



Solar Energy UK

Manifesto for Wales

February 2026

Solar and storage in Wales – the opportunity

Solar is the world’s fastest-growing source of new electricity. Global deployment has more than doubled in the past three years and investment in solar now exceeds all other electricity-generating technologies combined.¹

Solar is not just a clean source of energy either – ground-mounted projects are also a powerful tool for restoring and enhancing nature. Research from the RSPB found that well-designed solar farms were home to three times as many birds as nearby land.

For Wales this is a major opportunity, but one that risks slipping away. Action on solar across the UK and Europe is outpacing Wales as the global solar trend accelerates. More solar farms and rooftops will lower bills, support growth and enhance nature – however there needs to be clear political leadership to deliver these objectives.

We call on all parties to support a partnership between government, industry and communities to unlock, clean solar energy.

Policy asks – at a glance

- **Partnership:** Come together with industries and communities to seize the potential of solar and other renewable energy technologies.
- **Ambition:** Deliver at least 5GW of solar and 10GW of battery storage capacity by 2035.
- **Rooftop mandate:** Implement building regulation changes in line with England’s Future Homes Standard and Future Buildings Standard.
- **Finance home upgrades:** Align Green Homes Wales and Warm Homes with the Warm Homes Plan, to deliver interest-free/low-cost finance for solar and batteries.
- **Clear policy on utility-scale solar and battery storage:** Issue national guidance confirming their roles, so planning authorities can deliver consistent and confident decisions.
- **Planning capacity:** Invest in expertise and capacity for planning officers.
- **Grid coordination:** Shape grid strategic plans to reflect Welsh priorities; ensure flexibility for projects.
- **Skills:** Launch a 10–15-year green skills plan and convene a dedicated working group with employers.

Set a clear ambition for 5GW of solar and 10GW storage by 2035

The clearest way to demonstrate ambition and encourage investment is to set a target for deployment. This target should cover solar at all scales – both on rooftops and ground-mounted solar farms. We encourage all parties to commit to an overarching target of 5GW solar by 2035. According to research jointly published by Solar Energy UK, RenewableUK Cymru and Marine Energy Wales, 5GW solar will add £623m to the economy.²

Demand for electricity in Wales is due to more than double in the coming years as heat, transport and industry are further electrified and as other demands such as data centres are expected to be built.³ All these sources of demand have the potential to be powered by clean Welsh renewable energy.

We also need more energy storage to accompany growth in clean generation. Energy storage connected to the national grid helps maximise the benefits of a decarbonised grid, such as allowing us to deploy power from the sun in the evening, when homes demand peaks. Batteries for domestic and commercial use also help families and business owners take advantage of rooftop solar, allowing them the cleanest and cheapest way of powering their lives. In parallel, they can also charge up at night, when power from the grid is cheapest and sell it back when most in demand.



£623 million added to the economy up to 2035 from 5GW solar



Average of £52 million added to the economy each year

Make solar standard on new buildings

Installing solar panels during construction is cheaper and more efficient than retrofitting panels.⁴

Measures to increase rooftop solar deployment are being taken across Europe. The UK Government has set out its intention to require solar on new builds through the forthcoming Future Homes and Future Buildings standards in England.

The Welsh Government consultation on Part L Building Regulations is definitely the right step forward and we urge the next Welsh Government to move forward with implementation.

Building new Welsh homes and businesses with solar installed as standard will automatically unlock hundreds of megawatts of renewable energy capacity, easing demand on the grid and driving consumer bills down.

We urge the next Welsh Government to bring Wales in line with the rest of Europe by implementing the measures put forward in the Part L consultation. Mandating solar would make sure all new homes are equipped to deliver lower energy bills.



Unlock affordable finance for solar and storage

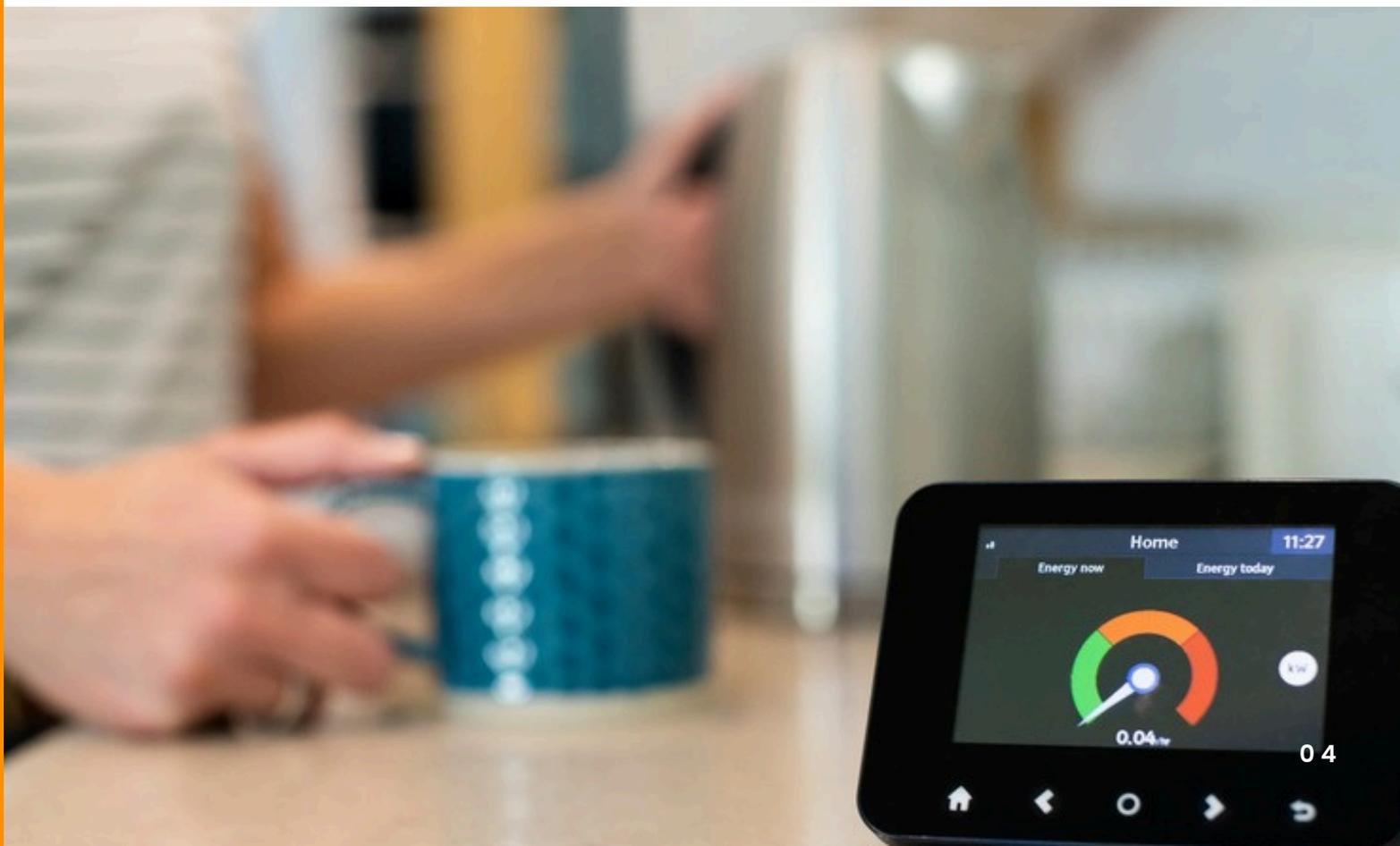
Affordable finance drives affordable clean heat, empowering families and businesses to generate their own power, store it. Having their own power will cut their bills and it makes heat pumps more affordable.

Alongside the introduction of the UK Government's Warm Homes Plan, the next Welsh Government should ensure that low-cost sources of finance, like Green Homes Wales, are supported and optimised to ensure solar and batteries are working for the homes that need them most.

Solar and fuel poverty: powering affordable homes

Solar gives households control over their energy use, cutting bills and tackling fuel poverty head-on. By generating and storing their own power, families can save hundreds of pounds a year – and even more with a battery, which stores cheap off-peak or otherwise-curtailed wind power for use when prices are high.

By shifting energy use away from peak times and using excess renewable power, solar and battery homes don't just save for themselves – they save the whole nation money, easing pressure on the grid and reducing costs for everyone

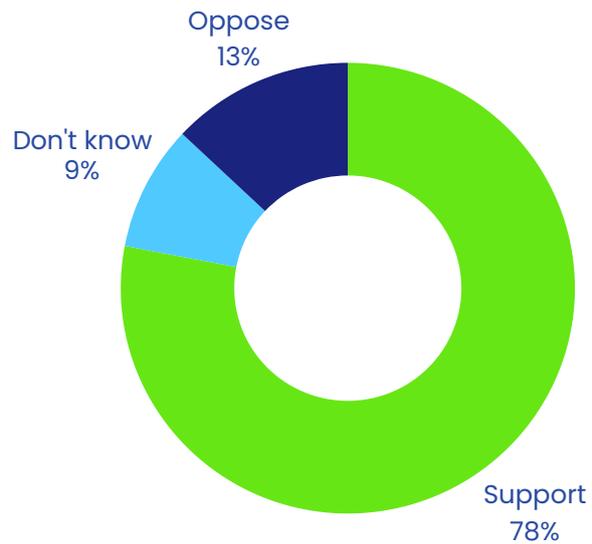


Ground-mounted solar farms generate some of the cheapest electricity available, while stabilising farming incomes, enhancing nature and supporting food security. Public polling consistently supports solar farms – YouGov polling found 78% Welsh voters would support a solar project in their area.^{6,7}

With clear economic and environmental benefits, as well as public backing, there is a strong case to act. Through partnership with industry and communities the following steps would unlock delivery and make sure solar works for Wales.

Likelihood of respondents supporting/opposing solar in their local area

YouGov/Cavendish
Cymru, October 2025



Clarity on planning

We welcome the introduction of the Infrastructure (Wales) Act 2024 to reduce the delay and inefficiency in the Developments of National Significance (DNS) regime it replaces.

Our concerns with the DNS regime are the lack of resourcing and the unpredictable and often slow speed of the consenting process for individual projects.

A central aspect of these delays is a lack of clarity over land use – with well-sited projects which deliver multifunctional benefits receiving insufficient support from officers and inspectors. This is leading to outcomes conflicting with Welsh planning and energy policy ambitions.

Decisions must be evidence-based, fair and aligned with national priorities. We would welcome stronger planning guidance that clearly states Welsh Government support for ground-mount solar farms and the benefits they provide. This would help ensure consistency and enable industry to deliver on Welsh clean energy ambitions.

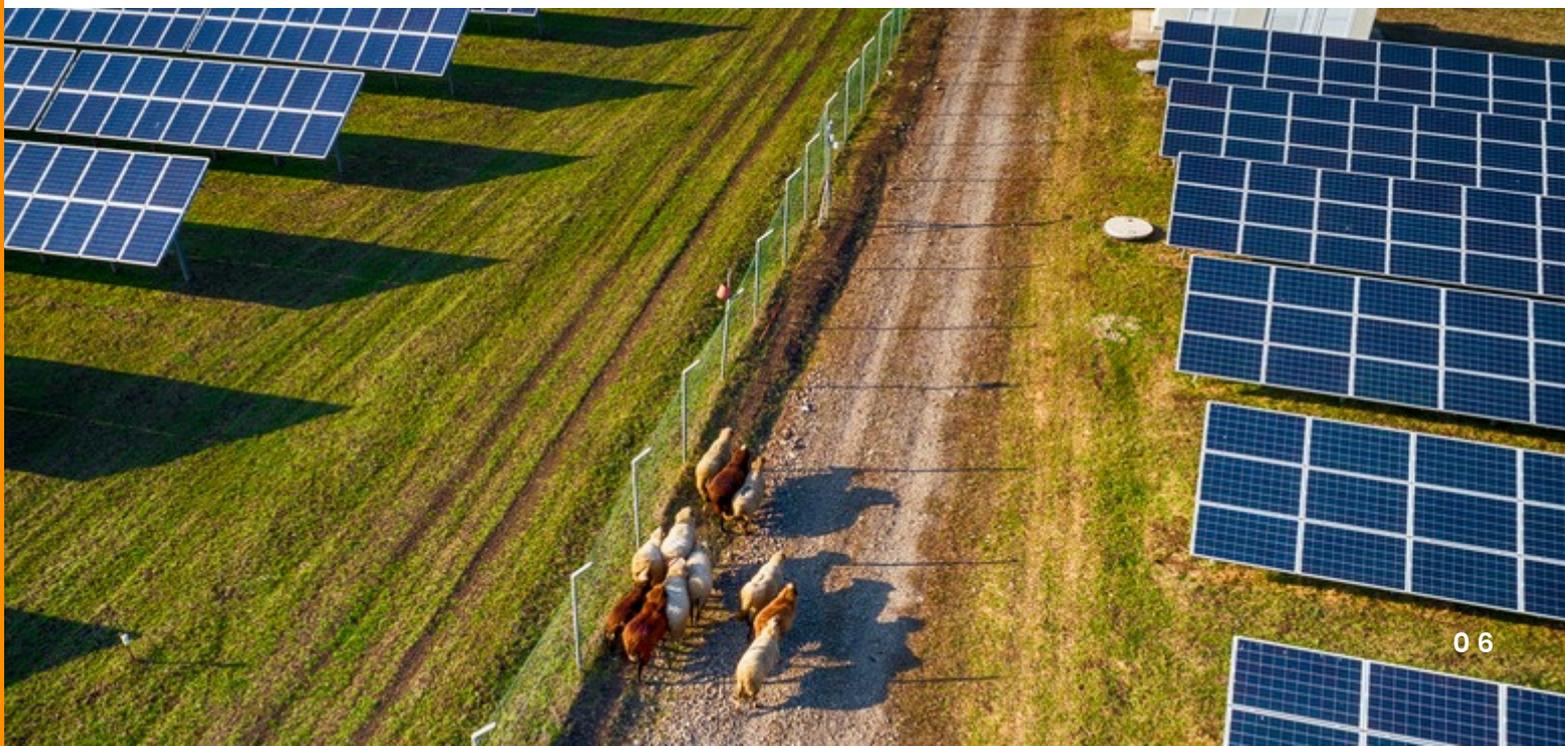
Solar land use in Wales – the benefits

- At a conservative estimate, solar farms use about 4 acres (1.6 hectares) per MW. If a 3:2 split of ground-mount to rooftop solar delivered 3GW of solar farms, the total land used by solar would be less than 0.2% of Welsh land.⁸
- Significant parts of solar sites remain in agricultural use (e.g., grazing). UK Government estimates this to be about half.⁹
- Solar provides farmers with a stable income for farmers, for a set period of time – typically 40 years. It boosts their financial security and hence our food security by keeping them in the business of producing food. The NFU supports solar farms as a way to diversify farming incomes, and does not consider them a threat to food security.
- Well-managed solar farms are nature positive – generating biodiversity as well as clean energy. Nature organisations, such as the RSPB, recognise these benefits, which have been demonstrated time and again through independent research.^{10,11}

Planning for tomorrow's grid

Wales needs a grid which can deliver clean power and its benefits at pace. The UK government and the National Energy System Operator (NESO) are developing strategic plans to this end but the process is unclear, creating uncertainty for Welsh projects.

The next Welsh Government has a critical role to play in forming these plans, so they work for Wales. This means working closely with NESO, Ofgem and industry to ensure that the Strategic Spatial Energy Plan and the Welsh Regional Energy Spatial Plan fully reflect Wales's ambitions for onshore renewables, including solar and battery storage.



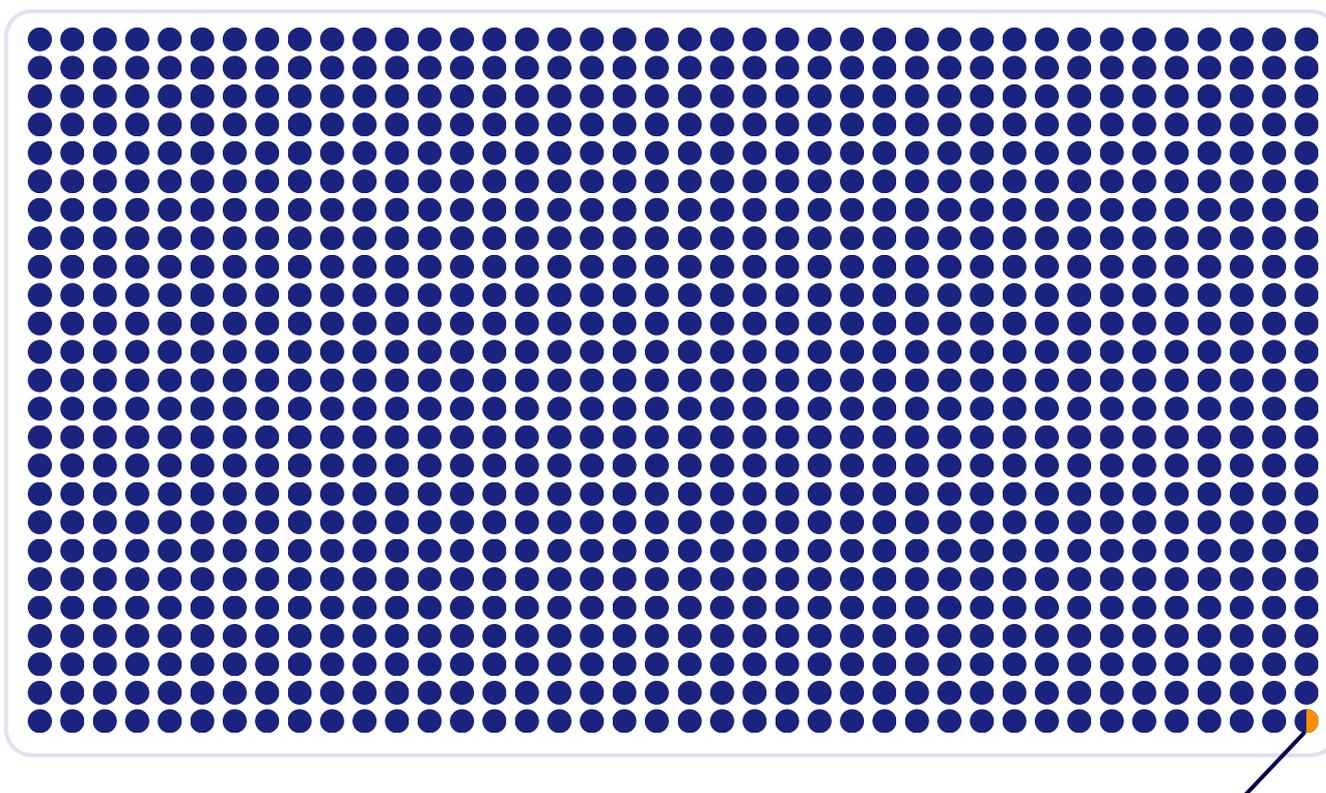
Resource and training: building expertise now and for the future

For Wales to capitalise on the benefits of clean energy generation, the planning system must be properly resourced. At present, local planning authorities and statutory consultees are under significant strain. Planning departments need the tools, knowledge and capacity to assess applications quickly, robustly and fairly.

Investment in people and skills is essential. Planning departments need additional funding to recruit, train and upskill officers, ensuring they have the knowledge and capacity to make timely, well-informed decisions. Expertise is particularly lacking in ecology, biodiversity and archaeology.

The Welsh Government should address these gaps to unlock progress and ensure that planning is a catalyst for renewables, not a roadblock.

Total future land use



0.2%

-  Portion of Welsh land required for 5GW target
-  Total Welsh land mass

Build Welsh solar skills

Solar and battery storage support high-productivity jobs in Wales. In 2024, each job in this sector contributed an estimated £88,800 to the economy – in comparison, the UK average is £62,300 per job.¹² While the sector is forecast to directly support around 2,000 jobs by 2035, these roles deliver significant economic value, creating skilled, well-paid employment in engineering, construction and grid services.

To unlock private investment in training and apprenticeships, employers need long-term policy certainty. Through the partnership we are proposing, we ask that the next Welsh Government joins with industry to deliver a 10 to 15-year skills plan, reassessing existing clean energy skills programmes to ensure that they work across technologies. This should remove silos between sectors – including oil and gas – and maximise the use of transferable skills, supported by a dedicated green skills working group convened by the Welsh Government.



References

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6. **Cavendish Cymru**, [What Wales Really Thinks About Energy: Key Insights from Cavendish Cymru's Polling with YouGov](#), October 2025.
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