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Spatial Approaches to Local Energy Planning

**Part two: A guide to energy
policy and planning for energy
infrastructure across the UK.**

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This resource is part of the Spatial Approaches to Local Energy Planning (SALEP) suite

This resource is part of the RTPI's SALEP (Spatial Approaches to Local Energy Planning) suite of guidance, analysis and in-depth case studies on integrating energy planning with town planning across the UK. It was produced in collaboration with [Regen](#).

For more information and access to the rest of the suite, please visit the [SALEP webpage](#).

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This document was produced by the RTPI with input from Regen.

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1. Introduction

1.1 A complex landscape

The energy and planning policy landscape across the UK is a complicated one. Energy policy is largely the responsibility of the UK government, while planning is devolved to the administrations in Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland.

In terms of electricity generation and transmission, Great Britain – covering England, Scotland and Wales – share one grid, while Northern Ireland has a separate grid. Electricity is then distributed to local areas by various operators. Great Britain and Northern Ireland have two separate regulators: Ofgem for the former and the Northern Ireland Authority for Energy Regulation for the latter.

Meanwhile, because planning is devolved, each UK nation has its own town planning system. Within these separate planning systems, there is generally a distinction between how major and local projects are consented, although the specifics differ across nations.

This already complex scenario is evolving rapidly, with new forms of energy-related plans being introduced to the policy landscape at various levels and with town planning reform ongoing.

1.2 This resource: Navigating changing energy infrastructure-related planning regimes and energy policy

Recognising this complexity and change, **this resource provides readers with an overview of:**

- **Climate and energy targets across the UK, and how they are reflected in policies across different nations;**
- **The electricity transmission and distribution networks across the UK;**
- **The consenting (planning) regimes in different UK nations for major and local energy projects; and**
- **The different levels of energy infrastructure-related spatial and development plans in different UK nations.**

At the end of the chapter, we provide reference tables of:

- Key government departments and public bodies relevant to infrastructure planning in different parts of the UK; and
- Key government departments and public bodies relevant to energy policy.

2. National energy policy and targets

The UK has committed to reaching net zero by 2050. This refers to the ambition to reduce 100% greenhouse gas emissions by that year compared with 1990 levels.

Covering **Great Britain**, Clean Power 2030 is the UK Government's ambition to 'generate enough clean power to meet our total annual electricity demand, backed up by unabated gas supply to be used only when essential' ([NESO, 2025](#)).¹ By 2030, clean sources should produce at least 95% of Great Britain's generation.

Scotland aims to achieve net zero by 2045. Its Draft Energy Strategy and Just Transition Plan set out the nation's plan to expand the energy generation sector, so it will have more than 20GW of additional low-cost renewable generation capacity by 2030 ([Scottish Government, 2023](#)).² The nation also aims to have 2GW of community-owned energy by 2030.

In **Wales**, the nation's energy strategy is set out in Energy Wales: A Low Carbon Transition ([Welsh Government, 2012](#))³. In 2023, the nation announced that it aims to meet the equivalent of 100% of its annual electricity needs from renewable sources by 2035 ([Welsh Government, 2023](#)).⁴ They also target at least 1.5GW of renewable energy capacity to be locally owned. They expect a separate 5.5GW of renewable energy capacity to be produced by heat pump by the same year, subject to support from the UK government and reductions in the cost of technology.

In **Northern Ireland**, according to the Climate Change (Northern Ireland) Act 2022, the Department for the Economy must ensure at least 80% of electricity consumption is from renewable sources by 2030. The Energy Strategy – Path to Net Zero Energy document sets out the steps to achieve this ([Department for the Economy, 2021](#)).⁵

¹ NESO, 'Clean power 2030', NESO, 2025 < <https://www.neso.energy/publications/clean-power-2030> > [accessed 21/05/2025]

² Scottish Government, 'Draft Energy Strategy and Just Transition Plan', Scottish Government Publications, 2023 < <https://www.gov.scot/publications/draft-energy-strategy-transition-plan/> > [accessed 21/05/2025]

³ Welsh Government, 'Energy Wales: A Low Carbon Transition', Gov.Wales, 2012 < <https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2019-07/energy-wales-a-low-carbon-transition.pdf> > [accessed 21/05/2025]

⁴ Welsh Government, 'Wales aims to meet 100% of its electricity needs from renewable sources by 2035', Gov. Wales, 2023 < <https://www.gov.wales/wales-aims-meet-100-its-electricity-needs-renewable-sources-2035> > [accessed 21/05/2025]

⁵ Department for the Economy, 'Energy Strategy - Path to Net Zero Energy', Department for the Economy, 2021 < <https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/publications/energy-strategy-path-net-zero-energy> > [accessed 21/05/2025]

3. Electricity transmission

For **transmission**, the **National Energy System Operator (NESO)** manages the flow of electricity within Great Britain, ensuring there is enough supply to meet consumer demand.

In England and Wales, **National Grid Electricity Transmission** owns and maintains the high voltage electricity network. In central and southern Scotland, this is the responsibility of **Scottish Power (SP)**; in the north of Scotland, this remit falls with **Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks (SSEN)**.

SONI operates the grid of Northern Ireland, in a role similar to NESO. **Northern Ireland Electricity Networks (NIE Networks)** owns the transmission and distribution infrastructure.

4. Electricity distribution

Following long-distance transmission, electricity is transmitted to smaller areas via infrastructure owned by District Network Operators (DNOs).

There are six DNOs in Great Britain:

- **Scottish and Southern electricity Networks** which covers Scotland and parts of England;
- **SP Energy Networks** which covers southern and central Scotland, north Wales and Merseyside;
- **Northern Powergrid** which north-east England and Yorkshire;
- **Electricity North West** which covers north-west England;
- **National Grid Electricity Distribution** which cover the midlands and south-west of England, and south Wales; and
- **UK Power Networks** which covers London and the south-east and east of England.

In Northern Ireland, NIE Networks operates the electricity distribution network (as well as owning the electricity transmission and distribution networks).

In recent years, DNOs are transitioning to become Distribution System Operators (DSOs) to take a systems approach towards network management. This will involve the use of data to enable better forward planning and more active network management.

5. Consenting regimes in England

In England, larger energy projects are determined through the Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs) regime, while smaller projects go through provisions set out in the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

5.1 Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects

The NSIP regime was created under the Planning Act 2008. At its heart are a set of National Policy Statements (NPSs) that lay out England's needs for infrastructure, how applications will be assessed and the ways in which impacts and mitigations will be judged. The Energy NPS ([DESNZ, 2023](#))⁶ was last updated in January 2024. However, DESNZ consulted on revising the Energy NPS from 24 April 2025 to 29 May, suggesting that further changes may be imminent, particularly in relation to onshore wind ([DESNZ, 2025](#)).⁷

Once the Planning and Infrastructure Bill ([House of Commons, 2025](#))⁸ gains royal assent, likely to be in 2025, it is expected that all NPSs will be updated every five years.

Electricity generation projects that exceed the thresholds set out in the list below are considered under the NSIP regime.

- Biomass - 50MW
- Pumped hydro storage - 50MW
- Solar Photovoltaic - 100MW
- Onshore Wind - 100MW
- Offshore wind - 100MW
- Tidal - 100MW

For transmission infrastructure, the thresholds are set out in EN-5: National Policy Statement for Electricity Networks Infrastructure ([DESNZ, 2024](#)).⁹

For an energy NSIP, the final decision is made by the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change following an examination process and recommendation by the Planning Inspectorate. Local authorities are statutory consultees in the process and they are required to produce a Local

⁶ DESNZ, 'National Policy Statements for energy infrastructure', Gov.uk, 2023 < <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/national-policy-statements-for-energy-infrastructure#full-publication-update-history> > [accessed 21/05/2025]

⁷ DESNZ, 'Planning for new energy infrastructure: 2025 revisions to National Policy Statements', Gov.uk, 2025 < <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/planning-for-new-energy-infrastructure-2025-revisions-to-national-policy-statements> > [accessed 21/05/2025]

⁸ House of Commons, 'Planning and Infrastructure Bill', UK Parliament, 2025 < <https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3946> > [accessed 21/05/2025]

⁹ DESNZ, 'National Policy Statement for Electricity Networks Infrastructure (EN-5)', Gov.uk, 2024 < <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-policy-statement-for-electricity-networks-infrastructure-en-5/national-policy-statement-for-electricity-networks-infrastructure-en-5> > [accessed 21/05/2025]

Impact Report to inform the examination process.

5.2 Town and Country Planning Act 1990

Smaller projects, that fall below the NSIP thresholds, will be determined by the relevant local planning authorities through the regime anchored in the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. The decision will be informed by the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). Chapter 14 of the NPPF – ‘Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change’ – is particularly relevant to energy projects.

Paragraph 168 of the NPPF (as of 26/03/2025) concerns how planning applications for renewable and low carbon energy developments and their associated infrastructure should be determined. It states that local planning authorities should:

1. Not require applicants to demonstrate the overall need for renewable or low carbon energy, and give significant weight to the benefits associated with renewable and low carbon energy generation and the proposal’s contribution to a net zero future;
2. Recognise that small-scale and community-led projects provide a valuable contribution to cutting greenhouse gas emissions; and
3. In the case of applications for the repowering and life-extension of existing renewable sites, give significant weight to the benefits of utilising an established site.

In 2024, a footnote in the NPPF that had previously imposed a de-facto ban on onshore wind development was removed. Since then, the government has also taken steps to reintroduce onshore wind to the NSIP regime ([legislation.gov.uk, 2025](https://www.legislation.gov.uk, 2025)).¹⁰

6. Consenting regimes in Scotland

In Scotland, applications to build, operate or modify onshore electricity generating stations with capacities over 50MW are decided by Scottish Ministers under the Electricity Act 1989. The same goes for applications to install overhead power lines, large oil and gas pipelines and associated infrastructure. These applications are processed on Scottish Ministers’ behalf by the Energy Consents Unit ([Scottish Government, 2025](https://www.scottish.gov.uk, 2025)).¹¹

Offshore wind, wave and tidal energy projects also require consent from Scottish Ministers through Marine Scotland ([Scottish Government, 2025](https://www.scottish.gov.uk, 2025)).¹² The Sectoral Marine Plan for Offshore Wind

¹⁰ UK Government, ‘The Infrastructure Planning (Onshore wind and solar generation) Order 2025’, Legislation.gov.uk, 2025 < <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukdsi/2025/9780348269765> > [accessed 21/05/2025]

¹¹ Scottish Government, ‘Energy Consents Unit’, Energy Consents, 2025 < <https://www.energyconsents.scot/> > [accessed 21/05/2025]

¹² Scottish Government, ‘Energy Consents Unit’, Energy Consents, 2025 < <https://www.energyconsents.scot/> > [accessed 21/05/2025]

Energy serves as a strategic framework to identify sustainable plan options for development of commercial-scale offshore wind projects with a generating capacity of over 100MW ([Scottish Government, 2020](#)).¹³ It informs the Crown Estate Scotland leasing process.

Applications for onshore electricity generating stations with capacities of 50MW or less are approved by the local planning authority under the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997.

Changes to electricity consenting in Scotland have been introduced in the Planning and Infrastructure Bill ([House of Commons, 2025](#)).¹⁴ This follows recognition that the Electricity Act 1989 needs modernisation to realise Scotland's net zero ambitions. Under the bill, pre-application and acceptance stages like those in England will be introduced. There will be clearer timescales for each stage of consenting.

7. Consenting regimes in Wales

In Wales, energy generation projects of 10MW to 350MW are considered Developments of National Significance (DNS). They are determined by Welsh Ministers and handled by Planning and Environment Decisions Wales (PEDW). In 2024, the Welsh government announced plans to allow PEDW to take decisions on renewable energy projects up to 50MW ([Welsh Government, 2024](#)).¹⁵ This was envisioned to reduce decision time by at least 12 weeks.

DNS applications must be decided in accordance with Welsh government planning policy and relevant Local Development Plans. Welsh government planning policy is set out in Future Wales ([Welsh Government, 2019](#))¹⁶, Planning Policy Wales ([Welsh Government, 2018](#)),¹⁷ and various Technical Advice Notes. Local Development Plans are prepared by Local Planning Authorities.

In 2024, the new Infrastructure (Wales) Act received Royal Assent ([Senedd Cymru, 2024](#)).¹⁸ The Act contains provisions to establish a unified consenting process called an Infrastructure Consent

¹³ Scottish Government, 'Sectoral Marine Plan for Offshore Wind Energy', Gov.scot, 2020 < <https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/strategy-plan/2020/10/sectoral-marine-plan-offshore-wind-energy/documents/sectoral-marine-plan-offshore-wind-energy/sectoral-marine-plan-offshore-wind-energy/govscot%3Adocument/sectoral-marine-plan-offshore-wind-energy.pdf> > [accessed 21/05/2025]

¹⁴ House of Commons, 'Planning and Infrastructure Bill', UK Parliament, 2025 < <https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3946> > [accessed 21/05/2025]

¹⁵ Welsh Government, 'Welsh Government takes action to accelerate infrastructure planning decisions', Gov.wales, 2024 < <https://www.gov.wales/welsh-government-takes-action-accelerate-infrastructure-planning-decisions> > [accessed 21/05/2025]

¹⁶ Welsh Government, 'Future Wales: the national plan 2040', Gov.wales, 2019 < <https://www.gov.wales/future-wales-national-plan-2040> > [accessed 21/05/2025]

¹⁷ Welsh Government, 'Planning Policy Wales', Gov.wales, 2018 < <https://www.gov.wales/planning-policy-wales> > [accessed 21/05/2025]

¹⁸ Senedd Cymru, 'Infrastructure (Wales) Act 2024', Business.senedd.wales, 2024 < <https://business.senedd.wales/mglssueHistoryHome.aspx?lId=41502> > [accessed 21/05/2025]

for ‘Significant Infrastructure Projects’ (SIPs). The vision is to replace various statutory regimes with a single process, creating a ‘one-stop shop’.

This new process covers wind generating stations of capacities over 50 MW and other energy projects of 50MW to 350MW. For projects below the 50MW compulsory threshold, as well as battery storage projects over 10MW, Welsh ministers have the power to direct them into the regime ([Welsh Government, 2024](#)).¹⁹

While the primary legislation is now in place, further secondary legislative work will have to be undertaken before these changes will be implemented. Once in place, this will replace the DNS process.

Projects generating more than 350MW are determined by the NSIP regime, as described in the England section above.

Smaller scale projects are decided by Local Planning Authorities, with reference to the Local Development Plan for the area and Welsh government planning policy and guidance.

8. Consenting regimes in Northern Ireland

In Northern Ireland, the Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPSS) ([Department for Infrastructure, 2015](#))²⁰ serves as the overarching planning document for the region. The provisions of the SPSS must be taken into account in the preparation of Local Development Plans and are material to all decisions on planning applications and appeals.

Electricity generating stations of a capacity of 30MW or over are considered ‘major developments’. This category also covers all onshore development associated with the construction of an offshore electricity generating station that has a capacity of 30MW or over. As these projects are considered to have important social, economic and environmental implications for a local area they are given priority, at the local authority’s discretion, to avoid delay and risk to investment decisions. Applicants for a major development must undertake pre-application community consultation.

The Department for Infrastructure (DfI) may call in an application for determination if it is deemed to have regional social, economic, or environmental significance and will affect a large number of people.

There is also a separate class of ‘regionally significant planning applications’, which are submitted

¹⁹ Welsh Government, ‘Infrastructure (Wales) Act 2024: Explanatory Memorandum, Gov.wales, 2024 < <https://law.gov.wales/sites/default/files/2024-06/Infrastructure%20%28Wales%29%20Act%202024%20English.pdf> > [accessed 21/05/2025]

²⁰ Department for Infrastructure, ‘The Strategic Planning Policy Statement’, Infrastructure-ni.gov, 2015 < <https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/publications/strategic-planning-policy-statement> > [accessed 21/05/2025]

to and determined by the DfI directly. According to the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 ([Northern Ireland Assembly, 2011](#))²¹, these developments are defined to:

- Be of significance to the whole or a substantial part of Northern Ireland or have significant effects outside Northern Ireland; and/or
- Involve a substantial departure from the local development plan for the area to which it relates.

9. The key energy-related spatial and town and country plans across the UK

9.1 Introduction

Town planning and infrastructure planning across the UK

In this resource, and across the rest of this suite, we use the terms ‘town planning’ (as a contraction of ‘town and country planning’) or ‘infrastructure planning’ to refer to the UK’s formal planning systems.

All of the UK nations have plan-led town planning systems, meaning that development is guided by development plans. These plans carry a significant amount of weight in planning decisions, although they must generally conform to national policy – such as the NPPF in England and SPSS in Northern Ireland – in their preparation.

In Scotland, the development plan consists of the National Planning Framework (NPF4) and the relevant local development plan (LDP).

In Wales, Future Wales: the national plan 2040, the Strategic Development Plan (which covers a larger-than-local area) and the local development plan together form the development plan. At the time of writing, no Strategic Development Plans have yet been adopted

In England, under reforms contained in the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 ([legislation.gov.uk, 2023](#)),²² the development plan comprises the relevant Spatial Development Strategy, local plan, minerals and waste plan, supplementary plan and any neighbourhood plans.

In Northern Ireland, each local authority must prepare a local development plan. It must take the

²¹ Northern Ireland Assembly, ‘Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011, [Legislation.gov, 2011](#) < <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/nia/2011/25/contents> > [accessed 21/05/2025]

²² Legislation.gov.uk, ‘Levelling-Up and Regeneration Act 2023, [Legislation, gov.uk, 2023](#) < <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2023/55/part/3/chapter/2/crossheading/development-plans-and-national-policy> > [accessed 21/05/2025]

SPPS – set out by the Department for Infrastructure – into account.

Outside planning systems

In this resource and elsewhere we use the term ‘spatial plans’, to refer to plans that shape the location of developments and infrastructure, but which may not formally constitute part of a development plan or statutory planning system.

Most forms of energy plan which we discuss here are types of spatial planning, rather than infrastructure planning or town planning, though it is important to note that plans that constitute part of the town planning system may well contain energy-related policy.

One example of a spatial plan which will shape development while not being part of a town planning or infrastructure planning system is National Energy System Operator’s Strategic Spatial Energy Plan (SSEP). This is currently under development but once in place will provide spatial guidance on the location of energy infrastructure development across Great Britain. Following that, NESO will also publish a Centralised Strategic Network Plan (CSNP), which will be published to coordinate the future development of electricity transmission network. Also covering Great Britain, it is expected that NESO will also produce Regional Energy Strategic Plans (RESPs) which will be prepared to ensure regional coordination of the energy network.

In England, the UK Government is developing a Land Use Framework ([Defra, 2025](#)),²³ which may support spatial decision making in local government by providing advanced land use data. The ambition is to ensure nature and agricultural land will be protected during the government’s drive to meet clean power and housebuilding targets. A consultation was launched in January 2025 and closed in April 2025 ([‘Land use in England’, Defra, 2025](#)).²⁴

9.2 The rest of this resource

The following parts of this resource describe energy-related spatial plans, infrastructure plans, and plans that are parts of town and country planning systems, in more detail.

Given the rapidly changing local energy planning landscape, the final part of this resource then provides a ‘who’s who?’ of key government departments and bodies that operate at the national and regional levels across the UK.

9.3 Great Britain

SSEP

The SSEP – jointly commissioned by the UK, Scottish and Welsh governments – is being

²³ Defra, ‘Government launches “national conversation” on land use’, Gov.uk, 2025 < <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-launches-national-conversation-on-land-use> > [accessed 21/05/2025]

²⁴ Defra, ‘Land use in England’, Gov.uk, 2025 < <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/land-use-in-england> > [accessed 21/05/2025]

developed by NESO. It will focus on the generation and storage of electricity and hydrogen and will enable better planning of the power grid. According to NESO's consultation document on SSEP's methodology ([NESO, 2024](#)),²⁵ the plan will:

- Reflect UK and devolved government policies for agriculture, the NPPF in England, NPF4 in Scotland and Planning Policy Wales; and
- Provide recommendations for the zonal locations of energy infrastructure, where location and project-specific decisions will be made during subsequent processes.

CSNP

The CSNP will be informed by SSEP, with a focus on the electricity transmission network. It will set out a long-term approach to electricity network planning in Great Britain.

RESPs

RESPs will be developed by up to 13 new bodies across Great Britain to coordinate strategic energy and infrastructure planning, in partnership with local governments. It is envisioned that strategic planning bodies in England, and unitary authorities in Scotland and Wales will feed into these plans.

9.4 England

Land Use Framework

The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) launched a consultation in January 2025 on land use, which will inform the eventual publication of a Land Use Framework.

The consultation's aim was to 'create a toolkit to support decision making and inform discussion' on food security, development, nature recovery and climate goals.

The Land Use Framework is expected to interact with the SSEP and other government strategies. In the consultation document, the government indicated that the framework will 'inform decisions, not impose them'. There will be no prescription of specific land uses in specific places.

Spatial Development Strategies

Spatial Development Strategies represent the tier of sub-regional planning in England. They may cover multiple local authority areas, but do not cover the regions which were abolished by the Coalition Government. At the time of writing, only London (in the form of the London Plan) and Liverpool City Region have, or are actively developing, Spatial Development Strategies. These set out the long-term and high-level visions for the sub-regions' development, including housing and

²⁵ NESO, 'Strategic Spatial Energy Plan: Draft methodology', NESO, 2024 < <https://www.neso.energy/document/349126/download> > [accessed 21/05/2025]

infrastructure.

It is envisioned under the government's English Devolution White Paper ([MHCLG, 2024](#))²⁶ that every area in England will eventually be covered by a Spatial Development Strategy and that they will be developed by 'Strategic Authorities'.

Local Plans

Local plans are developed by local planning authorities to guide decisions on future development proposals. Some local plans have provisions for net zero and energy efficiency measures.

Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) provide more detailed advice or guidance on policies adopted in a local plan. SPDs are not part of the development plan and cannot introduce new planning policies. Some local authorities have used SPDs to guide climate actions.

The Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 (LURA) contains provisions for SPDs to be replaced with Supplementary Plans – which will undergo a more stringent examination process and will form part of the development plan once adopted. Hence, while they are less agile than SPDs, they carry more weight in planning decisions.

Neighbourhood Plans

Neighbourhood plans are prepared by local communities – either through a parish council or neighbourhood forum. Neighbourhood plans form part of the development plan and the policies contained within them are used in the determination of planning applications.

9.5 Scotland

Land Use Strategy

The Land Use Strategy in Scotland sets out the nation's long-term vision for sustainable land use ([Scottish Government, 2021](#)).²⁷ The preparation of a Land Use Strategy is mandated by the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009. The current strategy is in its third iteration. It seeks to provide an overarching holistic picture of what sustainable land use in Scotland could look like, moving away from a sector-by-sector approach.

National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4)

NPF4 sets out the national spatial strategy for Scotland and includes a map for different types of national developments, including strategic renewable energy generation and transmission infrastructure.

²⁶ MHCLG, 'English devolution white paper', Gov.uk. 2024 < <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/english-devolution-white-paper-power-and-partnership-foundations-for-growth/english-devolution-white-paper> > [accessed 21/05/2025]

²⁷ Scottish Government, 'Scotland's third Land Use Strategy 2021-2026', Scottish Government, 2021 < <https://faolex.fao.org/docs/pdf/uk206925.pdf> > [accessed 21/05/2025]

NPF4 and the Local Development Plan forms the Development Plan for an area. As such, provisions in the NPF4 must be taken into account in planning decisions.

Regional Spatial Strategies (RSS)

RSSs are long-term spatial strategies for the development of an area, prepared either by a single local planning authority or two or more of them working together. RSSs are not part of the Development Plan but inform, and are informed by, the development of Local Development Plans and the NPF4.

Part 1 of NPF4 sets out the purposes of RSSs, while Annex C provides guidance for the preparation of each area's RSS, including the type of energy infrastructure to focus on.

Local Development Plans (LDPs)

LDPs envision how local places will change in the future. It is the obligation for each local planning authority to prepare an LDP. They are part of the Development Plan and as such are fundamental to planning decisions. Planning authorities must take the NPF4 into account when preparing their LDPs. They must also have regard to their adopted RSS.

Local Place Plans (LPPs)

LPPs are community-led plans that set out proposals for the development and use of land. They provide the opportunities for communities to express their aspirations for future development. Once completed and registered by the local planning authority, they are to be taken into account in the preparation of the relevant local development plan.

9.6 Wales

Future Wales: the national plan 2040

Future Wales is the national development framework for Wales, serving as the highest tier of the development plan. It provides the strategy to address key national priorities through the planning system. It is spatial in nature, containing a series of maps that visualise the nation's plans for nature, transport, economy etc. A map for 'wind energy and heat networks' indicate the pre-assessed areas for wind energy and priority areas for district heat networks.

National Energy Plan

The Welsh government intends to produce a National Energy Plan, incorporating findings in the Local Area Energy Plans across the nation. The national plan will set out the energy system changes required to achieve Net Zero by 2050.

Strategic Development Plans

Strategic Development Plans (SDPs) deal with cross-boundary and provide a strategic approach to planning at a larger-than-local scale. Covering a minimum 20 year period, they establish the spatial

areas for strategic housing, employment growth and renewable energy.

Since the obligation for CJsCs to produce SDPs is relatively new, there has not been any adopted SDP at the time of writing.

Local Development Plans and Local Development Plans 'Lites'

Local Development Plans (LDPs) are developed by local authorities to shape and guide development proposals. They cover a minimum of 15 year period.

Local Development Plans 'Lites' (LDPLs) are produced where an SDP has been adopted for the area. They cover a minimum ten-year period and will identify smaller and more localised allocations in a local area.

9.7 Northern Ireland

Regional Development Strategy 2035

The Regional Development Strategy (RDS) is the long-term development strategy which aims to deliver the NI Executive's Programme for Government. The Department for Infrastructure is responsible for the review, monitoring and implementation of the RDS 2035, published in March 2012. The RDS has a statutory basis and is material to decisions on individual planning applications and appeals. Local councils must take account of the RDS when drawing up their Local Development Plans.

Local Development Plans

Each council must prepare a Local Development Plan (LDP), which comprises a Plan Strategy and a Local Policies Plan. The Plan Strategy (PS) sets out the vision, objectives, growth strategy and strategic policies for the council area, which then inform the Local Policies Plan (LPP). Planning decisions are made in accordance with both the RDS and the relevant LDPs.

10. Who's who? Key government departments and public bodies relevant to energy policy

10.1 Background

The landscape in which local planners and other local energy policy decision makers are operating in is changing rapidly.

The table below summarises the key government departments and other public bodies involved in the development of energy policy at the national level (UK-wide, Great Britain and devolved administration-level).

10.2 UK-wide

Organisation	Status	Remit
Climate Change Committee	Independent statutory body established under the Climate Change Act 2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advises UK and devolved governments on emissions targets, including the carbon budgets • Reports to Parliament on progress
Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ)	Ministerial Department	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sets out energy and climate policies
Great British Energy	<p>Independent company owned by DESNZ</p> <p>In development at the time of publication and will be formally established when the Great British Energy Bill gains Royal Assent.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invests in energy projects alongside the private sector • Project development • Supports local energy generation projects through working with local authorities, combined authorities and communities • Builds supply chains across the UK • Develops work relationship with Great British Nuclear

10.3 Great Britain

Organisation	Status	Remit
Ofgem	Regulator/ Non-ministerial department	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect energy consumers • Set energy price caps • Industry licensing and regulation, including companies that design, build, operate and maintain electricity transmission infrastructure

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chairing the Connections Delivery Board, which oversees the implementation of the Connections Action Plan
National Energy System Operator (NESO)	Public corporation owned by DESNZ	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Energy system planner and operator Responsible for developing the Strategic Spatial Energy Plan Responsible for producing Regional Energy Spatial Plans

10.4 Scotland - national level

Organisation	Status	Remit
Energy and Climate Change Directorate	Scottish government directorate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Helps Scotland transition to a low carbon economy, with secure, affordable and sustainable energy

10.5 Wales - national level

Organisation	Status	Remit
The Welsh government		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overseas energy and climate change policy in Wales
Natural Resources Wales	Welsh government sponsored body	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Publishes the Energy Guidance Note Runs the Wind Energy, Wood Fuel and Small Scale Hydro Energy Programmes

10.6 Northern Ireland - regional level

Department for the Economy – Department of the Northern Irish Executive

- Sets out policy and strategy on energy including electricity, gas, renewables and energy efficiency

Northern Ireland Authority for Energy Regulation - Economic regulator for electricity, gas and water in Northern Ireland/ non-ministerial department of the Northern Irish Executive

- Protect consumers
- Issue and maintain licences for gas, electricity and water companies
- Set standards of service of regulated companies.

11. Who's who? The key departments public bodies relevant to the planning of energy infrastructure at the national and regional levels

11.1 Background

The landscape in which local planners and other local energy policy decision makers are operating in is changing rapidly.

The tables below summarise the key government departments and other public bodies involved in the planning of energy infrastructure at the national (both UK and Great Britain) and regional (including sub-regional) levels. It is not exhaustive, and focuses on those organisations whose remit is most relevant to energy planning.

11.2 UK- wide

Organisation	Status	Remit
Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ)	Ministerial Department	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Updates the Energy NPS, which mainly affects England but has limited applicability to Wales and Scotland
National Infrastructure and Service Transformation Authority (NISTA)	Joint unit of HM Treasury and the Cabinet Office	<ul style="list-style-type: none">A merger between the National Infrastructure Commission (NIC) and Infrastructure and Projects Authority (IPA)Before the merger, the NIC was responsible for assessing infrastructure needs in the UK and providing independent advice to the government; while the IPA monitored and reported on project deliveryNISTA will lead the delivery of the new 10-year national infrastructure strategy

11.3 Great Britain

Organisation	Status	Remit
National Energy System Operator (NESO)	Public corporation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Energy system planner and operatorResponsible for developing the Strategic Spatial Energy PlanResponsible for producing Regional Energy Spatial Plans

11.4 England - national level

Organisation	Status	Remit
Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG)	Ministerial department	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oversees the planning system, including reforms to the NSIP regime, the new plan making process and NPPF revisions
Planning Inspectorate	Executive agency of MHCLG	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Examines NSIP applications Examines local plans Deals with planning appeals

11.5 Scotland - national level

Organisation	Status	Remit
Local Government and Housing Directorate	Scottish government directorate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oversees the publication of the NPF4 Acts as a centre of expertise on local government and community planning
Planning, Architecture and Regeneration Directorate	Scottish government directorate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Delivers Scottish government's work on planning and consenting
Energy Consents Unit	Scottish government unit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Examines NSIP applications Examines local plans Deals with planning appeals
Marine Scotland	Scottish government directorate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Considers applications for offshore wind, wave and tidal energy projects
Planning and Environmental Appeals Division (DPEA)	Scottish government division	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Handles planning appeals

11.6 Wales - national level

Organisation	Status	Remit
The Welsh government		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Publishes Future Wales Oversees housing and local government
Planning and Environment Decision Wales	Welsh government division	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Examines DNS applications Handles planning appeals
National Infrastructure Commission for Wales	Welsh government's non-statutory body	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides independent advice on infrastructure for Welsh ministers
Natural Resources Wales	Welsh government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Statutory consultee

	sponsored body	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advise local planning authorities preparing local development plans • Marine/ Species licensing
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11.7 Northern Ireland - Regional level

Organisation	Status	Remit
Department for Infrastructure	Northern Irish government department	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determines regionally significant planning applications • Prepares the Strategic Planning Policy Statement
Planning Appeals Commission	Independent Commission funded and supported by the Northern Ireland Courts & Tribunals Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decides on planning appeals • Hosts and reports on public inquiries/ hearings/ examinations

11.8 England - regional level

Combined Authorities and strategic planning bodies

The Planning and Infrastructure Bill 2025 contains measures to widen and strengthen strategic planning to cover the whole of England. According to the English Devolution White Paper published at the end of 2024, devolution will become the ‘default setting’ and new strategic planning bodies will be set up in areas where a devolution deal is not yet in place ([MHCLG, 2024](#)).²⁸ The government’s proposal will see strategic authorities:

- Having a strategic role in the delivery of the Great British Energy Local Power Plans, which enable local sustainable energy generation; and
- Becoming the zoning coordinator for local heat networks and with their plans taken into account in the Regional Energy Strategic Plans (see the ‘Spatial plans and other policy documents’ section).

11.9 Scotland - regional level

Local planning authorities – a single one or two or more combined

Under the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019, a planning authority or two or more authorities acting jointly are required to prepare and adopt a Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS).

11.10 Wales - regional level

²⁸ MHCLG, ‘English Devolution White Paper’, Gov.uk, 2024 < <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/english-devolution-white-paper-power-and-partnership-foundations-for-growth/english-devolution-white-paper> > [accessed 21/05/2025]

Corporate Joint Committees (CJCs)

Corporate Joint Committees (CJCs) were introduced by the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021. There are currently four CJCs: North Wales, Mid Wales, South East Wales and South West Wales. CJCs are obliged by law to prepare Strategic Development Plans, which deal with cross-boundary issues such as housing and transport. They also provide a strategic approach to planning at a larger-than-local scale.



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