

Parliamentary material

Parliamentary questions

Planning: Renewable Energy

Asked by: Logan, Mark

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what recent assessment he has made of the impact of the planning system on onshore renewable energy projects.

Answering member: Rachel Maclean | Department: Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities

The Government recognises the importance of onshore wind in meeting our net zero and carbon budget ambitions. In recognition of this, last month the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was updated to help make it easier and quicker for local planning authorities to consider and, where appropriate, approve onshore wind projects where there is local support. We will keep the impact of this change under review.

HC Deb 23 October 2023 | PQ 201301

Renewable Energy: Storage

Asked by: Doogan, Dave

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps her Department is taking to accelerate the use of (a) battery storage and (b) other energy storage installations to store renewable energy on the grid when it cannot accept it due to capacity constraints.

Answering member: Graham Stuart | Department: Department for Energy Security and Net Zero

The Government is facilitating the deployment of electricity storage, including battery storage, through actions set out in the 2021 Smart Systems and Flexibility Plan.

On longer duration electricity storage, the Government has committed to developing an appropriate policy framework by 2024 to enable investment and deploy sufficient storage to balance the system. The Department is planning to consult on the framework this year.

On hydrogen storage, the Government has set out its preferred hydrogen storage business model to unlock private sector investment and remove barriers. The Government has secured amendments to the Energy Bill to introduce the primary powers to deliver this business model by 2025.

HC Deb 20 October 2023 | PQ 201780

[Solar Power](#)

Asked by: Huq, Dr Rupa

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps his Department have taken to increase solar capacity to 70GW by 2035.

Answering member: Graham Stuart Department: Department for Energy Security and Net Zero

The Government incentivises large-scale solar through the Contracts for Difference scheme. Last month, the Government awarded contracts to 56 solar projects, totalling 1.9 gigawatts of capacity, in the fifth, and first annual, allocation round

Rooftop solar is encouraged through various financial and regulatory measures. These include the Smart Export Guarantee, removal of VAT on domestic panels, tax relief, and business rate exemptions. The Government is reviewing permitted development rights to simplify planning for commercial solar projects.

The Government has established the Solar Taskforce to drive forward actions needed to achieve the Government's ambition of more than quadrupling solar capacity by 2035.

HC Deb 20 October 2023 | PQ 200026

[Wind Power](#)

Asked by: Rosindell, Andrew

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of reducing restrictions on the creation of new onshore wind farms.

Answering member: Graham Stuart | Department: Department for Energy Security and Net Zero

In December 2022, the Government published a consultation on making changes to national planning policy for new onshore wind farms in England. After consideration of all responses, on 5 September the Government set out changes to make it easier for local authorities to allocate suitable areas for

onshore wind developments and to provide greater flexibility in addressing associated planning impacts.

HC Deb 21 September 2023 | PQ 199286

Housing: Standards

Asked by: Lucas, Caroline

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, with reference to the oral contribution of the Deputy Leader of the House of Lords of 4 September 2023 on the Lords Report stage of the Levelling-up and Regeneration Bill, Official Report, column 280 HL, when his Department plans to publish its consultation on the technical specification for the future homes standard; if he will make it his policy for that consultation to include a requirement for solar to be equipped as mandatory on all suitable homes; and if he will make a statement.

Answering member: Rachel Maclean | Department: Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities

We intend to consult this year on the technical specification for the Future Homes Standard. The Building Regulations on energy efficiency will continue to set a performance-based standard rather than mandating the use of any specific technologies. Under the current performance standards, most new homes are likely to be built with solar panels.

HC Deb 19 September 2023 | PQ 198649

Topical Questions

Asked by: Dr Caroline Johnson

Writing for The Daily Telegraph last year, our now Prime Minister said:

“On my watch, we will not lose swathes of our best farmland to solar farms.”

Yet the industry has not heard that, and vast swathes of farmland in my constituency, totalling 16 square miles, are open to planning, engulfing whole villages and using the best and most versatile land. Will my right hon. Friend meet me to discuss how he and the Department can ensure that the Prime Minister keeps his very important promise?

Answering member: Graham Stuart | Department: Energy Security and Net Zero

I can assure my hon. Friend that planning policy and the associated guidance encourage large-scale solar projects to be located on previously developed or lower-value land. Where greenfield sites or high-grade land are used, developers are required to justify using such land and to design their projects

to avoid, mitigate and, where necessary, compensate for any impacts. I hear my hon. Friend's personal testimony, and I will be happy to meet her to discuss this further.

HC Deb 19 September 2023 | Vol 737 c1231

[Solar Power: Planning Permission](#)

Asked by: Knight, Julian

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what discussions she has had with Cabinet colleagues on speeding up the process of getting planning applications approved for solar farms.

Answering member: Graham Stuart | Department: Department for Energy Security and Net Zero

Ministers regularly discuss planning reform with colleagues to enable a fair and efficient system of decision making for all energy infrastructure proposals, including solar. The Government is currently consulting on operational reforms to the Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects regime and will publish its response in due course.

HC Deb 11 September 2023 | PQ 196646

[Solar Power: Derelict Land](#)

Asked by: Hayes, Sir John

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether she plans to use available brownfield sites for future solar developments.

Answering member: Graham Stuart | Party: Conservative Party | Department: Department for Energy Security and Net Zero

The Government encourages ground mounted solar installations mainly on brownfield, industrial and low and medium grade agricultural land as set out in the recent Powering Up Britain: Energy Security Plan.

HC Deb 11 September 2023 | PQ 195648

[Housing: Solar Power](#)

Asked by: Smith, Jeff

To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, with reference to CPRE, the countryside charity's report entitled Shout from the rooftops: delivering a common sense solar revolution, published in May 2023,

whether he plans to ensure that the Future Homes Standard requires roof space-mounted solar arrays to be installed on new homes.

Answering member: Lee Rowley | Department: Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities

Renewable energy, such as that generated from solar panels, is a key part of our strategy to get to net zero.

Not all homes are suitable for solar panels. For instance, some homes are heavily shaded due to nearby buildings or trees.

Under the Future Homes Standard, the Building Regulations will continue to set performance-based standards. Our approach to achieving higher standards will remain technology-neutral, to provide flexibility to choose the most appropriate and cost-effective solutions.

HC Deb 06 September 2023 | PQ 195186

[Lithium-ion Battery Storage Facilities: Regulation](#)

Asked by: Dame Maria Miller

We need to increase power storage, but the potential fire risks associated with lithium-ion battery storage facilities are now becoming widely acknowledged. What is my hon. Friend doing to ensure those facilities are not built in inappropriate locations, such as Basing Fenn in my constituency, which is a site sandwiched between a rare north-flowing, salmonid chalk stream and a hospital?

Answering member: Andrew Bowie | Department: Energy Security and Net Zero

I thank my right hon. Friend for her question and her tireless campaigning on this important issue. As I discussed in that very positive meeting that I had with her yesterday, I have been working with colleagues across Government to establish the appropriate treatment of these facilities in planning and environmental regulation. Every site should be considered on its own merits and is a decision for our local authorities.

HC Deb 04 July 2023 | Vol 735 c676

[National Grid: Batteries and Renewable Energy](#)

Asked by: Crosbie, Virginia

To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, what steps he is taking to facilitate grid connections to allow the deployment of (a) renewables and (b) battery storage projects.

Answering member: Graham Stuart | Department: Department for Energy Security and Net Zero

The Government works with Ofgem and network companies to accelerate connections by releasing network capacity and improving the connections process. As part of this work, the Electricity System Operator is seeking expressions of interest, by 30 April 2023, from developers who are willing and able to connect earlier than their allocated connection date. The Government will publish a Connections Action Plan in the summer, which will articulate actions by government, Ofgem and network companies to accelerate network connections, including for renewable energy and battery storage projects.

HC Deb 17 April 2023 | PQ 176768

Statements

Written statement: [Planning Update](#)

Member: Michael Gove | Department: Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities

I am today setting out updated policy on planning for onshore wind development in England.

In December last year the Government consulted on a number of proposed changes to the National Planning Policy Framework, including changes relating to onshore wind development in England. That consultation concluded on 2 March this year and we received over 26,000 responses which my department is carefully considering.

Through this consultation the Government has heard the strength of feeling and range of views on onshore wind. My Rt Hon Friend the Energy Security and Net Zero Secretary and I continue to believe that decisions on onshore wind are best made by local representatives who know their areas. This will ensure decisions are underpinned by democratic accountability. We agree following our consultation, however, that we need to strike the right balance to ensure that local authorities can respond more flexibly to suitable opportunities for onshore wind energy, contributing to electricity bill savings and increasing our energy security as well as respecting the views of their local communities.

Having considered the responses carefully, I am confirming our intention to proceed with changes to national planning policy for onshore wind which take forward the proposals which were consulted upon, with minor changes to reflect responses and provide clarity on how policy should be applied in practice.

This includes amending the planning tests for proposed onshore wind developments to make clear that suitable locations can be identified in a

number of ways (rather than solely through an area's development plan). Development plans can take a number of years to be produced and adopted and we want to be clear that other, more agile and targeted routes are appropriate. For example, through Local Development Orders, Neighbourhood Development Orders and Community Right to Build Orders. We hope that this will mean sites are identified more quickly, speeding up the process of allocating sites for onshore wind projects, and ultimately, and as a consequence more clean and renewable energy is generated sooner.

We are also adjusting the policy so that local authorities can more flexibly address the planning impact of onshore wind projects as identified by local communities, on which we intend to publish further guidance. We have heard accounts that current policy has been applied in such a way that a very limited number of objections, and even at times objections of single individuals, have been taken as showing a lack of community backing. This is not the policy intent, and as a result of today's policy change it will now be important that local decision makers are able to take a more balanced approach, considering the views of communities as a whole. The Government is also open to novel ways to demonstrate community consent, building on best practice and using new digital engagement techniques.

We are also clear that local areas that support hosting onshore wind should directly benefit. That is why we have consulted on proposals for improved rewards and benefits to be offered to communities backing onshore wind farms, including potential energy bill discounts. The Government will respond to this consultation in the Autumn.

I can also confirm that we are taking forward changes in relation to the repowering and life extensions of existing renewable energy sites to make clearer the circumstances in which these may be approved.

I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to all those who participated in the consultation. Our formal response to the other wider proposals in the consultation will also be published later this Autumn.

An updated National Planning Policy Framework will be published today and policy changes, relevant to planning decisions, take effect immediately upon publication (some transitional arrangements for plan making are set out at Annex 1). The amendments are to chapter 14 of the National Planning Policy Framework. Relevant extracts can be found attached.

HC Deb 05 September 2023 | HCWS1005

Debates

Debate: [Planning and Solar Farms](#)

HC Deb 19 July 2023 | Vol 736 c320WH-