

Somerset Wide Energy Plan

Lead Officer: Jacob Hall

Author: Jacob Hall

Contact Details: Jacob.hall@mendip.gov.uk

Cabinet Member: Sarah Dyke

Division and Local Member: All

## **1. Summary**

- 1.1.** This report is to update the Environment and Climate Change Scrutiny Committee on the progress of a Somerset Energy Plan. This was a key deliverable from the Somerset Climate Emergency Strategy, however the focus of this initial phase of work is mapping the development of renewable energy technologies in Somerset.

## **2. Issues for consideration / Recommendations**

- 2.1.** Members are asked to note the contents of this report and the progress made so far in the development of the Somerset Energy Plan

## **3. Background**

- 3.1.** A Local Area Energy Plan was identified as one of the key deliverables in the Energy section in the joint Somerset Climate Emergency Strategy, specifically to “develop and deliver an Energy Plan for Somerset - Roadmap to decarbonising the energy system in Somerset. whole systems approach (buildings, heat, transport and power generation).”

A Local Area Energy Plan is an evidence-based approach that sets out the most effective route for the local area to reach both its local and national net zero target. The Plan considers the complex interactions of power, gas, heat and transport and the different ways our energy might be supplied, managed and consumed in the future.

This action was investigated in 2020 with a project initiation document written and soft market testing undertaken. Quotes at the time came back with estimates for £500,000 plus to complete the full plan. The project was therefore put on hold due to the high costs involved and the lack of funding.

In early 2022 a working group of officers from the five councils came together following some initially scoping work by Mendip District Council to discuss how the project could be moved forward.

The group recommended that a rescoped (and hence affordable) plan would incorporate. The rescoping was based around analysis of existing energy

plans specifically focusing on the Dorset example developed by their Local Enterprise Partnership with Regen. We held discussions with them to understand how they had approached the work and determined we would be looking for a similar piece of work which was more affordable than previous quotes.

The Somerset Wide Energy Plan differs from the more traditional Local Area Energy Plan by mapping at a higher level and specifically focusing on renewable technologies. We are also using this work to scope potential on our own assets as well as how we influence the Somerset Local Plan.

Funding for this piece of work was committed by members of the Climate Strategic Management Group (SMG) in 2021. However, this funding was not enough to progress the project based on the initial soft market testing conducted. Additional funding has been provided by three of the four planning authorities planning policy teams based on the project beginning to inform the development of the new Somerset Local Plan.

Our plan specification is as follows as determined by representatives from across the five authorities from the climate and planning policy teams.

- Develop a high-level assessment of renewable opportunities to support the development of the new Somerset wide Local Plan to identify areas suitable for renewable energy
- Understand the opportunities for renewables on council owned assets both free standing and council buildings
- A report detailing the current state of renewable energy generation and an unconstrained area-wide map of renewable energy opportunities irrelevant of land ownership.
- A GIS map showcasing a high-level assessment of unavoidable constraints and reasonably high level (e.g LCA, access to the grid), subjective constraints to help understand the potential likelihood of reaching the objectives outlined in the Somerset Climate Emergency Strategy.
- Identify investment projects and opportunities ensuring evidence is in place to allow the new Somerset Council to take these forward directly or in partnership and have the evidence available bid for potential future funding
- A roadmap towards the objectives outlined in the Somerset Climate Emergency Strategy including a target of net zero by 2030 and how to work alongside community energy organisations, the private sector and various other stakeholders on to invest and grow renewable energy generation in Somerset.

**3.2.** Based on the project initiation document and working group discussions a

tender was issued by Mendip District Council on behalf of the five Councils in November 2022. The project plan is split into three work packages.

- 1) Work package 1: Baseline existing local renewable resources focused on understanding the pipeline and demand for renewables in Somerset. Develop a high-level overview of unavoidable and subjective constraints for renewable installations and an assessment of energy infrastructure and council assets for the development of renewable technologies.
- 2) Work package 2: Scenarios and Roadmap. Develop a road map of net zero scenarios for 2030,2040 and 2050 and how this aligns to national and local scenarios and policies. Analysis of potential generating capacity and yield for technologies across locations.
- 3) Work package 3: Investment Plan Development. Produce an economic benefit assessment of how to deliver the road map along with recommendations on policy routes and viable projects in Somerset. Critically ensure that stakeholder engagement takes place at all stages of the plan's development

#### **4. Consultations undertaken**

**4.1.** The project has developed in partnership between the five Somerset Councils that are coming together to form Somerset Council. Primarily representatives from the climate teams and planning have worked together to develop the project and will sit as part of the core steering group as the project develops. A wider stakeholder engagement plan will be created as a critical part of the project explained in more detailed below.

**4.2.** Stakeholder engagement and evaluation will be key for the development of the Energy Plan and will take place throughout the project. This will be done through a core steering group, advisory group and then a wider engagement exercise with other key stakeholders. The creation of a stakeholder engagement plan one of the first actions for the project

Stakeholders will include but are not limited to the below

Stakeholder	Reason for inclusion
Core steering group consisting of Climate and Planning Officers	Core project team ultimately responsible for the delivery of the Energy Plan
Council officers including Planning Policy, Economic Development and Asset Management	Evaluate and provide specific knowledge around key areas of the Energy Plan's development.
Council Members	To scrutinise and support to the

	development of the plan throughout it's development
District Network Operators (National Grid & Scottish & Southern Electricity Networks)	Provide detail of the current grid capacity and future energy scenarios. Ensures buy in for the development of renewable technologies across Somerset
South West Net Zero Hub	To bring local knowledge and renewable energy expertise.
Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership	Part of continued partnership with the district councils existing Local Plans and named as a key partner with delivery of clean energy projects in Somerset's Climate Emergency Strategy
Wildlife and environmental NGOs such as the AONBs & Local Nature Partnership	To advise on impact, constraints and potential solutions on Somerset's natural environment and potential nature 'hotspots' to be avoided
Agricultural organisations such as FWAG SW and NFU	To advise on impact, constraints and potential solutions on agricultural land and farming community
Local community energy organisations	To bring local knowledge and experience of renewable installation projects. Ensure collaboration for potential future project de
Renewable energy developers including current operators such as EDF	To understand relevant impacts of the Hinkley Point development and grid connection and to share plans and invite support

## 5. Background papers

### 5.1. No background papers