

RTPI response to:

A National Policy Statement for new nuclear power generation: Consultation on the new approach to siting beyond 2025

March 2024

Question 2: EN-6 includes government assessed potential sites. In this consultation we propose EN-7 empowers developers to assess and identify potential sites using robust criteria. What is your view on the government proposal to shift its nuclear siting policy to a criteria-based approach

Disagree

It is a backwards step to remove site specific content from now the only National Policy Statement which contains it. The point of the 2008 Act was to reduce time spent in planning inquiries by making clear choices in NPS. One of the reasons that NSIPs are taking longer is the absence of clear spatial guidance.

The Government made a commitment in the 2023 Autumn Statement to commission the Electricity System Operator to work with government to produce a new Strategic Spatial Energy Plan. The current debate about the national grid in East Anglia shows how important it is that the government plans where both generating capacity and grid capacity will be needed. A small nuclear reactor might be as big as 500MW and require substantial grid capacity. It would seem strange to permit it and then have it not built.

Both Sellafield and Wylfa DCO processes have shown that having no debate about the principle of development on the site is a major contributor to smooth progress.

Question 13: Is there any additional information, perspective, or consideration that you believe is important to the development of the nuclear NPS, which may not have been adequately addressed or is missing from the consultation document? Please share your insights and suggestions.

The consultation document provides little Welsh context, therefore making it difficult to comment on the proposals from a Wales perspective. Further information would be helpful on the interface between the proposals set out in this consultation and Future Wales: The National Plan 2040. Future Wales 2040 is the national development plan for Wales, with legal development plan status under S38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

We note that paras 4.3.3, 4.3.17, 4.3.19 and 4.4.13 onwards of the consultation document refers to English guidance and practice but does not quote the relevant Welsh guidance or practice. For example, Biodiversity Net Gain (4.4.13) does not apply in Wales, even for NSIPs determined at UK Gov level. Net Benefit for Biodiversity applies in Wales under Planning Policy Wales12, alongside the new step wise approach. It would therefore be helpful if the equivalent Welsh policy and practice were referred to in the consultation document.