

## How to ensure Wales meets its Net Zero targets?

**Climate change impacts everyone across Wales, yet the Welsh Labour Government doesn't have a plan to tackle the affects, to take the people of Wales along with it or to meet it's carbon emission reductions. How do ensure we reach our target for net zero by 2050?**

You can either complete the consultation using the response document and email to [manifesto@conservatives.wales](mailto:manifesto@conservatives.wales) or online at [www.conservatives.wales/cpf](http://www.conservatives.wales/cpf).

Below is a short briefing on some of the key areas but please do read around or give us your personal thoughts and experiences.

**The consultation will close at midnight on the 27<sup>th</sup> August 2023.**

**Sam Rowlands MS - Policy Director for the Welsh Conservative Group**

**Janet Finch-Saunders MS - Shadow Minister for Climate Change and Housing**

### Overview

Wales' journey to Net Zero is mapped out by a series of legislative five-yearly carbon budgets and decadal interim targets. Whilst Wales had met its 2020 targets and its first carbon budget (2016-2020), Wales is not on the path to achieving its net zero target by 2050. Under the Labour Government, the sector is struggling as a result of several factors, including major planning failures and lack of green skills. Emissions reduction will need to accelerate to ensure Wales meets it current and future carbon budgets and net zero targets.

Wales is not taking enough action to meet the demand for renewable energy. Labour has continuously been exposed for their climate failures, despite proclaiming a climate emergency, they continue to miss the mark on the environment. When it comes to the climate crisis, Labour is all talk and little action.

On the other hand, the Welsh Conservatives are determined to pursue ambitious solutions. On wind alone we have advocated for the expansion of offshore wind projects, backed floating wind, and proposed law that would make it a duty for the Welsh Government to facilitate the creation of a National Marine Development Plan. Welsh Labour must focus on the important issues and not prioritise their vanity projects. They cannot declare a climate emergency and fall down at the important hurdles.

This consultation will focus on the key priorities regarding renewable energy which need addressing so Wales can meet its Net Zero target by 2050.

### Consultation Questions

Using the consultation response document answer the questions below or complete online at [www.conservatives.wales/cpf](http://www.conservatives.wales/cpf)

#### Question 1:

What do you believe are the biggest barriers to Wales meeting its net zero targets?

**Question 2:**

In your opinion, is the planning system in Wales sufficient to deliver renewable energy projects?

**Question 3:**

How can the Welsh Government take the people of Wales along with its net zero ambitions?

**Question 4:**

Is education and/or training sufficient to enable and encourage young people to start careers in green energy, and if not how would you improve them?

**Question 5:**

Do you believe that Wales will meet its net zero target for 2050? If not, why?

**Question 6:**

What policies would you put in place to effectively address the current and future challenges Wales faces on its path to net zero?

## Briefing: what is the impact of the climate change crisis in Wales?

### Welsh Government priorities

As we face the ever-pressing issue of climate change and the increasing cost of energy, a new approach to renewable energy is needed in Wales. With an ambitious target to reach Net Zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050, action on decarbonisation in Wales must now accelerate. Wales' journey to Net Zero is mapped out by a series of legislative five-yearly carbon budgets and decadal interim targets. While the First Carbon Budget (2016-2020) has been achieved, Wales is not yet on track to meet its targets for the second half of the decade and beyond.

There are significant, long-standing barriers to development of renewable energy that must be addressed urgently for Wales to unlock its full renewables potential, major planning failures along with lack of skills being amongst the key issues the sector is currently facing.

### The challenges facing Wales in:

#### Renewables

Labour has been exposed time and time again for their climate failures.

Whilst the Welsh Government claim its policies and planning systems were highly supportive of renewable energy, barriers within the current regime would suggest the opposite. Wales needs to quadruple how many windfarms it has within a decade. Industry body RenewableUK Cymru said "a giant leap" was needed if green energy goals were to be met. It describes the process of getting new projects built in Wales as "sluggish" and called for government action.

The Welsh Government has set a target for all electricity demand in Wales to be met from renewable sources by 2035, the lion's share of this would come from wind farms on land and out at sea. It looks into detail at what it says are "a significant number of projects in the pipeline" – but face challenges in actually getting built. Experts say there is potential for generating 9GW of energy from these schemes over the next decade, but

only if an “ambitious delivery plan” was put in place now. Wales currently has about 2GW-worth of wind power projects up and running.

The Welsh Government took control over the consenting of large green energy schemes – under its development of national significance (DNS) regime – in 2016. Since then, only one onshore wind farm at upper Ogmore has been given the green light – a decision which took almost two years. If Ministers’ own electricity targets are to be met, bold, collaborative action between government and industry to tackle significant barriers are needed.

Meanwhile, the UK Conservative Government has introduced several plans to accelerate the use of homegrown power in Britain. Part of the UK Governments plan to boost renewable energy includes new planning reforms to cut the approval time for new offshore wind farms from 4 years to 1 years and an overall streamlining which will radically reduce the time it takes for new projects to reach construction stage while improving the environment. The UK Government will also be consulting on developing partnerships with a limited number of supportive communities who wish to host new onshore wind infrastructure in return for guaranteed lower energy Bills.

The Conservative UK Government will also look to increase the UK’s current 14GW of solar capacity which could grow up to give times by 2035, consulting on the rules for solar projects, particularly on domestic and commercial rooftops. The Wylfa nuclear project in Anglesey also features in the Conservatives UK Government Energy Security Strategy benefiting from the £120 million Nuclear Enabling Fund.

The Welsh Labour Government must take responsibility and use devolved levers to combat both climate change and the rising cost of living crisis here in Wales. Labour Minister need to support projects in Wales by drastically reducing planning time for renewable energy projects and providing incentives such as business rates relief for small scale hydro projects.

## **Planning process and consenting regime**

The Welsh Government’s planning system is not fit for purpose. A complex and slow consenting regime in Wales is holding back the work of developing a more sustainable future. The consent process and consenting authority for renewable energy developments in Wales differs according to the type of energy generation and the scale of the development.

There is a lack of capacity and resources for timely decisions within the planning process. Natural Resources Wales (NRW) and local planning authorities play critical roles in the consenting process, but a lack of capacity and resource means they are struggling to deliver services in an effective and timely way. This can frustrate and delay projects, and lead to increased costs. Since the start of the Sixth Senedd the Climate Change, Environment and Infrastructure committee has been calling on the Welsh Government to ensure that NRW is adequately resourced to carry out its roles and responsibilities effectively. The recent deep dive’s recommendations fail to address the concerns raised about local planning authorities. For example, we are aware of work already undertaken by the Welsh Government to provide a more stable fee structure for local planning authorities, however, it is unclear whether or how this work is being taken forward.

Companies find themselves unable to progress applications for renewable projects such as wind farms in a reasonable timescale. Without a reasonable timescale for planning applications investors could ultimately turn to alternative markets where there is greater certainty, either elsewhere in the UK, in Europe or beyond.

## **New legislation**

Increasing capacity and resource of key delivery partners will go some way in improving the current consenting process. Legislative changes will also be needed to deliver the streamline and effective process that developers and the planning sector are calling for. The Welsh Government has recently entered stage 3 proceedings for the Infrastructure (Wales) Bill which is supposed to do this, however there are significant issues which need to be addressed. One of the biggest concerns with the new legislation is regarding lack of information of the face of the Bill, there is a significant amount of information which has been left to subordinate legislation which the Senedd will not get to see until the legislation has passed and receives Royal Assent.

Particular challenges exist for marine energy developments in Wales. Marine energy developments in Welsh waters face increased consenting risk and a competitive disadvantage compared to those elsewhere in the UK. Unlike in England, Welsh Marine Licenses are not deemed under a DCO but are determined separately. There is no clear timetable by which NRW must determine Welsh Marine Licensing for DCOs.

## **Workforce recruitment and retention**

Green skills is a circulating term used to describe knowledge, behaviours, technical skills and capabilities that contribute to tackling the climate change problems and achieving net zero goals. According to Raconteur, one-third of the jobs advertised in the UK during 2023 required at least one green skill. There is a demand for a workforce who are already trained to step into roles. However, the same report says that only 12.5% of the British workforce have those skills. In Wales, we need to ensure a just transition, both in reskilling and redeploying workers affected by the transition.

The employment market itself is holding back the green transition in Wales. There is a need for the right skills for the growing number of consenting and licensing decisions for the transition to a net zero energy system. The transition to net zero presents opportunities and challenges for workers, employers and government.

We have seen recently that young people are becoming more and more interested in green skills. However, being committed to the ethics of climate recovery won't be enough to inspire a whole workforce to take on green jobs and develop green skills. We need to ensure that coordination with actors in the education and skills system to ensure that demand for new skills is reflected in course content, and that retraining opportunities are available to existing workers including through more flexible provision. We also need to ensure that there are the right courses available.

Developing new skills makes communities more resilient and boosts productivity in our economy. Investing in skills is an investment in our nation, our companies', and our peoples' future.

## **Websites for further information**

Welsh Government –

<https://www.gov.wales/renewable-energy-developer-wales>

Climate Change Committee: progress report –

<https://www.theccc.org.uk/publication/2023-progress-report-reducing-emissions-in-wales/#:~:text=Wales's%20journey%20to%20Net%20Zero,of%20this%20decade%20and%20beyond>

Energy Advice Hub –

<https://energyadvicehub.org/is-wales-on-track-to-reach-net-zero/>

Wales online: Welsh Government not on track to hit climate change targets –

<https://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/politics/welsh-government-not-track-hit-27060773>

Sky news: 'record fall in fossil fuels use' across UK and EU in 2023 -

<https://news.sky.com/story/record-fall-in-fossil-fuels-use-across-uk-and-eu-in-2023-13065583>

Welsh Government: Net zero sector skills –

<https://www.gov.wales/net-zero-sector-skills-html>

<https://www.gov.wales/stronger-fairer-greener-wales-net-zero-skills>

Learning and Work Institute: lack of know-how stopping young people plugging green skills gap –

<https://learningandwork.org.uk/news-and-policy/green-skills-young-people/>

Wales Centre for Public Policy –

<https://www.wcpp.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/Net-zero-skills-insights-and-evidence-from-emissions-sectors-in-Wales-Policy-Briefing-.pdf>

Catapult Energy Systems – Future Energy Grids for Wales –

<https://es.catapult.org.uk/case-study/future-energy-grids-for-wales/#:~:text=Future%20Energy%20Grids%20for%20Wales,future%2C%20and%20in%20global%20responsibility>

Wales Centre for Public Policy –

<https://www.wcpp.org.uk/publication/net-zero-skills-insights-and-evidence-from-emissions-sectors-in-wales/>

Institute of Welsh Affairs (IWA) -

<https://www.iwa.wales/events/rising-to-the-challenge-wales-pathway-to-net-zero/>

BBC News: Four times more wind power needed to hit net zero –

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c72r8nx8n10o>

Atlantic Renewables -

<https://www.atlanticrenewables.co.uk/news-blog/is-the-uk-s-workforce-without-critical-green-skills.html#:~:text=In%20general%2C%20what's%20holding%20back,jobs%20have%20to%20be%20good>

Welsh Government -

<https://inspiringskills.gov.wales/news/only-27-of-working-adults-describe-their-job-as-green>