

## QUESTION

"What role and importance will the planting of new woodland by communities have in the community energy strategy; in order to support biomass fuel sources, carbon removal as well as enhancing community cohesion and a decentralised energy approach?"

### DECC response:

**Answer: DECC regularly meets with the Forestry Commission and Defra to discuss communities and bioenergy. We see an important role for the use of locally grown biomass in community heat and CHP generation.**

"The biggest barrier we have and, it seems, many other rural micro energy generating schemes of over 10kW; is grid connection. There is market failure on this issue i.e. where a viable energy generating resource has been identified but cannot be utilised because of prohibitive grid connection costs. I understand that there are technical issues involved but that they are relatively straight forward to resolve. Say if a community energy group presents a viable and sustainable business plan for renewable energy generation then the monopolistic grid/network providers should work to remove the connection cost barrier so addressing market failure".

### DECC Response

**Connections to the distribution network are a matter for the Distribution Network Operator (DNO). Communities can access the alternative option of an independent Connection Provider (<http://www.lloydsregister.co.uk/schemes/NERS/providers-list.aspx>) which provides a competitive alternative.**

**As background, the general principle for grid connections is that the cost of connection should be borne by the person or community seeking connection. This could include feasibility studies undertaken by a DNO or necessary infrastructure work to allow new connections to be made. However charges need to be transparent, consistent and fair. Independent Connection Providers were also introduced in 2005 to ensure a competitive market in the connections market and approximately 10% of all connections are now provided by Independent Connection Providers.**

"Please take a look at the role of the environment agency in climate change. Why do we need abstract licenses (time and cost) for hydro projects when water is returned? This is a major barrier"

### DECC response:

**Hydropower schemes can cause a great deal of environmental damage if they are poorly sited and designed or badly installed.**

**The Environment Agency advises applicants and regulates schemes to ensure this doesn't happen. In most hydropower systems water is taken out of the river, directed through a pipeline or channel to a turbine, then returned to the river, often some distance from the abstraction point. It is an abstraction from the river, or "source of supply", which is why the activity is subject to Water Resources legislation.**

**Reduced water flows as a result of abstraction can have significant ecological effects so the Environment Agency works closely with developers to make sure the impact of schemes are managed and other abstractors' interests are not affected.**

We are very grateful for the opportunity to work for the benefit of our community and have experiences with other community groups. The difficulty with pushing the project further is community commitment with lots of other issues at community level, such as NPPF, Green Deal, planning and community power. We need consistent messages from government to maintain community interest"

### DECC Response

**DECC's Community Energy Online <http://ceo.decc.gov.uk> is already a central information portal, designed to communicate latest policy developments and wider advice to community groups. Subscribers receive bulletins. DECC has just announced a Community Energy Strategy Document for publication in 2013 to pull together its work on communities, including The Green Deal and renewables.**

"Why is domestic RHI continually postponed, when will it be introduced? When will it be back dated to? Nb. Pre-payment meters are now the lowest cost methods of payment (as I understand it)" (Andrej Miller)

#### **DECC Response**

**The Government is committed to providing a long term incentive for the roll out of renewable heat in the domestic sector. We plan to consult on proposals for support for renewable heat in individual households in September this year. We will set out a firmer timetable for delivering this support with the consultation and anticipate that the scheme will launch in summer 2013. We are committed to meeting this timetable and we will publish regular updates on our website to demonstrate progress in meeting our milestones.**

**It is important that the Government spends sufficient time to develop effective policy and to learn from the experiences of other schemes. Given the current economic climate we need to ensure that we deliver value for money by designing and delivering a scheme that offers sustainable support and delivers renewable heat in the most cost-effective way.**

**Whilst the scheme will be open for application from owners of renewable heat technology who have installed their equipment since 15<sup>th</sup> July 2009, receipt of support will be dependent on meeting the final eligibility criteria that we bring forward. We do not plan to back-date support to earlier than the date at which the application is accredited into the scheme.**

- "1. (a) Pathfinder people spend their money on retrofitting and achieve reductions of energy up to 70%  
(b) Meanwhile, down the road the local council is selling a site to local developer and setting minimum energy saving requirements  
(c) This undermines the hard work done by private homeowners  
(d) Can the Minister (through colleague ministries) insist that local authorities set high levels of energy saving for new builds?"

#### **DECC Response**

**There is no doubt that the efforts of those who have gone to great lengths to reduce the energy use in their homes are to be applauded. They provide an exemplary example to others about the need to take action on climate change and what can be achieved on an individual level. The Green Deal will allow others to follow in their footsteps and take up similar energy saving opportunities.**

**We are also pushing to greatly improve the energy performance of homes more widely, with a central pillar being our policy of Zero Carbon Homes. The Zero Carbon Hub, a non-profit company, has been set up to develop and drive a prioritised programme for delivering built homes that are zero carbon by 2016, covering all aspects such as the building fabric, air leakage from within the home, low carbon energy generation, build cost and the householder experience.**

**This will be delivered through a variety of ways, including through a strengthening of Part L of the building regulations. These changes will be supported through other measures, such as the Code for Sustainable Homes, the Planning Policy Statement on Climate Change and stamp duty relief for zero carbon homes. The challenging timetable for delivery has been developed following consultation, and in partnership with business, local government and green stakeholders.**

**This is a policy that is however still under development. We need to identify the issues surrounding the delivery of low and zero carbon energy, to explore any barriers to the new technologies and techniques we will need to employ. We also need to ensure that the tools and processes are workable, so that the industry can scale up its operation to deliver this challenging agenda. In the meantime we must be careful that we do not undermine the clear need for the construction of new homes in this country, whilst ensuring that we send a clear signals to both industry and consumers for the future.**

2 Will the Minister find a way of harvesting and disseminating the knowledge gathered in this room? The easiest approach would be: say 400 words per project based on a template using bullet points; and then clustered across referenced by topic type (e.g. engagement/micro generation/models of how to treat properties/wall insulation). This guide/directory would be used by community groups who don't want to re-invent the wheel. The previous Government (John Major's) produced the Prime Minister's A-Z of quality based on this idea. It was a winner. It would be an excellent resource to precede LEAF2. Please get in touch and involve me in your advisory group from communities"

**DECC Response**

**DECC welcomes the observations made in LEAF small group discussions. The Energy Saving Trust compiled feedback from the LEAF experience event and is due to publish its final report on LEAF. There are written reports from all 236 LEAF projects.**

**DECC is planning an in-depth evaluation of the outcomes of LEAF which should identify patterns, learning and best practice. The idea of a compendium of projects is helpful and we will consider it as part of the in-depth evaluation.**

**If there were to be a "LEAF2" (no confirmation) its design and criteria would take into account learning coming out of LEAF 1.**

Will the RHI definitely be rolled out to the individual domestic sector, and if so, when? My reasoning for this question is the false holding back of interest currently in the sector due to the hold-up in the introduction of the RHI, and the perception that it might not happen at all. Our region has a large proportion of homes off the gas network, so incentives to get off oil are crucial. If there is a promise that the the domestic RHI will go ahead, and a date for that to happen, then I'm sure we can start to get the market moving

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