

Cross-Party Group on Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency

14 January 2024, 6.30pm

Minute

Present

MSPs

Sarah Boyack MSP

Brian Whittle MSP

Lorna Slater MSP

Invited guests

Dave Hawkey (guest speaker)

Rita Wadey (guest speaker)

Non-MSP Group Members

Elaine Waterson

Jack Norquoy

Amanda Fairman

Lyndsey Croal

Ioanna Hadjicosta

Amanda Grimm

Tariq Muneer

Chirs Cook

Laura Fordyce

David Somervell

Sam Airey

David Thomson

Anna Mackenzie

Marijke Shahsavari

Joan Pisanek

Dan Jones

Roderick Galbraith

Antione Regius

John Young

Neil Kermode

Amy Keast

Apologies

Audrey Nicoll MSP
Sarah McIntosh
Gillian Campbell
Sue Kearns

Agenda item 1 – Introduction by chair

Sarah Boyack MSP welcomed everyone to the meeting the focus of which is Scotland's climate change targets and the just transition.

Agenda item 2 – Approval of minutes from the last meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting, held on 12 November 2024, had been sent round to group members in advance and the secretariat received no requests for additions or corrections. The group agreed that these provided an accurate account of the meeting (proposed by Brian Whittle MSP, seconded by Lorna Slater MSP).

Agenda item 3 – Presentation from Dave Hawkey, IPPR

Dave's presentation outlined the results of a report that had been produced by IPPR Scotland in collaboration with IPPR UK. The research started before the most recent UK election, was prompted by Labour's pledge to become a clean energy super power and looked at the implications of this pledge for devolved governments. Amongst other things Dave talked about how challenges had been categorised within the report (shared challenges, power with devolved administrations etc.) emphasised the complexity of wind project development, the interdependencies between the policies of the UK government and the devolved governments, the need for a clear vision of outcome in spatial planning policy and the fact that planning departments are not always sufficiently staffed because there is significant competition for trained staff.

Dave suggested that there were early signs of good collaboration across UK and devolved government with:

- GB energy to work with Scottish public bodies
- Reserved powers to update transmission network consenting in Scotland
- Joint commissioning of strategic spatial energy plan
- Productive working relationships across governments

Dave then went on to summarise the report's recommendations:

- Joint commitments to the joint challenge of transforming the energy systems across the UK
- Ensure a four nations approach – early sight, coordination and funding

- Transparent monitoring of progress to clean power, building accountability for actions and outcomes
- Defined roles for devolved government in rapidly evolving institutional landscape e.g. what the relationship between SG and GB energy will be

Dave also noted that IPPR UK are currently undertaking work to consider GB Energy's role.

Dave concluded by suggesting that the way in which the UK Government has framed this as a mission is something that should be carried across into other sectors e.g. heat in buildings, noting the importance of setting meaningful sectoral milestones and building a credible plan for reaching them. Dave also emphasised the importance of public buy in.

Agenda item 4 – Presentation from Rita Wadey, NESO

Rita began by noting that NESO has been operating since 1 October 2024 and that it evolved from ESO. Rita went on to note that NESO is now a public body wholly owned by government but independent and has three primary objectives. These objectives relate to net zero, efficiency and economy and security of supply.

Rita then went on to discuss NESO's Clean Power 2030 report including how NESO had approached their analysis, noting that the analysis assumed that clean power should meet total electricity demand, that there was back up generation to keep the system secure, and that there would be unabated gas but that this would be needed less than 5% of the time – although over time there would be an expectation that other technologies would push that unabated generation out.

Rita noted that the report's findings included that the government's 2030 target is possible if delivery challenges can be unblocked and that the foundations are already in place. Rita also noted that if the target is to be met flexibility will be vital and that this needs to be thought of at the system level and at the household level and that 4-5 times more deployment of renewables will be required. Rita also emphasised that communities need to be engaged, and that there is a skills capability and capacity gap around the planning system.

Agenda item 5 – Q & A and discussion

A range of questions were directed at the panel and included:

Lorna Slater MSP asked about the appetite that the UK Government has for cutting the link between gas and electricity prices.

David Somervell asked whether there was too much focus on electricity generation as opposed to heat.

Antione Regius asked if heat networks were seen as part of national energy infrastructure.

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Marijke Shahsavari asked about how public acceptance of different solutions can be promoted.

Amanda Grimm asked whether the UK should be prioritising switching to decarbonised electricity and transport rather than requiring additional electricity use through AI.

Tariq Muneer questioned whether storage heaters would be a better solution for households than heat pumps.

Chris Cook asked about financial tools and noted the role that swaps (supplying gas in exchange for a flow of power) and loans (lend money and get a flow of energy in return) could play.

Sarah Boyack MSP thanked the two speakers, everyone attending and everyone involved in organising the meeting.

Agenda item 6 – Dates for future meetings

The next meeting will be on 26 February.

The planned topic of the next meeting is – No transition without transmission: what's next for the grid in Scotland?

Agenda item 7 – AOB

No other business was raised.