

# P-06-1339 Require all new Welsh homes to be fitted with solar panels as a condition of planning permission

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 3 Gorffennaf 2023  
Petitions Committee | 3 July 2023

Reference: SR23/5997-2

Petition Number: P-06-1339

**Petition title:** Require all new Welsh homes to be fitted with solar panels as a condition of planning permission.

## Text of petition:

The world is facing an urgent energy crisis and we are all facing a daunting climate and nature crisis. This is why it is so important that the Welsh Government should lead the way in securing future renewable energy sources.

This is why all new industrial, commercial and domestic builds (who are not shaded or north facing) should include solar energy as part of their planning consent.

The sun produces more than enough energy to meet the whole world's energy needs and it's not going to run out.

Solar panels have several benefits for the environment due to their green energy and lack of emissions when running:

1. Cuts down the energy you use from the National Grid. Reducing energy poverty and helping to keep our lights on.



2. No emissions. It can reduce the carbon footprint of your home by 80% in one year.
3. It's renewable. Solar energy is a form of renewable energy. This means that there is plenty of it to go around because it is an energy source that won't run out (not for another few billion years anyway). Fossil fuels are a finite source of energy, and one that we damage the planet with when we mine and distribute it.
4. They last a long time and require little to no maintenance. Conventional heating methods require relatively regular replacement and maintenance, which can cause a lot of environmentally unfriendly waste, as well as increase the need for more units to be made. Solar panels last about 50 years, so you shouldn't need to replace them for a long time.

## 1. Background

Wales has declared a climate emergency and the Senedd's Climate Change, Environment and Infrastructure Committee has heard private housing described as "the elephant in the room" for reaching the Welsh Government's target of net-zero by 2050. While that particular reference focused on the need to retro-fit existing homes to improve energy efficiency, the efficiency of new homes will also play a key role.

The UK Climate Change Committee's June 2023 progress report on reducing emissions in Wales found that Welsh renewables capacity has increased over time but the rate of solar power installation has slowed since 2016.

There is currently no requirement on developers to fit new build properties with solar panels, however there are mechanisms designed to enable and promote installation.

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## Permitted Development Rights

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Some types of development are defined by planning law as being ‘permitted’ and are therefore automatically granted planning permission, this includes a number of [common household projects meeting certain criteria](#)

There are permitted development rights that allow for the installation of micro-generation equipment, including rooftop solar panels on domestic and non-domestic properties in Wales, without having to make a planning application. Where certain criteria is not met a planning application would be required.

Senedd Research has published a [small-scale renewable energy schemes planning quick guide](#) which provides further information.

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## Building Regulations

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The [Building Regulations](#) are made under the *Building Act 1984*. They govern the way in which buildings should be constructed by setting minimum standards for design, construction and alterations. Technical guidance on how to comply with the Building Regulations is provided within '[approved documents](#)'.

**Part L** of the approved documents relates to the conservation of fuel and power.

In 2022 the Welsh Government [completed a review](#) of Part L. This introduced higher minimum energy efficiency standards for all new homes than were previously required. However the Building Regulations generally do not prescribe specific forms of heating or energy generation to be used to meet standards.

A further review of Part L is [due in 2025](#).

## Other countries

The European Union [has proposed](#) making solar panels mandatory on all new buildings in the EU. Its “solar rooftop initiative”, part of the European Commission’s [REPowerEU plan](#) would see a requirement to install solar panels on new residential, public and commercial buildings.

Japan has already [passed regulations](#) requiring solar panels on all new houses built in Tokyo by “large-scale homebuilders” after April 2025.

## 2. Welsh Government action

In her letter to the Chair dated 7 June, the Minister for Climate Change, Julie James, says she fully agrees with the petitioner “on the scale and urgency of the climate and nature crisis we face”.

While the Minister says the “proposition that all new buildings be fitted with solar energy panels, is in principle a good suggestion”, in her view there are several reasons why she does not believe it should be mandated at this time.

In her letter, the Minister suggests:

- the Welsh Government’s overall approach to Building Regulations, the amendments it has made and intends to make are the right steps to achieve carbon neutrality over time;
- existing permitted development rights strike “an appropriate balance” to allow solar installations while considering neighbouring properties;
- solar panels may not be suitable for every property – the Minister makes reference to the direction properties face, whether properties are located in protected areas, are listed buildings and potential specific issues for certain building types;
- potential issues with the supply of solar panels should demand increase; and
- that the mandating of a single technology may delay the emergence of new technologies and more efficient energy solutions.

## 3. Welsh Parliament action

The Fifth Senedd’s Petitions Committee considered a very similar petition to this one. At that time the Committee closed the petition noting there was little action they could take on the matter.

In June, the Minister referred to the issue of requiring solar panels in response to questions from Senedd Members on the UK Climate Change Committee progress report referenced earlier in this briefing.

It's also worth noting the issue has been raised in the House of Commons. In 2022 it considered a [similar petition](#). The UK Government's response referred to the existence of permitted development rights and Building Regulations.

Also at a UK level, an [amendment](#) to the [Levelling-up and Regeneration Bill](#) calling for all new homes in England to be fitted with solar panels from 2025 was tabled by Conservative MP John Stevenson but was not put to a vote.

Every effort is made to ensure that the information contained in this briefing is correct at the time of publication. Readers should be aware that these briefings are not necessarily updated or otherwise amended to reflect subsequent changes.