

19 April 2024

Dear

ATISN 20418

Information requested

Thank you for your request which I received on 01 April. You asked for:

Information on the support Welsh Government are providing to local authorities to develop local area energy plans. This may include:

- *a summary how has Welsh Government supported local authorities in initially undertaking LAEPs;*
- *any formal correspondence between Welsh Government and Local Authorities on the subject of potentially conducting LAEPs;*
- *letter/email trails outlining the funding to be made available to local authorities from Welsh Government to undertake LAEPs;*
- *any expectations Welsh Government has for local authorities to undertake a LAEP;*
- *how local authorities were first approached by Welsh Government to undertake LAEPs;*
- *any ambition setting on how the roll-out of LAEPs will contribute towards a energy plan for Wales; etc.*

Our response

The information you requested is enclosed. Annex A includes a summary our the approach to LAEPs. Annex B includes a letter sent from the Welsh Government Director of Climate Change, Energy and Planning to Chief Executives of all Local Authorities in Wales. This letter sets out the details of our approach and expectations of Local Authorities in Wales in relation to LAEPs.

If you have any further questions you can contact me.

Next steps

If you are dissatisfied with the Welsh Government's handling of your request, you can ask for an internal review within 40 working days of the date of this response. Requests for an internal review should be addressed to the Welsh Government's Freedom of Information Officer at:

Information Rights Unit,
Welsh Government,
Cathays Park,
Cardiff,
CF10 3NQ

or Email: Freedom.ofinformation@gov.wales

Please remember to quote the ATISN reference number above.

You also have the right to complain to the Information Commissioner. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at: Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF.

However, please note that the Commissioner will not normally investigate a complaint until it has been through our own internal review process.

Yours sincerely

Annex A

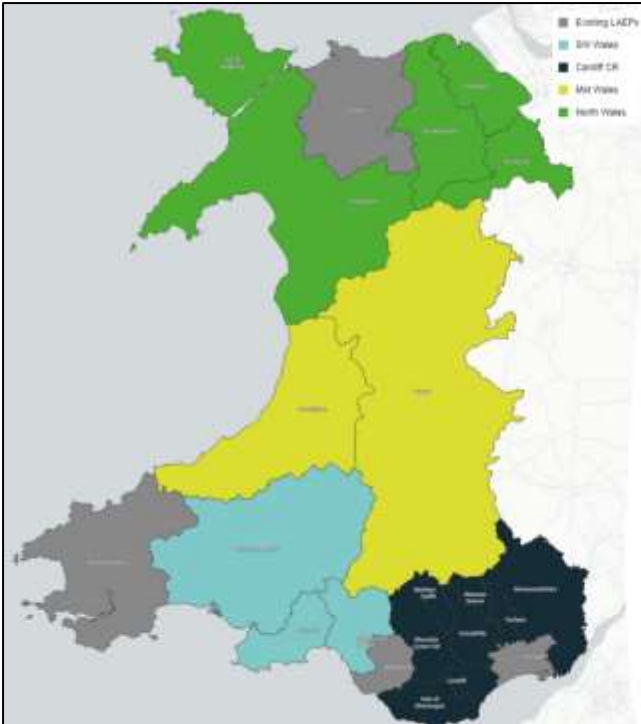
The Welsh Government (WG) has committed to net zero emissions by 2050. Achieving net zero is going to require rapid transformation of our energy system, to enable the decarbonisation of home heating, transport and industry. We recognise this will mean major changes to the energy system and infrastructure.

Local Area Energy Planning (LAEP) is part of our planned approach to the energy transition to ensure decarbonisation happens at the scale and pace necessary for the climate emergency and in doing so delivers sufficient benefit in Wales. A LAEP sets out the change required to transition an area's energy system to Net Zero in a given timeframe. This is achieved by exploring potential pathways that consider a range of technologies and scenarios and, when combined with stakeholder engagement, leads to the identification of the most cost-effective preferred pathway and a sequenced plan of proposed actions to achieving an area's Net Zero goal.

In [Net Zero Wales](#) (our decarbonisation plan for the current carbon budget period, 2021-26), WG committed to having a LAEP for all parts of Wales. Following successful pilots in Newport and Conwy local authorities during 2021-22, WG put in place a programme of support to enable each local authority to develop a LAEP. The programme was co-designed with local authorities. The letter issued by WG to local authorities inviting them to co-design the programme is attached at annex B.

The support provided has been at a regional level. The map below illustrates the four economic regions of Wales and the consultancy appointed to work with each region. The technical support provided by the consultants is fully funded by WG, as to is a team of officers within each region to support local authorities in development of their LAEPs. Energy Systems Catapult have worked alongside Welsh Government, in a Technical Adviser role, to provide support and technical insight to all delivery partners throughout the programme. Each LAEP has been developed using ESC's 7-stage [methodology](#).

In autumn 2021, WG undertook a [Deep Dive](#) into renewable energy. The purpose of the deep dive was to identify barriers to significantly scaling up renewable energy in Wales and identifying steps to overcome the barriers. The outputs of the deep dive was a series of recommendations, one of which was the creation of a national energy plan. The national energy plan will set out the energy system changes required to achieve Net Zero by 2050. The aggregated LAEPs will form the core of the National Energy Plan.



SUPPLIERS

- North Wales: Arup-Carbon Trust
- Mid Wales: Energy Systems Catapult
- South West Wales: City Science
- Cardiff Capital Region: Arup-Carbon Trust

Annex B

To:

All local authority Chief Executives

08 September 2021

Dear Chief Executives

I am writing to invite you to work with Welsh Government to design an approach to develop a locally led, pan-Wales understanding of the net zero energy system.

If Wales is to reach net zero and achieve maximum benefit from the energy transition, we need a co-ordinated approach that identifies low regret, least cost options for developing energy infrastructure in all parts of Wales. The Regional Energy Strategies we have supported each region to develop identify the scale of change needed to reach a low carbon energy system, and establish regional priorities for energy. However, we will all need much greater detail in order to identify the specific actions needed for each community.

Local Area Energy Planning (LAEP) is a whole systems approach to considering energy use for heat, power and transport - how we heat our buildings and the quality of their energy performance, how and when we generate, use or store electricity, how we fuel industrial processes, and how people and goods move about. Done well, LAEP can lead to:

- Improved understanding of what the transition to achieve net zero carbon emissions is likely to involve
- A clearer picture of the wider conditions, locally and nationally, required for these changes to take place
- Increased local stakeholder awareness of what needs to be done over time to achieve decarbonisation targets
- More comprehensive and effective local, regional and national plans
- Credible commitments to action from local stakeholders to deliver the plan

Welsh Government believe energy planning is a core part of the approach to decarbonisation, and we are making a major commitment to this work, as part of achieving current and future carbon budgets. We consider this work to be an important part of delivering the regional energy strategies, potentially requiring capacity and capabilities that authorities may not currently have at the level needed for the pace and scale of action needed in a climate emergency.

We were delighted that ten authorities were eager to pilot this approach in Wales, even during the height of the pandemic. The two pilots under way in Conwy and Newport are delivering useful learning which is informing our approach to supporting other local authorities with LAEP. Local authorities are the natural lead partners for

the development of local energy plans. However, we believe there are benefits to delivering local plans on a regional basis, such as efficiencies around data collection and stakeholder engagement, collaborative working between local authorities and better links to the regional energy strategies. There is also a strong link to the emerging Corporate Joint Committees and their role in strategic planning.

We would therefore like to work with the local authorities within each region to design a programme to roll out local area energy planning across Wales, which reflects the different approaches, challenges and governance structures in each region. Welsh Government is proposing to fund the technical resource necessary to scope and develop the local energy plans for each local authority. We would like your input on the level of resource required within the region, in order to deliver this work and use its insights to set us on the path to net zero.

I would like to ask for your support, building on the existing engagement you have within your region, to design an approach to developing local energy plans through a regional approach. **I would be grateful if you could put forward an officer, who has appropriate authority, to work with WG and other local authorities to tailor an approach for your region.** Annex 1 sets out the support we are offering and the questions we are seeking to answer. We would be very grateful if you could provide details of your nominated officer to EnergyPolicyMailbox@gov.wales by 24 September.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'John Howells', is positioned above the printed name and title.

JOHN HOWELLS

Director of Climate Change, Energy and Planning

Annex 1

There are two elements to the support we are offering for the development of local area energy plans:

- Technical resource to scope and develop the plans: we will work with each region to appoint a lead contractor. The contractor will be funded by Welsh Government to develop local energy plans for **each** local authority in the region.
- Additional time bound resource to build the capacity within a region to deliver local energy plans, and potentially to support the delivery phase of the Regional Energy strategies where necessary.

We are interested in hearing more on the following:

- The capacity within the region, or a lead authority, to lead the procurement of the technical resource necessary to scope and develop local energy plans;
- The existing resource available to support delivery of local energy plans and the capacity and capability gap, if any;
- Links with the delivery phase of the region's energy strategy;
- Potential for Corporate Joint Committees to take forward a regional approach to energy planning.