



COTSWOLD

District Council

Council name	COTSWOLD DISTRICT COUNCIL
Name and date of Committee	CABINET – 8 MAY 2025
Subject	COTSWOLD DISTRICT RENEWABLE ENERGY STUDY - JANUARY 2025
Wards affected	All
Accountable member	Mike McKeown Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Sustainability Email: mike.mckeown@cotswold.gov.uk
Accountable officer	Geraldine LeCointe – Assistant Director Planning Email: geraldine.lecointe@cotswold.gov.uk
Report author	Jasper Lamoon – Principal Planning Policy Officer Email: jasper.lamoon@cotswold.gov.uk Olivia McGregor – Climate Change & Carbon Reduction Lead Email: olivia.mcgregor@cotswold.gov.uk
Summary/Purpose	The Renewable Energy Study provides Cotswold District Council with evidence-based advice to inform decisions on renewable energy deployment and achieving net zero, while also supporting the Local Plan Update.
Annexes	Annex A – Cotswold Renewable Energy Study January 2025 (main report) Annex B – Renewable energy resource and opportunity assessment (Appendix A) Annex C – Renewable energy assessment figures (Appendix B) Annex D – Landscape Sensitivity Assessment (with figures) (Appendix C) Annex E – Assessment assumptions (Appendix D) Annex F – Cotswold District Council Landscape Sensitivity Assessment (Appendix E)
Recommendation(s)	That Cabinet resolves to endorse the Renewable Energy Study for use as:



COTSWOLD

District Council

	• part of the evidence base for the review of the Local Plan; • part of the evidence base for future Council policies and procedures in regards to responding to the Climate and Ecological Emergencies.
Corporate priorities	Responding to the Climate Emergency
Key Decision	NO
Exempt	NO
Consultees/ Consultation	N/A



1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1** Cotswold District Council (CDC or 'the Council') appointed the Centre for Sustainable Energy (CSE) and Land Use Consultants (LUC) to undertake a Renewable Energy Study. This provides CDC with evidence-based advice to inform decisions on renewable energy and achieving net zero, while also supporting the Local Plan review to ensure it is "green to the core."
- 1.2** The study sets out where Cotswold District stands in regard to energy use and production. To help the Council frame its energy ambitions, the study provides multiple scenarios showing how future demand could be met. It also proposes a range of strategic recommendations and policy options to assist the Council in supporting renewable energy generation whilst minimizing adverse harmful impacts and reach its overall aim of having a Local Plan which is 'Green to the core'. It achieves this by identifying areas where renewable energy (e.g. wind and solar) could 'technically' be generated in the district based on a number of assumptions regarding the key opportunities (e.g. levels of wind speed or solar irradiance) and the potential constraints to development such as landscape sensitivity, nature conservation designations, heritage designations, and physical constraints (e.g. slope, built development etc).
- 1.3** The study will underpin future Council policy and work on renewable energy. This is both in regard to the Council's own estate and planning policies to determine planning applications. It also forms the vital first step in creating a Local Area Energy Plan, which is a plan of actions needed to deliver a net zero energy system locally (i.e. the transition to renewable energy and associated energy infrastructure).

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1** The Council declared a climate emergency on 3 July 2019. The declaration committed it to various actions, including making the Council's own operations net zero by 2045 and reviewing the district's adopted Local Plan to make climate change a strategic priority and to make the Local Plan 'green to the core'.
- 2.2** CDC appointed the Centre for Sustainable Energy (CSE) and Land Use Consultants (LUC) to undertake a Renewable Energy Study which provides evidence-based advice on the technical potential for renewable energy deployment in the district. This will inform the district's energy ambitions in light of the Council's aim to achieve net zero



(decarbonise our district), while supporting the current Local Plan Update. The decarbonisation of the district will require substantial changes to the way that energy is generated, stored and distributed. It will require an urgent phase out of fossil fuels and move towards renewable energy generation with the accompanying electrification of heat and transport. This will increase electricity demand. The output of renewable generation is more variable than traditional energy generation. A move will therefore be required from a centralised energy system (with large-scale fossil fuel electricity generation sources) towards a distributed system with many smaller scale renewable energy schemes generating energy closer to where the energy is used.

- 2.3** The study is a comprehensive and technical document which contains further supporting information for context. This report does not aim to summarise all the elements of the study, but to cover the main points that will likely be used to underpin future planning and climate policy. However, it is important that Members take the time to read the whole document to understand the full picture that it draws.
- 2.4** The study is a factual document, which has already been referenced in the Regulation 18 consultation on the Local Plan Update in Spring 2024. The aim of this report is to ensure that Members are aware of the study's findings and endorse its use as evidence that underpins future policies and procedures.

3. MAIN POINTS

- 3.1** Chapters one and two of the study provide a general introduction, the methodology used and the policy context in which the study was conducted. Overall, this is background information and is therefore not covered in depth in this report.
- 3.2** In chapter three, the study sets out the current energy usage in the district, the impact of new development on this use and the energy demand of the Council's estate. It also highlights one of the main issues in regards to the deployment of renewable energy production, which is the limitation of the current electricity grid. In the short-term, opportunities for new renewable energy deployment are limited to areas where there is capacity still available or where there is an existing connection which is not being fully utilised. When looking at Cotswold District, the majority of substations in the Mid and South of the district are constrained and will therefore



unlikely be able to take on new connections until the Distribution System Operators upgrade the network.

- 3.3** Chapter four provides an assessment of potential sources for renewable energy and how they could be deployed to meet the estimated energy demand (looking both at current energy demand and forecasted demand by 2050). The benefits of renewable energy deployment are set out (such as energy security, improved air quality, minimal impacts on the landscape once decommissioned, etc.), and consideration is given to challenges such as the sensitivities around the Cotswold National Landscape.
- 3.4** A landscape sensitivity assessment (LSA) was undertaken to inform the assessment of the potential impact of different scales of wind and ground mounted solar development on the landscape. This LSA is based on criteria such as *landform and topography, land cover pattern, historic landscape character, perceptual qualities and skylines/intervisibility*. The results of the LSA can be found in Appendix C for areas outside the Cotswold National Landscape and Appendix E for areas within.
- 3.5** The study also looks at the technical potential for renewable energy in the district (taking into consideration opportunities and constraints such as areas with high levels of wind, heritage designations, nature conservation, location of roads and houses, etc.). This is overlaid with the landscape sensitivity assessment results to produce a series of energy opportunity maps (figures 2.12 to 2.19 of Appendix C), showing different results based on the scale and type of renewable energy. A summary of the results can be found on page 35 of the study. Appropriately worded planning policies on renewable energy proposals, together with the energy opportunity maps, will help the Council's Development Management team when determining the suitability of proposals for wind and solar development.
- 3.6** In chapter five, the study provides a wide range of *Strategic recommendations and policy options*, such as having supportive local plan policies on renewable energy and taking on a community leadership role in shaping the future of the district's energy mix. It sets out which further analysis is needed to deploy renewables within the corporate estate and also raises an important point in regard to internal staff resourcing. Although at this stage there are no resource decisions to be made, it is important Members are aware that to implement all the suggested actions, there will



be a requirement for further staff resource (subject to a broader business case being established). To achieve the community leadership role and facilitate partnerships, dedicated resources would be needed. Moreover, some of the recommendations go beyond the theme of renewable energy. For the Council to truly achieve its aim of having a Local Plan that is 'Green to the Core', it will need to introduce enhanced energy standards for development. This will require both the upskilling of development management officers and having a specialist officer available to support small and large development proposals.

- 3.7** The study continues with a set of suggested policies to assist implementation of the strategic recommendations and policy options. In regards to Planning Policy, the suggestions have been used as a starting point for the policies regarding Renewable Energy in the emerging Local Plan update. Following public consultations (of which one has already occurred in Spring 2024), these will become part of the Council's Local Plan. This will include the use of the energy opportunity maps. However, it is important to note that these maps only look at technical potential and broad landscape sensitivity. All development proposals for renewable energy projects will still be subject to site-specific assessments which will consider any additional localised constraints. They will also need to comply with all other requirements in the renewable energy policy which will be in the future update to the local plan.
- 3.8** The study finishes by highlighting that the approach to meet district net zero ambitions will need to be radical and transformative, and will require one that combines the application of technologies and techniques with ongoing public and business engagement.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 4.1** An alternative option would be for the Council to ignore the content of the study when developing future policies and a local area energy plan. However, the findings from the study are integral supporting evidence for the new Local Plan policy on Renewable Energy, which the Council consulted the public on via its Local Plan consultation in Spring 2024.
- 4.2** Ignoring the study is likely to lead to Council decisions not being informed by key evidence. It could also deny the Council the benefits of the report's advice on driving



the development of a net zero energy system, namely tackling climate change, increasing energy security, and improving air quality.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1** Paragraph 3.6 of this report highlights that the study provides a wide range of strategic recommendations and policy options. For the Council to adequately respond to the study, further resources may be required – be that staff resources or budget.
- 5.2** A comprehensive business case must be completed to support any request to the Council for additional resources and the Council will need to assess any request 'in the round' against other corporate priorities taking into account the limited resources available to the Council and deliverability of actions.
- 5.3** The total cost of the study is £41,000 which has been funded from the Local Plan earmarked reserve.

6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1** No legal implications. The relevant legislation is cited in the study

7. RISK ASSESSMENT

- 7.1** Please see section 4 Alternative Options.

8. EQUALITIES IMPACT

- 8.1** No impact on equalities have been identified.

9. CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1** The actions in the Renewable Energy Study can assist the Council in reaching its goals in regards to the climate and ecological emergencies. Endorsing the study will therefore have a positive impact.