

Welsh Canoeing Association Renewable Energy Policy

Introduction

Many of Wales' water resources are of interest to various types of paddlesport. The quality of rivers, lakes and coastal areas is coming under pressure from various types of development. The WCA are concerned that the amenity value of waterbodies and their environs do not suffer from damage by inconsiderate or poorly planned developments.

Whilst there are many types of development which may affect the water resource, the area focused on in this statement is that of renewable energy developments.

The statement is to voice our concerns about the value of access, visual amenity and the wider environment to canoeists and other water users and to explain to developers, planners, government agencies, councilors and politicians the views that the WCA holds and the kind of sites that we would wish to see protected from development.

Policy Context

The WCA recognises the global problems associated with carbon emissions and climate change, and accepts there is a need to alter our sources of energy and societal attitudes towards use of energy.

Renewable energy clearly provides a sustainable alternative for energy production. However, the introduction of new schemes should always be seen as secondary to relaxed public attitudes to use of energy, inefficient appliances and under insulated buildings. We believe that altering our natural heritage in order to explore new energy sources that are then wasted is not appropriate.

The WCA, are aware that participants are sometimes required to travel long distances to undertake their chosen activity and will support any initiatives which allow canoeists to pursue their interest whilst supporting the 9% reduction in CO₂ emissions required around the world from 2012.

WCA Policy

The WCA wishes to be involved in the debate on the future of the nation's energy policy in order to play a proactive role in determining the impact on water that canoeists make recreational use of. We believe in the principle of early consultation being used to identify problems with proposed plans at an early stage and as a way of avoiding protracted conflicts between developers and opponents of a proposed scheme as well as generally improving the public perception of renewable energy.

The WCA would like to see renewable energy developed in such ways to consider the natural heritage value of countryside experience in both our above and under water ecosystems

We seek to work with developers, agencies, consultants and planning authorities to help identify potential conflicts between canoeing, in all its forms and proposed renewable energy projects. Where developments are proposed we would wish to work with the developer to comment on the safety aspects of the inlet and outlet features, negotiate shut down days for the river to be paddled and in most cases request an online river level gauge.

The WCA seeks to work with developers and energy companies to secure better access on land for facilities that will assist canoeing, such as paths around dams and car parks close to the access and egress points on controlled rivers. We believe that water release information from existing hydro power stations should be more freely available so that more recreational use can be made of the water.

The WCA recognises that the artificial altering of inland water levels by hydro schemes switching on and off could lead to accidents or contribute to existing incidents turning into accidents. We strongly support the provision of information regarding water releases to enable these risks to be ameliorated.

The WCA seeks to protect our coastal scenery. We would prefer to see offshore wind turbines located well out to sea and tidal and wave power stations either out to sea or on our coastlines that have already been developed. We recognise that certain developments may impact upon navigation

The WCA will oppose development proposals when we consider the watercourse or coastal area that is under threat to be of national or international value to our sport.

Ratified by the Board of Directors 6/10/08

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