



The Senedd Cross Party Group on Renewable and Low Carbon Energy

12:00 – 13:00, Tuesday 28th November 2023

Virtual Meeting, Microsoft Teams

Minutes

Members of the Senedd

Delyth Jewell MS

Carolyn Thomas MS

Anna Banks (on behalf of Samuel Kurtz MS)

Ryland Doyle (on behalf of Mike Hedges MS)

Attendees

Amy Ravitz-Williams

Hayley Warrens

Lydia Godden

Andrew Donald

Huw Lewis

Manon Kynaston

Andy Billcliff

Ian Masters

Matt Telfer

Andy Fewings

Ifer Gwyn

Neil Lewis

Andy Regan

Ioan Dobbin

Rachel Kennedy

Angharad Davies

Jack Pugsley

Rebecca Williams

Ben Lewis

James Radcliffe

Robert Chapman

Carmen Smith

Jasmine Wheeler

Robert Gibbons

Charles Williams

Jennifer Jordan

Robin Johnson

Chris Jackson

Jeremy Smith

Rosemary Grogan

Clare Dance

Jess Hill

Ruth Lovell

Clare Jones

Jessica Hooper

Sara Dryhurst-Roberts

Craig Harrison

John Young

Sara Powell-Davies

Daniel Taylor

Jon Fox

Sarah Jones

David Brown

Joshua Morris

Simon Morgan

David Jones

Kevin Ashcroft

Suzie Saunders

Elizabeth Dunn

Kirsty Fox Hay

Tim Heatley

Elliot Smith

Leslie Walker

Tony Cooke

Ffion Davies

Lorna Scurlock

Trevor Hunter

Gemma Delafield

Louis Kirkup



Agenda item 1: Welcome and introductions

The Chair welcomed attendees and introduced speakers.

Agenda item 2: Jessica Hooper

Jessica Hooper, Director of RenewableUK Cymru, provided context on the Welsh Government's renewable energy targets and progress so far. She presented information from RenewableUK Cymru's report, *Future Energy Wales: The Critical Role of Welsh Wind Power*. Jessica highlighted that a 'giant leap' is required to meet the targets, with the need to quadruple the wind energy capacity in just over a decade. On planning, she noted that delivery timescales for onshore wind projects demonstrate low consenting rates and a slow planning process. She explained that, combined with a lack of grid infrastructure, this is holding back the renewable energy sector in Wales.

Agenda item 3: Liz Dunn

Liz Dunn, Partner at Burges Salmon LLP, presented to the CPG on the current state of planning, focusing on policy, legislation and resourcing. She provided the current policy context for planning in Wales, drawing attention to recent changes to Chapter 6 of Planning Policy Wales in particular. On legislation, Liz explained the key features of the Infrastructure (Wales) Bill, emphasising that the detail of secondary legislation and policy will be critical to the success of the framework bill. Finally, on resourcing she expressed that the planning system cannot operate without proper resourcing and suggested that the current lack of resource is undermining the planning process and applications. Liz noted potential solutions supported by industry, including a central resource of expertise.

Agenda item 4: Questions/discussion

Delyth Jewell chaired a discussion and invited questions from attendees.

Q1: What needs to be done to ensure that battery storage is part of the energy mix as well as wind energy?

Jessica Hooper noted that wind energy is favoured at the moment as it is the proven technology and is 'too cheap to be ignored'. However, she recognised that battery storage has a significant role to play. She promoted the need for a diverse energy mix in the journey towards achieving net zero and renewable energy targets.

Q2: Why is there not more solar being planned in Wales?

Liz Dunn suggested that the Welsh Government's interpretation of policy relating to Best and Most Versatile Agricultural Land (BMVAL) has previously been a problem. She stated that more projects could have likely been brought through if policy had been clearer. However, Liz noted that there are now a number of solar projects coming through the DNS process and recognised the important role for solar.

Q3: How do we motivate a private company to invest heavily in Wales and grid infrastructure?

Jessica Hooper highlighted RenewableUK Cymru's grid group which has been convened as a working group to make progress in this area.

Q4: How do we balance the dual objectives of increasing renewable energy deployment and protecting nature and biodiversity?

Liz Dunn noted how these objectives can sometimes clash at the policy level but noted that they are not mutually exclusive. She described how renewable energy projects can be enablers of improving biodiversity and nature, such as peat resources. Liz referred to Pen y Cymoedd Wind Farm which was built on NRW forestry land and is delivering peat restoration works and funding as part of the project.

Q5: What is the role for community involvement within renewable energy projects going forward?



Jessica Hooper expressed that government and industry must work together to heighten the awareness of the community benefits associated with renewable energy projects. She noted the particular work required on this in relation to grid infrastructure development. Liz Dunn spoke about ensuring that the economic opportunities associated with projects remain in Wales, taking the opportunity of jobs for people close to projects and encouraging communities to take pride in their local developments. She assessed that the Scottish Government has been more effective than the Welsh Government in this area.

Agenda item 5: Closing Remarks

The Chair offered closing remarks and noted that information about the next meeting and AGM will be shared in due course. She asked attendees to contact Cadno if they have any questions or queries about the Cross Party Group.