

# NEWSLETTER



## Planning and Politics

### A Review of the Welsh Government's Permitted Development Reform In Wales:

*A look at the Welsh Government's ambitious proposals to streamline planning, enable sustainable infrastructure, and support housing delivery through expanded permitted development rights.*

The Welsh Government's consultation sets out wide-ranging proposals to reform Permitted Development Rights (PDR's), aiming to improve planning efficiency, support the transition to net zero, and accelerate infrastructure and housing delivery across Wales. The reforms align Welsh policy more closely with English planning updates, addressing national priorities in energy, transport, housing, and environmental protection.

#### The Consultation sets out six key areas of reform:

##### 1) Accelerating the rollout of low-carbon infrastructure:

- Changes to ASHP (Air Source Heat Pump) regulations aim to encourage the widespread adoption of clean energy technologies by removing outdated restrictions.
- Air-to-air systems will now be permitted under PDRs alongside air-to-water systems.
- The 3-metre boundary rule will be removed, reducing the need for full planning applications.
- Unit size limits are proposed to increase from 1m<sup>3</sup> to 1.5m<sup>3</sup>.
- Detached properties could install two ASHPs instead of one.
- ASHPs could be installed on walls fronting highways in non-designated areas, subject to visual safeguards.

##### 2) Electric Vehicle (EV) Infrastructure Expansion:

Permitted development rights for electric vehicle charging infrastructure are being updated to support Wales Climate goals and Net Zero Wales targets:

- Wall-mounted EV chargers may be installed closer to highways.
- Non-domestic upstands may increase in height to 2.7m, enabling faster, high-capacity chargers.
- Equipment Housing for chargers will be permitted, with volume limits (29m<sup>3</sup>) and buffer zones from highways & residential areas.

##### 3) Temporary use of Land for Camping and Pop-Up Sites:

- A new PDR class will permit temporary campsites for up to 60 days per year, replacing the current 28-day allowance:
- Campsites will be excluded from operating within 100m of protected dwellings.
- A prior notification process will ensure oversight of access, transport and wastewater issues.
- Sites of environmental and historical sensitivity, including SSSIs, flood zones, and listing buildings, will be excluded.



##### 4) Deposit Return Scheme Infrastructure:

To support the upcoming Deposit Return Scheme (DRS), a new PDR will allow the instillation of reverse vending machines (RVMs):

- Development must be 15m away from residential properties.
- Max height: 3.5m, max footprint: 40m<sup>2</sup>.
- Excluded from WHSs, listed buildings, and Article 1(5) land.

##### 5) Development by Statutory Undertakers - Electricity

Electricity undertakers would benefit from:

- Inclusion of smart meter comms systems under PDRs.
- Increased size thresholds for substations (up to 45m<sup>3</sup>), subject to proximity rules near homes.
- New rights for enclosure fencing (up to 2.5m) to comply with UK safety regulations.
- Broader PDRs for site investigation and communication line replacement.

##### 6) Emergency affordable housing and Meanwhile Uses

To reduce homelessness and housing pressure, a new PDR for meanwhile affordable housing uses is proposed:

- Which would enable temporary modular homes on land allocated for future development.
- The Welsh Government is seeking views on appropriate time limits, public engagement mechanisms, and whether registered social landlords should be included under the rights.

# The Planning World is Changing

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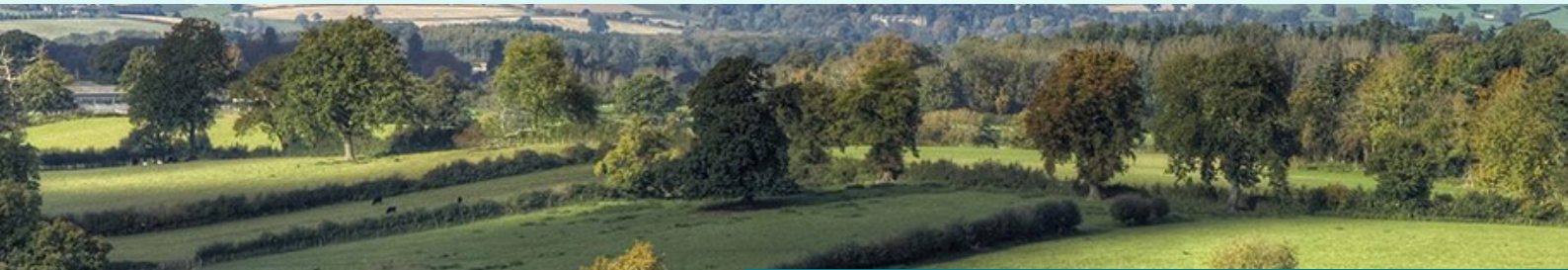
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#### 7) A New Definition of 'Major Development'

The Welsh Government is proposing changes to the definition of "major development" to help accelerate housing delivery and reduce delays for smaller schemes.

- It is proposed to increase the threshold for what constitutes a "major development" from 10 to 25 dwellings. This would reduce the requirement for pre-application consultation on smaller residential schemes, helping to speed up delivery and reduce costs for developers, particularly those bringing forward affordable housing.
- Alongside the change in dwelling numbers, the consultation considers whether the current site area threshold of 0.5 hectares should also be increased. This would ensure alignment with the new 25-dwelling threshold, preventing smaller sites from being caught by major development rules when housing numbers are uncertain at the application stage.
- There is an acknowledgment that the current pre-application process can delay smaller developments and may occur too late in the design phase to meaningfully influence proposals. The Task Force is reviewing how pre-application procedures can be improved or adjusted, with possible legislative changes under consideration.



The Consultation proposes wide-ranging amendments to planning legislation in Wales to support decarbonisation, housing delivery, and efficient infrastructure development, while maintaining community amenity and environmental protection.

#### Evidence to Underpin Decisions:

##### Environmental Impact:

Changes, particularly related to air source heat pumps (ASHPs) and electric vehicle (EV) chargers are rooted in the need to transition to a greener, more sustainable future.

##### Affordable Housing Needs:

Wales is facing a housing crisis, with 140,000 people on waiting lists, including 3,000 children and over 11,000 adults in temporary accommodation. Rising demand, low delivery of new homes, and market pressures highlight the urgent need for practical, fast-paced solutions.

##### Infrastructure Improvements:

The proposed streamlining of PDRs for statutory undertakers supports improved infrastructure, grid efficiency, and the shift to renewable energy.

#### This Consultation reflects broader planning priorities in Wales:

- Delivering a planning system that is responsive and climate focused, aligned with Net Zero Wales.
- Ensuring regional consistency with English PDR reforms, while respecting Welsh local governance and distinct spatial challenges
- Encouraging investment in infrastructure, housing, and tourism, particularly in rural and underserved communities.

*The consultation started on 8 April 2025 and ends on 1 July 2025 and can be viewed [here](#). If you would like Kew Planning to prepare and submit a representation on your behalf in response to this consultation, please contact a member of our team.*

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