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Designing for Renewable Energy in Wales

Design Commission for Wales publishes updated guidance for designing wind and solar farms in Wales

The Design Commission for Wales (DCFW) has published new guidance for the development of large-scale onshore wind and solar installations in Wales.

Designing for Renewable Energy in Wales replaces and expands on the previous *Designing Wind Farms in Wales 2014* guidance, also published by DCFW. It reflects Future Wales: the National Plan 2040 and addresses recent changes in the renewables industry in Wales including the increased scale of wind turbines and growth in solar energy development.

Key changes include emphasis being placed on the importance of creative landscape design leading the design process and moving from a mitigation approach to one that is design-led. The arrangement of turbines or solar arrays will now need to be carefully considered as a landscape design challenge, which considers environmental, aesthetic and cultural factors in addition to the technical and engineering design constraints.

The new guidance is not a policy document but it will be relevant in the determination and decision-making processes accompanying renewable energy development proposals at varying scales and locations. It will therefore be used by Planning and Environment Decisions Wales (PEDW) and/or Local Authorities in their approach to reviewing, influencing and determining wind and solar applications.

Carole-Anne Davies, Chief Executive of DCFW, said: "Since the publication of our *'Designing Wind Farms in Wales' guide in 2014* the legislative context in Wales has changed, particularly with the introduction of the Well-being of Future Generations Act, updates to Planning Policy Wales and the introduction of Future Wales.

“The Welsh Government clearly sets out in Future Wales that, where development proposals for renewable energy generation from wind or solar technologies and equipment come forward, they must respond well to their context and contribute to meeting Welsh Government ambitions for low carbon energy generation.

“The purpose of this new guidance document is to set out the key design objectives and considerations for the sensitive development of large-scale onshore wind and solar installations as well as ancillary development in Wales within the context of the ambitious targets set by Welsh Government for increasing the amount of energy generated by renewable sources.

“Consultation with developers, community groups, regulatory bodies and statutory stakeholders has enabled us to reflect and reference latest policy, technological changes and the lessons and experiences drawn over the last decade. Developers will now need to carefully analyse the existing landscape history, form, ecology and scenic characteristics, before meaningfully adding new elements that either harmonise or contrast with what already exists.

“Importantly, this new guidance has been designed to be useful, informative and accessible for all stakeholders, developers, decisions makers and the public. It is not a policy document but it sets out how creative landscape design can support the delivery of Welsh Government’s ambition for low carbon energy generation.”