



Replacement Local Development Plan 2018-2033

Background Paper

September 2024

BP 60: Renewable Energy Site Study

Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg hefyd.

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**Sir Conwy, yr amgylchedd iawn i fyw, gweithio
a darganfod**

**Conwy County, the right environment to live,
work and discover**

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1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose of Topic Paper

- 1.1.1 This Topic Paper sets out the draft policies, alongside supporting information and justification in relation to **onshore and standalone renewable and low carbon energy generation** in the Replacement Local Development Plan (RLDP) for Conwy. Specifically, it seeks to update the existing adopted LDP policies and introduce new technology specific areas, known as ‘Local Areas of Search’ alongside Welsh Government’s Pre-Assessed Areas for Wind. It also aims to progress the identified intervention on onshore renewables in the CCBC Local Area Energy Plan.

1.2 Background to Draft Policies

- 1.2.1 The Conwy Local Development Plan (LDP) 2007 – 2022 currently provides the adopted policy framework for the control of development and use of land within the boundaries of the Conwy County Borough Council (CCBC). Although the adopted Development Plan contained policies related to energy efficiency and renewable technologies, and onshore wind turbine development, the Plan as a whole was relatively silent on the connections between addressing climate change and energy generation from renewable and low carbon sources. These adopted policies are detailed further in Appendix 1.
- 1.2.2 CCBC are now preparing an RLDP, for which the plan period will run from 2018 to 2033. In terms of previous stages, CCBC consulted on the Preferred Strategy for the RLDP in 2019 and is now currently preparing its Deposit Plan.
- 1.2.3 The Preferred Strategy included the following draft Strategic Policy (Strategic Policy 32):
- 1.2.4 *“To promote a mix of energy generation sources, energy storage and building design which deliver clean growth and contribute to decarbonisation of energy as well as being resilient to the impacts of climate change.”*
- 1.2.5 The Deposit Plan will include detailed policies in relation to renewable energy (specifically onshore and standalone wind and solar) development to support this strategic policy, which is the purpose of this Topic Paper. These detailed policies will be linked to meeting the following strategic Plan-level objectives:

- **Strategic Objective 1 (SO1):** Contribute to the creation of sustainable places, social inclusion and improved wellbeing overall in Conwy through the delivery of inclusive placemaking and regeneration that ensures future growth levels and development takes place in sustainable and accessible locations, seeks to promote good design and healthier places, protects Welsh language and is supported by the necessary social, environmental, cultural and economic infrastructure to create great places.
- **Strategic Objective 10 (SO10):** Secure an appropriate mix of energy provision, including the promotion of a Tidal Lagoon, which maximises benefits to Conwy's economy and communities whilst minimising potential environmental and social impacts.

1.2.6 It should be noted that the draft policies as set out within this Topic Paper will be subject to further consultation being carried out on the RLDP before its submission to Planning and Environment Decisions Wales (PEDW) for independent examination.

1.3 Policy Development and Structure of this Topic Paper

1.3.1 This Topic Paper has been informed by research and evidence gathering relevant to renewable energy targets and policies at a national, regional and local level. This research is set out in the appendices of this document which includes:

- **Appendix A: Legislation and Policy Review** – including an overview of the relevant legislative framework of relevance to renewable energy and a review of the national, regional and local planning policy context for renewable energy development, as well as wider strategy and guidance on this topic.
- **Appendix B: Review of Good Practice and Case Studies** – including a detailed analysis of the approach taken by other recently adopted LDPs in Wales in developing policies in relation to renewable energy.
- **Appendix C: Defining Spatial Options for Renewable and Low Carbon Energy Generation** – sets out how solar and wind opportunity areas identified within RLDP policy have been defined.

2. Justification for Policy Approach

2.1 Principle of Planning Policy Intervention

2.1.1 Future Wales: the national plan 2040 ('Future Wales') clearly sets out that the *'planning system must help Wales lead the way in promoting and delivering a competitive, sustainable decarbonised society'*. As set out in detail in Appendix A, Future Wales is supported by Planning Policy Wales (PPW) which embeds Welsh Government's ambitious renewable energy targets into policy, including:

- 70% of Wales' electricity consumption to be from renewable energy sources by 2030;
- One Gigawatt of renewable energy capacity in Wales to be locally owned by 2030; and
- for new energy projects to have at least an element of local ownership.

2.1.2 PPW also sets out that Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) should use Local Area Energy Plans (LAEPs) or other development plan evidence to identify targets for renewable energy development in their LDPs. It requires LPAs to consider the renewable energy resource available to them and use the full range of policy options available to determine this target. Plan policies are required by Paragraph 5.9.10 and 5.9.14 to set out local criteria against which proposals will be evaluated, and identify appropriate spatial locations for energy developments below 10MW. Beyond these areas, Paragraph 5.9.15 states that LPAs should contain criteria against which planning applications outside of identified areas will be determined.

2.1.3 The Conwy LAEP was published in 2022 and translated these targets to a local context. For Conwy, these targets include:

- Generation of up to 40MW of additional onshore renewables by 2028, alongside operation of the Awel y Mor offshore windfarm and 1GW locally-owned renewable energy by 2030;
- Delivery of a 1GW tidal lagoon by 2035;
- Implementation of up to 690MW of additional onshore renewables by 2050¹.

¹ <https://www.conwy.gov.uk/en/Resident/Planning-Building-Control-and-Conservation/Replacement-LDP/Stage-4-Development-of-Evidence-Base/assets/documents-RenewableEnergy/BP55-Local-Area-Energy-Plan.pdf>

2.1.4 Initial evidence work prepared to inform the RLDP, known as the Renewable Energy Assessment (REA) (2019) undertook a high-level assessment based on the mapping of key constraints for each technology. In doing so, it had originally considered that there were no suitable areas for wind or ground-mounted photovoltaics (PV). However, following the publication of the LAEP, the 'Implications of the LAEP on LDP policy' (hereafter 'the Implications Study') was prepared using a constraints-based approach to determining opportunities for generation, with similar constraints applied as had been applied to the equivalent evidence for Future Wales. The spatial analysis found that there is significant potential for wind and PV generation in Conwy:

- Potential for approximately 496MW of installed wind capacity and 2,231MW of ground mounted PV generation capacity may be available based on a constraints-led assessment.
- Potential for approximately 6MW wind turbine generation, 16.2MW ground mounted PV generation and 6.5MW rooftop PV generation on Council assets.

2.1.5 Depending on the constraints considered, there are tensions within the recently-prepared local evidence in establishing how the requirements of the PPW and LAEP are met within the context of the RLDP. As such, Annex A *Constraints Analysis* explores the origins for constraints which could be applied to renewable energy generation technologies, whilst Appendix B reviews the good practice approaches taken by adopted LDP examples. Appendix C *Defining Spatial Options for Renewable Energy Opportunity Areas* then explains in detail the spatial implications of this constraints analysis and the resultant policy choices that were made by CCBC.

2.2 Policy Approach

2.2.1 As set out above, Future Wales clearly states the contribution the planning system can make to decarbonisation and renewable energy. Future Wales also includes policy provision for developments which qualify as 'Developments of National Significance' (DNS). DNS are determined by Welsh Ministers and are defined as:

- All on-shore wind generation of 10 or more megawatts (MW); and
- Other energy generation sites with generating power between 10 and 350MW

2.2.2 DNS are determined in accordance with the policies contained within Future Wales.

2.2.3 Future Wales identifies 'Pre-assessed Areas' for wind energy, within which there is a presumption in favour of large-scale wind and solar energy (i.e. DNS). There are 2

no. pre-assessed areas for wind energy which are situated wholly or partly within the CCBC administrative boundary as set out in Appendix A.

- 2.2.4 PPW is also clear that authorities should not seek to amend the 'Pre-Assessed Areas' for wind energy, and that local policy should not adversely affect the ability of large-scale wind developments coming forward in the Pre-Assessed Areas. However, it does set out how LPAs may define areas within the Pre-Assessed Areas for other land uses (including renewable development sites of below 10MW).
- 2.2.5 Any proposed energy development below the DNS thresholds is determined by Local Planning Authorities, in accordance with the relevant Development Plan, which in Conwy will include the adopted LDP and Future Wales. Future Wales also states that outside these areas a positive planning policy framework still exists.
- 2.2.6 In addition to Future Wales, PPW provides information for LPAs as to how renewable energy policies should be developed, and what they should include, which are set out in detail in Appendix A. This includes using the LAEP to identify targets for renewable energy in LDPs (Paragraph 5.9.5), establishing appropriate spatial locations for a 'presumption in favour' of installations generating less than 10MW (Paragraph 5.9.14), and introducing local criteria-based policies beyond these areas (Paragraph 5.9.15).
- 2.2.7 Outside the Pre-Assessed Areas, Areas of Search have therefore been devised for installations generating less than 10MW. The approach to the determination of these areas is set out within the Appendix, and is currently agnostic of available capacity. Capacities set out below should therefore be treated as 'maximum' amounts; with engagement continuing to take place with the distribution and transmission network operator to review this capacity.

2.3 Consultation on Draft Policy

RLDP consultation to Date

- 2.3.1 Conwy County Borough Council (CCBC) consulted on the RLDP Preferred Strategy between 29th July 2019 and 20th September 2019 as part of Stage 5 of the RLDP review process. In total there were three responses regarding renewable energy generation, which were all from statutory consultees including, Denbighshire County Council, Welsh Government, and Nature Resources Wales.
- 2.3.2 A summary of these responses to consultation are grouped in Table 1 below.

Table 1 Summary of Preferred Strategy Consultation

Theme	Summary of Response	Policy Response
Conformity with the NDF	Respondents from Denbighshire County Council and Welsh Government show support for the Preferred Strategy's approach to renewable energy generation given its alignment with the draft National Development Framework.	Since the conclusion of consultation on the Preferred Strategy, the National Development Framework has been adopted as Future Wales. As set out within the Appendices, the policy requirements of Future Wales have been considered fully in drafting RLDP policies on renewable energy generation.
Alignment with neighbouring county authorities	Respondents from Denbighshire County Council (DCC) express that early consultation with DCC is welcomed in terms of energy development so that they are both aligned with the draft Welsh National Marine Plan and NDF.	CCBC will continue engagement with DCC as the RLDP progresses.
Alignment with the Pre-Assessed Areas in the draft NDF	<p>Respondents from Welsh Government have drawn attention to the Pre-Assessed Areas (Strategic Search Areas – SSAs) found in the draft NDF and note that the Conwy REA found no suitable wind or solar LSAs and designated one solar array.</p> <p>The respondent suggests that the RLDP should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) demonstrate how the REA has been embedded into the candidate site process and explain how renewable energy and low carbon opportunities have informed the scale and location of growth; b) Include in policy and as part of the monitoring framework the contribution of the plan area towards developing and facilitating renewable and low carbon energy; c) Includes in the policy framework opportunities for local renewable and low carbon energy generation schemes. 	This Topic Paper and Appendices sets out the role of the Pre-Assessed Areas, which are now referenced within the draft policy framework, and explores the tensions between the various iterations of local evidence since 2019. The draft policy framework sets out the role of local search areas within Conwy, alongside objectives to monitor.
Offshore renewable energy development connections / onward transmission, and community benefit.	Natural Resources Wales suggest that addition to highlighting the community benefits and ownership needs of any onshore works associated with offshore development (section 6.7.32), the RLDP should also consider the implications of the onward transmission of electricity from offshore renewable energy development. This is suggested to be especially important if the proposals for new large scale offshore wind development by The Crown Estate, which are at a very early stage, are taken forward.	This comment is noted and has been considered within the draft policy framework as set out within Section 3 below.

3. Draft Policies

3.1 Introduction²

- 3.1.1 [The following policies cover overarching support for renewable and low carbon energy in Conwy, and how development will be expected to meet the requirements of achieving net zero carbon by 2050].

These draft policies assume that measures to reduce demand, building-integrated efficiency measures, integrated renewables (such as rooftop PV) and other off-shore technologies are covered elsewhere within the RLDP.

3.2 Strategic Policy: Supporting Renewable and Low Carbon Energy Development

- 3.2.1 [In March 2021, the Welsh Government approved an ambitious net zero (at least 100% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions) target for 2050. Net zero means balancing the greenhouse gas emissions produced with the same amount removed from the atmosphere. Wales also has interim targets for 2030 (63% reduction) and 2040 (85% reduction), and a series of 5-year carbon budgets which set out a stepped amount of greenhouse gas emissions that may be released if Wales is to meet these targets].
- 3.2.2 [The fate of future generations depends on our ability to take radical action to deal with climate change, drastically reduce greenhouse gas emissions and support genuinely sustainable development]. Action is critical given the global impacts of increased temperatures and severe weather are stark and intensifying, and will have major negative impacts on communities across Conwy particularly from areas at risk of flooding.
- 3.2.3 Collectively, we all have a role to play in achieving the energy hierarchy: that is, reducing demand for human induced greenhouse gas emissions, by moving away from fossil fuels, to generating renewable energy and minimising extraction of carbon intensive materials. Indeed, the RLDP plays a key role in supporting these efforts; with national and local government recognising the role of the planning system in facilitating decarbonisation, promoting renewable energy development in the right locations and achieving emissions targets through an integrated and co-ordinated approach to energy planning. Policies must therefore encourage opportunities for

² Brackets = Text lifted from CW review 021023 Renewable and Decentralised Energy Policy

system-wide benefits to be made, which allow for job-creation through equitable low-carbon economies, nature recovery, the impact on health and wellbeing of our residents, and where necessary, the creation of climate resilient communities.

3.2.4 Conwy has a national role to play in supporting the decarbonisation of future communities and supporting the realisation of renewable energy. This is highlighted through the designation of two Pre-Assessed Areas for Wind Energy within Future Wales; the National Plan (2040), for which there is a presumption in favour of large-scale wind. In addition, it is noted that other medium and smaller-scale solar and wind installations are now cost effective enough that projects are coming forward without subsidies, but are otherwise constrained by grid capacity. In combination, there is a need to balance the unequivocal benefits and opportunities generated by achieving net zero carbon, alongside minimising locally felt impacts on communities and continuing to protect the historic and natural assets which contribute to Conwy's specialness.

3.2.5 As such, it is necessary to introduce policies that support the legislative and national policy context for achieving the energy hierarchy and moving to net zero, whilst locally interpreting guidance to limit potential impacts of generation on local communities and historic and natural assets. It is recognised that technology will change over the lifetime of the RLDP; whilst we cannot anticipate every aspect of these changes, the policies set out within this chapter will be supportive of the possibilities of new and existing technology and adopt a flexible approach to innovation.

3.2.6 [Priorities for the Council are to³:

- Reduce the amount of high carbon energy we use in Conwy;
- Reduce our reliance on energy generated from fossil fuels; and
- Actively manage and promote the transition to a low carbon economy

3.2.7 In doing so the Council will seek to:

- Integrate sustainable building design principles in new development;
- Maximise renewable and low carbon energy generation;
- Integrate new development with the provision of additional electricity grid network infrastructure;
- Optimise energy storage,

³ Vision for decarbonisation and local leadership: Chapter 5, paragraph 5.9.2, page 95 from PPW Edition 12

- Optimise the location of new developments to allow for efficient use of resources especially transport and energy;
- Maximise the use of local energy sources, such as district heating networks and locally generated renewable energy;
- Minimise the carbon impact of other energy generation such as energy from waste; and
- Move away from the extraction of fossil energy minerals such as coal, oil and natural gas, the burning of which is carbon intensive].

3.3 Draft Strategic Policy 1: Supporting Renewable and Low Carbon Energy Development

Introduction

- 3.3.1 Minimising the growing demand for energy, particularly from fossil fuel sources, and maximising energy generation through renewable and low carbon technologies at all scales, is essential to ensuring decarbonisation and preventing Conwy being 'locked in' to further fossil fuel extraction and high-carbon futures. This policy provides the overall strategic support for renewable and low carbon energy developments in Conwy, whilst seeking to enhance the economic, social, and cultural well-being of local communities.

Draft Policy Text

Draft Policy 1 Supporting Renewable and Low Carbon Energy Development

By implementing the energy hierarchy, Conwy County Borough Council will give significant weight to promoting a mix of energy generation sources, supporting energy storage and reducing energy demand through building design and energy efficient measures.

All proposals must demonstrate how they will deliver clean growth, contribute to decarbonisation of energy and support the achievement of carbon reduction targets, as well as being resilient to the impacts of climate change.

Explanation

- 3.3.2 The Welsh Government strongly supports the principle of developing renewable and low carbon energy from all technologies and at all scales to meet future energy needs. As such, Conwy CBC is mandated by the Environment Act (2016) to increase the generation of renewable energy and reduce emissions by 2050, whilst national

policies within Future Wales: the national plan 2040 and Planning Policy Wales establish the means for achieving these commitments. Targets set by the Environment Act are also managed through the implementation of five yearly carbon budgets, which incrementally reduce the total amount of carbon that can be emitted across Wales.

3.3.3 As required by the PPW, the Conwy Local Area Energy Plan (LAEP) translates these Welsh Government targets into local carbon reduction targets which are considered through this policy. These targets include:

- Generation of up to 40MW of additional onshore renewables by 2028, alongside operation of the Awel y Mor offshore windfarm and 1GW locally-owned renewable energy by 2030;
- Delivery of a 1GW tidal lagoon by 2035;
- Implementation of up to 690MW of additional onshore renewables by 2050⁴.

3.3.4 Locally, the opportunities for renewable energy in supporting diversification of the economic base and community benefits are widely documented in local evidence. The Economic Growth Strategy⁵ supports the promotion of renewable energy projects across the County, whilst the declaration of a Climate Emergency⁶ set out aims for CCBC to become net zero and implement the LAEP by 2030. Depending on the specific constraints applied, several local evidence documents support the ability to generate the targets set out within the LAEP above.

3.3.5 [As such, CCBC will give significant weight to the Welsh Government's targets, and their translation into any future 'larger than local' policies or local carbon budgets to increase renewable and low carbon energy generation, as part of the overall approach to tackling climate change and increasing energy security. In circumstances where protected landscape, biodiversity and historical designations and buildings are considered in the decision-making process, only the direct irreversible impacts on statutorily protected sites and buildings and their settings (where appropriate) will be considered (see Draft Policy 2). In all cases, significant

⁴ <https://www.conwy.gov.uk/en/Resident/Planning-Building-Control-and-Conservation/Replacement-LDP/Stage-4-Development-of-Evidence-Base/assets/documents-RenewableEnergy/BP55-Local-Area-Energy-Plan.pdf>

⁵ CCBC (2017) Economic Growth Strategy (2017-2027) (conwy.gov.uk)

⁶ CCBC (2019) <https://www.conwy.gov.uk/en/Council/Strategies-Plans-and-Policies/Climate-Change/Climate-Emergency-Declaration.aspx>

weight should be attached to the need to produce more energy from renewable and low carbon sources, in order for Wales to meet its carbon and renewable targets].

	Indicator	Target	Source data	Review point
Draft Policy 1	Absolute energy installed capacity figure ⁷	Generation of up to 40MW of additional onshore renewables by 2028	LAEP	2028

3.4 Draft Policy 2: Solar and Wind Generation within Pre-Assessed Areas and Local Areas of Search

Introduction

- 3.4.1 Welsh Government have defined two ‘Pre-Assessed Areas’ for wind energy that are situated wholly or partially within the Conwy area⁸ for which there is a presumption in favour of large-scale wind energy development, including repowering.
- 3.4.2 Outside of the Pre-Assessed Areas, CCBC is also required by Planning Policy Wales to establish appropriate spatial locations for a ‘presumption in favour’ of installations generating less than 10MW⁹. These are called Local Areas of Search, and provide the focus for medium-scale (1 – 10MW) wind and solar energy development.
- 3.4.3 Elsewhere in the County, this policy proposes local criteria¹⁰. In these locations, support is offered for small-scale wind and solar energy development (typically around 250kW – 1MW) to directly support local demand.
- 3.4.4 This policy therefore establishes ways to avoid, mitigate and compensate for the adverse effects of renewable and low carbon energy development (specifically wind and solar) at all scales.

Draft Policy Text

Draft Policy 2 Renewable Energy Generation within the Pre-Assessed Areas, Local Areas of Search and Beyond

1. Proposals for large scale wind generation of 10MW or over will be supported within the identified Pre-Assessed Areas for Wind Energy, as identified in ‘Future Wales’ (or any future iteration) subject to these meeting the criteria below.

⁷ Planning Policy Wales, Edition 12 (2024) Chapter 5, paragraph 5.9.5, page 95

⁸ Future Wales: The National Plan

⁹ Planning Policy Wales, Edition 12 (2024) Paragraph 5.9.14

¹⁰ Planning Policy Wales, Edition 12 (2024) Paragraph 5.9.15

Proposals for medium-scale wind and solar developments between 1MW and around 10MW will also be supported within the Local Areas of Search, subject to meeting the criteria below.

All proposals for renewable energy generation must demonstrate net benefits in terms of social, economic, environmental and cultural improvements to local communities¹¹, and, include an element of local ownership and distribution¹².

All proposals will be supported only where it is demonstrated that individually, and cumulatively with existing and or consented adjacent development, that:

- a) There will be no unacceptable risk to, or adverse visual or amenity impacts on, nearby communities and individual dwellings¹³.*
- b) There will be no unacceptable landscape and visual impact, including on the setting of Eryri National Park and the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB, and where appropriate, proposals should ensure that their settings are enhanced¹⁴.*
- c) There will be no unacceptable adverse effects on designated sites for nature conservation, protected species or protected heritage assets, and where appropriate, proposals should ensure that their settings are conserved or enhanced¹⁵¹⁶;*
- d) There will be no unacceptable impacts on flooding and watercourses in accordance with national guidance.*
- e) There will be no unacceptable adverse impacts from the construction or operation of development, by way of: shadow flicker; noise; reflected light or glint and glare; air quality; electromagnetic disturbance¹⁷;*
- f) There will be no unacceptable adverse impacts from the construction or operation of development, on: radar or air traffic control systems (and implement Aircraft Detection Light Systems); operations of defence facilities¹⁸; telecommunications; or the transport network.*
- g) There is necessary grid capacity or associated energy storage to support development.*

¹¹ Policy 17 of Future Wales: The National Plan

¹² Welsh Government Policy Statement (2020) Local ownership of energy generation in Wales –benefitting Wales today and for future generations and Policy 21 of Future Wales: the National Plan

¹³ Policy 18 of Future Wales: The National Plan

¹⁴ Policy 18 of Future Wales: The National Plan

¹⁵ Policy 18 of Future Wales: The National Plan

¹⁶ Policy 18 of Future Wales: The National Plan

¹⁷ Policy 18 of Future Wales: The National Plan

¹⁸ Policy 18 of Future Wales: The National Plan

- h) The principles of the circular economy¹⁹ have been followed in accordance with Policy EN1, including the consideration of the embodied carbon impact of the materials needed or generated within an Energy and Circular Economy Strategy.*
- i) There are acceptable provisions for decommissioning of the development at the end of its lifetime, including the removal of infrastructure and effective restoration for beneficial future re-use.*

In relation to all Solar PV development, proposals must in the first instance, avoid developing on Best and Most Versatile (BMV) agricultural land. Where proposals are submitted on BMV land, they will be expected to demonstrate how the benefits of the scheme significantly outweigh the loss of BMV land²⁰. Proposals should otherwise ensure that valuable soils and deep peat are protected.

2. Outside of the Pre-Assessed Areas for Wind and Local Areas of Search for Wind and Solar, proposals for development of small-scale renewable and low carbon energy (typically around 250kV – 1MW) generation will be supported, subject to:

- a) Compliance with the criteria set out within 1a) – i) of this policy;*
- b) Demonstrating that these do not compromise the ability to achieve the anticipated energy targets of the defined areas.*
- c) Demonstrating co-location of generation of renewable energy with local demand.*

In all cases, developments will be refused where they would have an unacceptable²¹ impact on statutory protected sites, assets and buildings.

Explanation:

- 3.4.5 Conwy CBC is committed to taking an active leadership approach to decarbonisation and supporting the realisation of renewable energy targets that apply to the area. This policy seeks to contribute to cutting carbon and supporting environmental, social, and economic benefits from proposals for renewable energy both at a strategic and local level.

¹⁹ Policy 18 Supporting Text of Future Wales: The National Plan

²⁰ Paragraphs 3.58 and 3.59 of PPW

²¹ Policy 17 of Future Wales: The National Plan

Pre-Assessed Areas

- 3.4.6 Within the two 'Pre-Assessed Areas' for wind energy in the Conwy area²², there is a presumption in favour of large-scale wind energy development. In these areas, Welsh Government has modelled the likely impact of the landscape within these areas and has found them to be capable of accommodating wind energy generation in an acceptable way subject to other policies within Future Wales²³.
- 3.4.7 Large-scale energy developments are classed as Developments of National Significance (DNS). Planning applications for DNS will be determined by Welsh Ministers and include:
- All on-shore wind generation of 10MW or more.
 - Other energy generation sites with a generating power between 10MW and 350MW.
- 3.4.8 Within the Pre-Assessed Areas for wind, other renewable energy generation proposals will be supported on the basis that installations do not adversely prejudice the deliverability of future wind energy generation within these locations²⁴.

Local Areas of Search

- 3.4.9 CCBC is also required²⁵ to establish spatial locations for a 'presumption in favour' of installations generating generally less than 10MW to meet local targets. Known as 'Local Areas of Search' for Solar and Wind, these are considered necessary to support and guide renewable energy generation to ensure the potential of the area is maximised where possible.
- 3.4.10 Depending on the constraints considered, there are tensions within the recently-prepared local evidence in establishing how the requirements of the PPW and LAEP are met within the context of the RLDP. These are set out in Table 2 The 'Local Areas of Search' for both wind and solar have been generated based on a combination of constraints, which are justified within Appendix 1.

²² Future Wales: The National Plan

²³ Specifically Policy 18 of Future Wales: The National Plan

²⁴ PPW Paragraph 5.9.17

²⁵ PPW Paragraph 5.9.14

Table 2 Indicative capacity of the Local Areas of Search

	Wind	Solar
Welsh Government Targets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 70% of Wales' electricity consumption to be from renewable energy sources by 2030; One Gigawatt of renewable energy capacity in Wales to be locally owned by 2030; and For new energy projects to have at least an element of local ownership. 	
LAEP Energy Targets	40MW by 2028	
Renewable Energy Assessment ²⁶ Potential Capacity	0MW	
Implications Study Potential Capacity	496MW	2,231MW
Local Areas of Search Potential Capacity ²⁷	40MW	948MW

3.4.11 At this point, the definition of planning constraints to inform the Local Areas of Search does not take into account broader factors such as grid limitations, the proportion of different renewable technologies that can be integrated into the energy system, cumulative impact or competing land uses. Capacities set out should not be treated as additive, and instead they should be treated as a maximum potential capacity, given there are some overlaps between Future Wales Pre-Assessed Areas and the Local Areas of Search. These considerations are therefore reflected within this policy framework.

3.4.12 Changes in constraints considered for solar and wind are guided by PPW Edition 12²⁸, which strengthens the protection of Sites of Special Scientific interest. For Solar PV proposals specifically, it is expected that that proposals will demonstrate how they

²⁶ CCBC (2019) [BP33 Renewable Energy Assessment \(conwy.gov.uk\)](https://conwy.gov.uk)

²⁷ These capacities should be treated as an indicative monitoring tool for potential capacity, noting that there are overlaps with the Future Wales pre-assessed areas, as well as between Local Areas of Search for wind and solar areas. Therefore the numbers should not be considered to be additive and should be treated as a maximum, which would be refined through grid capacity constraints.

²⁸ Planning Policy Wales (Edition 12) In relation to all types of development, paragraph 6.4.26 of the document now states that 'There is a presumption against all other forms of development in a SSSI as a matter of principle and this presumption should be appropriately reflected in development plans and development management decisions.'

have sequentially avoided BMV, and where this is not possible, demonstrated how the benefits of the scheme significantly outweigh the loss of BMV land²⁹³⁰.

Local criteria-based policies for Solar and Wind Generation outside Pre-Assessed Areas and Local Areas of Search

- 3.4.13 Outside of the Pre-Assessed Areas for wind and the Local Areas of Search for solar and wind generation, CCBC are required to establish local criteria-based policies for other types and scales of generation.
- 3.4.14 Land outside these areas is more constrained for renewable energy development. As such, whilst CCBC promotes a positive policy context for renewable energy generation outside the areas, it is recognised that installations will be smaller and strongly linked to local demand. By applying policy criteria, and ensuring that there is demonstrable co-location of energy generation and with demand, will ensure that impacts are avoided, mitigated and compensated for whilst achieving local benefits of smaller scale renewable and low carbon energy developments between 250kV and 1MW.

Other Technologies

- 3.4.15 Other technologies for renewable energy will be supported within the Pre-Assessed Areas for Solar and Wind and Local Areas of Search, including anaerobic digestion, biomass, hydroelectric, ground source heat and energy storage facilities (among others), so long as these do not prejudice the development of wind or solar renewable energy.
- 3.4.16 The technical details and definitions required for understanding the characteristics and planning implications of these varied technologies is found in Practice Guidance – Planning Implications of Renewable and Low Carbon Energy Development. This will aid the assessment of individual proposals.
- 3.4.17 The potential for cumulative impacts of renewable energy and low carbon technologies of the same and different technology or typology should be considered. Where there is a potential harm due to landscape, visual impact, noise, ecology, historical assets, and ground and surface water, appropriate mitigation measures should be included in the development proposal.

²⁹ Paragraphs 3.58 and 3.59 of PPW

³⁰ Welsh Government (2022) <https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2022-08/best-and-most-versatile-agricultural-land-and-solar-pv-arrays.pdf>

Implementation

- 3.4.18 Conwy County Borough Council acknowledges that development of renewable and low carbon energy will lead to some environmental changes, both locally and to the wider landscape. It is expected that there will be no adverse effects from development of renewable or low carbon energy technologies on the integrity of internationally or nationally designated areas and sites, nor any unacceptable impacts from development on protected heritage assets.
- 3.4.19 In all cases, the design should seek to creatively accommodate these changes in ways that are positive and avoid adverse or unacceptable impacts on all types of receptor. This will include demonstrating through the application how decisions on design, layout and siting and other key considerations have been informed to achieve landscape benefits, and biodiversity and ecosystem resilience considerations. Ensuring net biodiversity benefit using the step-wise approach will be expected, and where necessary, proposals should be informed by a landscape and visual impact assessment.
- 3.4.20 Associated infrastructure developments that are required to assist the delivery of renewable and low carbon schemes will also be supported for schemes of all sizes, for example grid infrastructure³¹ and new energy storage facilities³² provided they accord with other policies of the Plan. In all cases, engagement should take place with the distribution and transmission network operator for the area to confirm availability of grid capacity and connections.
- 3.4.21 From the beginning of the site selection and design process, net benefits should consider those the wider environmental benefits associated with increased production of energy from renewable sources. Applicants must demonstrate how proposals support local job creation opportunities, create local community benefits and generate local economic benefits. To achieve a target of 1GW of locally-owned renewable energy by 2030, it is expected that all proposals are supported by an element of local and community ownership, distribution and design (Draft Policy 3). It is expected that all applicants must take a proactive role in engaging and co-designing energy proposals with the local community.
- 3.4.22 Impacts on resource use at all stages in the life cycle of the development should be considered throughout design process, including during construction, operation,

³¹ PPW Edition 12, Chapter 5, paragraph 5.7.10, page 92

³² PPW Edition 12, Chapter 5, paragraph 5.7.12, page 93

decommissioning, remediation and aftercare. At all stages, proposals should show flexibility and adaptation to future trends, and seek to maximise resource efficiency and the circular economy in materials selection. During construction, a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) must be provided to demonstrate that any potentially destructive effects arising from the construction and decommissioning phases of the proposal are avoided, assessing the potential harm to any sensitive local receptors and constraints. The beneficial future re-use of land and materials at the end of a scheme's life should be clearly embedded from the earliest stages and secured within a Decommissioning Plan.

3.4.23 An 'appropriate level of land ownership' will be assessed in line with the Welsh Government Policy Statement on 'Local ownership of energy in Wales – benefitting Wales today and for future generations' (or any subsequent updates). Albeit not prescription, this policy statement sets out how schemes can be 100% locally owned, partially community owned or supported by local investment. It is considered that any model which can be robustly demonstrated to be within the spirit and aim of the target may be considered to fulfil the local ownership expectation.

	Indicator	Target	Source data	Review point
Draft Policy 2	Number and MW of schemes approved on appeal against officer recommendation		CCBC Data	2030
	Number and MW of schemes refused on appeal in line with officer recommendation			

3.5 Draft Policy 3: Community-led and Community Benefit Renewable Energy

Introduction

3.5.1 To achieve the Welsh Government targets of 1GW of renewable energy generation to be locally-owned by 2030, it is essential for CCBC to provide policy support for opportunities for local and more democratised ownership.

Draft Policy Text

Draft Policy 3 Community-led and Community Benefit Renewable Energy

Proposals for community-led renewable and low carbon energy technologies will be encouraged and supported, subject to meeting the criteria in Policy 2.

Explanation

- 3.5.2 Across Wales, and particularly in rural and off-grid communities, the Welsh Government supports the development of renewable energy sources that allow communities to sustain their energy needs whilst decarbonising. It is also recognised that community-led development of renewable energy technologies is an effective approach to improve individual and community wellbeing and build resilience against the rising cost of living, fuel poverty and climate change³³.
- 3.5.3 It is recognised that community groups, and organisations who seek to propose new renewable energy projects, may require particular assistance in navigating their way through the planning system³⁴. CCBC will assist in facilitating this process when dealing with these projects, and where necessary will assist in directed developments to the right locations and set out clearly the local criteria against which proposals will be evaluated.
- 3.5.4 Additionally, private individuals are encouraged to develop locally owned energy schemes that facilitate sustainable rural and off-grid living, and allowing for resilience in energy supply to areas that area located at a distance to a grid connection. This pertains to schemes that form an asset for farm diversification, supporting sustainable rural and off-grid living, that may arise within the CCBC area.

	Indicator	Target	Source data	Review point
Draft Policy 3	Absolute energy installed capacity figure ³⁵ by community groups	Conwy contribution towards 1GW of renewable energy generation to be locally-owned by 2030	Welsh Government	2030

³³ 3.5.7 Conwy & Denbighshire Public Services Board Local Well-being Plan (2023-38)

³⁴ This supports the goals of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act to ensure that energy policy continues to ensure that inequalities in well-being in areas of health, socio-economic status and age are not adversely affected by adaptation to climate change.

³⁵ Planning Policy Wales, Edition 12 (2024) Chapter 5, paragraph 5.9.5, page 95