

Rural Proofing in Wales

A supporter's guide to responding to the Rural Proofing White Paper proposals

Deadline: Wednesday 14 October 2026

Don't be put off by the 115-page White Paper. The official response form says: "Please respond to the questions that are relevant to you. You do not need to answer every question." This guide concentrates on 10 official Rural Proofing questions .

What is rural proofing?

In plain English, rural proofing means checking how a government policy, strategy, plan or public service will affect rural people, businesses and communities, and taking those rural needs into account early enough for the decision to be influenced.

The White Paper proposes a statutory duty requiring Welsh Ministers and specified public authorities to "have regard to rural needs" when developing, adopting, implementing or revising policies, strategies and plans, and when designing and delivering public services.

Why this matters if large-scale renewables concern you

The Rural Proofing section is not a consultation on individual wind farms, solar farms or pylons.. **However, people's experience of large-scale renewable energy and associated infrastructure can be relevant evidence of what a meaningful rural-proofing system needs to recognise.**

For example, rural residents may wish to raise - cumulative effects from several projects; impacts on farming, tourism, roads, local businesses, landscape, Welsh-speaking communities, services, health and well-being; whether local evidence is heard; whether impacts are considered early enough; and whether authorities explain what they did in response to consultations.

Guidelines for your response

You do not need to read all 115 pages of the White Paper to take part. This guide gives page references if you want to read the background to a particular question. Responding in your own words and with your own views will add validity. It does not matter how brief each answer is, as long as you address one or more key points. You can select as many or as few questions as you like. Even one is acceptable.

Link here:

[rural-proofing-and-environmental-sustainability-white-paper](#)

Select the Consultation Document if you wish to read the background.

Scroll down the page and click "respond online".

Alternatively you can download a form to send your response by email.

Draft your answers in Word or Google Docs first, then copy them into the online form.

How to use this guide below – consider our additional questions and comments as prompts to formulate what you want to say.

White Paper page references

Question	White Paper pages
Q1	pp. 15–18
Q2	pp. 18–19
Q3	pp. 19–20 & p. 76
Q4	p. 20
Q5	pp. 18–19 & 21–22
Q7	pp. 21–22
Q8	pp. 15–22
Q9	pp. 15–22
Q10	pp. 21 & 22
Q11	pp. 21 & 22

These are suggestions below: use only those that reflect your own views and experience.

Question 1

Do you think Wales needs a new rural proofing duty? Please explain your response.

THINGS YOU MIGHT THINK ABOUT:

- Do you think rural needs are adequately considered when government and public bodies make policies and deliver services?
- Give a local example if you have one.
- If your area is experiencing major renewable-energy infrastructure, you could explain whether that experience highlights a need for rural consequences to be considered early enough to influence the policy, strategy or plan, rather than after the main direction has already been decided.

Question 2

Do you agree with the proposed form of the rural proofing duty (a duty to have regard to rural needs)? Please explain your answer.

THINGS YOU MIGHT THINK ABOUT:

- Is a legal requirement merely to “have regard to rural needs” the right terminology, or should the duty require something clearer or legally stronger?
- Should authorities use area specific assessments to identify rural impacts, evidence them and explain their response?
- What should happen when serious rural harm is identified? Who is responsible to address serious concerns and who is accountable? A Welsh Minister has the final say on large energy development planning applications. Does that make them accountable?
- You could say whether having 'regard' is enough where a rural area faces significant or cumulative infrastructure pressures.

Question 3

Do you agree with the proposed list of public authorities to whom the duty should apply? Please explain your answer. To answer this question please refer to Annex 1 on page 76 of the White Paper.

THINGS YOU MIGHT THINK ABOUT:

- Think about which public authorities make decisions that materially affect rural communities.
- Are important bodies missing?
- Should the list be capable of being updated?
- If a particular public authority has an important role in energy, environment, transport or infrastructure affecting your area, consider whether it should be included.

Question 4

Do you think public authorities subject to rural proofing should be required to periodically report on what actions they have taken, or propose to take, to comply with the duty? Please explain your answer.

THINGS YOU MIGHT THINK ABOUT:

- Should authorities have to show publicly what they have done, rather than simply say they considered rural needs?
- You could say - It should show evidence considered, impacts identified and changes made and that transparency is especially important where communities are facing repeated or major infrastructure decisions.

Question 5

Do you agree that the Welsh Ministers should be required to provide statutory guidance to support the new rural proofing duty? If so, what is your view on what should be included in that guidance. Please explain your answer.

THINGS YOU MIGHT THINK ABOUT:

- What rules and practical instructions should tell authorities how to rural-proof properly? (This is one of the most useful questions for detailed suggestions).
- This is the best place to argue that statutory guidance should provide protection from the threats posed by industrialisation. You can refer to - farming, jobs, tourism, housing, transport, services, Welsh language, community viability, health and well-being

Examples you might use:

The guidance on noise monitoring relating to wind turbines needs to be updated, to take in to account current science and new sound modelling tools.

The water resources assessments should be broader and more robust including baseline monitoring of flow and contamination and modelling of worst case scenario flooding in the whole catchment area.

Guidance should require the need for broader assessments on **health, well-being, loss of therapeutic environment disruption to daily life**, recognising that these impacts cannot always be reduced to financial values.

On page 6 of the IIA it "seeks views on whether current processes provide sufficient safeguards to protect communities from **inappropriate planting of trees**". The same principle should surely be applied to "**inappropriate placement of wind turbines**". This is not mentioned, in any form, in the White Paper or its related assessments. PEDW's scrutiny of applications is the control point. An argument is that this is too late in the process to meaningfully consider Rural Proofing.

Question 7

What practical matters, such as evidence and research, networks and human capacity building, would need to be addressed to make a rural proofing duty successful?

THINGS YOU MIGHT THINK ABOUT:

- This is the strongest place to explain where you believe evidence or local knowledge about rural impacts has been missing or inadequate, in your experience of living near to a proposed industrial energy park.
- *Examples you might use:*

Should there be a community impact assessment that focusses on particular groups? - For example older people, disabled people, young families, home workers and farmers - may experience major infrastructure impacts differently because they spend more time in and around their homes or local area and have little or no opportunity to remove themselves from being in close proximity to energy park developments.

Should rural proofing and major national policy exercises, such as The National Energy Strategy, be considered together where their effects on rural communities overlap, rather than being assessed entirely separately?

Should public authorities actively seek evidence rather than simply wait for communities to provide it?

Do developer's public consultations provide the right time and place to inform communities about local plans for industrial developments? These seems to have bypassed Rural Proofing. Did you feel your input was listened to at these public consultations?

Question 8

What benefits, costs, risks or unintended consequences do you think could arise from introducing a statutory rural proofing duty?

THINGS YOU MIGHT THINK ABOUT:

- Without adequate resources, it could become another tick-box exercise with little meaningful impact.
- You might explain that consultation or impact assessment is of little value if it happens after the important direction has already been decided. If significant rural effects are omitted from consideration, communities may feel that their experience has not been properly recognised.
- One issue you may wish to consider is whether the proposed duty is broad enough to capture the cumulative consequences for rural communities of large-scale energy and associated infrastructure. If it is not, could some of the communities experiencing the greatest change remain inadequately protected?
- Could failure to address these issues undermine Welsh Government credibility and public confidence?

Question 9

Do you have any other comments, evidence or experience, including from other parts of the UK or internationally, that should inform the development of *Rural Proofing* proposals?

THINGS YOU MIGHT THINK ABOUT:

- **This is the place for a concise real-life example involving wind farms, solar, pylons, substations or associated infrastructure, particularly where several impacts combine.**

- Put relevant evidence or experience here if it does not fit elsewhere.
- Describe what is happening in your own community.
- Explain the effect, not just the concern.
- Examples you might use:

Two rural local authorities – Carmarthenshire and Powys, have recently raised concerns on behalf of their communities about the scale and pace of energy development, they have called for a moratorium on on-shore wind in their counties. Explain how you think that Welsh Government should respond to these authorities who represent 10% of the population.

State if you think that rural proofing should explicitly recognise potential and foreseeable effects of current Net Zero targets and energy development policies on rural citizens.

Question 10

How, if at all, should a rural proofing duty work alongside the designation of Areas of Higher Density Linguistic Significance? In your view, what additional contribution could rural proofing make to supporting the sustainability of Welsh-speaking communities in those areas?

THINGS YOU MIGHT THINK ABOUT:

- If major development or infrastructure could affect the long-term viability or social fabric of a Welsh-speaking rural community, this is a relevant place to explain that if it affects you.

Question 11

What evidence, data, guidance or other resources would public authorities need to effectively consider impacts on Welsh-speaking communities and the Welsh language when undertaking rural proofing?

THINGS YOU MIGHT THINK ABOUT:

- Are wider assessments necessary when industrial energy developments are planned, taking into account how effects on housing, employment, community cohesion or population may affect Welsh as a community language?

If you only have 20–30 minutes

A reasonable short route: Q1 – Do we need the duty? • Q2 – Is 'have regard' strong enough? • Q5 – What must the guidance require? • Q7 – What evidence/resources are needed? • Q9 – Give your own local evidence or experience. Answer Questions 10 and 11 as well if Welsh-language impacts are relevant to you.

Do not include information that identifies other individuals in your response.

Online response form: [Welsh Government consultation response form](#)

What this guide does – and does not – claim

This guide is based on the Rural Proofing section and the official consultation response form in the Welsh Government White Paper (WG54479). It is designed to help members of the public understand the questions and decide where to put their own views.

Plain-English participation guide • revised 11 September 2026