

Huhne blasts critics of renewable energy as RHI gets go-ahead

Written by Karl

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Chris Huhne and Greg Barker today reiterated the Government's commitment to renewable energy, highlighting especially how many jobs it is helping to create.

Energy Secretary Chris Huhne addressed the RenewableUK annual conference in Manchester, where WWF has launched a report which demonstrates how Britain could meet between 60 and 90% of its electricity demand from renewable sources by 2030.

And in London, Energy Minister Greg Barker announced that state aid approval has been granted by the European Commission for the Renewable Heat Incentive (RHI), enabling it to be launched for commercial purposes.

The E.C. had expressed concern that the large biomass tariff was set too high.

It has now been reduced from 2.7p per KWh to 1p per KWh.

Revised regulations have been re-laid in Parliament and it is hoped the scheme will be open to applications by the end of November 2011, subject to Parliamentary approval.

9,000 new jobs in one year Chris Huhne, in his speech, countered critics of renewable energy (members of his audience will no doubt have their own ideas on whom he means) by saying that its technologies will deliver a third industrial revolution "every bit as profound as the first two".

"We are not going to save our economy by turning our back on renewable energy," he said. "At a time when closures and cuts dominate the news cycle, next-generation industries are providing jobs and sinking capital into Britain."

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He promised that the UK "will be the largest market in Europe for offshore wind" and highlighted the £ 1.7 billion investment in renewable energy and over 9,000 jobs created just this year.

Wind developers need to get their act together RenewableUK yesterday published figures at the conference showing that over the first half of this year onshore wind output was up 64% from 2.97TWh to 4.86TWh, whilst offshore rose even further, up 87% from 1.13TWh to 2.11TWh.

On 30th June 2011, 5,560MW of wind capacity was operational in the UK, with 3,615MW under construction.

A further 5,437MW was consented and awaiting construction, giving a grand total of 14,612MW consented, under construction or operational.

A further 9,084MW remain in the planning system awaiting determination.

This figure is slightly down from 9,174MW in the system at the end of 2010 and 9,299MW at the end of 2009.

But whereas consents for new wind capacity is rising, that for onshore wind has almost flatlined in the last four years due to problems at the planning stage.

Approvals for projects have reached an all-time low of 42%. English planning authorities are the most restrictive, approving only 26% of applications.

Developers have been their own worst enemies in many cases, the research shows, with holdups being caused by them not ensuring the project's commercial viability (17%), not selling projects (14%), objections due to interference with civil radar (14%), and grid connection problems (14%).

Problems with projects already operational and in construction include selling the projects after consent (26%), supply line issues with sourcing turbines (21%), intractable planning conditions (13%) and access route difficulties.

All of this points to developers needing to engage communities and do their homework better.

Offshore, the figures show that the UK may struggle to fulfil new orders in four years' time as the yearly growth in UK offshore wind farms is expected to double between 2015 and 2016.

Annual offshore wind deployment will rise to 1.2 gigawatts (GW) in 2012 and exceed 2.5 GW in 2016, after a forecast drop in activity in 2013-14 due to a lack of consented projects.

Bloomberg New Energy Finance's analysis of offshore finance suggests that a further 3.67GW of offshore wind will be commissioned over 2012-15, requiring £ 13.6bn in investment.

WWF's six low carbon futures The WWF report, prepared by GL Garrad Hassan (GL GH), portrays six potential future scenarios about the sourcing of the UK's electricity in 2030.

They all achieve the near decarbonisation of the power sector without new nuclear power but

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differ according to the level of electricity demand and the use of different methods for ensuring system security.

In all cases, there would be ambitious increases in electric vehicles (EVs) and electric heating.

The more ambitious scenarios require more substantial energy efficiency and behavioural change to reduce demand.

WWF says that the core scenarios show that it is perfectly feasible to develop a stable and secure electricity system where renewables deliver at least 60% of the UK's electricity demand by 2030.

This percentage is much higher than the 40% share suggested by the Government's Committee on Climate Change in its May 2011 Renewable Energy Review, which assumes the need for new nuclear power.

Gas, including the use of carbon capture and storage (CCS), and greater interconnection provide the rest of the UK's electricity under these core scenarios.

Reducing demand further in the more ambitious scenarios would actually make the transition cheaper by cutting the capital costs of building new generation capacity by around £40bn by 2030.

The report was welcomed by Siemens, whose director for Business Development, Sustainability and Government Affairs, Michael Rolls, said it "highlights the need for strong stable policies to drive investment, stimulating the green economy and bringing skilled manufacturing, construction and service jobs to the UK."

Gavin Neath, Unilever's senior vice president of Sustainability, also praised the report, saying that "reaching such a goal will not just be good for business but it will be absolutely essential if we are to retard the speed of accelerating climate change".