

Why no policy about renewable energy ?

The survey that we carried out in 2014 showed that there were mixed views in the parish about some aspects of renewable energy. More people replied to this part of the survey than any other. The majority were in favour of rooftop solar panels, but were opposed to wind turbines and large scale solar panel farms. A significant minority held other views. There was also some support for other forms of renewable energy, such as managing woodland to produce fuel. There is an organisation to promote renewable energy in the parish, SHARE (South Hill Association for Renewable Energy) and is represented on our NDP development team by its managing director, David Skelton.

There are a number of difficulties in formulating policies on Renewable Energy for our plan. NDPs have to be permissive, rather than prohibitive, so it is not possible to simply prohibit certain type of development. It was suggested that we might have a policy which supported community led renewable energy projects with any financial or practical benefits retained within the Parish, but it was pointed out to us by the expert we consulted that this is not allowed under planning law. As a result of this advice, the team decided by a majority decision to abandon the energy policy.

Government policy on renewable energy has shifted since we started work on our plan, and the Cornwall Local Plan has now been approved and adopted. Policy 14: Renewable and low carbon energy, in the Cornwall Local Plan, contains much of what we might have wanted to include in a renewable energy policy. There are two significant impacts on our plan. Applications for wind turbines will not be considered unless sites have been allocated in a Neighbourhood Development Plan. We have made no such allocations of sites. Domestic rooftop solar panels are now usually automatically approved, and we do not need to include them in our plan.

The advice we received from the consultant who looked at our latest proposal for an energy policy in December 2016, was that most of it was either not allowed, or was no longer appropriate. He suggested that we drop the separate policy entirely, and perhaps incorporate some elements in the other policies. Our Housing Policy H1, and Business Development Policy B1, already contain references to the orientation of roofs for the efficient use of solar panels.

Our other expert, George Trubody, warned us not to include policies which might divide opinion among the residents, and could therefore cause the whole NDP to fail at the referendum stage. On his advice, we conducted another online survey, which showed some support for the policy, but after further discussion about the results of this survey with George Trubody in January 2017, it was decided by a large majority of the development team, that we would not include a separate energy policy.

