

ROCP 38, RenewableUK Cymru

Senedd Cymru | Welsh Parliament

Pwyllgor Newid Hinsawdd, yr Amgylchedd a Seilwaith | Climate Change, Environment, and Infrastructure Committee

Adolygiad o flaenoriaethau'r Pwyllgor ar gyfer y Chweched Senedd | Review of the Committee's priorities for the Sixth Senedd

Ymateb gan RenewableUK Cymru | Evidence from RenewableUK Cymru

Senedd Climate Change, Environment and Infrastructure Committee – Review of Priorities for the Sixth Senedd

14 September 2023

Across RenewableUK and RenewableUK Cymru, we work with our members to support the building and operating of our future energy system, powered by clean energy. We jointly represent over 470 member companies to ensure an increasing amount of renewable electricity is deployed across Wales and the UK which will support the decarbonisation of our economy, reduce emissions, and respond to the climate emergency. Our members in Wales are business leaders, developers, and technology innovators. We have a broad membership with extensive experience from all the major onshore and offshore (fixed and floating) wind developers operating in Wales, ports, supply chain, hydrogen, grid stakeholders, as well as developers of electricity interconnectors and marine renewables.

RenewableUK Cymru welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Senedd Committee's review of priorities for the Sixth Senedd. We support the three broad themes of focus for the Senedd committee's work programme as all interface with renewable energy and will be part of the wider benefits of the increased development of projects through clean energy and lower emissions, opportunities for biodiversity enhancement and habitat restoration, community benefits and lower bills, economic growth and sustainable jobs for our local sustainable communities.

To date, we welcome the focus of the Senedd Committee on renewable energy through the Renewable Energy in Wales inquiry which highlighted the barriers to delivery and provided useful recommendations to the Welsh Government. Furthermore, we welcomed the initial urgency provided to the Renewable Energy Deep Dive programme to take some of these immediate actions forward. We would stress the need for the Committee to keep the Welsh Government to account on both these outputs and continue to encourage accelerated delivery on the recommendations.

The Welsh Government's Net Zero Wales Carbon Budget 2 (2021 to 2025) document guides the Committee's work throughout the Sixth Senedd. Unfortunately, Wales is already on track to miss its target to have an additional 1GW of installed renewable energy capacity by 2025 as outlined in this document. We would encourage the Senedd Committee to focus on the current gap in delivery during year 3-5 and how we can ensure renewable energy development can be accelerated and deliver on several targets successfully on time.

In year 3-5 for the 'Renewable Energy work' focus, we would welcome the opportunity to help provide more detail to the workplan and to reflect the recent changes in policy. In the work on renewable energy, firstly and overarchingly, as part of its work programme the Committee should hold the Welsh Government's delivery of the recently adopted target to reach 100% of electricity needs from renewable sources by 2035 to account. We welcome these ambitious targets but need a plan or mechanism for delivery. During the initial consultation, we called for the development of a **roadmap, delivery plan** and **review process** for renewables in Wales to reach these targets that provide further clarity on the how this will be achieved. A clear outline of the long-term ambition for renewable energy development in Wales across all technologies supported by a delivery plan with progress stage gates including key initiatives, approaches, and solutions is crucial. Ambitious minimum technology specific

capacity targets could form part of reviewing progress against the delivery plan. We propose that this delivery plan is supported by two task forces – onshore and offshore – made up of decision makers, government officials and industry representatives to support and monitor progress; providing open and ongoing engagement between participants and a recognition of how government, communities and the private sector can collaborate to deliver on these targets. The delivery plan should include actions on areas including timely investment in grid infrastructure, sufficient resourcing for the consenting process, a Welsh multi-port strategy, investment in manufacturing capabilities to boost the domestic supply chain and intragovernmental collaboration. We need much more than a ‘business as usual’ approach to kickstart investment on the level we need to boost energy security, cut consumer bills, and maximise benefits for the environment, economy and society in Wales.

A diverse, flexible, renewable based energy system is fundamental to support the net zero ambition and energy transition in Wales. Deploying a mix of technologies across Wales will bring a range of benefits; reducing our reliance on fossil fuels and international gas prices resulting in a robust and secure energy supply, lower bills, levelling up widespread economic benefits across Wales, and decreasing carbon emissions to tackle the climate emergency. We firmly believe that an **explicit acceptance of a diverse renewable energy mix of technologies** across land and sea supported by **ambitious minimum targets for each technology within the delivery plan** will provide the enabling policy and regulatory environment that gives certainty for investment in development and will build an industry that maximises the long-term supply chain, workforce, environmental and community benefits for Wales. Please see Appendix 1 attached for further detail that was provided in our response to the Welsh Government’s Review of Wales’ renewable energy targets.

In years 3 – 5, continued focus following on from the Renewable Energy inquiry is needed on **improving grid infrastructure** and supporting the need for **increased resource for planning and consenting** regimes which remain as significant barriers to renewable energy projects. The Welsh Government have a crucial role in advocating for Wales in terms of securing anticipatory investment in the grid. As previously included in the Committee’s workplan, examining whether there are sufficient capacity, resources and specialist skills within local authority planning departments is needed. We would like to see this also extended to NRW, PEDW and Welsh Government Planning Departments.

In terms of new areas and ideas to include in the Senedd Committee’s workplan, we would encourage any biodiversity work to recognise the opportunity that renewable energy development can positively provide for habitat enhancement and restoration. Please see Appendix 2 attached for a summary of our recent report on ‘Onshore Wind Power and Restoring Carbon-Rich Peatlands’ which highlights the opportunities for peatland restoration from onshore renewable energy project development supported by a number of case studies.

Secondly, we would welcome the Committee initiating an inquiry into the application of new, innovative energy technologies in Wales to act as a catalyst to support the Welsh Government’s efforts to meet 100% of its electricity needs from renewable sources by 2035. Emerging technologies such as green hydrogen – if given the policy and regulatory support – can enable the low-cost decarbonisation of legacy high-emission sectors which are not suitable for electrification, including heavy industry and certain more isolated parts of the rail and bus network. As part of this work, it would be welcome for

the Committee to underscore the need for the Welsh Government to take steps to calculate energy demand requirements as an 'end customer' to give steer to the development of technologies such as green hydrogen. Given Wales' infrastructure connection challenges, innovations around grid stability and inertia – which will enable more renewables to connect to the grid – are central to the long-term energy transition in Wales.

We would also welcome a joint inquiry between the Climate Change, Environment and Infrastructure Committee and the Senedd Economy Committee to look at opportunities and policy measures to maximise opportunities for sustainable communities – through Welsh green jobs, skills and supply chain involvement in renewable energy development in Wales.

To deliver on renewable energy projects in Wales and for Wales, improving the collaboration between governments is crucial. Increased activity between the Senedd committee and Welsh Affairs committee could help support this collaboration especially in areas where there are reserved matters that impact Welsh Government targets and their ability to deliver e.g. grid infrastructure and offshore planning.

The Welsh Government has an important role to give certainty and provide confidence for the private sector to invest and bring forward renewable energy projects at the scale and pace needed to reach our climate commitments, 2035 targets and to maximise the significant associated benefits to our communities, economy and environment in a sustainable way. We need to be an attractive place for renewable energy development and we hope that the Senedd Committee's continued work on this area will consider the inclusion of our suggestions and recommendations. We would welcome the opportunity to provide more detail where needed to support the Senedd Committee going forward.