



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

WRITTEN STATEMENT BY THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

TITLE: Introduction of the Infrastructure (Wales) Bill

DATE: Monday 12 June 2023

BY: Julie James MS, Minister for Climate Change

Today, the Infrastructure (Wales) Bill (“the Bill”) and Explanatory Memorandum have been laid before Senedd Cymru (“the Senedd”).

The Bill is vital to the timely delivery of significant infrastructure projects in Wales and is an important step towards supporting Government commitments to delivering on renewable energy targets as we move towards ‘net zero’ emissions by 2050.

To ensure Wales can attract the essential investment we need in the renewable energy sector and other significant infrastructure projects, the Bill introduces a new unified consenting process for Wales, which will apply both on the land and in the territorial sea. It will capture significant infrastructure projects for which the Welsh Ministers have responsibility to consent which will include onshore and offshore energy generating stations, certain overhead electric lines associated with a generating station, works to highways and railways, and wastewater treatment plants.

Since the Wales Act 2017 devolved further legislative and executive responsibility for the consenting of energy generating projects, overhead electric lines and ports and harbours, Wales has been at a disadvantage by being placed by the UK Government into legacy consenting processes which are no longer fit for purpose.

Not only has this caused a number of issues for developers and others engaged in the process of consenting of these projects, such as our local communities, it also discourages investment and growth in Wales.

The new unified consenting process established in the Bill will directly address these issues by providing a 'one-stop-shop', whereby certain permissions, consents, licences and other requirements currently issued under different consenting regimes, can be obtained as one package.

The Bill ensures a transparent, and consistent, process which enables local communities to better understand and engage in decisions that affect them, whilst providing certainty in decision-making which is underpinned by clear policy.

It will also be able to meet future challenges by being sufficiently flexible to capture developing technologies and any further powers which may be devolved.

Specifically, the Bill makes provision for matters such as:

- the thresholds when a development is considered to be a significant infrastructure project;
- ensuring publicity and engagement with local communities and local planning authorities;
- the processes and procedures for determining applications (including authorising the compulsory acquisition of land);
- breaches of infrastructure consent and how these can be enforced against; and
- how and when fees are charged.

My oral statement on the Bill to the Senedd on Tuesday 13 June will provide greater detail on the aims, objectives and content of the Bill, and I look forward to working with Members and stakeholders on the Bill's scrutiny in the coming months.