



As we pass through the season of gluttony and full rubbish bins, the issue of food waste becomes more pressing than ever. It is also an issue that has returned to the headlines. One of the 'challenge prizes' developed by innovation charity Nesta in association with the Cabinet Office is the Waste Reduction Challenge, which carries a £10,000 funding boost for the winning project to develop its programme.

As the name suggests, the Waste Reduction challenge prize was offered to projects that helped reduce food waste. The winning project was the Gleaning Network, run by the admirable Feeding the 5000 – the waste-fighting charity whose free lunch events were reported on in this column back in May. The Gleaning Network aims to reduce waste at its source – the farm – by gathering in as much of the produce left behind during harvesting as possible for distribution to charities.

According to Nesta, to date the project has 'gleaned' 36.74 tonnes of fruit and vegetables, providing over 183,000 meals to beneficiaries.

- The Energy Bill finally finished its battered and bruised journey through Parliament to receive the Royal Assent and become the Energy Act. It bears little resemblance to the proud crusader that began that journey, having been watered down at successive stages of the process.

Naturally, that is not quite how Energy Secretary Ed Davey sees it. Writing in Liberal Democrat Voice he boasted: "Creating the world's first ever low carbon electricity market is a major achievement for the Liberal Democrats and the Coalition."

He continued: “The framework we’ve now put in place will create 250,000 jobs in the energy sector by 2020 – and 200,000 of them in renewables. The investment that we’re unlocking will produce green jobs up and down the country in offshore and onshore wind, biomass, solar and other renewables.”

The Act was accompanied by publication of the Electricity Market Reform Delivery Plan.

According to one energy law expert, however, there is still much left undone Fiona Ross of Pinsent Masons said: “The Energy Bill receiving Royal Assent and confirmation of the Delivery Plan are important milestones in the Government's fundamental reform of the electricity market, bringing industry one step closer to certainty on the framework for support for low carbon energy generation in a process that has spanned the past two years.

“However, the real detail in terms of the nuts and bolts of the Contracts for Difference (CfDs) and Capacity Market mechanisms will be set out in secondary legislation; some of which – including eligibility requirements for CfDs – is under consultation until Christmas Eve. There remains a lot of work for Government to do in the New Year if it is going to deliver the mechanisms on time, while taking into account industry feedback on the detailed proposals.”

- The Energy Act became law just as the real government – the Tories – published a map showing that 60% of the land area of the UK could be licensed for fracking. According to the map, great swathes of the Tory heartland in the south could be bristling with fracking rigs. The report that produced the map even has the audacity to introduce the issue by referring to the need to switch to a low-carbon economy.

Meanwhile, Cuadrilla has announced it is pulling out of the Lancashire site where its activities were identified as possibly being associated with a couple of earth tremors.

- Puzzlingly, the Retrofit 2050 project, which brought together academics from across the UK to investigate the environmental benefits of adding in green elements to existing building and infrastructure, is nearing the end of its timescale (and it’s only 2013!), with the publication of its penultimate newsletter. The final missive will be next spring.

Retrofitting events continue to take place, however, with the self-evident sense of the process becoming more and more mainstream.

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