

Share your story on locally owned renewable energy

In September 2017, the Cabinet Secretary for Energy, Planning and Rural Affairs Lesley Griffiths announced ambitious new targets for energy generation in Wales including:

- 1 gigawatt (GW) of renewable electricity capacity in Wales to be locally owned by 2030; and
- Renewable energy projects to have at least an element of local ownership by 2020.

The [call for evidence](#), which will last 12 weeks, aims to gather evidence about how increasing local ownership of renewable energy generation can secure benefits for Wales and spread this in a more equitable way.

It will help identify the challenges developers, businesses, local authorities, communities and others will need to overcome to deliver more renewable generation in local and shared ownership.

Cabinet Secretary said:

“We are focusing on accelerating the transition of our energy system in Wales, particularly through the increased use of renewable energy. Last September, I announced ambitious new targets to deliver a low carbon energy system including local ownership and we are already making good progress in meeting these.

“Two projects which have recently become operational help symbolise the change taking place. Yesterday I visited Pen y Cymoedd windfarm, the largest onshore wind project in England and Wales. Vattenfall has supported and created more than a thousand jobs in Wales and the project delivers £1.8m annually into a community benefit fund.

“At a much smaller, community scale, we have Awel Aman Tawe’s wind development. It is wholly community owned, meaning all its profits are kept within the Amman Valley and their shareholders.

“However, Wales will need many more such projects at all scales and technologies, from community scale to major projects to meet our future energy needs.

“We believe it is possible to design energy developments that local people can support and buy into. The call for evidence I am launching today looks at how we can achieve this and deliver maximum benefits for the whole of Wales. I urge communities, developers, partner organisations and anyone with an interest to get involved and share their views with us.”

£500,000 for town centre regeneration in Neath Port Talbot

Minister for Housing and Regeneration Rebecca Evans AM announced the loan as she joined the Valleys Taskforce, which is working to deliver real change for the South Wales Valleys. The aim of the taskforce is to create good-quality jobs, closer to people's homes, improve people's skills and bring prosperity for all.

Rebecca Evans AM said:

"I am delighted to join the Valleys Taskforce, and I am committed to working with communities across the Valleys to create jobs and opportunities together. The £20 million Town Centre Loan Fund is helping to revitalise communities across Wales and it will have a real impact in the Neath Port Talbot area.

"The Town Centre Loan Fund aims to help bring empty, underused sites and premises in town centres back into use. It supports activities that increase footfall in our town centres, tackle empty sites and help businesses to grow and prosper. Once loans are repaid, the money is used again to fund new loans."

Neath Port Talbot Council will manage the loan, which is part of the £20 million Town Centre Loan Fund, currently supporting town centre regeneration in 17 local authority areas of Wales.

Llanelli provides an example of the benefits of Town Centre Loans. They have been used to fund the development of a derelict cinema into an entertainment centre, create homes out of derelict properties and to enable the demolition of an old building to create a new property which includes residential and commercial units.

First Minister offers further support to kick-start Swansea Bay Tidal Lagoon

Speaking with the tidal lagoon's CEO Mark Shorrocks this morning, the First Minister reiterated his support for the project and said he was ready and willing to provide further substantial investment to get the project off the ground.

This follows on from a letter the First Minister sent to Prime Minister Theresa May offering to cover some of the tidal lagoon's capital costs and urging the UK Government to give the project the go-ahead.

The Hendry report, published on 12 January last year, concluded that "the evidence is clear that tidal lagoons can play a cost effective role in the UK's energy mix and there is considerable value in a small pathfinder project." However, one year on, the UK Government has failed to make a decision on the project.

First Minister Carwyn Jones said:

"This would be the world's first tidal lagoon power plant, which would create thousands of high quality jobs, supply a significant proportion of the UK's energy needs and position Britain as a world leader in a new global industry.

"And, yet, the UK Government has been dragging its heels for over a year. This is leading to a growing sense of frustration among the Welsh business community and an increasing risk that the lack of a decision will turn into a decision not to proceed.

"Now is the time for the UK Government to stop stalling and get on with agreeing a strike price so we can make this transformative project a reality."

[Wales sets out plans to end the physical punishment of children](#)

The Minister for Children and Social Care, Huw Irranca-Davies, has today launched a 12 week consultation on the Welsh Government's proposal to remove the defence of reasonable punishment in Wales – part of a much wider package of measures the Welsh Government is taking to support children to have the best start in life, and to support their parents to do the best job they can.

The Welsh Government has a long standing record of working to ensure children have the best start in life and of promoting children's rights. This is why the Welsh Government is now intending to bring forward legislation to make it clear that physically punishing a child is no longer acceptable in Wales.

The proposed legislation would not involve the creation of a new offence. It would instead remove a defence to the existing offences of assault and battery. It would mean any adult looking after a child would no longer be

able to use physical or corporal punishment against them.

The Minister said the Welsh Government's aim was to accelerate existing trends in the way parents in Wales discipline their children and to support them in feeling confident to choose positive and more effective methods of discipline.

Launching the consultation, Huw Irranca-Davies said:

"We all want to give our children the best start in life. As a parent of three boys myself, I know being a parent can sometimes be a challenging experience. Children do not come with an instruction manual and sometimes parents need guidance and support to help them raise healthy and happy children.

"Our knowledge of what children need to grow and thrive has developed considerably over the last 20 years. We now know that physical punishment can have negative long term impacts on a child's life chances, and we also know it is an ineffective punishment. Whilst physically punishing children was accepted as normal practice in previous generations, we know that it is increasingly being seen as less acceptable and parents feel less comfortable.

"We want parents in Wales to be confident in managing their children's behaviour without feeling they must resort to physical punishment. If there is any potential risk of harm to a child then it is our obligation as a Government to take action. Legislation was introduced many years ago to stop physical punishment in schools and childcare settings – now is the time to ensure it is no longer acceptable anywhere.

"This is why as a Government we are bringing forward legislation to remove the defence of reasonable punishment, to make it clear that physically punishing a child is no longer acceptable in Wales.

"I am aware there are differing views on this legislation; this consultation provides an opportunity for everyone to have their say to help us try to address concerns as the legislation develops."

The consultation closes on 2nd April 2018.

[A55 Abergele noise reduction measures](#)

to begin

The area, to the west of Sea Bridge Road, has been identified as a priority area in the Welsh Government's Noise Action plan.

In order to minimise any disruption to the travelling public to the absolute minimum, while maintaining safety, a narrow dual lane traffic management system will be in place along with a temporary 40 mph speed limit. This reinforces the Welsh Government's commitment of no routine daytime work involving lane closures on the A55 between J11 and the English border until at least September 2018.

Work will also take place 7 days a week to ensure the scheme is completed as quickly as possible before the Easter period.

Transport Secretary Ken Skates said:

"I announced the go-ahead for this important work last year, and now everything is in place for it to begin.

"It's being carried out during the winter, which is the quietest time on the A55, in order to keep any possible disruption to the absolute minimum. A narrow dual lane system shows we are committed to no routine daytime work involving lane closures on the A55 on this particular stretch until at least September this year.

"Noise levels are a serious issue, and I am pleased this is now being addressed in the Abergele area."

The dual narrow-lane system is scheduled to be in place until March 12 between J24 and J23 westbound. Full details, including details of overnight works are on the [Traffic Wales website](#) (external link).