

# P-06-1459 Wind farm developments are akin to the drowning of Welsh valleys and old slate industry. Stop them.

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 2 December 2024  
Petitions Committee | 2 Rhagfyr 2024

Reference: SR24/9547-3

Petition Number: P-06-1459

**Petition title:** Wind farm developments are akin to the drowning of Welsh valleys and old slate industry. Stop them.

**Text of petition:** The exploitation of wild Welsh hilltops for the use of giant coal mining companies and other energy companies is akin to the drowning of Welsh valleys and Victorian slate industries.

These developments are not being permitted in wealthy parts of England but the poorer Welsh communities must carry the burden.

Climate change should not be an excuse to cut out carbon storing peatland and pour millions of tonnes of concrete into the habitats of Curlews and other endangered flora and fauna.

In North Wales, RWE, a giant German coal mining company propose to develop Gaerwen Wind Farm, which would result in ripping up ancient peatbog (Mynydd Mynyllod) which is the home to many endangered species and pour millions of tonnes of concrete. This is happening across Wales.



We recognise climate change is a threat to our planet but this is not an excuse to irreversibly damage habitats and wild Welsh hilltops. When the Welsh people look back on these irreversible developments and those that were involved we believe they will compare them to the drowning of Welsh valleys and the destruction of mountains for their slate.

Energy companies see great profits in wind turbine farms and developments and are not building them for the good of mankind. They are building them to create share holder profits.

We will look back on these irreversible developments that have destroyed our mountains and ask why those in power didn't stop the exploitation of our countryside. Those involved need to think about how they're perceived historically.

## 1. Background and Welsh Government action

Wales has a legislative commitment to achieve net zero emissions by 2050, with interim targets for 2030 (63% reduction) and 2040 (89% reduction).

The Welsh Government published [Net Zero Wales Carbon Budget 2 \(2021-25\)](#) ("the Net Zero Plan") in 2021. It sets out how Wales will meet its [second carbon budget](#) (CB2), and build the foundations for Carbon Budget 3 (CB3) and the 2030 emissions reduction target. The targets and budgets are summarised in this Senedd Research article on the [Path to Net Zero](#).

In November 2023, responding to a [similar petition](#) calling for a moratorium on onshore wind developments, the then Minister for Climate Change, Julie James MS, [said](#):

Wind energy, along with solar are the most mature technology and these are likely to make the most significant contribution to our energy needs in the short to medium term. We anticipate much of this will be offshore, but we will need further onshore generation.

## Planning policy

The Welsh Government's national planning policy is set out in [Planning Policy Wales](#) (PPW) which [states](#):

The planning system should secure an appropriate mix of energy provision, which maximises benefits to our economy and communities whilst minimising potential environmental and social impacts. [...]

The benefits of renewable and low carbon energy, as part of the overall commitment to tackle the climate emergency and increase energy security, is of paramount importance.

On large scale wind development, [PPW says](#) "Wales has an abundant wind resource and, as a result, wind energy forms a key part of meeting the Welsh Government's vision for future renewable energy production".

Policies for determining applications for wind development are set out in [Future Wales](#) - the Welsh Government's 'National Development Framework' (NDF).

Future Wales is a 20-year national strategy setting out the government's policies on development and land use in a spatial context. It was published in February 2021 and has 'development plan' status. This means planning decisions must be made in accordance with it. It sits at the top of the planning policy hierarchy alongside PPW.

Future Wales identifies a number of '[Pre-Assessed Areas for Wind Energy](#)'. In these areas, the Welsh Government has already modelled the likely impact on the landscape and has found them to be capable of accommodating development in an acceptable way. It has also published the detailed [assessment used to identify these areas](#).

In these areas there is a presumption in favour of large-scale wind energy development as set out in [policy 17 of Future Wales](#). However any potential development would be subject to a number of criteria which are set out in [policy 18](#) and include, amongst other things, criteria relating to biodiversity and environmental designations.

The pre-assessed areas don't attempt to identify specific development sites (nor do they exclude the potential for development in other locations), rather they're broad areas not all of which will be suitable for development. More detailed site-

specific assessment needs to be undertaken on a case by case basis as specific projects come forward.

## Consenting process

Certain categories of development are currently classed as Developments of National Significance (DNS) and are consented by the Welsh Ministers as opposed to the local planning authority (LPA).

All onshore wind projects with an expected generating capacity of over 10MW fall within the DNS regime and are decided by the Welsh Ministers. More information on DNS can be found in this Senedd Research guide.

However following the Infrastructure (Wales) Act 2024 gaining Royal Assent, a new consenting regime known as an Infrastructure Consent for 'Significant Infrastructure Projects' is being established to replace the existing DNS regime.

The Act changes the threshold in relation to energy generation and means energy generation projects of between 10-49MW, currently consented by the Welsh Ministers through the DNS regime, will in future be consented by LPAs. Onshore wind projects over 50MW will still be consented by the Welsh Ministers.

The Welsh Government is currently consulting on the detail of the new consent regime.

Senedd Research has published a range of resources which provide further detail on the Act.

## 2. Welsh Parliament action

As outlined, the Petitions Committee previously considered a similar petition calling for a moratorium on onshore wind developments.

At that time the Committee agreed to close the petition on the basis that the Welsh Government's position on the issue was clear

Every effort is made to ensure that the information contained in this briefing is correct at the time of publication. Readers should be aware that these briefings are not necessarily updated or otherwise amended to reflect subsequent changes.

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