

ECC Priorities for Holding Government to Account

● Submission to the Energy and Climate Change Select Committee by the Royal Geographical Society (with IBG)

... **The Society**

The Royal Geographical Society (with the Institute of British Geographers) is the UK's learned society and professional body for geography and geographers. Founded in 1830, it is the largest geographical society in Europe and one of the largest and most active in the world, with more than 16,000 Fellows and members. The Society plays a vitally important role in: supporting research; accrediting professional standards; influencing policy, enhancing geographical and environmental education; championing fieldwork and scientific expeditions and in raising public understanding. As a charity, the Society's work currently reaches more than three million people per year, and is supported by more than 2500 volunteers.

The RGS-IBG Energy Geographies Research Group

This response is submitted by the Society in collaboration with the RGS-IBG Energy Geographies Research Group (EnGRG)¹. The RGS-IBG currently coordinates 28 Research Groups. These bring together active researchers and those with a professional interest in a particular aspect of geography and related disciplines. The purpose of the EnGRG is to facilitate more research and teaching on energy within UK Geography and, by doing so, to enhance the contribution of the discipline to an issue of broad social significance and future concern.

The formation of the EnGRG in 2011, reflected the social 'challenge' that energy issues now present in both the global North and South, the centrality of these issues for a discipline committed to understanding society-environment relations, and the distinctiveness of the contemporary energy agenda. Energy transition, security, infrastructure, and governance are fundamentally spatial and scalar concerns.

The specific issues mentioned below are those where, as geographers, the Society and the EnGRG feel that energy policy, or the implementation of policy, both within DECC and more widely across Government, could benefit from independent scrutiny.

Climate Change Communiqué

In July 2015, the Society, along with 23 other Learned and Professional bodies in the UK, signed a communiqué addressed to governments that will meet in Paris in November to negotiate a new international, legally binding climate change agreement. The communiqué cites the IPCC in stating that to have a reasonable chance of limiting global warming to 2 degrees centigrade relative to the pre-industrial period, society must transition to a zero-carbon world by the second half of this century. To achieve this transition, governments should demonstrate leadership by recognising the risks climate change poses, embracing appropriate policy and technological responses, and seizing the opportunities of low-carbon and climate-resilient growth.²

¹ Energy Geographies Research Group: <https://energygeographiesworkinggroup.wordpress.com/>. [Accessed 6 August 2015].

² Climate Communiqué, 21 July 2015: <http://news.rgs.org/post/124654586928/climate-communiqu%C3%A9> [Accessed 6 August 2015].



Specific Comments

1. It is urgent that DECC review the implications of the impacts of other departments' policies for the delivery of energy policy aims and objectives. Academic research is occurring in this area within the DEMAND (Dynamics of Energy, Mobility and Demand) Centre at Lancaster University³, for example.
2. The Feed-in Tariff and similar policy mechanisms supported job generation and the development of social enterprises, for example, demonstrating their value beyond delivering renewable energy objectives.⁴ DECC should review the 'added value' of energy policy objectives and instruments on adjacent policy arenas and goals.
3. The relatively sudden reversal of energy policies can have a detrimental effect on current and future policy objectives, causing investor uncertainty.⁵ DECC should evaluate the impacts of moves to reduce and remove policy instruments (e.g. zero carbon homes) on the credibility of the UK as a place to invest in the green economy, with a view to staging processes of policy cessation.
4. The national policy on energy from waste and combined heat and power should be scrutinised. The lack of delivered Combined Heat and Power systems on many 'Energy from Waste' plants means that the carbon dioxide emissions per kilowatt hour may compare poorly with gas turbine power in some cases.
5. A priority area for DECC should be the development of storage and transport systems for renewably produced power, particularly for wind power. Base load issues are caused by the lack of medium-term storage capacity for generated power. A policy review on the need for, and progress with, the technological development of storage systems, and further, ones able to be transported whilst stored, could help remove a bottleneck and constraint to the maturation of renewable energy technologies.
6. Research has shown that whilst smart meters do initially help reduce energy consumption, people do not remain engaged with them over long periods of time.^{6,7} A review of this evidence would be useful, together with the implications of it for considering the end user needs more critically when it comes to smart meter roll out, as part of a continuing programme of energy efficiency measures.
7. The Select Committee could usefully review the matter of 'geographical equity' with regard to current and future energy efficiency policies. In particular, there is the matter of off-gas-grid households, which suffer greater fuel poverty due to the combination of harder to heat homes, the limited range of

³ For examples see: Butler, C., Bickerstaff, K., Parkhill, K., and Walker, G. 'Welfare, Employment and Energy Demand: Examining Tensions and Opportunities in the Delivery of Demand Reduction', <http://www.demand.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/Butler-et-al-summary.pdf>; Demand, Research Theme 4.3, Implicit energy governance: Jan Selby and Elizabeth Shove <http://www.demand.ac.uk/research-themes/theme-4-normality-need-and-entitlement/4-3-implicit-energy-governance/>; Blue, S. Institutional Rhythms: Opportunities for Energy and Mobility Demand: <http://www.demand.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/blue-summary.pdf>. [All Accessed 6 August 2015].

⁴ For example: Parkhill, K.A., Shirani, F., Butler, C., Henwood, K.L., Groves, C., Pidgeon, N.F., 2015. 'We are a community [but] that takes a certain amount of energy': Exploring shared visions and social action, and resilience in place-based community-led initiatives. *Environmental Science and Policy* 53(A), p60-69.

⁵ UK Energy Research Centre. Energy Strategies Under Uncertainty (2012 – 2014) <http://www.ukerc.ac.uk/programmes/flagship-projects/energy-strategies-under-uncertainty.html>. [Accessed 6 August 2015].

⁶ Hargreaves, T., Nye, M., Burgess, J. 2010. 'Making energy visible: A qualitative field study of how householders interact with feedback from smart energy monitors'. *Energy Policy*, 38; pp. 6111-6119.

⁷ Hargreaves, T., Nye, M., Burgess, J. 2013. 'Keeping energy visible? Exploring how householders interact with feedback from smart energy monitors in the longer term'. *Energy Policy*, 52; pp. 126-134.



tariffs available and more expensive fuels.⁸ Consumers in the off-grid market are less protected than their mains gas counterparts, due to the lack of an industry regulator for this group.⁹

- 8. Finally, we recommend that the Select Committee keep under review renewable energy policy and associated research and development. DECC should ensure continued investment in off-shore renewable energy, building on the UK's existing position as a global leader in the development of marine energy, in particular, and capitalising on the significant off-shore resources available more broadly.⁹ DECC's own figures show high potential for marine and tidal energy with even greater potential for off-shore wind.^{10,11} In addition, research has shown that there is significant interest amongst the public in tidal, wave and solar energy. Marine energy is perceived as an unobtrusive and plentiful resource, whilst there is significant support for deployment of offshore wind farms.¹² Investment in this area is likely to be increasingly important in the context of cuts to support for land based renewables, such as on-shore wind, if the UK is to meet its legally binding carbon targets.

Further information

The RGS-IBG is happy for our response to be made available publicly. If you have any questions about the content of this response or about the work of the Society, please contact:

Ceri Margerison
Policy Manager
Royal Geographical Society (with IBG)
T: +44 (0)20 7591 3000
E: policy@rgs.org

August 2015

⁸ Baker, W., & Faulk, A., 2012. Off-grid fuels: An investigation of the off-grid energy market. *Consumer Focus* (p11): <http://www.consumerfocus.org.uk/files/2012/04/Off-grid-fuels.pdf> [Accessed 17 August 2015].
⁹ Renewable UK, Wave and Tidal Energy: <http://www.renewableuk.com/en/renewable-energy/wave-and-tidal/> [Accessed 18 August 2015].
¹⁰ Climate change and energy – guidance. Wave and tidal energy: part of the UK's energy mix: <https://www.gov.uk/wave-and-tidal-energy-part-of-the-uks-energy-mix#wave-and-tidal-stream-potential> [Accessed 18 August 2015].
¹¹ RenewableUK: DECC's Statistics Prove the Case for Wind Power: <http://www.offshorewind.biz/2014/06/26/renewableuk-deccs-statistics-prove-the-case-for-wind-power/> [Accessed 18 August 2015].
¹² Parkhill, K.A., Demski, C., Butler, C., Spence, A. and Pidgeon, N. 2013. Transforming the UK Energy System: Public Values, Attitudes and Acceptability – Synthesis Report (UKERC: London).