

Pwyllgor Newid Hinsawdd, yr Amgylchedd a Seilwaith /  
Climate Change, Environment and Infrastructure Committee  
Cynhyrchu ynni adnewyddadwy yng Nghymru / Renewable energy generation in  
Wales  
RE11  
Ymateb gan Ynni Cymunedol Cymru / Evidence from Community Energy Wales

### **Community Energy Wales Feedback on the Renewable Energy Deep Dive**

Please find below a very brief summary from Community Energy Wales perspective of the Renewable Energy Deep Dive process and outcomes.

#### **Process**

The process was very intense but also dynamic. It felt like a lot was achieved in a very short space of time which isn't necessarily something that is common when working with any government. It was an ambitious process which was pleasing to see given the climate and ecological emergency which we are facing and likely to be significantly impacted by.

It felt like the Community Energy sector was well represented throughout the process and that we were also a valued part of the process rather than a token inclusion.

The range of people involved was also impressive and the subgroups worked well as additional expertise was able to be brought in for specific focused discussions.

There are several working groups that have spun out of the process to take the recommendations forward which I hope will have the same dynamism and ambition as the deep dive themselves. If they do then that will be really positive.

One recommendation for improving the process which I raised at the time, was bringing in a skilled facilitation team to run the meetings. The meetings tried to cover a lot of ground, with a lot of people involved. This made it quite difficult at times, a skilled facilitation team would have been able to use a variety of different tools to help support the process such as breakout rooms etc.

There was also some cross over between renewable energy, heat, energy efficiency and transport. I understand that there are other deep dives that will look at some of these other areas but at times it was unclear how much this deep dive was focused on those issues. Heat is a huge issue and perhaps wasn't covered in the same amount of depth as Renewable Energy.

Overall, it was a positive process and something that could be built on in other areas of government, particularly when looking to tackle big issues.

#### **Outcomes**

##### **Strategy**

The strategy recommendations were certainly ambitious in terms of renewable energy and we were really pleased to see the focus on local ownership and retaining the benefits of this transition in Wales as much as possible.

It was good to see the acknowledgement of the importance of energy efficiency and heat but those are areas where there isn't such a clear vision and strategy. As I highlighted earlier certainly energy efficiency and heat would probably require a deep dive on their own as they are such huge issues.

### Grid

The recommendations for grid are good and grid is probably one of the biggest barriers to achieving the strategic aims. One of the challenges for Wales is that it is regulated by Ofgem which is not devolved to Wales. Therefore, given the constraints the recommendations are good ones and making Ofgem more accountable to Wales and our overall strategy is key.

### Consenting, licensing and supporting advisory arrangements

Clearly resources, particularly within NRW are an issue in terms of licensing timescales. It is good that the reports recommended by this process are due by Summer of this year. The key will be actioning them. If we can retain as much of the benefits from these projects in Wales then investing in more strategic resource to enable the licensing timescales to be speeded up would be a good investment for Wales.

Scotland has devolved powers over the crown estate, Wales should have the same, particularly given the potential for marine energy projects in Wales such as offshore wind and tidal. This is something really key to be pushing for.

### Finance

I am looking forward to being involved in the finance group and am pleased that community energy and local ownership are key focuses of this group. Again the proof of success will be in how effective and dynamic this group is but if it maintains the ambition of the deep dive process then that will be positive.

It would have been good to have an announcement re: non-domestic business rates from the process but we await with interest the outcome of that process.

Procurement has been another huge issue that's been highlighted. Particularly for community energy schemes who often fall foul of procurement processes. We are currently working on developing the largest community owned energy project in the UK a 30MW solar farm. We could be in a situation where we end up selling the power from that scheme to Local Authorities in England because the procurement services in Wales haven't enabled us to sell the energy to the Welsh public sector. The Welsh public sector could also use it's buying power to help enable more community or locally owned projects to be built, supporting the strategic objectives.

### Opportunity to scale up Community and Local Energy in Wales

It is good to see that Welsh Government have already backed the initial commitment by scaling up resources for Community Energy next year.

We look forward to further clarification on the shared ownership requirements for private developers as currently there is some uncertainty and stronger wording would help our sector engage with developers on shared ownership projects.

I am currently involved in the Ynni Cymru process. There is still a lot to work through and a decision hasn't been made on the structure of the body. It is clear that the intention of Ynni Cymru is to support the development of publicly and community owned projects which is positive and the

concept is a good one. A lot will depend on how much resource is put into this body and how it evolves.

Having better access to the public estate will be key for communities looking to develop projects. Whilst this is a good announcement the process by which this happens will need to be determined by the procurement working group.

#### Opportunities to maximise economic and social value in Wales

Clearly building supply chains will be key to this. The more control Wales has of the crown estate and developments on the public estate the more say it will have in supporting local supply chains. The more schemes that are in local and community ownership the more economic and social value will be retained in Wales and this is recognised in the overall strategy. Shared ownership opportunities will also be key to this.

#### Innovation

Nothing to add as it is not my area of expertise. However, one crucial point came across in the discussions was that we have all the technology we need so innovation shouldn't be used as an excuse to prevent progress but as something that can build on what already exists.