

# Renewable Energy Position Statement



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**Nidderdale**  
National  
Landscape

# CONTENTS

|  |   |
|--|---|
| Purpose of this Renewable Energy Position Statement .....    | 1 |
| Introduction .....   | 2 |
| Renewable Energy Installations and Emissions Reduction ..... | 2 |
| National and Regional Climate Change Policy .....            | 3 |
| National Planning Policy Framework .....                     | 3 |
| North Yorkshire Council Climate Change Strategy .....        | 3 |
| Nidderdale National Landscape Management Plan .....          | 3 |
| Special Qualities of Nidderdale National Landscape .....     | 4 |
| Planning Permission .....                                    | 5 |
| Considerations for Renewable Energy Development in NNL ..... | 6 |
| Heat pumps.....  | 6 |
| Solar .....  | 6 |
| Hydro .....  | 6 |
| Wind .....   | 6 |
| Anaerobic digestion .....                                    | 6 |
| Biomass heating .....  | 6 |
| Further Information.....                                     | 7 |
| Useful Links .....   | 7 |
| References .....   | 7 |

## PURPOSE OF THIS RENEWABLE ENERGY POSITION STATEMENT

The Nidderdale National Landscape Partnership has welcomed investment in renewable energy technology across the area but, if not carefully sited, the impact of individual installations and especially their cumulative impact can cause harm to Nidderdale’s protected landscapes.

The focus of this Position Statement is how to balance the need to protect Nidderdale’s landscape with climate change mitigation objectives. It is intended to provide advice and guidance to householders, farmers and landowners, rural businesses, and the local planning authority to ensure that renewable energy developments are appropriate to their locality and are compatible with the primary purpose of National Landscape designation, which is to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the designated area.

## INTRODUCTION

Mitigating the impact of climate change on Nidderdale's landscape, wildlife, businesses and communities by reducing emissions and adapting to changes that have already taken place or are likely to occur is a key theme of Nidderdale National Landscape's Management Plan.

Objectives in the Plan reflect the Government's commitment to combating climate change that was incorporated into UK legislation in November 1998 when the Climate Change Act was passed by Parliament with an overwhelming majority across political parties. The Act sets out emission reduction targets that the UK must comply with legally. It was amended in 2019 to set a target for at least a 100% reduction of greenhouse gas emissions (compared to 1990 levels) in the UK by 2050. This is known as a net zero target because some emissions can remain if they are offset by other measures that remove equal amounts to the remaining emissions from the atmosphere.

## RENEWABLE ENERGY INSTALLATIONS AND EMISSIONS REDUCTION

The Government publishes data annually on greenhouse gas emissions (carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous oxide and a combined total in carbon dioxide equivalent) by region and by local authority. In the most recent cycle, the Government has also provided emissions for National Landscapes. This most recent data shows that the total emissions for Nidderdale National Landscape were 187 kt CO<sub>2</sub>e in 2022, equating to per capita emissions of 15.7 t CO<sub>2</sub>e and an average of 0.3 kt CO<sub>2</sub>e per km<sup>2</sup>. Emissions have decreased from 276 kt CO<sub>2</sub>e (25.4 t CO<sub>2</sub>e per capita and 0.5 kt CO<sub>2</sub>e per km<sup>2</sup>) in 2005, but the scale of further reductions required to achieve Net Zero will be challenging.

The Local Area Energy Plan for Harrogate and the Dales commissioned by the York & North Yorkshire Local Enterprise Partnership (now the Combined Authority) in 2022 describes the range of actions needed to achieve a Net Zero energy system in Harrogate and the Dales by 2040. It proposes a combination of improvements in the energy efficiency of buildings, investment in heat pump technology, a significant increase in the number of electric vehicles and expansion of renewable energy generation capacity. Electrification of heating and transport in particular will result in an estimated 70% increase demand. The Plan calculates that the area has the capacity to develop 1950MW of wind and solar generation through large-scale as well as domestic installations. However, this is unlikely to be achievable in practice because of limitations

on national grid connectivity, competing land uses including agriculture, and landscape conservation priorities in North Yorkshire's two National Landscapes and two National Parks.

The Local Area Energy Plan also notes that the electricity network is progressing towards full decarbonisation by 2035. Local generation is therefore not an essential part of the pathway to Net Zero, but renewable generation at a local level can contribute to national progress as well as accelerating local emissions reductions by acting as a substitute for fossil fuel in domestic heating systems.



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## **NATIONAL AND REGIONAL CLIMATE CHANGE POLICY**

### **NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK**

In accordance with the provisions of the 2008 Climate Change Act, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that policy “should take a proactive approach to mitigating and adapting to climate change, taking into account the long-term implications for flood risk, coastal change, water supply, biodiversity and landscapes, and the risk of overheating and drought from rising temperatures”. NPPF encourages planning authorities to “identify opportunities for development to draw its energy supply from decentralised, renewable or low carbon energy supply systems”.

In December 2024 the government published an update to the NPPF requiring greater weight to be given to the contribution a development makes to renewable energy generation and a net zero future. Part of this approach has led to a more positive policy to support on shore wind turbines and more flexible permitted development rights have been introduced to support domestic renewable energy installations. This however does not reduce the protection the Framework affords to important landscape and heritage assets, and it requires any adverse impacts including cumulative landscape and visual impacts to be appropriately addressed.

### **NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNCIL CLIMATE CHANGE STRATEGY**

North Yorkshire Council declared a climate emergency for North Yorkshire in 2022 and published a Climate Change Strategy in 2024. The Strategy aims to encourage North Yorkshire’s residents, businesses and visitors to adopt ‘climate responsible’ actions on adapting to change already

taking place, by supporting nature and by mitigating the effects of change. The Strategy highlights the importance of creating ‘a low-energy and low-carbon built environment powered by local renewable energy’.

### **NIDDERDALE NATIONAL LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT PLAN**

Climate change is a recurring theme in the Nidderdale National Landscape Management Plan. Objectives include work on reducing carbon emissions while simultaneously increasing capacity for carbon storage by supporting restoring peat habitats and significantly increasing the amount of woodland cover. The Management Plan also advocates climate change adaptation measures including implementing a targeted habitat creation and expansion programme, tackling invasive non-native species and natural flood management.



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## SPECIAL QUALITIES OF NIDDERDALE NATIONAL LANDSCAPE

Policy in the Management Plan reiterates the primary purpose of National Landscape designation which is to conserve and enhance natural beauty. The primary purpose is reflected in legislation including the Countryside Act (1968), the Environment Act (1995), the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (2000) and the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (2006). Recent legislation (Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023) has strengthened the legal requirement on “relevant authorities” to seek to further the statutory purpose of National Landscapes in their actions or decisions within or affecting these designated areas.

The National Landscape Partnership recognises the need to act quickly on climate change. It supports installation of renewable energy infrastructure in Nidderdale where it is compatible with the primary purpose of designation. When the Partnership provides advice on new renewable energy development, and when responding to applications

for planning permission where consent is required, it will carefully scrutinise proposals to assess the likely impact on the character of Nidderdale’s landscape. Important considerations in this respect will include visual and landscape impact and clearly the siting and scale of installations are crucial in this regard.

Nidderdale’s landscape character consists of various distinctive elements:

- The scenery to the west is dominated by heather moors that have internationally important conservation status. The moorland plateau landscape is characterised by an exhilarating feeling of openness, elevation and exposure.
- To the east the landscape broadens and flattens and becomes softer, containing more pastoral scenery, alongside historic parks and gardens and grand country houses like Swinton Castle, Farnley and Grantley Hall together with the Fountains Abbey and Studley Royal World Heritage Site.

- Water is a key feature, in rivers and streams and in the National Landscape’s 11 reservoirs with their elaborately constructed dams, spillways, reservoir lodges and aqueducts dating from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.
- Diverse and species-rich mosaics of dwarf shrub vegetation interspersed with native broadleaved woodland in gills on the edges of the moors dominate the uplands, turning the moors purple in August. They support strategically important populations of birds including red grouse, merlin, and golden plover alongside other Red Listed birds such as curlew and lapwing that breed in the adjoining meadows and pastures. Their calls in spring dominate the landscape. Reptiles including adder, slow worm and common lizard are locally frequent, and there are still areas of flower-rich meadows on the grassland plateau alongside fields that have been improved to produce silage crops.
- Farming has played a dominant role in creating Nidderdale’s special qualities and has given rise to an historic field pattern bounded by dry stone walls, with small woodlands, and isolated buildings with domestic development confined to mainly small settlements concentrated on the valley floor.

These elements combine to form a tranquil and unspoilt rural landscape of national importance that has been successfully protected against harmful development since the boundaries of the designated area were defined in the 1940s. While it is recognised that Nidderdale’s special qualities are vulnerable to climate change, people also expect to experience a nationally designated landscape where these qualities are conserved, in which inappropriate 21<sup>st</sup> century technology can strike a discordant note.







## PLANNING PERMISSION

Local planning policy in current and emerging Local Plans is positive about the installation of micro generation technology. Supplementary Planning Guidance on Renewable and Low Carbon Energy published by Harrogate Borough Council in 2015 contains useful information, although it has not been updated in line with changes in planning policy since that date. Updated Local Plan policy will in due course be provided by a new North Yorkshire Local Plan which will follow and add detail to national policy in the NPPF.

The rules linked to planning permission for renewable energy schemes are complex and have

frequently been amended by the Government in recent years with increased permitted development allowances introduced to enable small scale renewable energy initiatives to be implemented within residential and business/farm properties. Although much renewable energy equipment is permitted in principle by these allowances, they are almost always subject to limits and tolerance relating to dimensions and siting and so **it is always advisable to contact the planning authority to clarify whether planning permission or prior approval is required before carrying out any work.** Works that affect the character or appearance of listed buildings will always require listed building consent.

In general, devices that **may not** need planning permission include:

- Air source heat pumps (provisos relating to siting and number apply)
- Biomass boilers (with a low flue and installed at the rear)
- Ground source heat pumps (within a garden)
- Solar thermal panels on residential properties (under 200mm depth and installed as far as practical to reduce the effect on the appearance of the building and amenity of the area). Other provisos also apply and, in all cases, planning advice should be sought prior to installing as there are also size limitations in relation to ground mounted panels within residential gardens.
- Solar photovoltaic panels (as above)
- Water source heat pumps (within a garden)

Devices that **always need** planning permission in the National Landscape include:

- Anaerobic digesters
- Small-scale hydroelectric schemes
- Wind turbines
- Solar panels sited outside of gardens/ curtilage

## CONSIDERATIONS FOR RENEWABLE ENERGY DEVELOPMENT IN NIDDERDALE NATIONAL LANDSCAPE

Large-scale commercial renewable energy projects – wind and solar in particular – will be an essential part of the UK's transition to Net Zero. The Government's Energy Security Strategy sets out plans for a major expansion in generating capacity at a commercial scale, but outside designated sites including National Landscapes. The Nidderdale National Landscape Partnership will continue to oppose large-scale renewable energy development within the boundary and on land adjacent to the designated area where it would have a significantly adverse effect on its setting.

The Partnership acknowledges that small-scale micro generation projects using a variety of technologies can often be successfully integrated into sensitive landscapes and the Partnership will work with applicants and developers to minimise adverse impacts where possible.

### HEAT PUMPS

There are two widely used heat pump technologies: air and ground source. Air source heat pumps are increasingly commonplace and have only minimal impact provided they are carefully sited to minimise the effect on the external appearance of a building. The same applies to ground source heat pumps although extra care should be taken to ensure that the installation does not damage sub-surface archaeology.

### SOLAR

The Local Area Energy Plan for Harrogate and the Dales estimates that roof-mounted solar could contribute 157 GWh per year to the Dales' 2,777

GWh electricity demand. Roof-mounted panels on most buildings, including portal frame agricultural sheds, have only limited landscape effects. Listed Building Consent is required for roof-mounted installations on Listed Buildings and planning permission is needed for ground mounted ones within their curtilage.

Ground-mounted solar arrays can be difficult to integrate into Nidderdale's farmed landscapes and the cumulative impact of multiple projects could be harmful to Nidderdale's character. For this reason, siting solar arrays in the open countryside outside of a property's grounds is discouraged, whereas small-scale installations designed to produce energy for domestic consumption situated within a domestic curtilage or farmstead are generally permitted development and do not require planning permission.

### HYDRO

The infrastructure necessary for hydro power generation projects can usually be designed to limit adverse landscape impacts and is unlikely to cause landscape harm, although alterations to the profile of rivers and streams, and the effect on their flow rates, can have negative consequences for wildlife that must be considered. Environment Agency approval is needed alongside planning permission where appropriate.

### WIND

For operational reasons, preferred turbine sites are often in exposed and relatively remote locations where mast-like structures can become dominant features in otherwise undeveloped landscapes. Their visual profile is heightened by the moving rotor blades and shadow flicker in some atmospheric conditions. Noise can also cause local disturbance

and potential amenity issues. However small-scale domestic turbines situated within the curtilage of an existing group of buildings may not cause significant harm dependant on siting and design. Siting turbines so they are seen in association with other linear features or structures (e.g., trees, phone/power lines or farm infrastructure) can help in reducing their landscape impact.

### ANAEROBIC DIGESTION

Anaerobic digestion (AD) plants generate renewable energy from a combination of high energy feedstocks (such as whole crop wheat, maize and rye) together with livestock wastes including slurry. It has the potential to process high volumes of livestock waste that can otherwise cause environmental harm, but AD plant infrastructure can be intrusive. Arable land suitable for production of high energy crop substrates is limited in Nidderdale and transport of high volumes of substrate and slurry can have an adverse impact on tranquillity.

### BIOMASS HEATING

The potential contribution of wood fuel to Net Zero objectives has been the subject of detailed research. Carbon sequestered by growing trees is released back into the atmosphere when burnt and the volumes can exceed the sequestered amount if the woodlands and forests from which the timber is extracted are inappropriately managed. Energy used in harvesting, firewood processing and transport is also significant. The wood fuel market provides an incentive for forestry and woodland management which can be beneficial for biodiversity and landscape but wherever possible care should be taken to ensure that timber for firewood is derived from sustainably managed woodlands, and that wood fuel products are accredited by the Woodsure 'Ready to Burn' scheme.



## FURTHER INFORMATION

### USEFUL LINKS

#### **Energy Saving Trust**

[energysavingtrust.org.uk](https://energysavingtrust.org.uk)

#### **North Yorkshire Council planning enquiries**

[northyorks.gov.uk/planning-and-conservation/find-out-if-you-need-planning-permission-and-apply](https://northyorks.gov.uk/planning-and-conservation/find-out-if-you-need-planning-permission-and-apply)

#### **North Yorkshire Council climate advice**

[northyorks.gov.uk/environment-and-neighbourhoods/climate-change/climate-change-and-local-action](https://northyorks.gov.uk/environment-and-neighbourhoods/climate-change/climate-change-and-local-action)

#### **Woodsure**

[woodsurre.co.uk](https://woodsurre.co.uk)

### REFERENCES

#### **Harrogate District Local Plan 2014-2035**

#### **Local Area Energy Plan for Harrogate and the Dales, 2022**

#### **National Planning Policy Framework, December 2024**

#### **Nidderdale National Landscape Management Plan**

#### **North Yorkshire Council Climate Change Strategy 2023-2030**

#### **UK Government greenhouse gas emissions data**



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