

**Inaugural AGM of the Senedd Cross Party Group on Renewable and Low Carbon Energy  
CCB agoriadol Grŵp Trawsbleidiol y Senedd ar Ynni Adnewyddadwy a Charbon Isel**

12.30 - 1.30pm, Wednesday 17 November 2021

12.30 - 1.30yp, ddydd Mercher 17 Tachwedd 2021

Online meeting / Cyfarfod ar-lein

Minutes

**Members of the Senedd**

Delyth Jewell MS (Chair)

Mabon ap Gwynfor MS

Lee Waters MS, Deputy Minister for Climate Change (speaker)

**Attendees**

Andrew Donald, Centrica Business Solutions  
Andy Billcliff, Morlais Energy/Menter Mon  
Angharad Davies, Cadno Communications  
Bethan Simes, DP Energy  
Breon Finch, EDF Renewables  
Dafydd Williams, Eco2 Limited  
Daniel Taylor, Newsdirect Wales  
David Brown, Arup  
David Clubb, Afallen  
Eleri Davies, RWE Renewables UK Ltd  
Ffion Davies, ABP  
Gareth Hawkins, Statkraft  
Gaynor Jackson  
Gwenllian Elias, Savills  
Hayley Warrens, Transport for Wales  
Helen Westhead, Arup  
Ian Masters, Swansea University  
Ifan Gwilym, Barton Willmore  
Ioan Jenkins, Prosperity Energy Limited  
Jack Wilkinson-Dix, Energy Saving Trust  
Jason Hester, Port of Milford Haven  
Jeremy Smith, RWE Generation  
Jon Fox, Wardell Armstrong  
Lawrence Cox, Belltown Power  
Lisa Christie, Vattenfall Wind Power Ltd

Mabon ap Gwynfor MS, Senedd  
Martyn Roberts, Firebox Solution Ltd  
Mary Lewis, Natural Resources Wales  
Matt Telfer, Marine Energy Wales  
Michael Phillips, Dulas Ltd  
Natalie Rees, Transport for Wales  
Nathan Currell, National Grid  
Neil Lewis, Ynni Sir Gar  
Peter Trott, Afallen LLP  
Philippa Powell, RWE  
Ralph Windeatt, ABP  
Rhiannon Phillips, Welsh Government  
Rhys Wyn Jones, RUK Cymru  
Rory Johnson, Welsh Government  
Rosemary Grogan, Cadno Communications  
Sara Powell-Davies, RUK Cymru  
Sarah Jones, Cadno Communications  
Simon Morgan, EDF Renewables  
Thomas Yeo, Powys County Council  
Tim Heatley, Dorothea Pumped Hydro Limited  
Tom Crick, NICW  
Tom Glover, RWE  
Tony Cooke, Cardiff Community Energy  
Trevor Hunter, Coriolis Energy  
Will Henson, Institute of Welsh Affairs

**1. Welcome and introductions**

- Rhys Wyn Jones welcomed everyone. The sustainable energy cross party group in the previous Senedd which was informative and popular.
- The meeting is being recorded and will be available after the session.
- Apologies were received from Janet Finch Saunders MS.

**2. Election of Chair & Vice Chairs**

- Rhys Wyn Jones nominated Delyth Jewell MS as Chair, seconded by Angharad Davies. There were no objections.

- Delyth Jewell took over chairing. The Chair thanked members of the Senedd and those attending from industry. Renewable and low carbon energy are vitally important, timely issues in the wake of COP 26.
- The Chair nominated Huw Irranca Davies MS and Jane Dodds MS as vice chairs, seconded by Mabon ap Gwynfor MS. There were no objections.

### 3. Election of Secretary

- The Chair nominated Cadno Communications as Secretary, seconded by Rhys Wyn Jones. There were no objections.

### 4. Agreement of formal statement of purpose of the group

- The purpose of the group was endorsed by the group: “A forum to facilitate discussions between industry and parliamentarians and inform the debate on renewable and low carbon energy in Wales.”

### 5. Future work programme for the group

- It is intended that that group will meet approximately three times a year, more often if possible. Members should send suggestions for speakers and agenda items to Cadno Communications.

### 6. Deputy Minister for Climate Change, Lee Waters MS: Renewable Energy Deep Dive and Q&A

- The Deputy Minister stated he is really pleased to see the Cross Party Group forming and that the previous group was a real success story.
- The portfolio is huge and encompasses energy, housing, transport, digital, and more. The main aim of the deep dive into renewable energy is to explore what can be done to remove barriers. The core group meets regularly and these are supplemented by roundtables with industry, NGOs and others.
- The deputy minister will present the initial findings of the deep dive to the Senedd on 7<sup>th</sup> December 2021.
- The Deputy Minister invited ideas by email.
- Cadno will collate all of the questions and send them to the Deputy Minister after the meeting.

Q. Noting the recent refusal for the Blackberry Solar site in Pembrokeshire - How can we ensure the temporary nature of PV is not considered a detriment to agricultural land?

A. Julie James MS and I aren't enthusiastic about carpeting the countryside with large solar farms. Think solar is best on buildings. Want to think about broader impacts, there is a nature and a climate emergency, and we don't want to focus on action which helps one but impacts on the other. I think there is a lot more we can do with buildings. (LW)

Supplementary point: You'll never get the kind of input into the grid that's required from solar on buildings. I can understand taking land out of production but it's only temporary planning permission, it's resting the land. Normally 37 years. Only places where you can put valuable solar is where there's a grid connection.

A. I don't consider 37 years to be temporary. It reaches a saturation point where that becomes uncomfortable, and we need to strike a balance. (LW)

Q. Vicars in Wales have approached me pointing out that every church faces eastwards, therefore each church has a large south facing roof. How much work are you doing with the Church in Wales

and other denominations to place solar panels on these rooftops (planning and listed building consent is a problem, of course).(MaG)

A. It's a good point and I'm happy to consider it further. (LW)

Q. Is there an appetite for growing renewable crops for bioethanol production and is there a future plan to develop this toward the hydrogen quest here in Wales?

A. There are ethical dilemmas about using land to grow fuel in effect. Interested in hearing the arguments. (LW)

Q. The deep dive focusses on renewable energy, whilst many of the challenges are around systems integration - transport, heat, networks etc. How have you considered this so far?

A. Agree. Regional energy mapping is being done as a result of the work IWA did. (LW)

Q. What about agrivoltaics where solar doesn't displace food production? Solar farms can be pollinator havens, as planting under and around the panels can attract bees and have positive impact on biodiversity.

A. I think that's a more nuanced approach, which sounds interesting, as are solar canopies on carparks, e.g. EV charging station in Cross Hands. (LW)

Q. The Net Zero Wales Plan mentions a target of 1GW of additional renewable energy capacity by 2030 - is the Welsh Government confident that there are sufficient projects either already consented or in the development pipeline (and likely to be generating by 2025) to achieve this target?

A. I'm not certain what capacity is in the planning process. We need to be as ambitious as we can be (LW).

Q. Could Lee tell us what his thoughts are around pursuing a rapid and wide rollout of renewable heat in Wales and what plans Welsh Government has in development in this area given that heating buildings accounts for 23% of UK emissions?

A. I really want you to tell me what you think the problems are and what you think the solutions are. (LW)

Q. Exciting that Welsh Government remains committed to Tidal Lagoons, where we have recently seen the launch of the Tidal Lagoon Challenge. What does the Minister see as the next steps in this process, and what are the timings likely to be?

A. It's really good to see this coming from Swansea, not Welsh Government. To meet this challenge it needs everyone to act, not just Welsh Government. It needs to go through the planning and regulatory processes, which remain untested with regard to marine. We have a Marine Challenge fund in development. (LW)

Q. Recognising some of the challenges around the planning system for terrestrial projects, how important do you see the role of marine renewables such as floating offshore wind?

A. We had a really good meeting with the Irish Government recently, with the Foreign Minister and Energy Minister. We recognise Celtic Sea has opportunities, there are issues around grid and port readiness and we're talking about potential to work together on that. Grid is a theme coming out of

deep dive. We will come up with some recommendations on that and get a meeting with National Grid and Crown Estate to forward the recommendations from that. (LW)

Q. We are aware a statement will be made in early December, but I was wondering if the deep dive will inform any upcoming legislation? I'm aware an Infrastructure Bill might be coming in front of the Senedd next year, I wonder if some of the elements, planning, communities and the role of the energy sector might be involved.

A. Recommendations are only just beginning to emerge from the deep dive. It could be a vehicle. The Infrastructure Bill 2022 will be essential for streamlining the consents process. (LW)

Q. Coming back to the interaction with the Irish on the Celtic Sea and grid constraints, one of the biggest issues we have is what we want to do in the Welsh part of the Celtic Sea and what the Irish want to do will be constrained by grid capacity in south Wales. E.g. RWE's latest project has been offered a connection into north Devon, rather than Wales. We'd prefer to go into Pembro because that's where we have our Pembroke Net Zero cluster.

A. It's a massive challenge. National Grid is not devolved, it's a private company. I'm keen to develop workarounds which are not dependant on the National Grid. Equally, we need to put pressure on National Grid to step up to the challenge of helping us tackle climate change. (LW)

Supplementary point: In Pembroke we're looking at hydrogen as an option, subsidies are at UK, not Welsh level.

It will also be interesting to see how the Morlais project on Anglesey develops, which has a hydrogen element. (LW)

Q. Please can the Deputy Minister give an indication when its Hydrogen Pathways document is to be published?

A. We were waiting for UK strategy to be published to ensure there was alignment between the two. It's in final stages of development. We're really keen to look at a range of scales and locations for solar but we really need to be cognisant of the policy constraints around biodiversity and other forms of land use. (RP).

Q. Is the place to start: national land use planning for renewable energy production where land (and seabed) is assessed in terms of constraints and impacts in order to allow 'cookie-cutting' of parcels of land that may be suitable for solar / biomass / other (Philippa Powell)

A. We're starting to look strategically at land use, understanding all of the policies that might involve use of land and how we can look at accommodating agriculture, biodiversity, tree planting targets and renewables etc to look at whether separation or a colocation strategy is needed. (RP)

Q. What work will take place to ensure that our renewable energy system can withstand future climate risks, such as extreme storms and flooding.

Supplementary point: August 2019 we had catastrophic failure of UK electricity network which stopped all trains coming out of London, it's a very relevant point. When we talk about 100% renewable target, what are the plans for the "firm, flexible generation".

A. There is a significant amount of climate change already baked in. As part of national adaptation plan we have the need to make the building resilient from future climate risks and we'll work with the UK government on scenario planning. You're right, it's something we all need to be mindful of. (LW)

Q. I had a supplementary point to the discussion on working with National Grid and looking for workarounds. There may be opportunities to release capacity on the Welsh network through closer work with the DNOs e.g. through construction of new distribution supply points in south Wales.

A. We are working with the DNOs as part of the regional energy planning and there is a grid group looking at future scenarios. Any further suggestions you have are welcomed. Just to note, David Clubb has agreed to help us lead National Infrastructure Commission Wales and I specifically asked David to do that because of his expertise and focus on climate change and renewables. We are reshaping NICW to help us with the specific focus on climate change work. (LW)

Q. Is the "deep dive" expected to recognise economic viability in a subsidy-free world of competitive CfD/PPA auctions as an important barrier to deployment and therefore material planning consideration, in terms of balancing against impacts (visual and otherwise) of large-scale renewables?

A. We're working with UK government on their CfDs and projections for moving away from subsidising renewables. We maintain that we think we need a mix of technologies so we can have resilience. We don't think lowest cost should always win out. Need to balance demand and cost and benefits of more expensive technologies. (RP)

A. I put two challenges at every meeting: what can we do quickly, and how will we make sure communities benefit from this. We don't want to repeat the pattern of previous industrial revolutions where Wales's natural resources are exploited for gain by actors outside of Wales and communities get the scraps. We want to work with multinationals but also maintain value locally. We want genuinely community /co-ownership, wider community benefits. I want to disrupt the model. (LW)

Supplementary point – agree, need a mix of technologies and scales. Smaller scale, less established technologies won't get Wales to net zero by 2050 so we will also need the larger scale projects and established technologies like onshore wind, offshore wind and solar.

A. I agree. It's not the case that we're turning our back on large schemes. Equally we don't want our future entirely defined by that model. This is an economic opportunity as well as a climate imperative. (LW)

A. What is your sense of the balance needed between big and small projects, and a view on some of the technologies we don't talk about much like pumped hydro and is there any prospect of the Severn Barrage returning? (RWJ)

A. These are difficult judgements. I'm glad that Rhys is on this group to provide an industry expert voice from within Wales. Regarding big versus small, my instinct is we need a thousand flowers blooming. We need to reduce energy use, demand reduction needs to be an important part of this. We need to then alter the relationship with the energy we use so we each understand the impact of our behaviours. We want to get to the point where every house is its own power station, so lots of small interventions and technology and AI is important. In terms of the generation we have there is a need for both. I've seen some great community hydro schemes in Bethesda. It takes a long time and a requires a level of community capacity that isn't replicable, so there are huge challenges but when they work I think they're terrific. We clearly need to see large developments too to make sure we have proven, large scale interventions.

Regarding the Severn Barrage, it's back to the nature and the climate emergency, We need to tread very carefully, particularly when it comes to larger schemes, that they are not having adverse impacts on other things. (LW)

#### 7. Any other business

None.

#### 8. Date of next meeting

The next meeting will be in early February 2022.