

Rebecca Evans AS/MS
Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Energy and Planning
Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros yr Economi, Ynni a Chynllunio



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-06-1503
Ein cyf/Our ref RE/00522/25

Carolyn Thomas MS
Chair - Petitions committee

17 June 2025

Dear Carolyn,

Thank you for your letter regarding petition P-06-1503 which asks the Welsh Government to conduct a study to analyse the options for ground mounted solar panels alongside roads, railways, in industrial areas and over car parks.

Here in Wales, we understand that to deliver our renewable energy targets we need a mixture of renewable energy technologies, which includes solar, and wind and other innovative technologies such as tidal and hydrogen. We believe this mixture adds resilience to delivering the energy demand required for now and the future.

I have included information below on the work already being undertaken regarding the use of solar energy technology in Wales.

Roads and Railways:

We have no plans to install solar panels on the Core Valley Lines (CVL) railway infrastructure for which we are responsible. Railway infrastructure in Wales outside of the CVL is owned and managed by Network Rail. The installation of solar panels on this infrastructure is a matter for them and I am not aware of any plans they may have on this matter. We remain committed to improving the railways in Wales and continue to work with Transport for Wales and partners such as Network Rail to deliver for passengers.

My officials are also working closely with our Trunk Road Agents to identify opportunities to use renewable energy sources such as solar panels. We are undertaking a programme of installing panels on works depots and other suitable buildings and are also investigating the possibilities of use elsewhere, however, we have not commenced installations adjacent to the strategic road network at this time.

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

Rooftop solar:

Welsh Government makes active use of solar panels in Wales in schemes such as the Optimised Retrofit Programme (ORP) in which social housing landlords are encouraged and supported to decarbonise their stock through a suite of interventions which has included significant amount of solar panel installations.

Permitted development rights for solar installations

Some solar panel developments benefit from permitted development rights which mean they do not require planning permission subject to certain restrictions and conditions. Permitted development rights for domestic and non-domestic solar are set out in The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order, Part 40, Class A, and Part 43 Class A respectively. On domestic properties permitted development rights allow solar installations, defined as microgeneration, of up to 50kw electricity and 45kw thermal subject to location and impact on amenity. On non-domestic properties there is no limit to the amount of solar panels that can be placed on a roof under permitted development rights subject to location and impact on amenity.

Building Regulations

The Welsh Government's Building Regulations (Part L: Conservation of fuel and power) are largely technology and fuel neutral in that they do not prescribe or prohibit any particular form of heating or energy generation, the intention being flexibility in meeting energy targets so as not to act as a barrier to innovation. In 2022, we made a significant and necessary step change in energy and carbon performance in new housing, which introduced a 37% reduction in carbon emissions for new dwellings (compared with previous standards). The 2022 amendments included solar PV within the notional building specification which sets the energy target. Although not mandatory, this encourages the use of renewable energy in new dwellings.

Car parks:

My officials are already working with their UK Government counterparts to explore the use of solar canopies on car parks [Solar on car parks and electric vehicle charging - GOV.UK](#)

National planning policy:

The Welsh Government supports the principle of developing renewable and low carbon energy from all technologies and at all scales to meet our future energy needs. Future Wales policy 18 sets out the criteria against which large scale renewable energy developments should be considered. Planning applications for large scale developments are rigorously assessed so that communities, designated areas and landscapes, and protected habitats and species, are protected from unacceptable adverse impacts. Planning Policy Wales supports the use of Local Area Energy Planning. LAEP are led by local authorities and through local and regional partnership seek to identify the most appropriate way to deliver renewable and low carbon energy delivery in an area across all technologies. Local authorities should also prepare a Renewable Energy Assessment and Energy Opportunities Plan to inform the preparation of their Local Development Plan and local planning policies.

Development on agricultural land

Planning Policy Wales also sets out the approach to be taken to managing best and most versatile (BMV) agricultural land. In development plan policies and development management decisions considerable weight should be given to protecting such BMV land from development, because of its special importance. Land in grades 1, 2 and 3a should only be developed if there is an overriding need for the development, and either previously developed land or land in lower agricultural grades is unavailable, or available lower grade land has an environmental value recognised by a landscape, wildlife, historic or archaeological designation which outweighs the agricultural considerations. The Welsh

Government's position on BMV land and solar PV arrays was further clarified by the former Minister for Climate Change, Julie James MS, in her Chief Planning Officer letter of 1 March 2022.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rebecca Evans". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'R' and a long tail on the 's'.

Rebecca Evans AS/MS

Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Energy and Planning

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