

Petition: Halt Major Development on the Gwent Levels

Briefing Note

Frequently Asked Questions

What are the Gwent Levels SSSIs?

The Gwent Levels SSSIs are an iconic, wetland landscape of national significance. Reclaimed from the sea in Roman times, the Gwent Levels are a criss-crossed network of fertile fields and historic watercourses, known locally as reens.

The Gwent Levels is home to an incredible diversity of wildlife..

What is a SSSI?

Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) are sites statutorily-designated at the UK level for their national, natural heritage because of the rare and important plants and animals that are found on them.

Why can't the wildlife of the SSSI coexist with development on the Gwent Levels ?

Studies have shown that attempts by developers to "mitigate" or "compensate" for the damage that their developments have caused have been largely unsuccessful. The Gwent Levels SSSI is a complex and fragile wetland ecosystem, which is wholly reliant on very high water quality for example. It is impossible for large developments not to damage that.

Some of the developments currently proposed are solar farms. Wouldn't a halt in development on the Gwent Levels affect our Net Zero targets?

No. Past experience in Wales has shown that deploying development to its most sustainable locations on a Wales-wide scale, and excluding areas where it is not appropriate, is actually the best way of delivering renewable energy quickly . For example, Wales has more installed onshore wind developments, having followed that approach, than England, in spite of having approximately seven times less land than England.

Wouldn't it be complicated and difficult to change the planning system to bring about a halt in development on the Gwent Levels?

No. Most of the suggestions in the briefing note could be achieved relatively quickly and easily, for example speeding up the release of certain documents pending with the Welsh Government. (see briefing note for more detail on this)

Why are you calling for a short inquiry?

These are matters of national importance, and the gravity of the issue merits a thorough examination. This does not mean however that the easier elements should not be delivered as a matter of urgency, such as the release of pending planning documents.

