Scottish Publicly Owned Energy Company (POEC)

- What are your general views on the idea of a Scottish publicly owned energy company (POEC)?

A POEC is a great idea for Scotland

- What role should it fulfil and how?

It should take over control and maintenance of the National Grid in Scotland. It should be responsible for supply to business and residential consumers. It should pro-actively look at solutions for fuel poverty both generally and specifically for individuals experiencing hardship. Schemes should be set up where small scale solar or wind generators can be installed to properties that experience fuel poverty. It should carry out and invest in R&D on new technologies for energy generation and storage in partnership with Universities and Business. It should advise the Scottish Government on energy policy. It should seek to influence developers on energy generation, efficiency and sustainability on new housing and business projects. It should assess the value on having all new builds have South facing roofs. It should act as a hub, connecting consumers with contractors for smaller scale residential and community renewable projects. It should export, for profit, to neighbouring countries. It should seek to lead the way in renewable technologies, reducing our carbon footprint, and exceeding any targets without recourse to “offsetting”.

- What are the key challenges that the POEC should address?

Infrastructure in our landscape is an issue. Environmental and scenic footprint. Carbon capture

- How might a Scottish energy supply company work best to support the growth of local and community projects, and fuel poverty reduction?

More small scale, residential options for generating power. Integrating with other utility suppliers, to see if Gas, Sewage and Water pipelines could be utilised in generating power.
An infrastructure programme that allows residences to connect third party power generating equipment. At the moment ordinary people, especially those in fuel poverty, have no way of reducing their bills through generation of power.

- How can the POEC be best designed to align with wider Scottish energy policy objectives, and to avoid potential policy conflicts?

An umbrella company, like “Scotland’s Energy” would then have subsidiary companies to separate some aspects of the company, keeping Generation, Distribution and Supply separate from each other.

- Should a new Scottish POEC be more than solely a licensed energy supply company? Should it have a direct role in energy generation?

Definitely! Not just that, they need to invest heavily in energy storage, such as hydroelectric dams. Currently, our energy is very unpredictable, demand and supply are completely independent, and should one outstrip the other at any point, complications can arise. By storing water in a dam, it can be released during high demand, and then pumped back when supply is under capacity.

- How might the POEC be designed to promote objectives and functions beyond the retail of gas and electricity (e.g. supporting investment and innovation in new technologies and infrastructure)? What benefits are there to having wider objectives?

The benefits to Scotland as a whole, both internally and globally, of investing in research in conjunction with Business and Education cannot be ignored. The switch from fossil fuels will gather pace, and as larger projects are undertaken, like vehicles and infrastructure, the advantage at being in the forefront is huge. Not having to rely on outside agencies would have a massive impact on our balance of trade.

By working holistically, introducing changes to housing and planning policies to better account for large and small scale renewable projects, we could lead the way in energy integration.

By Investing in business not only would we reduce our import requirements, but we could also export technologies and equipment globally.

- What governance arrangements should a Scottish POEC have? Who should it be accountable to e.g. Parliament?

They should be accountable to parliament, but be apolitical, and not influenced by party politics. They should be able to recruit their own people, rather than having appointed CEOs to avoid nepotism or party agendas, but at the same time there should be strict ministerial oversight on things like efficiency, CEO salaries, working conditions. We need to learn from previous national arrangements, like Royal Mail, which became bureaucratic and inefficient.

Integration with Private Enterprise needs to be carefully managed and transparent, to avoid profiteering, to ensure quality, and fair access.

- Should legislation be required to underpin the creation of a POEC?

Definitely, to protect it from outside influences, and grant it the necessary powers.