Targets

Are the 2020 renewables targets (for electricity and heat) achievable? If not, why not?

The Government attitude seems to be that if enough onshore wind turbines are erected the targets will be met automatically. Talk of a balanced portfolio of renewable energy is just that – talk. The only form of renewable energy that is being pushed is wind.

This would explain why since 2007 only four Section 36 wind farm applications have been refused, despite many objections from local communities, planning authorities and statutory consultees. It would appear from this that despite strong planning reasons for refusing inappropriate applications, and also rhetoric from the Government that only suitable applications will be approved, the Government targets override all other considerations.

What contribution will achievement of the 2020 renewables targets make to meeting Scotland’s CO2 emissions targets (a reduction of at least 42% by 2020 and an 80% reduction target for 2050) under the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009?

Because of the intermittency of wind power fossil fuel and hydro back-up is necessary to make up the moment by moment shortfall. As a result fossil fuel plants will be running inefficiently and may in fact increase CO2 emissions.

Has the Scottish Government made any estimation of the overall costs of achieving the targets, and identified which parties will bear them?

If they have, it is not publicised enough. Why is that?

Our information is that it will be every Scottish household who foots the bill to the tune of £300 extra per year, a vast proportion of which will go to renewable energy suppliers in the form of subsidies.

The system is wrong and penalises the less financially able disproportionately. Solar panels are a perfect example of this. They are expensive to install but reward the homeowner who can afford to have them with substantial benefits. Yet, everyone else, regardless of their circumstances, is through their increased electricity bills, supporting those who are already financially secure. The same principle applies to wind farms but multiplied many times over.
Challenges

(a) Technology

Is the technology to meet these targets available and affordable? If not, what needs to be done?

Wind generation technology is unable to meet the targets due to its intermittent nature. It is not affordable because wind farms would not be built if substantial subsidies were not being paid. The Government needs a different plan. It needs to step back and reassess its objectives and current policy with the help of independent experts from industry and business. More of the money available needs to be diverted into research to develop other renewable technologies that will deliver the electricity requirements to domestic and industrial customers at a competitive price.

Are electricity generating or heat producing technologies compatible with the need for security of energy supplies?

Wind generation does not contribute to security of supply because of its intermittency. The fossil fuel plant most suitable for coping with these shortfalls of supply is gas-fired. As we become more reliant on foreign imports, security of supply will be further called into question. As it currently stands current policy will lead to reduced security.

It is a ridiculous stance by this Government to deny its population access to clean, cheap nuclear power.

c) Planning and consents

Is the planning system adequately resourced and fit for purpose?

No. Planning departments are inundated with wind farm applications and unable to cope with this avalanche. The Environmental statements are long, wordy and often seem to be cut and pasted from other applications. By the time they are submitted they are often out of date. Bird surveys and noise assessments are not independently verified and understaffed and overworked planning departments are forced to accept these documents at face value.

Planning authorities have been encouraged to draw-up planning strategies for renewable energy. In those cases where Councils have considered an application to be inappropriate and contrary to their strategy, the Government has the power to overrule the Council’s decision which erodes local democracy.
How can national priorities be reconciled with local interests?

This question, in itself, admits there is a serious problem. Local communities are becoming more and more disillusioned with Government policy that seems to ride roughshod over local democracy.

(d) Access to finance

What will the impacts be on consumers and their bills?

Please see our answer in ‘Targets’ above.

(f) Energy market reform and the subsidy regime

Are the reforms of the energy markets and subsidy regimes at both UK and EU level sufficient to meet the challenge of the Scottish Government's renewable targets?

The subsidy system for wind energy is wrong and scandalous. Wind farm millionaires are being created at the expense of the ordinary person. More people are being pushed into fuel poverty at the same time as being brainwashed into believing that they are saving the planet.

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