

From today (4 November) installers of solar panels, heat pumps and other renewable energy technology will have a regular opportunity to discuss the issues and challenges facing the industry.

The new Welsh Microgen Network was launched today by the Environment Minister Jane Davidson at the Kenfig Nature Reserve Visitor Centre in Bridgend.

The network, which has been established with the co-operation of the industry, has been set up so that installers of renewable technology can have constructive discussions about the issues that really matter to them.

It has been launched as part of a wider package of support aimed at helping Welsh SMEs to profit from the renewable energy sector. This includes interest free loans and practical advice to help installers through the industry certification process.

Speaking about the support, the Minister said:

“Renewable energy really is the future; it causes minimal damage to the environment, will not run out and is not dictated by factors, such as oil supply and energy prices, that are outside our control.

“I want to make sure that Wales gets the best possible outcome from our transition to a low carbon economy. To achieve this we have to make it as it as easy as possible for Welsh businesses to make the most of the opportunities associated with renewable energy.

“The network that I am launching today will enable green energy installers to share experiences and good practice, and provide them with an opportunity to highlight any issues that they feel might be holding them back.

“We are genuinely interested in what the network has to say about their experiences of this developing industry and are keen to factor the wishes and concerns of the sector into the development of our policy. This is a sector that I am very keen to support and I am confident that the network will assist the growth of renewable energy in Wales.”

Earlier in the year the Environment Minister launched the MCS Installer Support programme which enables small and medium sized renewable energy installation companies to access interest free loans to cover the cost of gaining industry certification.

The Minister also announced that installers could access the services of a development officer who will provide free and impartial advice to steer them through the accreditation process.

Installers need to be MCS accredited if they are to fully benefit from the growth in the renewable industry stimulated by Feed-in Tariffs. The Feed-in Tariff will enable businesses, communities and individuals to be paid for the renewable electricity they generate and export to the grid.

The interest free loan scheme went live in October and seven installers have already received their funding, with many more applications in the pipeline.