SUBMISSION FROM BRENDA HERRICK

Are the 2020 renewables targets (for electricity and heat) achievable? If not, why not?
Not if the Government continues its concentration on wind energy. Nuclear is renewable and should not be ruled out.

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?
Past evidence has been that wind energy does not reduce CO2 emissions due to the need for backup; more recent evidence shows that it probably increases these emissions so current policy is counter-productive.

Will increase in demand from electric heat and transport be offset by efficiencies elsewhere?
Only if current policy is revised. I see no serious signs of reduction in heating/lighting by public bodies; Holyrood itself is overheated. There should be far more emphasis on insulation which would reduce the need for heating; replacement boilers, as I know from personal experience, vastly reduce consumption. Councils should be instructed to take expert advice before embarking on wasteful schemes such as the disastrous one in Wick council housing, now defunct, and the present one in Castletown where coal fires are being removed from council houses to be replaced by air source heating with its huge demand for electricity which is sending tenants’ bills soaring. Both Government and Councils should take expert advice before embarking on all these schemes including windfarms.

Has the Scottish Government made any estimation of the overall costs of achieving the targets, and identified which parties will bear them?
I have seen no evidence of this. See comment above on seeking expert advice from people in the industry who are not influenced by financial considerations.

Challenges

(a) Technology

Is the technology to meet these targets available and affordable? If not, what needs to be done?
It is available but not used, e.g. alternative more efficient, less destructive turbines have been invented but are not commercially available as conventional turbines have cornered the market.

Are electricity generating or heat producing technologies compatible with the need for security of energy supplies?
If the right technologies were used they would be. The Government’s present blinkered attitude precludes this.

Are our universities and research institutes fully geared up to the need for technological development, innovation and commercialisation?
Probably not. There is a serious shortage of qualified engineers as the right skills are not encouraged and properly taught in schools.

(b) Supply chain and infrastructure

Is the supply chain in Scotland in place to meet the targets?
No.
What further improvements are needed to the grid infrastructure or heat supply networks both at a national and a local level? Additionally, are we confident that the necessary infrastructure can be developed and financed so that Scotland can export any excess electricity generated to the rest of the UK and/or the EU? What is the role for the Scottish Government here?
This is based on the assumption that other countries will want to buy our electricity. Experience on the continent shows that oversupply causes problems between countries. Why would England want to buy expensive electricity from Scotland when they can generate it more cheaply themselves?

(c) Planning and consents

Is the planning system adequately resourced and fit for purpose?
Absolutely not. Environmental statements are produced by developers so not impartial. They are far too long and frequently not as site specific or as thorough as they should be. Councils and Councillors have neither the staff, the time nor the expertise to study them adequately. The public are equally unable to spend the time necessary to study documents running to many hundreds of pages so cannot make detailed relevant comments. The sheer volume of applications means that they cannot be adequately dealt with.

How can national priorities be reconciled with local interests?
At the moment national priorities over-rule local interests. There is not even a pretence of democracy any more. The Government makes public statements such as

"While Ministers believe it is right to make the most of the opportunities that are offered by our abundant natural energy resources, this must be done in a way that protects the environment and takes account of the views of local communities."

but they do not mean a word of it as even if applications meet overwhelming local opposition and are recommended for refusal, or refused, by Councils, a Government Reporter or the Minister will ignore all this and consent.

(d) Access to finance

Will sufficient funds be available to allow investment in both the installation and the development of relevant technologies? What can the Scottish Government do to influence this?
Only by robbing the poor to give huge sums to developers and landowners. Even developers admit they would not instal windfarms without the subsidies.

What will the impacts be on consumers and their bills?
It will lead to increasing fuel poverty in households with deaths particularly in the older population and more small businesses failing as they cannot pay their bills.

(e) Skills and workforce development

Will Scotland have sufficient home-grown skills to attract inward investment? Are current policies producing the desired move towards Science Technology
No – see earlier comment on universities.

Engineering and Maths subjects at schools and universities? Is the skills transfer from the oil and gas sectors being realised?
(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? This is an unanswerable question as it is the unachievable targets that are the problem.

Brenda Herrick
29 February 2012