Electricity Distribution

Community Energy Planning Guidance

A guide for community energy organisations to help navigate the planning system in England and Wales

Feb 2026

nationalgrid

Acknowledgements

National Grid is the largest electricity transmission and distribution business in the UK, delivering electricity safely, reliably and efficiently to the customers and communities they serve, while working towards a cleaner, greener energy future.

About Regen

Regen provides independent, evidence-led insight and advice in support of our mission to transform the UK's energy system for a net zero future. We focus on analysing the systemic challenges of decarbonising power, heat and transport. We know that a transformation of this scale will require engaging the whole of society in a just transition.

Acknowledgements

We would like to express our sincere appreciation to all those who contributed to the successful completion of this report. This work benefited greatly from the support and assistance of many individuals and organisations, in particular the South West Net Zero Hub and Gloucestershire Community Energy Forum.

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National Grid

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Purpose of this guide

Navigating the intricacies of the planning system can often feel like a daunting task. Planning can be a lengthy and complicated process, requiring careful consideration, a strategic approach and engagement with the wider community. In this guide, we aim to simplify this journey for community energy organisations in England and Wales.

What this guide covers

This introductory guide aims to demystify the planning system, providing an accessible overview of the process, regulatory frameworks and considerations of community engagement and local benefits. While we acknowledge the importance of local plans and national policy, this guide prioritises practical advice for developing planning applications to ensure that it remains a lasting resource regardless of policy changes.

Who this guide is for

This guide is designed for communities across England and Wales seeking to understand and engage with the planning system for renewable energy projects. Whether you're part of a community group looking to submit a planning application or you want to understand how to engage with other planning applications being submitted in your area, this guide serves as a starting point for informed decision making and proactive engagement.

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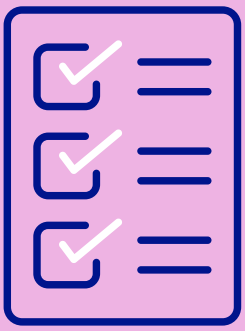


1.1 Using this guide

This checklist provides a quick overview of the key steps and considerations for developing a successful community energy planning application.

If you're just starting out, it offers a helpful snapshot of what lies ahead. Each item in the list is explored in more depth throughout the guide, with practical advice, examples and links to further resources.

Whether you're checking your progress or planning your next move, use this list alongside the guide to make sure you're covering all the essential ground.

1.2 The checklist

Use this checklist to ensure you have completed all essential steps before submitting your planning application for a community energy project.

- [ ] **Have you confirmed that the site is suitable?**
  Assess land ownership, access, planning history and environmental constraints.
  See section 3.1: The stages of developing a planning application

- [ ] **Have you engaged with the local community?**
  Inform and involve local residents and stakeholders. Respond to early concerns.
  See section 4: How to engage the wider community and overcome opposition

- [ ] **Have you consulted with the local planning authority (LPA)?**
  You may want to request pre-application advice to align with local planning policies.
  See section 3.1: The stages of developing a planning application

- [ ] **Have you checked which planning policies apply?**
  Review national and local planning policies for your site.
  See section 2.2: Where do I find information on planning policy?

- [ ] **Do you have all the necessary documents ready?**
  Prepare plans, statements and any required specialist reports.
  See section 3.2: What needs to be submitted as part of a planning application?

- [ ] **Have you considered the grid connection timeline?**
  Ensure planning and grid connection are coordinated to avoid delays.
  See section 2.8: Planning and grid connection timing

- [ ] **Have you thought about local community benefit?**
  Decide how the project will provide meaningful benefits to the local community.
  See section 5.1: Delivering community benefits

- [ ] **Are you ready to respond during the consultation period?**
  Plan how to communicate with the public and handle feedback.
  See section 4.3: Keeping people updated and involved

2 How does the planning system work: the basics

In this section, we provide a brief overview of the planning system for renewable energy projects in England and Wales, acknowledging the dynamic nature of the planning system and the potential for policy changes over time.

While we won't delve into specific policies, as they may evolve, we aim to offer a foundational understanding of the planning process relevant to community energy projects. The content presented here reflects the policy landscape at the time of publication. For further clarification on any terms or concepts mentioned, a glossary is provided at the end of this document.

2.1 Who makes decisions on planning applications?

Most community energy projects are likely to be decided by the local planning authority (LPA) or in Wales, in some cases by Welsh Ministers. Larger 'Nationally Significant' energy projects such as offshore wind farms or large onshore renewable sites are decided by the UK Secretary of State under the Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs) process. The planning systems for England and Wales are set out below (please do check for any policy updates since publication of this guide – see section 2.2 below for relevant website links).

Figure 1: **The planning system for renewables in England**

Decision making level	Who decides?	What's covered	Key features	Example projects
Local planning authority (LPA)	Planning officers or delegated decisions (planning committee)	All battery storage projects Onshore wind and solar projects up to 100 MW (previously 50 MW) from December 2025 onwards. Other onshore energy projects under 50 MW	Applications submitted to LPA Assessed against Local Development Plans (LDP) May require consultation with local stakeholders	Small solar and wind farms
Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs)	Secretary of State, following the UK Planning Inspectorate	Onshore wind and solar over 100 MW Other renewable energy projects more than 50 MW onshore or more than 100 MW offshore	Applications handled by the Planning Inspectorate Decision made by the Secretary of State Requires a Development Consent Order (DCO) Mandatory public consultation National Policy Statements (NPS) guide decisions	Offshore wind farms, large solar parks

Figure 2: **The planning system for renewables in Wales**

Decision making level	Who decides?	What's covered	Key features	Example projects
Local planning authority (LPA)	Local authority planners	Projects under 10 MW (onshore) All battery storage projects	Applications submitted to LPA Assessed against Local Development Plans (LDP) May include consultation with local stakeholders	Very small local energy projects
Developments of National Significance (DNS)	Welsh Ministers	All onshore and offshore projects between 10 MW and 350 MW	Applications made to Planning and Environment Decisions Wales (PEDW) Welsh Ministers make final decisions Public consultation is required Advised by Future Wales: The National Plan 2040	Onshore wind and solar farms
Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs)	Secretary of State, following the UK Planning Inspectorate	All onshore and offshore projects with a generating capacity of above 350 MW	Applications handled by the UK Planning Inspectorate. Decision made by UK Government Secretary of State Must comply with Wales' renewable energy targets and national policies	Offshore wind farms, tidal power projects

Source: Government of Wales 2024, Developments of national significance (DNS): procedural guidance.

2.2 Where do I find information on planning policy?

Understanding which planning policies apply to your project is essential for developing a successful planning application for a community energy scheme. Planning policies are set at both the national and local level, and the specific policies that apply to your project will depend on its location.

The table below outlines the key planning policy documents for England and Wales. Local policies are set by the relevant planning authority, typically your local council, while national policies are issued by central governments. Together, both levels inform decisions on development proposals. The information below is correct at the time of publication; however, the UK Government is progressing planning reforms, so please check for updates on the websites listed in the table.

Figure 3: **Planning policy documents in England in 2026**

Level	Policy document	Overview	Where to find it
National	National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)	Sets out the national planning policies for England	Link
National	National Policy Statements (NPS) for Energy (EN-1, EN-3, EN-5)	Policies for assessing nationally significant energy infrastructure projects	Link
National	Planning Practice Guidance	Online guidance supporting the NPPF	Link
Sub-regional	Spatial Development Strategies (SDS)	Long-term strategies for some combined authority areas (not yet in place for all areas)	Local Combined Authority websites (e.g. London Plan)
Local	Local Plan	Sets out local-level planning policy (some Local Plans may include allocated areas for renewables)	Local authority websites
Local	Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs)/ Supplementary Plans	Provide detailed guidance on certain topics; Supplementary Plans are expected to replace SPDs	Local authority websites
Local	Neighbourhood plans	Community-led plans that form part of the adopted local development plan	LPA websites or neighbourhood forums

Figure 4: **Planning policies documents in Wales in 2026**

Level	Policy document	Overview	Where to find it
National	Future Wales: The National Plan 2040	Sets national spatial strategy; includes maps for wind energy and heat networks	Link
National	Planning Policy Wales (PPW)	Sets out the land use planning policies of the Welsh Government, guiding all levels of plan-making	Link
National	Designing for Renewable Energy in Wales	Guidance (not policy) for large scale wind and solar	Link
Regional	Strategic Development Plans (SDPs)	Cross-boundary plans for large-scale development and energy priorities	Via Corporate Joint Committees (CJCs) – see local council or Welsh Government websites
Local	Local Development Plans (LDPs) and Local Development Plan 'Lites' (LDPLs)	Set local planning policies and land allocations	Local authority websites
Local	Place plans	Community-led plans supporting LDPs; help shape local development priorities at the town/community level	Through local town/ community councils or Planning Aid Wales

2.3 What is neighbourhood/place planning?

Neighbourhood or place planning aims to empower communities to shape the future of their local area through the development of a local-level planning policy document. It aims to allow communities to influence local development and land use in a way that reflects local priorities and needs.

Neighbourhood plans in England allow residents to develop a shared vision for their local area and influence the types, locations and scale of development they feel are needed. Importantly, communities can use neighbourhood plans to adopt policies that promote low-carbon development, including renewable energy projects. Once a neighbourhood plan has been legally reviewed and adopted, it becomes part of the Local Development Plan. This means the policies carry legal weight and must be considered when determining planning applications.

For more information, take a look at the Centre for Sustainable Energy guide on 'Neighbourhood planning in a climate emergency.'

Place-plans in Wales are community-led documents that reflect local aspirations, similar to neighbourhood plans. Created in partnership with local authorities, place plans provide more detailed guidance on implementing policies in a Local Development Plan. Although not legally binding, they carry significant weight in shaping planning decisions. For more information, take a look at this guide produced by Planning Aid Wales.

2.4 What is permitted development?

Not all renewable energy projects require a full planning application. Some smaller-scale installations may fall under Permitted Development Rights (PDRs) – a national grant of planning permission that allows certain types of development to proceed without needing to apply through the formal planning system.

Understanding whether your proposed installation qualifies as permitted development is a key early step. This can save time, reduce costs and allow you to focus more on the technical and community aspects of your project.

However, it is important to note that conditions and limitations apply to PDRs and some types of land or buildings may be excluded entirely e.g. listed buildings, conservation areas, National Landscapes (formerly AONBs) etc.

Even if a project qualifies as permitted development, you may still need to apply for prior approval or notify your LPA before starting work.

Use the table below as a quick guide to what is typically allowed as PDR (remembering that these will not apply to many protected buildings and areas as noted above). For more information in England, please refer to the Part 14 of the General PD Order 2015 and in Wales the General PD Order 1995, (as amended). Always check with your local planning authority to confirm current rules and whether prior approval is required.

Figure 5: **Permitted development in England and Wales**

Technology/Installation	Permitted development regulations (at time of publication)
Domestic solar panels	Usually permitted if not higher than the roof & < 200mm projection. In Conservation Areas and World Heritage Sites, additional restrictions may apply. Listed building consent may be required if relevant.
Non-domestic rooftop solar	Usually permitted development subject to design and visibility restrictions. Prior approval process may be needed in some circumstances.
Ground-mounted solar (domestic)	Permitted if under 9m² and <4m height and not near the boundary. Only one per house.
Battery storage (domestic)	Permitted in most locations. Permitted if meets noise & placement limits (see Microgeneration Certification Scheme (MCS) Standards).
Air source heat pumps	In Wales, not permitted currently if installed within 3m of the property boundary – although Welsh Government committed in its Heat Strategy for Wales to revise this.
Ground source heat pumps	Usually permitted.
Wind turbines (domestic)	Small turbines (11.1 metres in England and Wales for standalone turbines) and other restrictions apply. See also Microgeneration Certification Scheme (MCS) Standards.

2.5 How does a local authority decide on a planning application?

Local authorities can only approve or refuse planning applications in accordance with the relevant national and local planning policies, as well as other material considerations such as noise impacts (please see this guide to material considerations). As such, it is important to ensure that your application aligns with the national planning policy (the National Planning Policy Framework in England or Planning Policy Wales) and the local planning policy in your area (found on your local authority website).

There are two routes for local authority determination of planning applications:

Officer determination: for straightforward applications that comply with planning policies and regulations, the local authority's planning officers may have delegated authority to approve or refuse the application based on established criteria.

Planning committee: in some cases, the decision on a renewable energy planning application may be made by the local planning committee, composed of elected councillors. Planning committees are often used for more complex applications or applications where contentious issues are raised. As set out below, the committee reviews all relevant information, including officer recommendations, before making a decision.

How long will it take?

In England for most planning applications, local authorities aim to make a decision within eight weeks. However, larger or more complex projects may take on average 13 weeks, and those requiring an Environmental Impact Assessment can take on average 16 weeks.

In Wales, most planning applications are typically decided within eight weeks. However, larger applications that require an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) may take on average 16 weeks.

In practice, applications can take much longer than 16 weeks, e.g. if additional studies are required by planning authorities.

What is a Planning Performance Agreement (PPA)

A Planning Performance Agreement (PPA) is a voluntary agreement between an applicant and the local planning authority that sets out a clear timetable and process for handling a planning application. It's typically used for larger, more complex, or potentially controversial proposals, including some renewable energy projects.

A PPA helps ensure that both parties are aligned on key stages, expected submission dates, necessary documentation and decision timelines. While it does not influence the outcome of the planning decision, it provides more certainty, allows for better project management and can improve collaboration and communication.

Some local authorities may charge for entering into a PPA, and they are often offered as part of a wider pre-application service. To consider this option please speak to your local planning authority.

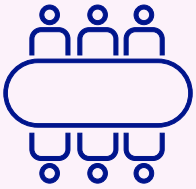
2.6 What happens at a planning committee?

Each planning committee meeting will normally involve the discussion of several planning applications. The key stages involved in the planning committee include:

1. **Pre-committee meeting: reading of planning report**
   The committee will review the information provided by the planning officer in a planning report. This will include a recommendation to approve/refuse, drawing on public opinion, advice from consultees, including experts within the council (e.g. landscape officers) and supporting evidence.

2. **Presentation of planning applications**
   Each planning application is presented by the planning officer responsible for assessing the proposal. This presentation provides an overview of the application, including development details, relevant policies and key considerations.

3. **Public participation**
   Members of the public, including applicants, planning agents and concerned individuals, may have the opportunity to address the committee. They may express their views, concerns or support for the planning application. The number of speakers and allocated time for each presentation may be limited to ensure the meeting progresses efficiently.



4. **Committee deliberation**
   Following public participation, committee members engage in a detailed discussion on each planning application. They discuss the merits, potential impacts and compliance with relevant planning policies. Committee members may ask questions, seek clarification from officers and debate various aspects of the proposals.

5. **Decision making**
   After the discussion, the committee decides on each planning application. This involves voting on whether to approve, refuse or defer the application. For a committee decision to be approved, the majority of members must be in agreement, with votes cast by a show of hands. If there is a tie, the Chair has the right to exercise a 'second' or 'casting' vote to determine the outcome.

2.7 What happens if a planning application is refused?

If a planning application is refused, you have the option to appeal the decision. During a planning appeal, each party generally pays their own costs, but if one party is found to have acted unreasonably, they may be ordered to cover the other party's costs.

In England planning appeals are undertaken by the Planning Inspectorate, which is independent of the LPA. In some circumstances, the Secretary of State may exercise the power to make a decision on an appeal, which is known as a 'recovered appeal.' In the event that planning permission is granted, there is no right to appeal the decision. The applicant may appeal against a planning condition.

In Wales, appeals are undertaken by Planning and Environment Decisions Wales. The planning appeal process lets the inspectorates (on behalf of the Welsh Ministers) consider all the material planning considerations relevant to the case and hear from all parties, including the LPA, the applicant and those who might have made representations on the application. Once a case is examined, ultimate decisions are made by Welsh Ministers.

In England and Wales, a judicial review can be called by a party seeking to overturn consent for a project on a point of law. This is not based on the merits of the application but a review of the decision making process, i.e. whether correct planning procedure was followed. A challenge in the court must be brought within 6 weeks of the decision.

Figure 6: **Summary table: the stages of developing a planning application for decision by a local authority**

Stage	What happens	Key players
1. Idea & feasibility	The community energy organisation identifies a site and assesses technical and financial feasibility. Discussions begin with the wider community to share ideas for feedback. This needs to be considered alongside grid connection timing.	Community energy organisation, landowners, wider community
2. Pre-application advice	Optional informal discussions with local planning authority to scope key issues	Community energy organisation, LA
3. Submit application	Application submitted	Community energy organisation, LA or relevant decision making body, statutory consultees
4. Public consultation	Neighbours and stakeholders provide feedback; objections/support are logged.	Community energy organisation, LA, interest groups
5. Decision	If decided at the local authority level – planning officers assess compliance with policies and make a decision, or they recommend approval/ refusal for the planning committee	LA
Planning committee (if necessary)	If decided at the planning committee level – the planning application is discussed at committee and the committee members vote to decide	LA, Local Planning Committee, interested representatives who wish to speak
6. Appeal (if necessary)	If refused, the community energy organisation can submit a planning appeal	Community energy organisation, Planning Inspectorate
7. Implementation	Construction begins, with conditions monitored and enforced	Community energy organisation, LA enforcement officers

2.8 Planning and grid connection timing

A grid connection is the physical link between your renewable energy project and the electricity transmission or distribution network. It enables electricity generated by your project to be exported to the grid and used by homes and businesses. Securing a grid connection is essential for most community energy initiatives and should be coordinated alongside the planning process, as the two are often interdependent in terms of timelines and permissions.

At the time of publication, the UK government has introduced a reform of the grid connection process with the aim of reducing delays and speeding up grid connections for renewables. This is part of the wider Clean Power 2030 plan, which aims for clean sources to produce at least 95% of Great Britain's generation by 2030.

In April 2025, Ofgem (Great Britain's independent energy regulator) finalised the connections reform package (TM04+), introducing a readiness-based approach to grid connections. This reform replaces the previous 'first come, first served' system with a 'first ready, first connected' model. Projects are now assessed based on:

Readiness: demonstrable progress such as secured land rights and obtained planning permissions.

Strategic alignment: contribution to national energy goals, including the Clean Power by 2030 (CP2030) plan.

In January 2026, NESO released the connections reform results, specifying capacity allocations by distribution and transmission zone based on the assessed queue of projects that meet the Gate 2 requirements: secured planning and land rights. The queue is split into Phase 1 (projects connecting by 2030) and Phase 2 (projects needed post-2031).

Further information on this process is available on the National Grid connection reform webpages. We recommend checking these pages before submitting a project to ensure you know the latest information.

For readers within the NGED licence area, for further advice on the connection process, please reach out to the National Grid community energy team by booking an appointment here.

3 Developing your planning application

Developing a planning application for a renewable energy project is a detailed process involving several key stages and preparing comprehensive supporting documents. Each step is vital to ensuring that your application meets planning requirements and effectively demonstrates the project's suitability.

Timing is also a critical factor in the success of a renewable energy project. Coordinating the planning process with other essential elements, such as securing grid connections, can prevent costly delays and missed opportunities.

This section provides a clear overview of the stages involved in preparing a planning application, outlines the key documents required and offers insights into aligning the process with other project timelines. Thorough preparation at this stage is essential for laying the groundwork for a successful application.

3.1 The stages of developing a planning application

Once you've selected a site for project development and completed any initial feasibility studies, the next steps involve preparing your planning application. This section provides an example of how you would submit an application to a local planning authority. It outlines the key stages you'll need to follow, from gathering essential information to engaging with stakeholders, and submitting the necessary documentation.

1. Pre-application stage

Early community engagement: engage with local residents and organisations at the earliest opportunity to discuss your proposed project, gather feedback and build trust. Early engagement can help address concerns before they become objections and identify potential opportunities for community benefit or collaboration (see section 4 for more detail on engagement).

As a first step, we recommend:

- Engaging directly with local residents and groups to understand local priorities, concerns and opportunities. Consider informal conversations, drop-ins or attending existing community events.
- Reviewing your Local Plan (or Local Development Plan in Wales) to understand policies on renewable energy, land use and designated sites.
- Speaking to your local authority's climate change or sustainability officer, who may be able to offer advice, flag relevant strategies or direct you to local support.
- Identifying key local stakeholders, such as parish or town councils, neighbourhood planning groups and environmental charities.
- Exploring any relevant neighbourhood plans or place plans for your area, which may highlight community priorities or existing ambitions for renewable energy.

Pre-application discussions with the local planning authority: when you are at the early stages of developing your planning application, it is worth contacting your local planning authority to see if you can arrange a pre-application discussion. Local authorities often offer pre-application advice sessions to assist applicants by providing information on relevant planning policies and sharing existing details that the council has about any site constraints. Please be aware that some local authorities charge for this process; to check if this is the case contact your local planning authority.

2. Application preparation

Documentation compilation: prepare all necessary documents and information required for the planning application. This will involve coordinating with any necessary consultants, such as environmental consultants, engineers, planners and legal advisors (please see section 2.3 below).

Community consultation: conduct meaningful consultation with the local community to inform them about the proposed project, gather and incorporate feedback and address concerns. Provide opportunities for public engagement through meetings, presentations, newsletters and online platforms (see section 4 of this guide).

3. Application submission, review and decision making

Formal submission: submit the completed planning application, along with all required documents and fees, to the relevant local planning authority. Ensure the application form is filled out accurately and comprehensively, providing clear and detailed information about the proposed project.

Keeping the community informed: as the planning application moves through the submission and review process, it's important to keep the local community updated on the project's progress. Maintaining open lines of communication and transparency helps build trust, address concerns and ensure that the community feels involved in the decision making process.

Local authority validation: the local planning authority validates the planning application to ensure that it meets the necessary requirements for processing. This includes checking for completeness, accuracy and compliance with statutory regulations.

Consultation period: the planning authority undertakes a formal consultation process, inviting comments and feedback from statutory consultees, relevant government agencies and the public. Comments received during this period are considered in the decision making process.

Planning assessment: planning officers review the planning application, taking into account all relevant information, including technical reports or assessments, community feedback and planning policies. They assess the proposal against statutory criteria, local development plans and national planning guidance.

Planning committee review: in some cases, particularly for major or contentious projects, the planning application may be referred to the local planning committee for review and determination (see section 2.6).

4. Post-decision

If approved: any legal conditions attached to the permission are outlined and the applicant must comply with these conditions. Common conditions could be removing the renewable infrastructure and restoring the land after a set period (usually 25-30 years), specifications on the model/colour of the infrastructure, restrictions on lighting etc.

The planning permission will also include a timeframe in which you must commence development (this is often three years).

If refused: you will have the right to appeal against a planning decision within a specified timeframe (see section 2.7).

3.2 What needs to be submitted as part of a planning application?

While renewable energy planning applications encompass a diverse array of projects, there are common documents that are typically required for most applications. Each document specifically supports the application, from visualising the project's layout to setting out the technical feasibility. Below we offer an overview of these common documents as well as the additional documents and studies that may be required for some applications. We suggest speaking to a chartered planning consultant to confirm what will be needed for your project.

Most applications will require:	Some applications will require:
• Planning application form • Site location plan • Site plan and layout drawings • Design and Access Statement (DAS) • Planning statement	• Noise assessment • Visual impact assessment • Heritage impact assessment • Flood risk assessment • Community consultation report • Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)

Overview of each document type: commonly required documents

Planning application form: the first step is to complete and submit the relevant planning application form prescribed by the local planning authority. This form collects essential details about the proposed development, including its location, scale, purpose and any associated works.

Site location plan: a site location plan is essential to show the exact location of the proposed renewable energy development within the wider geographical context. This plan should include sufficient detail to identify the site boundaries, adjacent land uses, access points and any relevant features or landmarks.

Site plan and layout drawings: detailed site plans and layout drawings are necessary to illustrate the layout of the proposed development within the site boundaries. These drawings should accurately depict the positioning of renewable energy infrastructure, such as solar panels, wind turbines, biomass facilities or hydroelectric installations, as well as any associated structures, access roads and landscaping.

Planning statement: a planning statement outlines how the proposed development aligns with relevant local and national planning policies. It provides an overview of the project, explains the rationale behind the proposal and demonstrates how it meets planning requirements. For renewable energy projects, the statement typically addresses the need for the development, its environmental and economic benefits and how potential impacts (e.g. on the local community or landscape) will be managed or mitigated.

Design and Access Statement (DAS): a Design and Access Statement explains the design rationale behind the renewable energy project. It should outline how the development integrates with its surroundings, addresses design considerations and ensures appropriate access and connectivity.

Overview of each document type: potentially required reports and studies

Various technical reports and studies may be necessary to support the planning application, depending on the nature and scale of the renewable energy development. These may include:

Noise assessment: an assessment to evaluate the anticipated noise levels generated by the renewable energy infrastructure and to propose mitigation measures where necessary. This is likely to be required for onshore wind applications.

Visual impact assessment: this report will assess the visual effects of the development on the landscape and surrounding views, including photomontages or visual simulations.

Heritage impact assessment: when needed, this report will assess the potential impact of the development on heritage assets or designated conservation areas.

Flood risk assessment: this study will evaluate the risk of flooding to the site and propose appropriate flood mitigation measures.

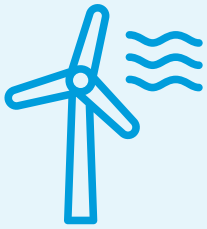
Community consultation report: this document summarises the outcomes of community engagement activities and details any feedback received from local residents or stakeholders.

Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA): for larger-scale renewable energy projects, an Environmental Impact Assessment may be required to comprehensively assess wider potential environmental effects. This assessment should include detailed studies and reports on landscape and visual impacts, biodiversity, noise, air quality and socio-economic effects.

What is Biodiversity Net Gain?

Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) is a requirement for new developments to leave nature in a better state than before the development was constructed. This means developers must assess the existing biodiversity on a site and demonstrate a measurable increase in biodiversity after development – typically by enhancing habitats or creating new ones.

In England, Biodiversity Net Gain is now a requirement for most new developments, meaning projects must deliver at least a 10% improvement in biodiversity for 30 years compared to the existing condition of the site. In Wales, the requirement is expressed through Net Benefit for Biodiversity (NBB) as opposed to a formal metric-based mandate. Welsh planning policy still expects developers to qualitatively demonstrate proportional biodiversity enhancement as part of their proposals (See Planning Policy Wales 12, 2021). In both countries, it's good practice to show how your project will support local nature.



Planning application case study: Ambition Community Energy wind turbine, Bristol

Location:
Severn Road, Lawrence Weston, Bristol.

Project:
At 4.2 MW and 150 m tall, the Ambition Community Energy wind turbine is England's largest single community-owned onshore wind turbine, located on publicly owned land provided by Bristol City Council.

Developer:
Ambition Community Energy (ACE CIC) – the wholly community-owned subsidiary of Ambition Lawrence Weston charity.

Local authority:
Bristol City Council.

Planning application reference number:
20/01270/F

Planning approval:
Planning permission was granted on 8th July 2020, following a unanimous vote by the City Council planning committee.

Key features:

- A comprehensive community engagement campaign built local support from residents, councillors and schools.
- A formal Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) was scoped in consultation with Natural England due to proximity to the Severn Estuary Ramsar/SAC site.
- A Planning Performance Agreement (PPA) with Bristol City Council helped manage the submission and determination timeline, crucial for meeting funding milestones.
- The turbine generates renewable energy equivalent to around 3,000 homes.
- An estimated annual community revenue of £100,000 helps to fund regeneration and a planned community hub, and a Energy Learning Zone for local residents and schools.

3.3 Understanding wider energy and land use plans

While the planning system plays a central role in approving renewable energy developments, it is not the only system shaping where and how energy infrastructure is expected to grow. Although outside formal planning policy, the UK government has been developing energy and land use strategies, which are having a growing influence on site selection.

While focusing on local planning policy is most important, these wider plans can offer valuable insight into local ambitions, priority areas, and partnership opportunities. Community energy groups are encouraged to review them early in the project development process.

Below we set out some of the plans you may want to look out for:

Local Area Energy Plans (LAEPs)
LAEPs are strategic documents developed by local authorities (or in partnership with them) that map the most effective ways to decarbonise heat, power and transport within a given geography. All local authorities in Wales have a LAEP, and many in England do.

They may identify priority areas for low-carbon heat, solar, and grid upgrades. Although not statutory, LAEPs increasingly influence local decision making and investment. Ask your local authority where to find them. Some LAEPs are also hosted on local climate action or strategy webpages.

UK government: Regional Energy Strategic Plans (RESP)
Regional Energy Strategic Plans (RESP) are place-based energy infrastructure roadmaps being developed for each of Great Britain's nine English regions, Wales, and Scotland. Led by the National Energy System Operator (NESO), each RESP will map future energy infrastructure needs, including electricity, gas, hydrogen, transport and heat, in order to deliver coordinated investment. NESO have hosted RESP Forums, developed draft methodologies and published transitional RESP outputs. The full suite of final RESPs is expected to be delivered for all regions and nations in late 2028. Keep up to date on the NESO website.

UK government: Strategic Spatial Energy Plan (SSEP)
The Strategic Spatial Energy Plan (SSEP) is a Great Britain-level spatial strategy to guide the development of future electricity generation, storage, and hydrogen infrastructure. Commissioned by the UK, Scottish, and Welsh governments, it is being developed by the National Energy System Operator (NESO) to map where clean energy assets can best be located across land and sea, based on modelling, environmental constraints, and public and industry input. A final methodology was published in May 2025 and a first draft SSEP is anticipated in early 2027. Keep a look out on the NESO website.

UK government: Land Use Framework
In January 2025, the UK government launched a 12-week national consultation on land use in England, marking the beginning of a major initiative to introduce a Land Use Framework (LUF). The LUF aims to coordinate competing demands on land for housing, nature restoration, food, infrastructure, and clean energy, without replacing the planning system.

The final framework has not yet been published and we recommend watching for it on the DEFRA website. The LUF intends to offer principles, policy levers and spatial insights to guide decision making across regional and local levels. However, it will not hold statutory planning status.

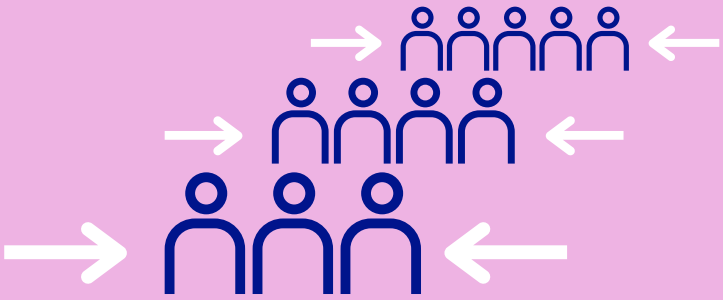
How to check land classification

Before choosing a site for a renewable energy project, it's important to understand how the land is classified. This helps identify whether the site is considered best and most versatile (BMV) agricultural land or has other environmental protections that could affect your planning application. Grades 1, 2 and 3a are considered BMV land, which planning policy seeks to protect.

In England:
You can check land classification using Defra's online mapping tool (MAGIC MAP). Click 'Agricultural Land Classification' in the left-hand layers menu.

In Wales:
Use the Welsh government's predictive ALC map.

4 How to engage the wider community and overcome opposition



Community engagement lies at the heart of a successful renewable energy project, shaping the project development from inception to completion.

It is essential to involve the local community from the moment the project idea starts, recognising that individuals may wish to participate at varying levels. Whether community members seek deep involvement throughout the process or prefer to stay informed with minimal engagement, being flexible can foster inclusivity and help to develop a wider sense of ownership in the project. Communication and transparency are central to effective community engagement and essential for building trust and understanding within the wider community. Addressing local concerns and incorporating community feedback are vital parts of the process.

4.1 Understanding the local context

Before developing a full planning application, it is strongly recommended that community energy groups undertake early engagement with local councils, parishes and neighbourhood groups. This pre-engagement lays the groundwork for a smoother planning process by identifying potential issues early, building local support and ensuring your proposal aligns with existing planning and climate strategies.

Engage with your local authority
Review relevant parts of the Local Plan, including site allocations, renewable energy policies and environmental designations. Reach out to the climate action or sustainability officer to understand whether the council has declared a climate emergency or published a climate strategy that supports local renewable energy. Some councils support community-led climate or energy projects; it's worth asking what support is available.

Engage with your parish or local council
These councils can be a valuable source of local insight and support.
They may also:

- Share knowledge of local sensitivities or priorities (e.g. heritage, landscape, biodiversity).
- Be actively involved in or have helped develop Neighbourhood Plans – an essential source of community-led planning policies.

4.2 How to involve the community

Community members should be actively involved at every stage of project development, from pre-submission consultations to ongoing engagement after an application has been submitted and beyond i.e. through construction and operation. This can include public meetings, surveys, workshops and continuous feedback mechanisms. Involving the community from the start and keeping them engaged throughout the process is crucial for fostering trust, ensuring transparency, addressing concerns, gathering valuable input, and promoting a deeper understanding of the project's benefits and potential to create positive change within the community.

The strength of community energy organisations lies in their ability to facilitate these interactions more effectively than a commercial developer, as community energy leads are often local and already communicating directly with their neighbours. This dynamic can help create a more personal and relatable experience.

At the start of the process, it is important to identify who is in the local area and how the project may impact them. It is also important to consider the different ways these people may want to be approached and engaged in the project. We recommend looking at the UK government guidance document on community engagement and benefits from onshore wind developments in England for ideas on developing a community engagement plan and what to consider in this process.

Below we have set out a range of different methods of engagement:

Public meetings and workshops: hosting public meetings and workshops is an excellent way to introduce the community to the project. These events provide an opportunity for project leaders to explain the benefits, goals and processes of the project. It also offers community members a chance to voice their concerns, ask questions and provide valuable input. Make sure you consider accessibility when it comes to event timing and locations.

Information sessions and webinars: online information sessions and webinars are particularly useful for reaching larger audiences, especially those who might not be able to attend physical meetings. They also allow for real-time Q&A, ensuring that community members are well-informed.

Surveys and feedback forms: conducting surveys and distributing feedback forms allows community members to express their opinions and preferences. These tools can help project leaders understand the community's priorities, concerns and ideas.

Community liaison groups: establishing community liaison groups can create a direct line of communication between project leaders and community members. These groups represent different segments of the community and serve as a sounding board for ideas and concerns. Regular meetings can ensure ongoing collaboration and transparency.

Online platforms: you could use existing social media groups, dedicated project websites, social media pages and online forums to share project updates and relevant articles, and engage in discussions. Online platforms provide a space for community members to ask questions, share experiences and exchange ideas in a convenient manner.

Site visits and demonstrations: site visits and demonstrations can give community members a direct experience of the technology involved. Whether it's a visit to the project site or a demonstration of the technology involved, these activities can enhance understanding and enthusiasm among community members.

Partnerships with local organisations: consider collaborating with local community organisations, schools and businesses to reach a wider audience. These partnerships can help spread the word, increase participation and tap into existing local networks. Local school children can be particularly powerful advocates.

Storytelling and visual materials: use compelling stories, videos and visuals to illustrate the project's benefits. People often connect with personal stories and visuals that showcase the positive changes the project can bring to their lives and the environment.

Reaching the harder-to-reach groups

Engaging all community members, including those who are often harder to reach, is essential. To ensure that your community engagement reaches the wider community, ask yourself the following questions and consider implementing the strategies below.

Content

Is the content culturally sensitive?
Translate the material into relevant languages and partner with community leaders who can act as liaisons.

How relatable is the content?
Try sharing stories and content that relate the project's positive impacts on individuals or households within communities.

Methods

Are you using a mix of communication channels?
Tailor your communication techniques to reach diverse audiences.

Is your feedback method inclusive?
Provide multiple channels such as written forms, surveys or oral feedback.

Are you working with community organisations?
These organisations often have a deeper understanding of communities' needs, preferences and priorities.

Location & timing of events

Are you hosting in spaces frequented by different demographic groups?

For example, spaces like community centres and places of worship.

Are you scheduling meetings and events at times that accommodate different schedules?
Accommodate for various schedules, including evenings and weekends.

Are you able to conduct home visits or go to local events?
Try conducting home visits to those who request it and setting up information booths at existing local events.

4.3 Keeping people updated and involved throughout the planning process

The planning process can be time-consuming, requiring regular communication to keep everyone informed and engaged.

It is important to keep communities involved and up to date as a project progresses. Ensure that community members are actively engaged throughout the project by providing clear information about the different stages of the project and presenting opportunities for them to give feedback and help shape decisions at each stage.

One way to do this is to have a point of contact with the community so that they can speak about any concerns, ideas and feedback. This can help community members have a deeper understanding of the project, build their trust in the project, and ensure that any questions are answered. Another method is to provide regular updates in a newsletter. A newsletter could highlight project milestones, showcase community involvement and keep everyone informed about the project's progress.

4.4 How to respond to organised opposition

It is common to experience small, but vocal, organised opposition groups opposing renewable energy applications. These groups often raise concerns about the visual impact, land use and perceived reduction in property values associated with renewable energy projects. While such opposition can pose significant challenges, understanding and effectively addressing these concerns can help to reduce the strength of the opposition group.

Tips for responding to opposition groups

Listen and engage: take the time to understand the concerns of opposition groups. Engage in open dialogue and actively listen to their perspectives. Assess if immediate actions can be taken to address their concerns and demonstrate responsiveness to community feedback.

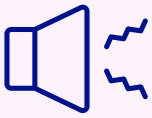
Educate: provide accurate information about the local benefits of the project, including job creation, economic growth and wider benefits. Address misconceptions and myths with evidence. Also, ensure that people understand how a community project is owned and operated, with the direct benefit going to the local community.

Engage the wider community: ensure that supporters are vocal about the proposed project so those 'on the fence' hear both sides.

Addressing common concerns

Below, we have suggested ways to address common concerns:

Visual impact: explore design options and landscaping measures to minimise the project's visual impact. Consider aesthetic enhancements such as native plantings or screening. Also, look for opportunities to allow continued community use of the land, such as incorporating walking trails or other recreational amenities.



Noise: implement sound mitigation strategies to address concerns about noise, such as selecting quieter turbine models or using sound barriers.

Wildlife protection: adopt best practices to mitigate potential impacts on wildlife habitats and migration patterns. Collaborate with local conservation organisations to develop wildlife protection plans.

Health and Safety: address concerns about the health and safety impacts of the project by providing information on the rigorous safety standards and regulations that the project will adhere to. Consider sharing examples of similar projects that have successfully operated without adverse health or safety consequences.

Tourism impact: address concerns about the project's potential impact on tourism by highlighting how it can coexist with and enhance tourism opportunities through educational tours or renewable energy-themed attractions.

Land use: discuss how renewables can increase biodiversity and allow land regeneration. Consider exploring design options for multi-purpose land use, such as combining solar with grazing sheep or integrating recreational trails around wind turbines.

Community involvement: address concerns about community involvement by engaging the community in key decisions from the outset and throughout the project's development.

Benefits: discuss the direct benefits the project will bring to the community, such as a community benefit fund.

By proactively addressing common concerns such as those above, and providing evidence-based information, you can foster a more informed and constructive dialogue about the proposed renewable energy project.

5 The role of community benefits

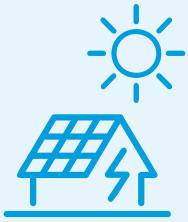
Community-owned energy projects typically involve share offers, allowing community members to invest in and own a stake in the project, and fostering a sense of ownership and participation. However, alongside these financial opportunities, community energy projects also deliver tangible benefits directly to the wider local community through community benefits. By reinvesting profits back into the local area, community energy projects empower individuals to take control of their energy future and contribute to the community's social, economic and environmental well-being.

5.1 Delivering community benefits from your project

Community benefits refer to voluntary contributions or initiatives provided to the local community. This is usually in the form of an annual fund. Such funds have become standard practice in commercial wind energy developments and increasingly for other forms of renewable energy infrastructure. However, community benefits can also go beyond a fund to include initiatives such as energy efficiency upgrades for local buildings, educational programmes on renewable energy and sustainability, or support for vulnerable households to reduce energy bills. Some examples of how community energy groups have organised their community benefit funds are set out in the table and case studies below.

Form of community benefit	Selected example projects with this form of benefit provision
Fund open to community projects	Gamlingay Community Turbine Resilient Energy Mounteneys Gower Power Point and Sandwick Trust Settle Hydro
Fund dedicated to local low carbon activities	Awel Co-op Gorran Highlanes wind farm Hottwind community turbine Talybont-on-Usk Energy Abergwaun Community Turbine community climate fund South Brent Community Energy turbine Isle of Skye Renewables Co-Operative Cwm Arian Renewable Energy Ynni Padarn Peris Westmill Solar Co-operative Wiltshire Wildlife Community Energy: also supports initiatives creating more wildlife in Wiltshire.
Community education	Egni Co-op: all surplus supports climate change education in schools. Point and Sandwick Trust: offers a consultation service to community groups wanting to develop their own project within the Western Isles of Scotland. Brighton Energy Co-operative: offers a solar education programme to local schools. Westmill Solar Co-operative: offers community buildings a free energy assessment.
Discounted electricity prices	Brighton Energy Co-operative Edinburgh Community Solar Co-operative Egni Co-op: usually to businesses or schools through installation of solar panels.

Case study:
Engi Co-op



Type of project:
Rooftop solar PV.

Stage of project:
Established in 2013 as a pilot project on seven community buildings, it has expanded to 90 sites across Wales and is still growing.

Project website:
https://aat.cymru/egni/

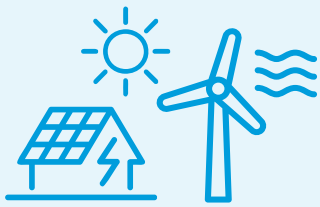
Funding received:
Raised £5m in community shares and over £2m from the Development Bank of Wales.

Funding distributed:
All surplus revenue funds their climate change education program. Engi also provides affordable electricity to schools and businesses with the solar panels, saving them over £119,000 in 2022.

Key features:
Egni Coop, the first solar PV Co-operative in Wales, has been making significant strides in promoting renewable energy and empowering local communities since Awel Aman Tawe established it in 2013. The project focuses on installing rooftop solar PV systems on community buildings across Wales, generating clean energy and helping sites reduce their energy costs and carbon footprint.

All the surplus revenue generated from the projects are put towards their climate change education programme, which has been a cornerstone of Awel Aman Tawe's work since 2000. The current programme, 'We are Energy Warriors' works with primary and secondary age pupils across South Wales, providing bilingual workshops and experiences that empower students to take action in reducing energy consumption in their schools.

By investing in education, Egni Coop ensures that the project's benefits are felt both in the present and the future, empowering the younger generation with the knowledge and skills to tackle the climate emergency and create a more sustainable future.



Case study:
South Brent Community Energy Society

Type of project:
Wind turbine and rooftop solar PV.

Stage of project:
Generating energy since 2013, with planning permission granted in 2010.

Project website:
http://www.sbces.org.uk/index.html

Funding received:
The project was funded through a community share offer, which successfully raised over £430,000 from 189 investors.

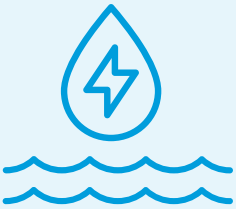
Funding distributed:
As of April 2024, the society has distributed £228,000 to energy-saving projects in and around South Brent.

Key features:
The South Brent Community Energy Society, a registered Industrial and Provident Society for the benefit of the community (BenCom), was established in 2011 to take forward the community-owned wind turbine project. The turbine was installed in September 2013, generating 225 kW. The year after, the society also installed solar PV on the South Brent Recreation Association's pavilion building, which has generated over 90,000 kWh to the end of April 2024.

South Brent Community Energy Society's primary objective is to benefit the community of South Brent in Devon by generating renewable energy and promoting energy efficiency. The society's policy for distributing funds prioritises projects that benefit the local community, reduce the village's carbon footprint and have community support. The society aims to minimise the burden on volunteers by prioritising fewer, larger schemes. Organisations that operate within or primarily serve the community of South Brent and its surrounding areas can apply for funding, but individuals cannot. By focusing on local organisations, the society ensures that the benefits of the project are felt directly within the community.

To date, it has supported various initiatives, such as installing energy-saving measures in local churches, providing grants for insulation improvements in local homes and funding solar PV installations on local schools. By reinvesting the surplus funds generated by the wind turbine and solar panels, the South Brent Community Energy Society continues to create a positive impact on the local community while contributing to a more sustainable future.

Case study:
Ynni Padarn Peris



Type of project:
Hydro.

Stage of project:
Generating energy since 2017.

Project website:
https://www.elusendyffrynperis.cymru/home-english

Funding received:
Local shareholders funded Ynni Padarn Peris, with a minimum investment of £250 per person.

Funding distributed:
£10,000 per year (depending on the weather!) to local community projects.

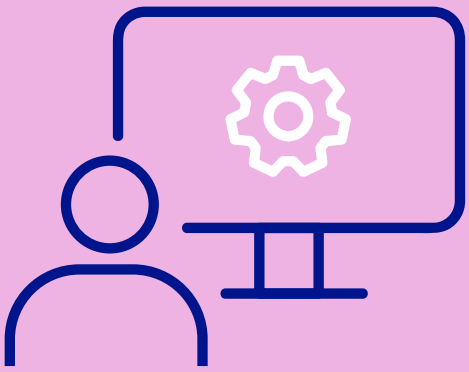
Key features:
Ynni Padarn Peris, a community hydro scheme in Llanberis, Wales, has been making impact in its local community since its establishment in 2017. The driving ambition for the project was to create economic and social benefits that would stay in the local community. Each year, project's profits, about £10,000 per year, are distributed through the Elusen Dyffryn Peris Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) for the benefit of the local community.

Elusen Dyffryn Peris CIO plays a crucial role in ensuring that the project's benefits are felt throughout the community. The charity offers grants to support a wide range of initiatives that align with its goals, such as reducing fuel poverty, promoting renewable energy, encouraging sustainable transportation, connecting people to the environment, promoting exercise and health and supporting the Welsh language.

The organisation provides clear guidance on what is supported through the fund, which includes one-off grants for small community projects and long-term funding for more significant initiatives. The charity welcomes applications from individuals, voluntary and community groups, community councils and not-for-profit social enterprises. They review applications quarterly and require successful applicants to submit receipts, reports and use the money as stated in their application, ensuring transparency and accountability throughout the process.

By investing the profits back into the community, Ynni Padarn Peris is creating a sustainable model for community development that ensures the project's benefits are felt by a wide range of residents.

6 How to respond to other planning applications



It is necessary to consider how you may respond to other planning applications submitted in your local area e.g. by renewable energy developers. The processes around community engagement and benefits can vary among developers, so it is beneficial to try to engage with them as early as possible to ensure that the local community can receive maximum benefit from a commercial project.

6.1 What to expect from a developer

When a renewable energy project is proposed in your community, it's important to know what good developer engagement looks like. Developers should aim to work collaboratively with communities, ensuring their approach is inclusive, transparent and responsive to local concerns. Knowing what to expect will help you engage effectively and advocate for meaningful participation.

Good community engagement from a developer should ensure that the community is involved in the project as early as possible so that you can shape the project's design. Developers should be following the principles outlined in section 3 of this guide. If they are not meeting these expectations, consider arranging a meeting to discuss how the community can be more effectively included in the process. Early communication can help ensure your voices are heard and the project delivers real benefits locally.

It is important to note that discussions around community benefits may be undertaken separately from discussions around the project design.

What if we are not happy with the proposed project design?

If you are concerned about the design of a proposed project, you could try the following actions:

1. Identify specific concerns: clearly articulate the issues with the design.
2. Gather evidence: collect data and examples to support your position.
3. Propose alternatives/solutions: suggest feasible design modifications that address your concerns.
4. Engage stakeholders: rally community support and involve relevant experts.
5. Negotiate constructively: approach discussions with the developer professionally and seek mutually beneficial solutions.

Remember to focus on finding a design that aligns with your community's needs while being open to compromise.

Negotiations on community benefits

It has become standard practice for developers to offer community benefit packages, particularly for onshore wind projects. The most common form of community benefit is a fund. However, it is helpful to recognise that community benefits can extend beyond the conventional community benefit fund model and can be tailored to the needs and preferences of your local community.

Particularly as the scale of developer-owned projects are advancing, community benefits can encompass a wide array of initiatives tailored to address local needs and priorities. These may include targeted funding for specific community programmes, such as local retrofit initiatives, or benefits ranging from educational programmes to infrastructure improvements.

To ensure that community benefits align closely with community aspirations and achieve greater local impact, developers should be engaging early with the community to understand community preferences. Some developers actively assist communities in this process, offering guidance and support to identify and implement additional forms of community benefit beyond traditional financial contributions.

It is useful to be aware of the additional forms of local and community benefit that developers could provide:

Energy efficiency and retrofit support: developers could fund or help deliver local home retrofit initiatives (e.g. insulation, heating upgrades) targeting fuel-poor or vulnerable households. This creates lasting carbon and cost savings.

Education and youth engagement: support for local schools and youth groups through renewable energy education programmes, site visits, science kits or curriculum-linked workshops.

Shared ownership: community shared ownership enables local residents to directly invest in and own a stake in renewable energy projects. This approach empowers communities by providing them with a tangible sense of ownership and control over local energy generation. It also offers potential financial returns through dividends or revenue sharing. More information on shared ownership is available in Regen's Sharing Power report.

Skills sharing: skills sharing programmes could greatly benefit local community energy organisations by developers sharing their technical expertise and knowledge. This could involve providing training sessions, workshops, or mentorship opportunities to help community members enhance their understanding of renewable energy technologies, project management and related skills. By leveraging their pool of technical experts, developers can significantly help community energy groups bring forward their own projects.

Training and apprenticeships: developers could help provide training schemes, green job placements or apprenticeships linked to the construction or operation of the energy project.

Energy bill discounts: some developers have offered energy bill discounts as a form of community benefit. While these discounts may seem beneficial on the surface, particularly to those on a lower income, there are concerns that they could inadvertently encourage higher energy consumption, potentially counteracting the environmental benefits of renewable energy generation. It is thus worth considering if there are other more direct measures to help community members struggling with their energy bills, such as energy efficiency measures or a directly targeted fuel poverty fund.

How to approach developers to discuss community benefits

When engaging with a developer, approach the conversation early and constructively. Start by requesting a meeting to discuss how the project could deliver lasting value to the local area, beyond the statutory planning process. Come prepared with clear community priorities or ideas, whether it's supporting retrofit schemes, youth engagement, or local biodiversity. If possible, reference examples of community benefit models from other projects, and emphasise your interest in working collaboratively to find options that reflect the local context. Developers may be more flexible and creative when communities are proactive, informed and solution-focused. In some cases, a developer may hire a separate organisation (a fund administrator) to help with this process.

How to negotiate on forms of community benefits:

You may be in a situation where the developer is not offering any flexibility in terms of community benefit. To negotiate effectively, it's essential to:

Do your homework: research the project, developer and potential benefits that your community would like to receive.

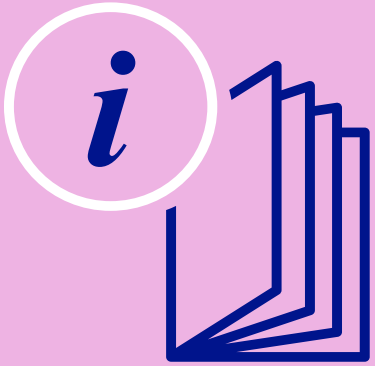
Build relationships: foster open communication and find common ground with the developer.

Be flexible: be open to discussing potential solutions that meet both parties' needs.

Can we approach developers of existing projects?

Yes, even if a project is already operational, it's still worth approaching the developer to discuss community benefits. While some agreements may have been finalised, many developers are open to building or improving relationships with the local community over the longer term. Start by identifying the project operator or asset manager (often listed on planning documents or local authority records) and request a meeting to explore whether any ongoing funding, partnerships or educational opportunities might be possible. Be constructive and specific about the community's interests and highlight any local initiatives the developer could support as part of their social or environmental commitments. Some community benefit schemes have evolved post-construction through this kind of ongoing dialogue.

7 Further resources



Below we have set out some additional resources that may help navigate the planning system. Additionally, it is worth reaching out to other community energy groups in your local area to learn about their experiences of navigating the planning process.

7.1 Additional resources

The following resources may provide useful information:

Centre for Sustainable Energy
Neighbourhood planning in a climate emergency
A helpful guide to neighbourhood planning.

Planning Aid England and Planning Aid Wales
Free services for England and Wales providing independent advice and support on planning issues for communities, including workshops, training and guidance notes.

Senedd Research, Welsh Parliament
A series of quick guides to the planning system in Wales
Practical guides to the Welsh planning system.

UK Government Renewable Energy Planning Database map
A map of submitted, refused and granted planning applications for renewables.

Regen
Onshore Renewable Energy: Common Myths
A myth-busting guide for onshore renewables.

Guide to best practice in community engagement
A guide to best practice community engagement.

Friends of the Earth
Supporting onshore solar and wind applications: Responding to planning applications and local campaigning
Tips for supporting onshore wind and solar planning applications.

Greater South East Net Zero Hub
Collaborating on community energy
A guide for local authorities on working with community energy groups.

7.2 Glossary

Below we have set out a glossary of key terms you may encounter during the planning process.

Community benefits
A voluntary initiative to support communities living close to a renewable energy project – often in the form of a monetary community benefit fund.

Core strategy
A strategic document within the local plan. It sets out the long-term vision for a local planning authority area, the strategic objectives and the strategic planning policies needed to deliver that vision.

Design and Access Statement (DAS)
A document accompanying a planning application that outlines the design principles and accessibility considerations of a proposed development.

Development plan
The documents that outline the planning policies within a local authority area. This includes Local Plans, Neighbourhood Plans, and Supplementary Planning Documents.

Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)
An assessment process that evaluates the potential environmental effects of a proposed development. An EIA is often required for larger or environmentally sensitive projects.

Local Plan (England) and Local Development Plan (Wales)
A Local Plan is a statutory planning document prepared by a local planning authority (LPA) in England that sets out the vision, objectives, and detailed planning policies for the future development of an area, usually over a 15–20 year period. Once examined and adopted, it forms part of the development plan, alongside Neighbourhood Plans and supplementary plans; in Wales, the equivalent document is the Local Development Plan (LDP).

Local planning authority (LPA)
The administrative body responsible for making decisions on planning applications within a specific geographic area.

Material considerations
Any relevant and important factor to the decision making process for a planning application. These considerations can influence whether permission is granted or refused and must relate to land use and development. Examples include the impact on traffic, environmental effects, design and appearance, local planning policies etc.

Neighbourhood Plan
A community-led document that sets out planning policies for a specific neighbourhood or parish, often addressing local issues.

Planning appeal
The process by which applicants can challenge planning decisions made by the local planning authority through an independent appeals process.

Planning committee
A decision making body comprised of elected representatives or appointed members responsible for determining planning applications and related matters.

Planning condition
A condition imposed on a grant of planning permission. Examples of planning conditions could include the installation of landscape screening to minimise visual impact.

Planning Inspectorate
The Planning Inspectorate deals with planning appeals, national infrastructure planning applications, examinations of Local Plans and other planning-related and specialist casework in England.

Site location plan
A detailed map showing the location of the proposed development within its wider context, including site boundaries and nearby features.

Supplementary Planning Documents/Guidance (SPD/SPG)
Documents which add further detail to the policies in the Local Plan. They can be used to provide further guidance for development on specific sites or on particular issues, such as design. Supplementary Planning Documents are capable of being a material consideration in planning decisions, but are not part of the development plan, so do not carry as much weight in the process.

Electricity Distribution

Community Energy Planning Guidance

This guidance was sponsored by:
National Grid Electricity Distribution (NGED)

Date:
February 2026

nationalgrid