

Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru Pwyllgor Amgylchedd a Chynaliadwyedd	National Assembly for Wales Environment and Sustainability Committee
Dyfodol Ynni Craffach i Gymru?	Smarter energy future for Wales?
Ymateb gan Cymdeithas Llywodraeth Leol Cymru (Saesneg yn unig)	Response from Welsh Local Government Association
SEFW 23	SEFW 23



Cynulliad
Cenedlaethol
Cymru

National
Assembly for
Wales



RESPONSE TO WELSH
GOVERNMENT CONSULTATION
ON A SMARTER ENERGY
FUTURE FOR WALES

September 2015



WLGA • CLILC

INTRODUCTION

1. The Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) represents the 22 local authorities in Wales, and the three national park authorities and the three fire and rescue authorities are associate members.
2. It seeks to provide representation to local authorities within an emerging policy framework that satisfies the key priorities of our members and delivers a broad range of services that add value to Welsh local government and the communities they serve.
3. The WLGA welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the development of an energy policy for Wales within the next Assembly and beyond, in the context of meeting Wales' commitments to contribute to the prevention of global average temperatures rising more than 2° Celsius.

General

4. The approach to decarbonising our energy system in Wales must not just consider the environmental issues but also the social and economic issues. A considered, structured and programmed approach is necessary, too rapid an approach could have significant impact upon the social and economic well-being of Wales as a whole, too gradual an approach although more socially and economically beneficial would be detrimental to the environment and the achievement of the required targets.
5. The approach needs to be considered in respect of the 'energy hierarchy': do not waste energy; reduce the consumption of energy; generate energy from renewable sources; if carbon fuels are the only resort ensure utilise low carbon technologies.
6. An energy strategy needs to be to 2050 (or beyond) with clear and distinct decadal targets working back from 2050 to the present. This will give a clear statement of intent and will provide clear milestones that need to be reached by when.

Energy mix

Q1: How can we decarbonise our energy system at a sufficient pace to achieve the necessary reductions in emissions?

7. It should be noted that with regards to carbon emissions there are implications associated with the fact that energy generation is a not fully devolved function.

Furthermore, carbon emissions need to be apportioned to reflect that not all of the energy generated in Wales is consumed in Wales.

8. Encouraging innovative and energy saving developments in manufacturing processes can have multiple benefits of making the processes more energy efficient thereby reducing the demand for energy but also, in these times of austerity reducing the production costs and reducing the energy bills for the industry.
9. Further innovations should be sought in technologies to reduce the need to have household electrical goods on 'standby'

Q2: What mixture of distributed generation resources best meets Wales' renewable energy needs in respect of the supply of a) electricity, b) gas, and c) heat?

10. There is a strong case for looking at local resilience but maintaining a balance between a UK distribution grid and a local generation and distribution pattern.

The Grid

Q3: How does the grid distribution network in Wales enable or restrict the development of a new smarter energy system?

11. Local renewable energy schemes have been thwarted by the prohibitive costs associated with initial connections to the grid.
12. The major energy companies have a stranglehold on the market place and do not make it easy nor advantageous for local renewable schemes to feed in to the grids /distribution networks, especially with declining Feed-In-Tariffs.

Q4: What changes might be needed in terms of ownership, regulation, operation and investment?

13. Encourage and facilitate more local ownership as has been illustrated by the Energiewende scheme in Germany which enables communities to easily access loans to invest in community energy schemes. The big energy companies do not have a stranglehold on the market.
14. The Assembly could invest in spurs/connections to the grid and identify a given number of community/renewable energy schemes which would all be required to pay the same fixed connection fee to ultimately pay back the Government investment.

Storage

Q5: How can energy storage mechanisms be used to overcome barriers to increasing the use of renewable energy?

15. By developing the public/community ownership – if the majority of energy production rested with the local schemes with the 'slack' being taken up by the major energy companies with a greater capacity to flex production up and down.
16. The use of hydro-storage techniques whereby excess energy is used to pump water to higher ground reservoirs to then be released and 'regenerate' the energy through hydropower generation and gravity.
17. More remote locations generating energy by wind-power could charge batteries when production is high; the batteries could then be transported to supplement need elsewhere.

Ownership

Q6: To investigate the desirability and feasibility of greater public and community ownership of generation, transmission and distribution infrastructure and the implications of such a change.

18. Smaller, local communities' ownership of energy generation can enhance the understanding and responsibility of the members of the community towards energy and its use leading to more awareness and consideration of the value of energy efficiency. The Isle of Eigg in Scotland is an illustration how a community accepts the responsibility to be energy efficient and considerate.

Energy Efficiency and demand reduction

Q7: How can the planning system and building regulations be used to improve the energy efficiency of houses (both new and existing stock)?

19. The National Assembly must be stronger and determined to address this energy and emissions issue head-on with higher energy efficiency standards and stick to them in order to meet the decadal targets.
20. Investment by the Assembly in energy efficiency measures in current housing stock could reduce energy wastage and provide employment.
21. Consideration should be given to include heat source and other sustainable energy generation techniques in the planning and design of new properties and developments. Encouraging the use of renewable technologies and future-proofing

properties. New developments could ensure that the south facing aspect of all the properties utilises solar power in the most efficient way possible.

22. It is essential that Welsh Government is aware of and keeps up-to-date with technological advances to include in the design for new build [e.g. photovoltaic blocks on driveways which generates energy (stored in batteries) when the car is not there and the energy could be used to recharge an electric car when it is parked].
23. Consideration could be given to a whole house approach to planning applications for extensions. For example, it is recognised that there is energy loss from conservatories, perhaps compensatory actions can be taken within the rest of the house to mitigate any losses.
24. Real-time feedback technology can enhance awareness of energy use or abuse by the householder which can be rectified in real time, encouraging behaviour change.

Q8: What would the environmental, social and economic impacts be if Wales set higher energy efficiency standards for new build housing? (E.g. Passivhaus or Energy Plus)

25. This would ensure that the environmental impact would not get any worse, however this would not in itself bring about an improvement if the existing (majority) housing stock is not improved to the same higher energy efficiency standards. The same could be applied to the social situation.
26. As mentioned at the beginning the speed with which these changes are introduced can have a significant impact upon the social, economic and environmental well-being of Wales

Q9: How can communities, businesses and industry contribute to transforming the way that Wales thinks about energy? Does the answer to this challenge lie in enabling communities to take greater responsibility for meeting their future energy needs?

27. Already answered in previous responses.

Neville Rookes

Policy Officer - Environment, Welsh Local Government Association

Swyddog Polisi - Amgylchedd, Cymdeithas Llywodraeth Leol Cymru

www.wlga.gov.uk