Foel Fach Wind Farm Limited.

Foel Fach Wind Farm

Socio-Economic Statement

Project Reference: 664094

Energy for generations

DECEMBER 2025

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 RSK Environment Limited (hereafter 'RSK') has been commissioned by Foel Fach Wind Farm Limited (hereafter the 'Applicant') to produce a Socio-Economic Statement for the development of Foel Fach Wind Farm (hereafter the 'Proposed Development') in the administrative area of Gwynedd Council on land located approximately 3.1 km north of the town of Bala (hereafter the 'Site').

1.1.2 This Socio-Economic Statement outlines the main socio-economic elements of the Proposed Development. This document includes an overview of the demographic background of Gwynedd Council as the local authority area that hosts the Proposed Development. The socio-economic elements of the Proposed Development are considered against national and local planning policy and also considered in relation to the likely impacts on the local and wider economy, society and communities.

1.2 Project Background

1.2.1 The Proposed Development comprises the construction, operation and decommissioning of 10 wind turbines, a Battery Energy Storage System (BESS), substation and ancillary infrastructure works.

1.2.2 The Proposed Development would be constructed over a period of approximately 21 months.

2 SOCIO-ECONOMIC BASELINE

2.1.1 This section outlines the demographic background of Gwynedd Council (hereafter Gwynedd) and provides a comparison against national trends.

2.2 Population and Labour Force Overview

2.2.1 The population of Gwynedd fell between the last two censuses (held in 2011 and 2021). According to Census 2011 data, the population of Gwynedd was just under 121,900 people in 2011, which decreased by approximately 3.7% to around 117,400 in 2021. The population growth rate of Gwynedd is lower than the national population growth rates across Wales, which has seen a 1.4% increase in the past 10 years (Office for National Statistics, 2023a).

2.2.2 In 2021, the population of working age people (people aged 16–64) in Gwynedd was 70,300, representing approximately 60% of the population. The percentage of the population of Gwynedd that is of working age is less than the population of working age residents across Wales as a whole (Nomis, 2025).

2.2.3 People are classed as 'economically inactive' if they are not in employment but do not meet the criteria for being 'unemployed'. This means that they have not been seeking work within the previous four weeks or are unable to start work within the next two weeks. Common reasons for 'economic inactivity' include being retired, looking after the home or family, being temporarily or long-term sick and being disabled. Between January 2024 and December 2024, approximately 23.8% of the population of Gwynedd were recorded to be economically inactive, this proportion is slightly lower than the average for Wales at 24.5%. The largest contributor to economic inactivity in Gwynedd is due to long term sickness (40.1%), this is much larger than the average for Wales. Retirement is a notably lower contributor to economic inactivity in Gwynedd (10.8%) than across Wales (14.6%) (Nomis, 2025).

2.2.4 Census 2021 data show that between 2011 and 2021, there had been a slight increase of 1.5% in people aged between 65 and 74 in Gwynedd. Individuals aged 65 and over constitute approximately 23.2% of the population which is higher than across Wales at 21.4% (Office for National Statistics, 2023a).

Educational Attainment

2.2.5 **Table 1** illustrates the highest level of educational attainment in Gwynedd compared against the national average (Office for National Statistics, 2023b). Those with the highest level of educational attainment (Level 4 and equivalent or above) contribute to the largest proportion of the population in Gwynedd (34.5%), which is higher than the national average of 31.5%. The percentage of the population in Gwynedd with no qualifications is lower (16.3%) than across Wales (19.9%). Other educational attainment levels broadly align with the national averages.

Table 1 Highest Level of Qualification in Gwynedd and Wales

Level of Qualification	Gwynedd (%)	Wales (%)
No qualifications	16.3	19.9
Level 1 and entry level qualifications: 1 to 4 GCSEs grade A* to C, Any GCSEs at other grades, O levels or CSEs (any grades), 1 AS level, NVQ level 1, Foundation GNVQ, Basic or Essential Skills	7.6	8.7
Level 2 qualifications: 5 or more GCSEs (A* to C or 9 to 4), O levels (passes), CSEs (grade 1), School Certification, 1 A level, 2 to 3 AS levels, VCEs, Intermediate or Higher Diploma, Welsh Baccalaureate Intermediate Diploma, NVQ level 2, Intermediate GNVQ, City and Guilds Craft, BTEC First or General Diploma, RSA Diploma	14.6	14.4
Level 3 qualifications: 2 or more A levels or VCEs, 4 or more AS levels, Higher School Certificate, Progression or Advanced Diploma, Welsh Baccalaureate Advance Diploma, NVQ level 3; Advanced GNVQ, City and Guilds Advanced Craft, ONC, OND, BTEC National, RSA Advanced Diploma	18.8	17.2
Level 4 qualifications or above: degree (BA, BSc), higher degree (MA, PhD, PGCE), NVQ level 4 to 5, HNC, HND, RSA Higher Diploma, BTEC Higher level, professional qualifications (for example, teaching, nursing, accountancy)	34.5	31.5
Apprenticeship	5.8	5.6
Other: vocational or work-related qualifications, other qualifications achieved in England or Wales, qualifications achieved outside England or Wales (equivalent not stated or unknown)	2.5	2.7

Existing Local Levels of Employment

2.2.6 There is a large range of employment sectors within Gwynedd, as shown in **Table 2** (Office for National Statistics, 2023c). The greatest proportion of the workforce of Gwynedd work within public administration, education and health industries (SIC Codes: O, P and Q), these industries also constitute the largest industry across Wales. Generally, the spread of employment sectors in Gwynedd is in line with the national averages.

2.2.7 Between January 2024 and December 2024, the proportion of the economically active population that were recorded to be self-employed was 11.6%, this is higher than the average for Wales at 7.9% (Nomis, 2025).

Table 2 Employment Industries across Gwynedd and Wales

Industry (SIC Codes)	Gwynedd (%)	Wales (%)
A,B,D,E. Agriculture, energy and water	6.3	3.7
C. Manufacturing	5.2	8.7
F. Construction	9.7	8.6
G,I. Distribution, hotels and restaurants	21.9	19.7
H, J. Transport and communication	5.3	6.6
K,L,M,N. Financial, real estate, professional and administrative activities	10.2	12.8
O , P , Q. Public administration, education and health.	36.3	35.8
R, S , T, U. Other	5.2	4.2

3 LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK, POLICY AND GUIDANCE

3.1.1 The Proposed Development has been designed to align with and contribute to national and local policy objectives. Relevant plans and policies for the purpose of this Socio-Economic Statement comprise:

- Future Wales: The National Plan 2040 Future Wales provides a national spatial strategy for development across Wales. Outcome 5: work in towns and cities which are a focus springboard for sustainable growth is most relevant to this document;
- Planning Policy Wales Edition 12- Planning Policy Wales provides a framework and guidance for making planning decisions that contribute to wider aims. Chapter 5: Productive and Enterprising Places is relevant to this document;
- The Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015. The Act provides seven 'well-being goals' that recognise social, economic and environmental interactions contributing to the wellbeing of Wales, with a focus on ensuring sustainability for future generations. The seven well-being goals are often referenced as a baseline for other policies;
- The Anglesey and Gwynedd Joint Local Development Plan 2011–2026. The local plan identifies policies that will assist in the development of Anglesey and Gwynedd. The joint local plan provides a land use development strategy which aims to bolster sustainable development in the region. As a joint local plan, the strategy aims to tackle issues across the administrative boundaries and ensures cohesion between the two neighboring authorities.

3.1.2 The primary issues for consideration in relation to the Proposed Development are outlined below.

3.2 Site Specific Considerations and Contributions to Local Targets

3.2.1 The Proposed Development will directly contribute to the deployment of onshore wind, which is regarded as crucial for addressing the climate emergency.

3.2.2 The Environment (Wales) Act 2016 sets a target to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in Wales by 100% by 2050. Furthermore, the Welsh Government (and Gwynedd Council / Cyngor Gwynedd) have declared a climate emergency, and in March 2021 the Senedd Cymru approved a Net Zero target for 2050 (Welsh Government , 2022). Renewable energy is a key component to achieving greenhouse gas emission reduction.

3.2.3 In 2017, the Welsh Government announced a target of meeting 70% of Wales's electricity consumption from renewable electricity sources by 2030. This figure was updated in July 2023 when the Welsh Government committed to the target of ensuring that 100% of Wales annual electricity consumption will come from renewable sources by 2035, and to continue to keep pace with consumption thereafter (Julie James MS, Minister for Climate Change, 2023).

3.2.4 The ‘Energy Generation in Wales’ report (Regen for the Welsh Government, 2025), sets out the energy generation capacity in Wales for each year and analyses changes over time. The purpose of the report is ‘to support the Welsh Government in developing energy policy and help to evidence the economic, social, and environmental benefits of Welsh energy projects’. According to the most recent version of this report, from 2025, renewable electricity generation in 2023 was equivalent to 58% of electricity consumption in Wales (excluding losses). However, the report highlights that in reality, only 34% of total electricity generated in Wales comes from renewable sources.

3.2.5 Of the electricity generated from renewable sources in Wales in 2023, approximately 68% came from onshore and offshore wind, with much of the remainder from solar PV and biomass electricity generation.

Future Wales: The National Plan 2040

3.2.6 Future Wales: The National Plan 2040 provides a spatial approach to the growth of the nation. It is the highest tier of the statutory Development Plan in Wales and provides the principal policy context against which DNS applications are determined.

3.2.7 Future Wales: The National Plan 2040, promotes the potential of Wales to become a world leader in renewable energy. The Welsh landscape provides a unique opportunity for the generation of wind energy and therefore a number of Pre-Assessed Areas are identified as suitable locations for solar and wind energy developments.

3.2.8 The plan identifies a number of ‘outcomes’ that are a ‘*vision for change’* for Wales between 2020 and 2040. The outcomes of relevance to the Proposed Development and its contribution to the diversification into new markets are Outcome 6 and Outcome 11.

3.2.9 *‘Outcome 6… in places where prosperity, innovation and culture are promoted’,* Development Plans should encourage economic development, investment and innovation. The Proposed Development will increase the capacity of wind energy in the region, and as a result of this contribute positively to economic development across the region.

3.2.10 *‘Outcome 11… in places which are decarbonised and climate resilient’*, the challenges of decarbonising Wales and reducing the reliance on unsustainable technologies and lifestyles is noted and therefore the planning system must work to deliver new sustainable methods. The Proposed Development is contributing and increasing the capacity within the renewable energy sector and promoting climate resilience.

3.2.11 The Proposed Development contributes to the diversification of new markets and aligns with policy initiatives in Future Wales: The National Plan 2040 by:

- Encouraging the development of new, large scale innovative developments;
- Decarbonising the energy sector and delivering new sustainable methods; and
- Increasing capacity within the renewable energy sector.

Planning Policy Wales 12th Edition

3.2.12 Planning Policy Wales sets out land use policies which contribute to the broader policy goal of the sustainable development of Wales. The policies aim to support and contribute to the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales

3.2.13 Planning Policy Wales notes the requirement for increased renewable energy capacity to improve the energy security of Wales and address the climate emergency. 'Chapter 5: Productive and Enterprising Places' recognises that the development of solar and wind energy developments may be used to enhance and diversify existing rural environments and economies by *'increasing the viability of rural enterprises by reducing their operating costs'*. The development of solar and wind farms, including the Proposed Development, are suited to rural environments due to the existing characteristics of the environment and area of land available for these large developments. The installation of solar and wind energy on agricultural land also contributes to the diversification of the rural job market into the emerging renewable energy sector.

3.2.14 Planning Policy Wales states that the energy sector must be flexible and adaptable to integrate renewable energy production into the energy mix and increase energy security in Wales. Solar and wind developments are specifically named as a means of diversifying the energy mix of Wales due to the suitability of these developments to the natural landscape of Wales. The policy advocates that the energy mix in Wales should be appropriate and states that decarbonising the economy underpins all potential 'growth and prosperity' for Wales. The Proposed Development directly aligns with this initiative through the delivery of wind energy.

3.2.15 The Proposed Development aligns with Planning Policy Wales and diversifying the existing job market and economy into new markets by:

- Contributing new, renewable energy sources to the existing Welsh energy mix;
- Growing and contributing to an emerging sector; and
- Diversifying the rural economy.

The Well-being of Future Generations Act

3.2.16 The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, aims to inform the planning process to identify ways in which proposed plans can assist in the development of society. The Well-being goals, should be addressed by plans to ensure due diligence is given to the social and cultural aspects of planning applications.

3.2.17 The Well-being of Future Generations Act outlines the benefit of diversifying into new markets for local communities and the economy. Public bodies have a duty to ensure developments contribute towards sustainable development. The Act advocates that planning proposals must contribute towards a ‘Prosperous Wales’ that provides socio-economic benefits which include:

- Creating an innovative society that recognise and react to climate related issues; and
- Produced a skilled workforce in well-maintained and secure industries.

3.2.18 The Proposed Development aligns with the goals outlined in the Well-being of Future Generations Act by:

- Increasing the capacity of renewable energy sources and thus directly reacting to climate related issues in Wales; and
- Increasing local and regional skills in an emerging sector that is anticipated to continue expanding as renewable energy developments become common place.

Anglesey and Gwynedd Joint Local Development Plan 2011-2026

3.2.19 The Anglesey and Gwynedd Joint Local Development Plan (2011-2026) provides overarching themes that all planning decisions should align with.

3.2.20 The Joint Local Development Plan states that the area is well suited for the development of Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects which offers a range of economic and skills opportunities for local people and economy. A key theme of the plan is to bolster the economy and regeneration of the area, and the renewable energy sector is identified as a particular sector anticipated to growth, which will in term, providing increased employment opportunities and upskilling the workforce. The Proposed Development contributes to the plan by:

- Increasing the stock of Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects in the area; and
- Providing local employment opportunities and the potential for upskilling of the local workforce.

4 ECONOMIC IMPACTS OF THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

4.1 Supporting Local Jobs

4.1.1 Net zero and renewable energy generation targets set by the Welsh Government are anticipated to result in the average annual employment of 3,250 jobs in the lead up to 2035. In the renewable energy sector, each job generates £70,500 in GVA, which is 19% higher than the Welsh average (RenewablesUK, 2025). The creation of job opportunities in typically rural and coastal locations also reduce the so-called 'brain drain', by retaining skilled workers and professionals in Wales.

Construction Phase Direct and Supply Chain Jobs

4.1.2 During the construction phase, the number of onsite construction personnel will vary for each phase of the development. Overall, it is envisioned that the Proposed Development would generate employment for up to 60 personnel to include site contractors, onsite vehicle and plant operators, engineers, materials delivery personnel, environmental personnel and health and safety personnel.

4.1.3 The Proposed Development aims to provide opportunities for local construction and manufacturing businesses during the construction phase, where possible. Should it not be possible to source construction staff locally, there may be a need to draw construction staff from wider regions.

4.1.4 Whilst the wind turbines will be manufactured outside of Wales. Where possible, materials for construction works will be sourced from local suppliers which has the potential to increase the number of indirect job opportunities associated with the Proposed Development.

Construction Employment and Costs Outside the UK

4.1.5 Due to the nature of construction and manufacturing related activities associated with wind farms, economic benefits from the Proposed Development may be experienced outside of the UK. This is largely due to the construction costs and contracts required during this phase of the development, particularly turbine manufacturing. Around 55% of construction activities occur outside of the UK, and therefore there are anticipated to be additional job and economic benefits experienced beyond the UK (RenewablesUK, 2012).

Operational Phase Direct and Supply Chain

4.1.6 During the operational phase, the turbine manufacturer, the Developer or a service company will carry out regular maintenance of the turbines. During the life of the project, it is envisaged that at least 2 permanent jobs will be created locally in the form of operator of maintenance personnel. In addition, operation and monitoring activities may be carried out remotely with the aid of computers connected via a broadband link. However, routine inspection and preventative maintenance visits will be necessary to ensure the smooth and efficient running of the wind farm and require a minimal presence.

4.1.7 There may be additional maintenance works required associated with onsite planting. These jobs will be for the duration of the project but on an ad-hoc basis.

Agricultural Economy

4.1.8 There are no anticipated job losses within the agricultural sector as a result of the Proposed Development.

4.2 Wider Impacts to the Economy and Gross Value Added

4.2.1 The onshore wind industry is anticipated to continue to grow and draw investments to Wales and subsequently generate economic activity associated with increased employment opportunities and by retaining and expanding skills across Wales. By 2035, total investment in onshore wind projects in Wales could total £7.6 billion, of which Welsh businesses could secure £3.0 billion of gross value added (RenewablesUK, 2025).

Construction Phase

4.2.2 The Proposed Development will provide a number of direct and supply chain related jobs during the construction phase. Construction employment opportunities generated as a result of the Proposed Development will produce an economic output which can be measured through the generation of Gross Value Added (GVA). GVA in this context is an economic measure of the contribution of value added as a result of construction workers working at a site.

4.2.3 Whilst a detailed economic assessment has not been undertaken for the Proposed Development. The most recent priority sector statistics revised document published by the Welsh Government, estimates the construction industry across Wales contributed around £21 of GVA per hour worked to the economy (Welsh Government, 2018). It should be noted that this number is an estimate and representative of the whole of Wales, rather than Gwynedd specifically.

4.2.4 As discussed above, the Proposed Development is anticipated to support up to 60 construction jobs and therefore will positively contribute to the generation of GVA locally and across Wales.

Indirect GVA

4.2.5 During the construction phase, the Proposed Development is likely to influence local expenditure due to an increase in temporary employment levels. The induced effect suggests that income is reinvested into the local economy by employees through the increased use of local restaurants, cafes and local shops. This will benefit the local economy due to greater local expenditure and number of potential customers.

4.2.6 During the construction phase, a number of construction workers may be required to stay in the local area overnight and require temporary accommodation as they live beyond a reasonable commuting distance from the Site. CITB data (2023), suggests that 5% of construction workers typically stay in temporary accommodation whilst working on a job. An increased uptake of existing temporary accommodation providers may adversely affect the local tourism industry due to a reduced number of available accommodation providers and therefore deterring tourists from visiting the region and investing in the local tourist economy.

4.2.7 However, the increased demand for temporary accommodation providers may also assist the local economy, by increasing the use of the resource, particularly during the 'low tourist economy', and during weekdays. Given the average number of construction workers that typically require temporary accommodation is approximately 5%, this is not likely to have a large influence in the availability of accommodation overall.

Operational Phase

4.2.8 A detailed economic assessment has not been undertaken to assess the Proposed Development.

4.2.9 The Proposed Development is anticipated to support at least 2 operational/ maintenance jobs and therefore will contribute positively to the generation of GVA to the local economy and across Wales. During the operational phase, every £1 of direct spending in renewables in Welsh businesses is expected to result in £0.32 GVA across the renewable energy sectors supply chain and wider Welsh economy, demonstrating the multiplier effect of renewables investment (RenewablesUK, 2025).

4.2.10 As discussed in **paragraph 4.2.1**, the economic benefits of onshore wind developments are anticipated to generate approximately 3.0 billion of GVA for Welsh businesses in the lead up to 2035.

4.2.11 The operation of onshore wind farms also result in payments to landowners. It is estimated that payments to landowners in Wales from onshore wind technology could total £458.7 million by 2035 (RenewablesUK, 2025).

Decommissioning Phase

4.2.12 During the decommissioning phase, it is anticipated that the impacts will be equal to or less than those experienced during the construction phase. It can therefore be assumed that there will be a number of jobs and associated benefits to the economy associated with the decommissioning phase of the Proposed Development.

4.3 Skills Development

4.3.1 The Welsh Government has set a target for renewable electricity generation to be equivalent to 100% of annual electricity consumption by 2035. In 2023, renewable electricity generation was equivalent to 58% of its electricity consumption. This requires a significant increase in renewable energy developments, including onshore wind, which has the greatest potential to achieve these targets in time. As discussed in the policy review, the natural Welsh environment is well suited to accommodate onshore wind developments. As the demand for renewable energy increases ,an increase in skilled workers will be required over the coming years. Therefore, the Proposed Development has the potential to develop existing skills and provide training opportunities in the sector, with this the current and future workforce will have the skills to continue working on developments of similar schemes moving forward.

4.3.2 The expansion of the onshore wind industry is also a driver for upgrading grid capacity which strengthens the resilience of the electricity grid to support infrastructure and businesses across Wales.

5 SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY IMPACTS OF THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

5.1.1 The Proposed Development will provide benefits to the wider community in Gwynedd, through financial contributions to support local services. The following initiatives are proposed.

Community Ownership

5.1.2 The Welsh Government has a target for 1.5 GW of renewable energy generation to have local and shared ownership by 2035. The Applicant is working in partnership with Community Energy Wales to develop a community ownership model. Local residents, businesses and community groups would be able to buy shares in the Proposed Development (up to 15 % of Capital Costs) and receive savings on their electricity bills.

Community Initiatives

5.1.3 The Applicant will look to engage with the local community through local educational services to educate young people on the Proposed Development and onshore wind developments more widely.

Community Benefit Fund

5.1.4 In addition to this attractive ownership offering, the Applicant is committed to providing £8,000/MW (index-linked) per year in Community Benefit for the lifetime of the project. In the case of Foel Fach, this represents up to £576,000 per year for 40 years. The Applicant will be working with local organisations, Community Voluntary Support Conwy (CVSV) and Mantell Gwynedd to manage the Community Benefit Fund, who have experience managing wind project Community Benefit Funds and government funding.

Local Business

5.1.5 The Applicant is committed to providing material benefit to the communities that host them where possible. For the procurement of services to the project, preference will be given to subcontractors that are based locally, subject to meeting minimum health and safety criteria. There are a wide range of services and suppliers required to build and operate a wind farm, including but not limited to:

- Construction, drainage and fencing contractors,
- Materials suppliers and building merchants,
- Plant hire and security,
- Fuel providers and waste management, and

- Local hospitality providers and car hire.

5.1.6 Local businesses have the opportunity to contact the Applicant to discuss being a supplier via the online website.

6 CONCLUSION

6.1.1 The Proposed Development will provide economic, regenerative and job benefits for Gwynedd and the wider region. The expansion of the renewable energy sector is crucial for combatting the climate crisis and therefore the Proposed Development is providing job opportunities in a sector targeted for growth.

6.1.2 The Proposed Development offers the opportunity to generate socio-economic benefits during the construction, operational and decommissioning phases. The Proposed Development will utilise the experience and specialties of the current workforce and enhance skill sets in an emerging sector that will be relied upon in order to reach Wales's Net Zero Target by 2050. In addition, there will be associated benefits for the wider community as a result of improved and increased spend in the local area.

6.1.3 The key socio-economic benefits of the Proposed Development include:

- The development of skills relevant for an emerging renewable energy sector;
- Providing job opportunities in low and high skilled sectors;
- Increased spend into the local community through the increased use of retail and hospitality services;
- Making financial contributions through a Community Benefit Fund which will have local social and economic benefits; and
- Encouraging community ownership of energy sources and providing opportunities to save on their electricity bills.

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