



All Gwynedd County Councillors  
County Hall,  
Shirehall Street,  
Caernarfon, Gwynedd  
LL55 1SH

Emailed to all councillors

23<sup>rd</sup> June 2021

**Joint letter to all Gwynedd councillors – extraordinary council meeting, 28<sup>th</sup> June 2021**

Dear Gwynedd councillors,

The Nuclear Free Local Authorities Welsh Forum, People Against Wylfa B, CADNO and the Welsh Language Society are writing to you following the decision to hold an extraordinary full meeting of Gwynedd County Council on the 28<sup>th</sup> June 2021.

An extraordinary meeting of Gwynedd Council has been called regarding concerns over the second homes housing crisis and Welsh language fears. The Gwynedd Anglesey Joint Local Development Plan (JLDP) currently details why and where up to 7,184 new homes should be built across Anglesey and Gwynedd over the period up to 2026.

We agree with a growing number of Gwynedd County Councillors that there is an urgent need to go further than the scheduled review of the JDLP. We also broadly endorse the recommendations raised by Porthmadog academic, Dr Simon Brooks, in his recent report on second homes and their impact on Welsh speaking communities.

At the time the JDLP was agreed in 2017, by just the casting vote of the Chairman of the Council, councillors from across the political groups referred to a language study stating the plans would lead to a 2% drop in Welsh speakers. Many councillors at the time were deeply unhappy that the plans were passed. Now is the opportunity to reconsider that decision.

We welcome and support the correct decision for the Wylfa B site to be rejected by the Planning Inspectorate. The negative impacts it would have on sensitive environmental sites, as well as on the Welsh language and culture were core reasons for the advice by the Planning Inspectorate to reject the Development Consent Order for Wylfa B. There is now a real opportunity to review housing needs in reference to developing a new economic development strategy.

At the time Wylfa B had been planned for a site near Cemaes in northern Anglesey, Gwynedd County Council had made arrangements for what it saw as increased demand on housing in the Arfon area.

In total, the JDLP mentions the erection of 3,817 houses on Anglesey and 3,367 houses in Gwynedd. It is impossible to believe now that this number is needed for local requirements. The problem remains that if the land that has been previously allocated in areas for housing development is not reconsidered, then it may still be available as a prey to developers even though Wylfa B has been effectively scrapped. We believe that if Gwynedd County Council retains its plans for allowing the building of houses it will have a significant impact on those communities, linguistically, culturally and socially, not to mention the large use of greenfield land, giving the landscape a further blow. We also believe that there will be huge pressures on health, education, social services and the emergency services by such a large increase in the local population.

We believe that the reduction seen in the percentage of Welsh speakers is likely to accelerate if houses are built at this rate, as the number needed for the local area is much smaller. While recognizing the efforts of the Council and other bodies to assimilate incomers into the existing society, the reality is that only a small percentage succeed in becoming fluent in the Welsh language. With many more non-Welsh speakers moving here, it is difficult to see how the situation of the language will stabilize and strengthen.

We also note that the two Councils, with the support of the Welsh Government, is continuing to lobby for the potential development of Small Modular Nuclear Reactors (SMRs - possibly with a hybrid hydrogen facility) at Trawsfynydd and Wylfa. We would like to make you aware of an April 2021 study the Nuclear Free Local Authorities have commissioned by Professor Stephen Thomas of Greenwich University, which we believe emphasises that it is time for Gwynedd County Council to move on from its mistaken support for new nuclear reactors.

The full report can be found at:

[https://www.nuclearpolicy.info/wp/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/NFLA\\_New\\_Nuclear\\_Monitor\\_No65\\_SMR\\_in\\_the\\_UK.pdf](https://www.nuclearpolicy.info/wp/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/NFLA_New_Nuclear_Monitor_No65_SMR_in_the_UK.pdf)

In terms of Trawsfynydd, the report notes:

“In November 2018, at a “Commercialisation of Small Nuclear in the UK” event held at the Trawsfynydd, then expected to host the first UK SMR, the UK Energy Minister Richard Harrington announced an intention that the Office of Nuclear Regulation’s Generic Design Assessment process would be open to review SMR designs. There appears to have been no significant mention since then of Trawsfynydd as a site for SMRs, perhaps because technologies like the Rolls Royce SMR and the Westinghouse LFR, which are about the size of the two Magnox reactors that operated there till 1991, are too big for this site.”

In terms of the Shearwater plans for the Wylfa site, the report notes:

“The NuScale/Shearwater proposal was only publicised in January 2021 and few details are available. Shearwater’s project would be: *‘to build a wind-SMR (Small Modular Reactor) and hydrogen production hybrid energy project in North Wales’* specifically at Wylfa and would produce a: *‘3 GWe of zero-carbon energy and is also expected to produce over 3 million kilograms of green hydrogen per year for use by the UK’s transport sector.’* The breakdown of the capacity into nuclear and offshore wind is not given, whether it would one cluster or two clusters of 12 reactors. As is usual some highly optimistic and implausible projections are made by its promoters of times and costs. The power would come at ‘a fraction of the cost of a conventional nuclear power station’ and first power would be in 2027.

NuScale is claiming construction costs would be \$4200/kW, about half the level of large reactor projects in the USA, the UK, France and Finland. However, the NuScale design is still far from finalised, so current estimates must be seen as promotional only. The NuScale design is much smaller than its main competitors, so the lost scale economies compared to large reactors will be correspondingly harder to make up through savings that might accrue from using assembly line manufacture”.

It is important for councillors to be aware of Professor Thomas’s conclusions on SMR technology:

“The UK Government has been actively pursuing SMRs since 2015. However, there have been a number of changes of direction, programmes announced but not followed through and large sums of money announced but with open-ended timescales and few details of how the money will be spent. The sums of money spent so far have been relatively small and much of it has been on nuclear fusion, a technology that has little in common with nuclear fission technologies. Fusion has always been since as a promising technology but one that is several decades from commercial deployment, if ever. Much of the rest has been spent on technologies, often known as Gen IV, that, despite highly optimistic forecasts by the UK government of deployment in the early 2030s, are unlikely to be commercially available for more than two decades, if ever. Fusion and Gen IV designs are therefore irrelevant to the commitment to decarbonise the UK electricity generation sector by 2050.

The claims made by Rolls Royce (on SMRs) are extraordinary but very similar to those made for the current generation of large reactor designs such as the EPR being built at Hinkley Point. Around

2000, the so-called 'Nuclear Renaissance' was based on claims that these reactors could be built in four years or less and would cost \$1000/kW (about £800/kW) of capacity. Less than 20 of these designs have been completed or are claimed to be near to completion. All are far over budget and all will take much more than 4 years to construct. The latest cost estimate for Hinkley Point C is about £27bn (2020 money) or about £8400/kW. It still has at least 5-6 years of construction left and inevitably further cost increases. Rolls Royce's claims must therefore be taken with a very large pinch of salt.

Rolls Royce is also making extraordinary demands on the UK government that it must commit to before further significant development work takes place. UK taxpayers would have to provide a large proportion of the cost of design development, navigating the Generic Design Assessment and of setting up component production lines. It would also have to guarantee orders for a minimum of 16 reactors, which, even on Rolls Royce's unrealistic cost estimate, would be a commitment to **spend nearly £30bn before it has progressed beyond a conceptual design**. Given the lack of interest from utilities, it seems likely the UK Government would also have to commit to own the plants. It is hard to see how any responsible government could take such a massive 'punt' using public money. It is perhaps significant that the amounts of government money committed to the Rolls Royce design is still small, about £18m, and it remains to be seen how long Rolls Royce and its partners will be willing to keep the design programme going without the level of commitment it is asking for. Rolls Royce lost £4bn in 2020, due to serious problems exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic and lockdowns, so it has very limited scope to keep investing without a public commitment given by the government.

The NuScale option, whether as a standalone plant or a hybrid with offshore wind, suffers from the fact that while the individual reactors are small, they are designed to be in as cluster of 12, making the site capacity about 1GW, making it effectively a large reactor and, until the UAMPS project is completed and operating efficiently and economically, it will remain unproven and risky."

We now believe it is time for Gwynedd County Council to end its interest in new nuclear technology and rather engage in the cheaper, more easily realisable and waste-free renewable and decentralised alternative energy projects instead. These will not be the 'white elephants' that new nuclear technology would be, and they would interact much more sympathetically with local communities, requiring much fewer houses.

PAWB's "Manifesto Môn" outlines the benefits of this type of approach, and the NFLA has a suite of reports which shows how Councils can more effectively develop local renewable energy projects, energy storage and energy efficiency projects, as well as showing councillors the best practice that exists around the UK and Ireland to deliver an effective response to the climate emergency and reduce carbon to a 'net zero' scenario by as early as the late 2030s.

These reports include:

- How should councils respond to the climate emergency in a post pandemic environment?  
[https://www.nuclearpolicy.info/wp/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/A329\\_NB215\\_Post\\_pandemic\\_and\\_climate\\_emergency.pdf](https://www.nuclearpolicy.info/wp/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/A329_NB215_Post_pandemic_and_climate_emergency.pdf)
- Is a 100% renewable energy system a possible energy scenario in the UK and Ireland?  
[https://www.nuclearpolicy.info/wp/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/A321\\_NB208\\_100\\_per\\_cent\\_renewables.pdf](https://www.nuclearpolicy.info/wp/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/A321_NB208_100_per_cent_renewables.pdf)
- How Local Authorities can develop a 'Green Recovery' as a respond to the Covid-19 pandemic  
[https://www.nuclearpolicy.info/wp/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/A320\\_NB207\\_Green\\_recovery.pdf](https://www.nuclearpolicy.info/wp/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/A320_NB207_Green_recovery.pdf)
- Covid-19, the climate emergency and the need for a green stimulus in its aftermath  
[https://www.nuclearpolicy.info/wp/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/A313\\_NB200\\_Covid\\_19\\_and\\_aftermath.pdf](https://www.nuclearpolicy.info/wp/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/A313_NB200_Covid_19_and_aftermath.pdf)
- Tackling the climate emergency in the UK and Ireland – how Councils can own their commitments and demonstrate their low carbon ambition  
[https://www.nuclearpolicy.info/wp/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/A312\\_NB199\\_Climate\\_emergency\\_update.pdf](https://www.nuclearpolicy.info/wp/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/A312_NB199_Climate_emergency_update.pdf)

- The 'top 10' actions for local authorities to tackle the climate emergency - a short guide [https://www.nuclearpolicy.info/wp/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/A307\\_NB194\\_Climate\\_emergency\\_10\\_top\\_tasks.pdf](https://www.nuclearpolicy.info/wp/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/A307_NB194_Climate_emergency_10_top_tasks.pdf)

We advocate some of the ideas in these reports within a review of the JDLP. We also advocate moving away from massive and incompatible development in new nuclear reactors and the like; and transfer instead to policies focused on a local economy centred around innovative renewable, 'smart' and decentralised energy alternatives. These schemes could focus much more on local jobs for local people, rather than bringing in large cohorts of people from considerable distances to build a new nuclear reactor.

We encourage you to move in a new direction at next Monday's extraordinary meeting of the Council. Gwynedd County Council has missed out on new ideas and new thinking by focusing so much of its attention on new nuclear when it could have developed smaller, innovative, community owned energy alternatives. It would not need so many new homes for such developments and the area could retain its Welsh language speakers, who would be proud to live in Gwynedd and Anglesey.

We conclude by also encouraging you to consider rejoining the NFLA and finding out much more about an exciting and quite different economic and energy future. If you would, please do get in touch with us by contacting the NFLA Secretary – [sean.morris@manchester.gov.uk](mailto:sean.morris@manchester.gov.uk).

Yours sincerely,

Councillor Ernie Galsworthy, Chair of NFLA Welsh Forum  
Carl Clowes, People Against Wylfa B (PAWB)  
Elin Hywel, CADNO  
Selwyn Jones, Welsh Language Society (Cymdeithas yr Iaith)