

Written evidence submitted by Conwy County Borough Council (REW0009)

Welsh Affairs Committee Consultation - Renewable Energy in Wales

Conwy County Borough Council Response February 2021

Q1 How can the UK Government best support the deployment of renewable generators in Wales?

A1 The UK Government should be applauded for the work already carried out to support the deployment of renewable generators in Wales & beyond. However, a lack of central investment in the energy network has led to capacity constraints & prohibitive connection & upgrade costs that render many a renewable generation project uneconomic. For example, the level of non-domestic rates charged for such projects present significant barriers, making renewable generation financially unviable.

Central investment to upgrade the energy distribution network to a decentralised model could remove grid constraints & prohibitive capital costs as barriers to deployment. Such an approach may also prove more cost effective than retaining & upgrading the existing centralised distribution network.

Ensure that the necessary skills & expertise are available locally & that Wales' workforce can take advantage of the transition to a green economy.

Ensure sufficient financial & practical support is in place to facilitate local ownership of renewable generation projects.

Further support for smaller generators to sell directly to customers rather than entering the wholesale market can facilitate local ownership of renewable generation projects.

Grant Aid/Loans, aka Salix paid back based on savings

UK wide strategy on technologies and priorities

UK wide planning policy on renewables to streamline applications

Investment in infrastructure to support renewable energy transition, for example investing in the infrastructure to support electric vehicle use.

Q2 How should the UK and Welsh Governments work together to support the development of renewable energy projects in Wales?

A2 Ensure that Wales houses a proportion of the UK's renewable generation needs commensurate with the natural resources available locally. Distribution network issues should not be a barrier to this & both governments should be working together to ensure that this issue is resolved.

Ensuring a synergy between funding sources.

Accelerating the transition to a decarbonised transport & heating sector will increase demand for renewable electricity.

Work with national utility companies to coordinate export into the grid.

Identify regional areas and type of renewables required to support the national infrastructure.

Encourage suppliers to employ staff from within Wales including training and development opportunities – grant conditions?

Q3 What mechanisms can ensure that subsidies for renewable generators are good value for money?

A3 Other than the existing subsidies, none, with the exception of further extending RHI. Removal of barriers to deployment, improved access to finance & easier routes to market for smaller generators could provide better value for money.

Competition in the market place.

Standards/accreditation for suppliers to avoid fraud etc.

Competency standards for Consultants etc. engaged in the work.

Avoid unrealistic programmes overstressing a small number of suppliers.

Q4 What opportunities are there for renewable generators in Wales of greater interconnection with other electricity markets?

A4 Potentially an increased customer base with the economic advantages that entails. Reduces risk of having to “stop generating” due to low demand.

Wind, wave and water due to natural attributes of the regions – coastline, reservoirs etc.

As we in North Wales, rely for the vast majority of our income on tourism, and the natural beauty of the area, whatever power generation we decide upon must be as unobtrusive as possible. The Menai Strait generates 4 powerful tidal flows every day, as regular as clockwork. Why are we in Wales not discussing wave and tidal, indeed hydro power more? All we seem to see are offshore wind farms. Visual pollution is still a form of pollution, and when the wind stops blowing, what then?

A tidal barrage situated in North Wales would provide many benefits, environmental, economic and social.

Q5 How can the UK Government facilitate Welsh contributions to COP26?

A5 Assisting Welsh Government. Ensuring that the resources required are at Wales’ disposal. Ensuring that Wales’ potential contribution becomes a reality.

UK wide response, different parts of the UK will have different strategies i.e. coastline length for wave, height and latitude/longitude etc. for wind.

Q6 What implications is COP26 expected to have for Wales?

A6 The decarbonisation transition should accelerate. One would expect less talk & more action.

Radical action required to improve energy efficiency of existing properties & decarbonise heat.

Greater effort required to decarbonise transport.

One would expect efforts made to ensure that the infrastructure required to do this is in place.

Further shifts towards digital & on-line services.

Disruption in labour market as the economy transitions.

Likely to be UK wide policy which could apply to Wales/Ireland and Scotland.

Q7 Has the COP26 Year of Climate Action had any significant implications for Wales?

A7 Don't know, was Wales a co-signee as part of the UK signing the UN treaty in 1994?

Were objectives set and measured?

Q8 What opportunities are there for renewable energy to aid Wales post-COVID-19 economic recovery?

A8 Wales has an abundance of natural resources required for renewable generation. Wales may well be able to provide more than its fair share of energy.

Provide new industries/skills for training, career and job prospects as has occurred with wind turbines.

Encourage Higher and Further Education to offer the right courses.

Basing the whole supply chain within Wales would "level-up" the economy by securing jobs, rejuvenating former industrial areas. As well as aid sustainability goals.

Increasing the target for locally owned capacity could help improve energy efficiency & reduce fuel poverty. Supporting routes to market that enable a large proportion of the economic benefits from sale of energy to be retained locally.

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