

**PLANNING  
POLICY WALES**  
(Edition 4)

**DLP BRIEFING NOTE 46**

Prepared by  
**DLP Planning Ltd**

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Bedford

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At the end of February 2011, the **Welsh Assembly Government (WAG)** published an update to national planning policy in the principality, in the form of the 4th edition of **Planning Policy Wales (PPW)**. The update reflects an ongoing commitment to addressing the causes and effects of climate change and its impact upon planning.

(Previous DLP Briefings on similar subjects in Wales include:- 18. Proposed Changes to Permitted Development Rights for Microgeneration; 22. Planning for Sustainable Buildings; and, 31. Sustainability Update)

PPW now cross-refers to the **Climate Change Strategy for Wales**, which includes a *"specific action to ensure that land use and spatial planning promote sustainable development and enable a move towards a low carbon economy which takes account of future climate impacts."*

The document has also been update to echo the latest **Code for Sustainable Homes Technical Guide** that was published in November 2010.

Paragraph 12.8.1 of PPW, now reinforces WAG's aim to have almost all of Wales's local energy needs met by low carbon electricity production by 2050 at the latest.

The PPW also clarifies the role of LPAs in decision-making on energy infrastructure proposals, including those with a capacity greater than 50MW that remain within the jurisdiction of the Secretary of State and / or Infrastructure Planning Commission.

Particular attention is drawn to paragraph 12.8.6 of PPW, which states that:-

*"The Assembly Government's aim is to secure an appropriate mix of energy provision for Wales, whilst avoiding, and where possible minimising environmental, social and economic impacts. This will be achieved through action on energy efficiency and strengthening renewable energy production. This forms part of the Assembly Government's aim to secure the strongest economic development policies to underpin growth and prosperity in Wales recognising the importance of clean energy and the efficient use of natural resources, both as an economic driver and a commitment to sustainable development."*

PPW now offers definitions of renewable energy (*"those sources of energy, other than fossil fuels or nuclear fuel, which are continuously and sustainably available in our environment"*) and low carbon energy (*"technologies that are energy efficient"*, excluding nuclear).

WAG are committed to using the planning system to:-

- **optimise the generation of renewable energy;**
- **optimise the generation of low carbon energy;**
- **facilitate combined heat and power systems; and**
- **recognise the benefits of renewable energy as part of their commitment to tackle climate change and increase energy security.**

Allied to this, LPAs are encouraged to facilitate all forms of renewable and low carbon energy by:-

- **ensuring LDP policies enable local contributions to developing such energy;**
- **ensuring development control decisions comply with climate change obligations (national and international);**
- **recognising the social, economic and environmental opportunities from renewable energy; and**
- **ensuring publicly-financed or supported buildings set exemplary standards for energy conservation and renewable energy production.**

The PPW also reinforces the role of the development plan, insofar as ***"LPAs should guide appropriate renewable and low carbon energy development by undertaking an assessment of the potential for all renewable energy resources and renewable and low carbon energy opportunities within their area, and include appropriate policies in development plans. LPAs are encouraged to work collaboratively in order to gather evidence on a sub-regional basis wherever possible."***

PPW has been amended to update the list of criteria that should be taken into account when determining applications for renewable / low carbon energy developments:-

- ***"the contribution a proposal will play in meeting identified national, UK and European targets and potential for renewable energy, including the contribution to cutting greenhouse gas emissions;***
- ***the wider environmental, social and economic benefits and opportunities from renewable and low carbon energy development;***
- ***the impact on the natural heritage, the Coast and the Historic Environment;***
- ***the need to minimise impacts on local communities, to safeguard quality of life for existing and future generations;***
- ***ways to avoid, mitigate or compensate identified adverse impacts;***
- ***the impacts of climate change on the location, design, build and operation of renewable and low carbon energy development. In doing so consider whether measures to adapt to climate change impacts give rise to additional impacts ;***
- ***grid connection issues where renewable (electricity) energy developments are proposed; and***
- ***the capacity of, and effects on, the transportation network relating to the construction and operation of the proposal."***

The PPW also clarifies the principle of '**community benefits**' arising from such developments. WAG support the principles of sustainable benefits for a host community through voluntary arrangements; the PPW however emphasises that these benefits are not material considerations (unless the tests in Circular 13/97 are met) and should not impact on the decision-making process.

In summary, this latest PPW continues to emphasise the increasing importance of renewable and low-carbon energy generation across all parts of Wales. For WAG to meet their future commitments and targets, LPAs will need to be increasingly proactive in identifying opportunities, whilst developers must pay close attention to the policy framework, what constitutes a material consideration and potential benefits to host communities.

For further information on how planning can help address the causes and effects of climate change, or if you are interested in developing renewable energy, please contact our Cardiff office.

**Bedford (Design)**

3rd Floor  
8 Goldington Road  
Bedford  
MK40 3LG  
T 01234 261 266  
F 01234 353 715

**Bedford (Planning)**

4 Abbey Court  
Fraser Road  
Priory Business Park  
Bedford  
MK44 3WH  
T 01234 832 740  
F 01234 831 266

**Bristol**

2A High Street  
Thornbury  
Bristol  
BS35 2AQ  
T 01454 410 380  
F 01454 410 389

**Cardiff**

Sophia House  
28 Cathedral Road  
Cardiff  
CF11 9LJ  
T 029 2064 6810

**Reading**

2 Richfield Place  
12 Richfield Avenue  
Reading  
RG1 8EQ  
T 0118 939 1004  
F 0118 939 1005

**Sheffield**

11 Paradise Square  
Sheffield  
S1 2DE  
T 0114 228 9190  
F 0114 272 1947

# briefings

## **BEDFORD**

DLP Planning Ltd  
4 Abbey Court  
Fraser Road  
Priory Business Park  
Bedford  
MK44 3WH

t 01234 832 740  
f 01234 831 266

[bedford@dlpconsultants.co.uk](mailto:bedford@dlpconsultants.co.uk)

DLP Design Ltd  
8 Goldington Road  
Bedford  
MK40 3LG

t 01234 261 266  
f 01234 347 413

[bedford@dlp-design.co.uk](mailto:bedford@dlp-design.co.uk)

## **BRISTOL**

DLP Planning Ltd  
DLP Transportation Ltd  
2A High Street  
Thornbury  
Bristol  
BS35 2AQ

t 01454 410 380  
f 01454 410 389

[bristol@dlpconsultants.co.uk](mailto:bristol@dlpconsultants.co.uk)

## **CARDIFF**

DLP Planning Ltd  
28 Cathedral Road  
Cardiff  
CF11 9LJ

t 029 2064 6810

[cardiff@dlpconsultants.co.uk](mailto:cardiff@dlpconsultants.co.uk)

## **READING**

2 Richfield Place  
12 Richfield Avenue  
Reading  
RG1 8EQ

t 0118 939 1004  
f 0118 939 1005

[reading@dlpconsultants.co.uk](mailto:reading@dlpconsultants.co.uk)

## **SHEFFIELD**

11 Paradise Square  
Sheffield  
S1 2DE

t 0114 228 9190  
f 0114 272 1947

[sheffield@dlpconsultants.co.uk](mailto:sheffield@dlpconsultants.co.uk)

