



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

POLICY AND STRATEGY

# Coal policy statement

The Welsh Government's policy objective to avoid the continued extraction and consumption of fossil fuels.

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## Ministerial foreword

The policy of Welsh Government is to bring to a managed end the extraction and use of coal. This Coal Policy Statement is an important step towards that goal.

The opening of new coal mines or the extension of existing coaling operations in Wales would add to the global supply of coal, having a significant effect on Wales' and the UK's legally binding carbon budgets as well as international efforts to limit the impact of climate change. Therefore, Welsh Ministers do not intend to authorise new Coal Authority mining operation licences or variations to existing licences. Coal licences may be needed in wholly exceptional circumstances and each application will be decided on its own merits, but the presumption will always be against coal extraction.

Whilst coal will continue to be used in some industrial processes and non-energy uses in the short to medium term, adding to the global supply of coal will prolong our dependency on coal and make achieving our decarbonisation targets increasingly difficult. For this reason, there is no clear case for expanding

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the supply of coal from within the UK. In the context of the climate emergency, and in accordance with our Low Carbon Delivery Plan, our challenge to the industries reliant on coal is to work with the Welsh Government to reduce their reliance on fossil fuels and make a positive contribution to decarbonisation.

The notification direction on coal and petroleum developments allows Ministers to call in a planning application where it is of greater than local significance or novel or contentious, should they consider it appropriate. These provide strong control measures over new mining permissions. Planning Policy Wales (PPW 11) already provides a strong presumption against coaling, with the exception of wholly exceptional circumstances, and Local Planning Authorities are required to consider this policy in the decisions they make. Local Authorities have a critical role to play in the response to the climate emergency and authorities right across Wales have shown real leadership on this issue. The transition away from the use of fossil fuels will be supported by local energy planning, building on the regional energy strategies for each part of Wales.

The publication of this coal policy builds on our policies on petroleum, including hydraulic fracturing for petroleum extraction, and our marine plan – all of which underline the commitment of Welsh Government to oppose the extraction and use of fossil fuels and to support social justice in the economic transition away from their use. We will develop our policies further, reflecting the provisions of our Wellbeing of Future Generations Act and our Environment (Wales) Act. These Acts require the development of policy to reflect the need for our economy and society to live within environmental limits and to hand on the natural world in a better state than we found it to generations who will come after us.

These include further developing the policy in relation to coal for uses other than energy, policy on the combustion of fuel of any kind for heat, and our policy towards Carbon, Capture, Utilisation and Storage. These are complex areas and it is vital the Welsh stakeholders take an interest in the development of these policies, which will affect not only industries with a direct interest but our communities more widely and our global responsibilities as a nation.

Hundreds of Welsh workers still rely on coal mining to support their families and communities. A managed end to the extraction and use of coal will require skills

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training and employment support, working in social partnership with our trades unions. It will require research and must respect the legal rights of employees and licence holders.

This policy is only one part of the transition away from coal mining in Wales. It is clear the move towards a managed end of the extraction and use of coal must be decisive and delivered as soon as is feasibly possible.

Lesley Griffiths MS  
Minister for Environment, Energy and Rural Affairs

## Context

The climate emergency has already impacted on public health and our economy, and will have increasing impacts in the future as climate impacts become more frequent and severe. Tackling the climate emergency requires serious and sustained action and collaboration both here in Wales and at a global level. All countries, regardless of their relative size, have an important role to play. As we work to protect our economy and communities, we must do so in a way which maximises wider benefits, such as reducing our pollution emissions and ensuring a fairer and healthier society for all.

In May 2019, during a period of increasing global concern around the impact of climate change, the Welsh Government declared a climate emergency. This was followed by the National Assembly becoming the first Parliament in the world to vote in support of such a declaration, signalling the cross party recognition of the importance of the issue.

In December 2020, the Welsh Government received advice from the Climate Change Committee (CCC) that included a recommendation to set a target for net zero emissions in 2050, replacing the previous statutory target of at least an 80% reduction in 2050. In March 2021, legislation to amend The Environment (Wales) Act 2016 was passed in the Senedd to bring the net zero target into law. The Senedd also amended secondary legislation under the Act to increase the 2030 target to 63% and the 2040 target to 89%, in line with the CCC's recommendations.

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We recognise Wales also needs to adapt to the unavoidable impacts of climate change and we have published our cross government plan on how we deal with the impacts of climate change, Prosperity for All - A Climate Conscious Wales.

In order to meet our ambitious climate targets, we must reduce emissions from energy generation, by reducing fossil fuel generation and increasing generation from renewable sources. The continued extraction and use of fossil fuels for energy, including electricity generation, heating buildings or powering transport, is not compatible with the pathway to reach net zero at a pace that addresses the climate emergency.

In our Clean Air Plan for Wales - Healthy Air, Healthy Wales, Welsh Government has committed to work collaboratively across Government and sectors, taking action to reduce air pollution to support public health, biodiversity, the economy and the natural environment. Outdoor air pollution is the largest immediate environmental threat to health. This coal policy is consistent with the aims set out in the Clean Air Plan and supports action to reduce emissions from coal that contribute to air pollution.

In Prosperity for all: A Low Carbon Wales, Welsh Government committed to reducing emissions through phasing out power generation from unabated coal technologies, as well as applying devolved energy consenting, planning and permitting policies to deliver our decarbonisation targets. This new coal policy will inform all decisions taken in Wales on coal, in support of our climate and broader wellbeing aims.

## How the consultation informed the policy

We have published a response to the consultation on coal policy, which sets out the information we received and provides the Welsh Government response. The majority of consultation responses, including those involved in coal extraction, acknowledged the transition to lower carbon fuels is necessary and inevitable. They recognised coal consuming industries must innovate and develop new options to replace coal in the supply chain.

Although coal is not used as a power station fuel, and the final coal-fired power

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station in Wales closed in November 2019, coal is still supplied for space heating, and for industrial processes including cement manufacture and steelmaking, which has a significant impact on Welsh greenhouse gas emissions.

This policy recognises the transition away from coal will happen at a different pace in different sectors. The policy also acknowledges there are economically important industries that still need coal. Given the clear direction of travel away from coal for thermal uses, there is already doubt over the future of indigenous mines reliant on selling thermal coal as part of their business model. We have seen no evidence of the continuing need for coal use for energy purposes. We do see the continuing need for coal for a number of industrial processes and non-energy uses and Wales' existing mines and coal stocks are able to supply such purposes.

On balance, we consider the continuing of coal mining in Wales is highly likely to increase greenhouse gas emissions in both the short and long term. Therefore a precautionary approach is reasonable. We consider, as a globally responsible Government, we must minimise further extraction in Wales and reduce consumption, as far as our policy levers permit. This analysis supports the proposed approach for Ministers to consider future applications on their individual merits, with a presumption against extraction.

## The policy

It is the Welsh Government's policy objective to avoid the continued extraction and consumption of fossil fuels.

## Coal extraction

Coal is a non-renewable energy source. All proposals for the extraction of coal, including any secondary coal products produced during mining operations, which are destined for energy markets, must clearly demonstrate why they are needed in the context of climate change emission reduction targets. Energy markets include, but are not limited to, the domestic consumption of coal

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products and electricity generation.

Welsh Ministers therefore do not intend to authorise new Coal Authority mining operation licences or variations to existing licences.

However, in wholly exceptional circumstances, Welsh Government would consider the further extraction of coal. Each proposal would be considered on its individual merits, but must clearly demonstrate:

- Why the extraction is required to support industrial non-energy generating uses for coal.
- Why the extraction is needed in the context of decarbonisation and climate change emission reductions targets, or to ensure the safe winding-down of mining operations or site remediation.
- How the extraction contributes to Welsh prosperity and our role as a globally responsible Wales.

Decisions will be made on the specific circumstances of each case based on its climate impact, with the presumption being against extraction.

Welsh Ministers will consider approval for individual licences in the context of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, our climate targets and energy policy.

The principles set out in our coal policy will apply to coal extraction on land in Wales and in the seabed coalfields under the territorial seas around Wales.

## Coal use for energy generation

It is UK policy to remove coal from energy generation. Wales supports this aim in delivering our emissions targets and Planning Policy Wales already places fossil fuels at the bottom of the energy hierarchy. The use of coal for generation of power in Wales will not be permitted, given there are a range of other low carbon energy technologies. The use of coal for any thermal purpose is also to be avoided.

Welsh Government will consistently and actively seek the UK Government's commitment to reducing and in time eliminating the extraction and consumption of fossil fuels.

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