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Sent: Fri, Jun 14, 2013 10:44 PM BST

Subject: Circuit of Wales

Dear all,

CNC/NRW's response to Blaenau Gwent Council's planning application for Circuit of Wales was on the evening radio news and is on the BBC's website tonight. Harry you were concerned about the reputational and political risks, and they are real at this particular time.

Peter you may have had discussions with Emyr about this today?

I don't know who wrote our submission or how high up the hierarchy it was escalated, but I know that staff are finding it difficult to do anything other than give the same answer as we would have done before vesting day. We are, after all, required to advise planning authorities on the impacts of projects on protected landscapes, wildlife and other environmental assets. Nothing in our mission, our purpose or our business plan changes the balance of evidence we are required to consider in providing advice. We are not required to advise on the positive benefits for the economy and society and in my view we shouldn't do that. That's for the the developer, the local chamber of trade, the CBI and all the other groups who promote economic development.

Its then up to the planning authority, as the democratically elected authority, to balance the competing views and come to a decision. How they do that is influenced by Planning guidance, from WG.

The only way our advice on issues such as Circuit of Wales is going change is if we are directed by Government to have regard for other factors over and above the environmental ones. And that, I believe, would be a very sad day. As long as our advice was factually correct, based on sound evidence, and was consistent with our remit, and acknowledged the economic and social dimensions of the applicant's proposal, I think we should support the staff. I also think we should patiently and modestly set out our opinion in the public domain, and emphasise the economic and social value of the national park, and if we did so we would retain public and political support, even if we make life a little difficult for the Government of the day.

Will we publish our advice, according to our Publication Scheme?

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