

Scotland needs more ambition for community energy

KEY POINTS

- Through setting a unique target of 500MW 'community and locally owned' energy, and creating support mechanisms to help meet this target, Scotland has established itself as a leader in the transition to a fair and renewable energy future
- We met the current 500 MW target five years early and urgently need a policy framework that safeguards programmes like CARES and the continued transition to circular energy economies
- Increasing the 2020 target to 1GW and setting a 2030 target of 2GW would send a strong signal to communities thinking of making their own electricity or renewable heat
- Scotland cannot afford to wait five years in the hope that Westminster may change its mind and actually starts doing what's right for people and the planet

BACKGROUND

It is without doubt, that the Scottish target of 100% renewables by 2020, "has provided a hugely powerful focus for government and industry and helped create the green energy industry we have today – one which provides half our electricity and supports 21,000 jobs."¹

As part of this wider renewables ambition, the Scottish Government has set a target of 500MW for 'community and locally owned' energy by 2020. In conjunction with an array of support mechanisms, including the Renewable Energy Investment Fund (REIF) and the Community and Renewable Energy Scheme (CARES), this policy has helped deliver tangible projects that benefit communities across Scotland.² What is a unique target, has also established Scotland as a leader in community energy internationally.

However, it could be argued that the 500MW target lacked ambition from the onset, which is underpinned by the fact that it was met last October, five years ahead of schedule.

WE NEED MORE AMBITION, NOW!

Recent times have seen unprecedented attacks on financial support mechanisms for the renewable energy sector by the UK government. This includes drastic cuts to Feed-in

¹ Stuart, N. (2016) *Chief Executive Niall Stuart launches Scottish Renewables' manifest for May's Scottish Parliament elections with a new target for the industry*, [Internet]. Scottish Renewables. Available from: < <https://www.scottishrenewables.com/news/blog-2030-ambition-crucial-sr-manifesto/> > [Accessed 20 January 2016].

² The report *From Remote Island Grids to Urban Solar Co-operatives*, offers examples of case studies from across Scotland <http://www.communitypower.scot/wp/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/CommunityPowerScotlandOct2014Web.pdf>. Alternatively you can view a film version here <http://www.communitypower.scot/wp/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/CommunityPowerScotlandOct2014Web.pdf>.



tariffs, as well as the termination of the Seed Enterprise Investment Scheme (SEIS) and Enterprise Investment Scheme (EIS) tax relief. Regardless of the increasingly difficult policy context at UK level, Scotland has to push on with the transition to renewable energy not least because we will switch off the last conventional power generation in not much more than a decade. In addition, we have to tackle emissions from transport and heating/cooling so we need more ambition, not less, in cutting our addiction to fossil fuels.

However, in our drive to tackle climate change, we also need to address the underlying inequalities of our current, highly centralised energy system. Both the environment and people must be at the heart of the renewable transformation and the best way to achieve this is through people's ownership of renewable energy.

It is clear that the 500MW target provided a strong basis for effective support mechanisms for the benefit of Scottish communities. We are calling on the Scottish Government to double its target of community-owned renewable energy to 1GW by 2020 and also set an ambitious target of 2GW by 2030. This will also ensure that vital support mechanisms including CARES, will be safeguarded for the foreseeable future and protect Scottish communities against policy adversity at UK level.

THE POWER TO SET TARGETS AND PROMOTE RENEWABLE ENERGY³

Energy policy is generally reserved to the UK government. However, the Scottish Government has a strong track record of setting energy targets, which are crucial drivers of action in delivering a fair and renewable energy future.

At European level, renewable energy targets are currently governed by Directive 2009/28/EC (Renewables Directive). While the Renewables Directive contains mandatory targets it also encourages additional action at both national and regional levels. It specifically states, that:

"Member States may encourage local and regional authorities to set targets in excess of national targets and to involve local and regional authorities in drawing up national renewable energy action plans and in raising awareness of the benefits of energy from renewable sources."⁴

A 1GW target of 'community and locally owned' energy by 2020, and 2GW by 2030, will provide a strong framework for the renewable transition, and send a strong signal to the rest of the EU over how Scotland intends to contribute to meeting objectives of the Energy Union.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, SEE <http://www.communitypower.scot>

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³ Roberts, J. (2014) *Enhancing support of community energy in Scotland: the case for stronger community energy targets to 2030*. London, ClientEarth.

⁴ Renewables Directive, Recital 23.

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