity conservation.

#### **4.0 Existing planning policies for the Brechfa Forest Area**

4.1 Currently Carmarthenshire County Council's planning policies for the Brechfa Forest Area are all contained in the Carmarthenshire Unitary Development Plan (UDP). The UDP contains both strategic and detailed policies, and maps showing where land has been allocated for particular kinds of development. The Plan applies for the period 2002-2016.

4.2 The Proposals Map identifies the central part of the Brechfa Forest Area as a Special Landscape Area. It also shows that the valleys of the rivers Teifi and Cothi are also Special Landscape Areas. Inset maps for about eighteen settlements within the Buffer Area are shown, as are the locations of eighteen scheduled Ancient Monuments. The inset maps show that most settlements are expected to receive a limited amount of new housing, contained within the current overall limits of these settlements during the Plan period. The majority of settlements have specific sites allocated for housing development. A few of the very small settlements would receive new housing in the form of infill opportunities only. The settlements of Llanybydder, Ty Mawr, Pencader and New Inn also have small areas of land allocated for employment use.

4.3 The UDP contains many non-site-specific policies. Strategic policies provide a strategic framework for new development. Policy CUDP 1 identifies the settlements, including the eighteen referred to above, where most new development is planned to take place. The key strategic policies for the Brechfa Forest Area are those that seek to:

- safeguard the natural environment, and where appropriate enhance it;
- protect areas important for amenity and/open space;
- support proposals for renewable energy schemes.

4.4 Detailed UDP policies address a great many issues. Policy UT6 deals specifically with proposals for wind turbines. Other relevant policies provide protection for special landscape areas, outdoor recreational resources, scheduled ancient monuments, wildlife sites, residential amenities, etc. (See Appendix One).

4.5 Naturally there are occasionally conflicts between different UDP policies which are generally resolved on a site-specific basis by reference to a particular proposal, usually a planning application. One of the purposes of this supplementary planning guidance is to assist resolution of any such conflict before planning applications are prepared.

## **5.0 The scope of SPG**

5.1 It is intended that supplementary planning guidance will be adopted pending preparation of the Carmarthenshire Local Development Plan which will eventually replace the Carmarthenshire Unitary Development Plan (UDP) as the main local policy document to guide the development and use of land in Carmarthenshire. The UDP was adopted in July 2006, although largely prepared before the Welsh Assembly Government published its proposals for strategic search areas for major wind farm development.

5.2 Approval, or otherwise, of major wind farm proposals will either be under the Town and Country Planning Acts or under the Electricity Act 1989. The former circumstance will apply when the proposed development has an installed capacity of less than 50MW. The application would be determined by Carmarthenshire County Council (CCC) as local planning authority. Decisions may be subject to a right to appeal to the Welsh Assembly Government. Planning applications would be determined in the light of the current development plan i.e. the UDP, and other material planning considerations. Welsh Assembly Government planning policies, as published in the MIPPS and TAN 8 are material planning considerations, as is this SPG and its background documents.

5.3 A proposal for wind farm development of 50+ MW of power, e.g. twenty or more large (2.5MW+) turbines would be subject to authorisation under s.36 of the Electricity Act 1989. The decision to approve or refuse the proposal would be made by an Inspector appointed by the Department of Trade and Industry. CCC would be consulted on proposals and in making its response would have regard to the same material considerations as if the proposal was subject to a planning application.

## **6.0 Environmental Assessment**

6.1 The importance of ensuring that planning applications for wind farm development are determined in the light of adequate environmental assessment is statutorily laid down in the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact, etc.) Regulations 1999. These provide that installations for the harnessing of wind power for energy production including more than two turbines, or including a turbine, the hub of which is more than 15m above the ground, shall be subject to formal environmental assessment. The Regulations lay down the procedure for making the environmental assessment, and for ensuring it is given adequate publicity.

6.2 Responsibility for ensuring the environmental assessment is carried out rests with the applicant. He may however ask the local planning authority to advise on the content of the assessment. In turn the local planning authority may take advice on this from other organisations, including the local highway authority, Environment Agency Wales, Countryside Council for Wales and Cadw. This advice is usually given early on in the process at the "scoping stage". Advice given then does not preclude the local planning authority from requesting further information at a later stage.

6.3 UDP policies provide a guide as to the environmental matters which should be assessed. These will vary according to the development proposed and its location. Relevant guidance is also contained in TAN 8: Planning for Renewable Energy (WAG July 2005). A few additional guidelines can be given as follows:-

- visual impact should be assessed over a radius of 20-30km, depending on the size of the proposed development, within which two zones of theoretical visibility should be mapped, for visibility of blade tips at their maximum elevation, and for turbine hubs.
- Significant and representative viewpoints, including main settlements, within a radius of 20-30km should be identified and agreed with CCC. Wireframe diagrams should be provided showing the impact of development. Photomontages showing impact should be provided for key viewpoints.
- Landscape and visual impact should be assessed by recognised professionals in accordance with best practice, e.g. as identified by The Landscape Institute and/or the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment.
- The significance of visual impact from viewpoints should be assessed using the following scale:- insignificant, minor, prominent and dominant. Categorisation should be justified by text.
- Landscape sensitivity should be assessed in the light of Landmap data and the Arup Report on the Brechfa Forest Area.
- Background noise levels at representative dwellings up to 1km from proposed turbines should be assessed. Choice of dwellings should be subject to approval by CCC.

- Ecological impact should be assessed having regard to site management to enhance environmental character to offset visual intrusion in the wider landscape. Time should be allowed to ensure that seasonal changes are adequately assessed.

6.4 The above guidelines are by no means comprehensive. In addition to the references indicated above, regard should be had to recent best practice, including environmental impact assessments carried out for proposed wind farms in Carmarthenshire. A similar process of environmental assessment would be carried out for larger wind farm applications made to the Department of Trade and Industry.

## **7. SPG objectives:**

### **7.1 Offsetting principle**

7.1 Major wind farm development will inevitably have a major impact on the landscape character of parts of the Brechfa Forest Area. It will also have a major visual impact when viewed from large parts of North Carmarthenshire. The implications of siting modern industrial objects, such as turbines, in a sparsely-populated and relatively wild part of Carmarthenshire were considered in the Discussion Report. Major wind farm development, which involves large areas of land but which physically develops only a very small proportion of this, provides a unique opportunity to secure environmental benefits which, at least partially, offset the intrusion into more panoramic views. Land in the areas most suitable for wind farms is severely disadvantaged agriculturally, being characterised by poor, shallow soils overlying acidic rocks, and in areas of very high rainfall, as well as strong winds. These factors, which limit traditional farming and forestry outputs, may be turned to advantage where land management can

- enhance the biodiversity value of scarce habitats and species,
- promote carbon storage, e.g. by encouraging peat formation, or
- ensure cosmetic improvements to landscape features.

7.1.2 It should also be recognised that the physical and historical constraints which have hindered agricultural development are closely linked to the high quality of most of the landscapes in the Brechfa Forest Area, and consequent value as a recreation resource.

### **7.2 Interpretation of UDP and WAG policies**

7.2.1 The key UDP policies which need to be addressed in the context of the Brechfa Forest Area as a whole are the Plan's strategic policies. As indicated in 4.3 above, those of most relevance to the Brechfa Forest Area are those that seek to:

- safeguard the natural environment, and where appropriate enhance it; (Policy CUDP 9)
- protect areas important for amenity and/open space (Policy CUDP10); and
- support proposals for renewable energy schemes (Policy CUDP14).

7.2.2 Definition of the natural environment, for the purposes of Policy CUDP 9, is influenced by the degree of naturalness of the character of an area. Land which has remained uncultivated, which has retained native woodland over a significant period, which has high biodiversity value, or which is relatively undisturbed by man's activities, will be more natural than, for example intensively-managed farmland, conifer plantations or settlements.

7.2.3 Definition is further aided by the identification in the UDP of special landscape areas. All of these areas are characterised, to a greater or lesser extent by their natural, as opposed to man-made qualities. Mynydd Llanllwni SLA is particularly characterised by a natural environment. The Cothi Valley and Teifi Valley SLAs also have natural qualities, notably their rivers and streams.

7.2.4 The presence of biodiversity habitats, as identified by the Countryside Council for Wales' Phase One Habitats Survey, carried out throughout Wales in the 1990's, is a valuable indicator of natural environment. The Survey confirms the naturalness of Mynydd Llanllwni SLA, and also indicates the very fragmented pattern of such habitats elsewhere in the Brechfa Forest Area. The Survey indicates that woodland is an important component of the natural environment in the Area.

7.2.5 A survey of ancient woodland carried out in the 1980's identifies many areas of ancient woodland in the Brechfa Forest Area. These make a varying contribution to the naturalness of the local environment, according to the ways they are managed.

7.2.6 In summary it may be considered that safeguarding the natural environment in the Brechfa Forest Area requires the following to be safeguarded:-

- Mynydd Llanllwni Special Landscape Area
- Other identified biodiversity habitats
- Ancient woodland

7.2.7 The extent to which major wind farm development is compatible with safeguarding natural environments depends mainly on the following factors (in no particular order of importance):-

- The actual land taken up by development
- The disturbance caused during construction
- The reduction in naturalness of perceived landscape
- The management of land within wind turbine sites
- Consequential changes in human activity, e.g. recreation and forest management

7.2.8 Enhancing natural environment in accordance with CUDP 9 requires a direct link between development and management of natural features. This link could be a financial one. Supporting policies are found in the Environment – Nature and Landscape Conservation section of the UDP.

7.2.9 Policy CUDP 10, refers to areas of important amenity or open space which should be safeguarded from inappropriate development. Some of the most important areas of open space in Carmarthenshire are those extensive areas over which the public has right of access on foot for "air and exercise". These include the the three large commons in the Brechfa Forest Area, namely Mynydd Llanllwni, Mynydd Llanybydder and Mynydd Llanfihangel Rhos-y-Corn, which broadly comprise the Mynydd Llanllwni Special Landscape Area. Public access on foot is also permitted throughout Forestry Commission land (subject to restrictions to allow safe forest management). This land is open in the sense that it is not enclosed, although much of it is , of course closed in by trees. For the purposes of the policy unenclosed Forestry Commission land may be considered open space. On size alone all of these areas should be considered a major recreational resource and therefore important areas of open space.

7.2.10 The appropriateness of development on these areas depends on the nature of the recreational experience. Afforested areas can absorb much development, which

if sensitively sited and landscaped, would not substantially diminish the recreational experience. The impact on recreation, and hence the value of the open space is much greater on unenclosed common land unobstructed by trees or existing development. Supporting policies are found in the Recreation section of Part Two of the UDP

7.2.11 The third main strategic policy, i.e. CUDP 14, indicates that the County Council will support proposals for renewable energy schemes, where appropriate. Renewable energy development is not new to Carmarthenshire. In addition to continuing use of wood fuel for heating, particularly in rural areas, three wind farms have been developed in the County since 1991. Water power was used to power mills for many years, and also powered several hydro-electric stations. Hydro-electricity has been generated for several years from water leaving Llyn Brianne in the far north-east of the County.

7.2.12 Dyfed County Council, a predecessor authority for Carmarthenshire, investigated, in association with predecessor district councils, the planning implications of renewable energy development in the early 1990's. Electricity generation from wind power was recognised as probably the most significant likely such development. In 1993 these authorities published supplementary guidance entitled Wind Farm and Wind Turbine Developments in Dyfed. This guidance is no longer applicable as the plans it supplemented have now been superseded by the Carmarthenshire Unitary Development Plan. The guidance recognised that "there are areas within Dyfed which are both technically feasible for wind turbines and which will not involve encroachment into sensitive landscapes and environmental areas". It stated that the identification of these areas should be considered as part of preparation of local plans. However central government planning policy at that time stated that locations for wind farm development should only be identified in broad terms, and in the event neither local plans nor the UDP for Carmarthenshire identified search areas for possible wind farm development. Recently this function has been carried out by TAN 8 which identifies Strategic Search Areas as broad locations for wind farm development.

7.2.13 The research carried out in the early 1990's provides much information which is still relevant today. However assumptions then were that wind turbine sizes would be about half the size of those currently being proposed for the Strategic Search Areas. This clearly has important implications for landscape and visual assessment, for noise, and for access during construction.

7.2.14 The strategic policy is supported in respect of wind energy by Policy UT6. This policy contains criteria which must be met before development could be permitted in accordance with that policy. These criteria seek to ensure that wind farm, etc. development would take place without causing demonstrable harm or having significant adverse impacts.

7.2.15 Topics which need to be considered under Policy UT6 are:

- Local environment
- Sites of nature conservation
- Historical and archaeological sites
- Agricultural value
- Landscape areas
- Species of nature conservation or ecological value
- Land-form character
- Highway safety

- Provision of public services
- Impacts on nearby residents and on other members of the public arising from shadow flicker, safety risk, and radio or telecommunications interference
- Amenities of residents
- New connections to the local electricity distribution network

7.2.16 Some of the factors which may be taken into account when interpreting Policy UT6 are as follows:

- Local environment – visual impact should normally be assessed over a radius of 20-30km around proposed turbines. This area is larger than the areas which would experience significant visual impact from a single wind farm proposal. However the larger area is selected in order that account is taken of the cumulative impact which might arise as more than one wind farm becomes visible from particular locations.
- Sites of nature conservation value – these include sites categorised by UDP policies EN1, EN2, EN3, EN6, EN8 and EN9. Sites can range from extensive areas of heather moorland on Mynydd Llanllwni to river corridors, road verges and even individual trees.
- Historical and archaeological sites – these include sites categorised by UDP policies BE1 and BE2, together with Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas. They include Scheduled Ancient Monuments, such as the Bronze Age barrows found in the Brechfa Forest Area, and a wide range of other sites. The setting of these sites is an important consideration.
- Agricultural Value. - There is no high grade agricultural land in the Brechfa Forest Area, so this issue will not apply. It would be more likely to apply in coastal areas.
- Landscape Areas – These include the special landscape areas designated by UDP Policy EN16, including Mynydd Llanllwni, Mynydd Pencarreg, and the Tywi, Teifi and Cothi Valleys. Proposed development may have a visual impact on these areas even if located several kilometres away from them.
- Species of nature conservation, etc. value – These species are categorised in UDP policies EN5, EN7 and EN9. Some rare species are clearly relevant, e.g. red kite, dormouse. Other species are also clearly protected by legislation, e.g. bats and rarer breeding birds. Other species may be harder to evaluate, given legislative complexity and a general lack of knowledge of ecological significance. For most species there is little precise data available at the local level against which to evaluate proposals. A key part of environmental assessment of a particular proposal is to obtain relevant information, including by field survey.
- Land-form character – Proposals will be expected to have been designed followed detailed assessment of local land-form and their impact upon it. The assessment of the submitted proposals would seek to justify the chosen design.
- Highway safety – Two aspects are relevant: i) turbines are sited so that their sudden perception from a public road is not sufficient to distract a driver to the extent that it would adversely affect the safety of his or her driving; and ii) during construction, traffic would be managed safely and changes to local highways would not increase traffic hazards. A detailed traffic management plan should be agreed with the County Council before any development takes place.
- Provision of public services – proposals will need to have regard to local highways and microwave links

- Shadow flicker, safety and radio and telecommunications interference – These are matters which must be addressed during environmental assessment. Careful siting can often avoid significant problems.
- Amenities of residents – Residents should be protected from the effects of turbines by siting turbines away from dwellings. Large turbines, with an installed capacity of at least 1MW should be located at least 500m from the nearest occupied dwelling. In addition development should accord with central government guidelines to limit noise impact, as contained in The Assessment and Rating of Noise from Wind Farms (ETSU 97). Protection of views from individual dwellings is not normally a material planning consideration. However wind turbines should be sited so as to avoid dominating views from occupied dwellings. These factors may be waived where occupants of dwelling have a financial interest in a proposed development, where they have indicated that this is acceptable.
- Connections to electricity distribution networks – Connections may often require several miles of new electricity cables. These also have an environmental impact. Although outside the control of the local planning authority, details of possible connections should be included in the overall environmental assessment of a proposal wherever possible.

7.2.17 The UDP contains mainly criteria-based policy with no clear locational guidance for wind farm development. This must be balanced against conservation policies which can more easily be related to specific locations.

### **7.3 Interpretation of Targets.**

7.3.1 In contrast to the UDP and earlier central government advice, the MIPPS and TAN 8 (see 5.1 above) contain targets for wind powered electricity generation and also locational guidance in the form of Strategic Search Areas. This advice was not available in time to inform the UDP. TAN8's target for the Brechfa Forest Strategic Search Area is for 80MW of installed capacity to have "come forward" by 2010. This may be compared with the Wales-wide target of producing 4TWh of electricity per annum by renewable energy by 2010. The use of the phrase "come forward" for individual Strategic Search Areas suggests a slightly more relaxed target, perhaps in recognition of the ambitiousness of the timescale set. It is an indicator that early schemes should not automatically be favourably considered simply because they would be likely to be implemented by 2010.

### **7.4 Protection of common land**

7.4.1 A high proportion of the land in the BFA technically suitable for wind farm development is common land, mostly owned by the Crown Estate These commons provide

- an important source of grazing for rights holders
- a wide range of habitats and species of biodiversity importance
- a long-established recreational resource for those taking air and exercise on foot
- a reservoir of stored carbon in wet, peaty soils
- a relatively undisturbed environment with enhanced archaeological value

7.4.2 Development on common land is subject to special legislation. Management of common land also has its own special issues. Development of wind farms on common land would result in a major change to their character and may be resisted in accordance with several UDP policies. Agreed land management changes may offer scope for reducing overall adverse environmental impact.

#### **7.4A Encouraging protection of forestry assets, including biodiversity and recreation resources**

7.4.A1 A high proportion of the land in the BFA which is technically suitable for wind farm development is owned by WAG and managed by Forestry Commission Wales (FCW). It contains a wide variety of woodland and forest plantation, of varying age, economic productivity, ecological and recreational value. Some unplanted areas are also managed by FCW. FCW has encouraged general public access on foot to forest tracks and rides. More recently it has developed facilities for cycling, including, mountain biking within Brechfa Forest, with further investment expected in the near future. In recognition of the public interest in Brechfa Forest, FCW has published Forest Design Plans which indicate a programme of forest management, including re-creation of broad-leaved woodland, clearance of land along forest streams, and cropping of trees. CCC would urge FCW to update Forest Design Plans as relevant areas are affected by wind farm proposals.

#### **7.5 Ensure adequate guidance on community benefits**

7.5.1 The offer by developers of benefits to local communities raises several difficult issues. UDP Policy GDC33 encourages such offers where the benefits are

- directly related to the development,
- fairly and reasonably related to the development, and
- necessary.

7.5.2 TAN 8 states that experience has shown that there are opportunities to achieve community benefits through major wind farm development. Some benefits can be justified as offsetting development impacts. Developers may offer other benefits not directly related to the planning process. CCC would encourage and facilitate such offers. The important point, however is that CCC will not grant planning permission, or recommend support for a proposal in recognition of the scale of community benefits offered, unless these are directly related to the proposed development and, taken into account with other policy considerations, justify support for a proposal.

#### **7.6 Addressing access and construction issues**

7.6.1 Most, if not all, wind farm developments will require some modification to the local highway network and existing forest tracks to allow the delivery of large components, and are also likely to require new tracks to be constructed. The environmental impact of this can be considerable and should be taken into account when assessing the merits of a proposed development.

#### **7.7 Steering development towards the most acceptable areas**

7.7.1 TAN 8 identifies the Brechfa Forest Strategic Search Area in broad terms. It includes land which is not technically suitable for wind farm development, and is bounded by a deliberately “fuzzy” line some hundreds of metres wide. TAN 8 also

states that scope to increase the Area has been identified to the north/north-east. This extension would appear to be land on and around Mynydd Pencarreg.

7.7.2 TAN 8 encourages Carmarthenshire County Council to undertake local refinement within the Area in order to guide and optimise development within the Area. It also advises that if there is robust evidence that land outside (but close to) the Area is suitably unconstrained, then the Council might wish to consider the possibility of development of wind farms in these areas as well.

7.7.3 Annex D of TAN 8 provides a “potential” methodology to help local planning authorities take an active approach to developing local policy for Strategic Search Areas. Such local policy would form part of the Local Development Plan. However in the meantime TAN 8 and its methodology provide opportunities to aid interpretation of existing UDP policies.

7.7.4 The Annex D methodology recommends an overall study area of some 5km from the boundary of a Strategic Search Area, to ensure that possibly suitable land, referred to in 7.7.2 above, is considered when optimising development. This is the basis for the area identified as the Brechfa Forest Area in CCC’s Discussion Paper (June 2006). Mynydd Pencarreg is included within this Area, and it is CCC’s view that the TAN8 reference to land to the north/north-east of the Strategic Search Area is wholly contained within the Brechfa Forest Area.

7.7.5 To assist understanding of the planning implications of major wind farm development in the Brechfa Forest Area the Council commissioned Ove Arup and Partners Ltd to study the area and assess where wind turbines could best be accommodated, having particular regard to the desirability of minimising visual intrusion. The Report of the study was published on the Council’s website in September 2006. The Report identified:

- eleven zones technically suitable for major wind farm development, with a capacity, assuming no unidentified constraints, of about twice that advised as a 2010 target in TAN 8.
- A comparison of the likely landscape and visual impacts of major wind farm development in each of the eleven zones.
- A recognition that development in any of the zones would be acceptable having regard to TAN 8 criteria and landscape and visual impact criteria identified in para. 4.3.1 of the Report.
- Preferred zones for development, having regard to landscape and visual impact.
- Four areas, collectively likely to be capable of supplying sufficient land to meet the 2010 target, where landscape and visual impact of major wind farm development would be least.
- Some recommendations on issues to be addressed when dealing with proposals.

7.7.6 The Arup Report is based on a systematic methodology which provides a quantitative assessment of landscape and visual impact, based on the numbers views from dwellings which would be affected, etc. In this respect the Report goes further than many environmental assessments of proposed wind farms, which rely heavily on assessing landscape and visual impact from selected viewpoints.

7.7.7 It is important to recognise that the Arup Report is primarily based on a landscape and visual impact assessment, and that many other factors will affect site selection and approval, or otherwise, of wind farm development. Detailed ecological

impact, means of access, possible electro-magnetic interference, etc. etc. are issues which need to be addressed during the environmental assessment of individual proposals. The considerable expense involved in this process is borne by the prospective developer.

## **8. Monitoring and review**

This supplementary planning guidance is for the period ending at the end of 2010. Monitoring of wind farm development and policy implementation in the Brechfa Forest Area will be undertaken to facilitate preparation of replacement policies to be contained in Carmarthenshire's emerging Local Development Plan and response to replacement Welsh Assembly Government planning advice which is expected in around 2010.

### **Appendix One – Selected Carmarthenshire Unitary Development Plan Policies**

11.1 For all relevant UDP policies in relation to a specific proposal, reference should be made to the UDP itself. The following are the most significant policies for the Brechfa Forest Area:

CUDP 14: It is the policy of Carmarthenshire County Council to support proposals for renewable energy schemes and developments which minimise energy and resource requirements, where appropriate.

CUDP 9: It is the policy of Carmarthenshire County Council to enhance the natural environment safeguard it from inappropriate development.

CUDP 10: It is the policy of Carmarthenshire County Council to ensure that all identified areas of important amenity/openspace be protected to safeguard against inappropriate development and the coalescence of settlements.

UT 6: it is the policy of Carmarthenshire County Council that proposals for wind turbines, wind farms or groups of wind turbines will be permitted provided that the following criteria are met in full:

- (i) proposals either individually or cumulatively would not cause demonstrable harm by virtue of having a significant adverse impact on the quality of the local environment, or to sites of nature conservation, historical or archaeological importance, agricultural value, areas designated for their landscape value, or to species of nature conservation and ecological value;
- (ii) the siting, design, layout and materials used should be sympathetic to the characteristics of the land-form, contours and existing features of the landscape;
- (iii) proposals do not give rise to problems of highway safety or place unacceptable demands on the provision of public services;
- (iv) ancillary works, buildings and structures are kept to a minimum and sited unobtrusively within the landscape;
- (v) proposals should not lead to a significant adverse increase in risk or nuisance to, and impacts on the amenities of, nearby residents or other members of the public arising from wind turbine operation, shadow, flicker, safety risk, radio or telecommunications interference;
- (vi) no turbine should cause demonstrable harm to the amenity of any residents;

(vii) new connections to the local electricity distribution network should accord with policy UT2

EN 16: it is the policy of Carmarthenshire County Council that the following be designated as Special Landscape Areas (as defined on the Proposals Map):

Tywi Valley  
Mynydd Llanllwni  
Cothi Valley  
Mynydd Pencarreg  
North-eastern Uplands  
The Carmarthen Bay Coastal Area (see Taf and Tywi Estuary below)  
Cych Valley  
Teifi Valley  
Inland cliffs  
Afon Morlais Valley  
Afon Lliedi Valley  
V-shaped valley north of Pwll (Stradey Woods – Dulais Valley)  
Loughor Valley  
Coastal plain (east)  
Coastal plain (salt marsh, sand dunes, beach and mudflats)

In these areas, priority will be given to the conservation and enhancement of the landscape, while new development that would result in harm to their character and appearance will not be permitted.

Within or adjoining Special Landscape Areas suitable schemes of landscape improvement, enhancement and management will be encouraged, such schemes will be the subject of conditions and/or agreements where appropriate.

## **Appendix Two – Background Documents**

Carmarthenshire Unitary Development Plan (CCC, July 2006)

Wind Farm Development in the Brechfa Forest Area – A Discussion Paper (CCC, June 2006)

TAN 8 Annex D Study of SSA G: Brechfa Forest (Arup, September 2005)

Ministerial Interim Planning Policy Statement 01/2005: Planning for Renewable Energy (WAG, July 2005)

Technical Advice Note 8: Planning for Renewable Energy (WAG July 2005)

Wind Farm and Wind Turbine Developments in Dyfed (Dyfed CC, December 1993)

## **Appendix Three - Background Information on central government planning policy**

5.1 In July 2005 the Welsh Assembly Government published a Technical Advice Note on Planning for Renewable Energy (TAN 8) which identified the Brechfa Forest Area as one of seven Strategic Search Areas for major wind farm development to assist implementation of targets to produce 4TWh of electricity in Wales by

renewable energy by 2010, and 7TWh by 2020. The Ministerial Interim Planning Policy Statement on Planning for Renewable Energy (MIPPS) published at the same time, advises local planning authorities in Wales to facilitate the development of all forms of renewable energy which fit within a sustainable development framework, and make positive provision for such development. TAN 8 also advises local planning authorities to take an active approach to developing local policy for Strategic Search Areas.

#### **Appendix Four – Abbreviations**

AR	Arup Report, as prepared by Ove Arup and Partners Ltd and published October 2006
AS	The Arup Study i.e. the process that led to the Arup Report.
BFA	Brechfa Forest Area
CCC	Carmarthenshire County Council
CCW	Countryside Council for Wales
DTI	Department of Trade and Industry
FCW	Forestry Commission Wales
kV	kilovolts (1000 volts)
m	metres
MIPPS	Ministerial Interim Planning Policy Statement 01/2005: Planning for Renewable Energy
MW	Megawatt (1,000,000 watts)
SLA	Special Landscape Area, as designated by the UDP, especially Mynydd Llanllwni SLA
SSA	Strategic Search Area (from TAN 8)
SPG	Supplementary Planning Guidance
TAN 8	Technical Advice Note 8: Planning for Renewable Energy (July 2005)
UDP	Carmarthenshire Unitary Development Plan (July 2006)
WAG	Wales Assembly Government