



Lesley Griffiths MS

Julie James MS

1st February 2021

USKMOUTH POWER STATION, NCC Application 20/0748

Dear Ministers,

We are writing to you on behalf of Friends Of the Gwent Levels, a grassroots campaigning organisation which was set up in 2020 in order to protect and enhance the Gwent Levels.

As you are no doubt aware, the Gwent Levels are under constant threat. Despite being identified in Future Wales as one of only nine National Natural Resources they are still being seen as fair game by developers; in the midst of a climate and biodiversity emergency, we are in danger of losing the Levels, their landscape, flora and fauna.

This particular development at Uskmouth consists of a request to reopen a disused coal power station and to convert it into an incinerator for imported non-recyclable plastic waste. The people of Newport were immensely relieved when Uskmouth power station stopped burning coal. We are in a position in Wales where the idea of dirty energy has become an anathema, so even to consider reopening a dirty power station in order to burn imported plastic waste is shocking in the extreme.

We believe that the development is of such significance that it should not be decided by the local planning authority in Newport, and that the proposals should be called in by Welsh Government. Newport County Council appears to have mishandled the planning procedure for this application and are disallowing a number of valid and significant objections. The power station was initially deemed to be disused, which would have necessitated a totally new application, but NCC have backtracked on this and are now allowing the application to be made merely for 'change of use.' We believe that the applicant has also intimated that it is within their power to revert to a coal power station if the incinerator is turned down. It seems that local politics and the interests of business have muddied the waters and this application must now be put into the hands of Welsh Government.

This development is of major significance for the future of energy generation in Wales, and could be regarded as a test case for the robustness of Welsh Government commitments to climate change and biodiversity in its planning policy, as enshrined in both Future Wales and the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act. In order to safeguard the interests of the local population, the environment and the ambitions of the Welsh Government for a green and circular economy we request that you call the proposal in, placing it within the category of DNS and allowing ministers, rather than the local planning authority, to make the decision.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Catherine Linstrum and Dr Diana Callaghan

Co-chairs of FOGL