

Community Energy Contact Group (CECG) – 19 March 2013, 3 Whitehall Place

Attendees

Peter Lipman (Chair)
Peter Capener
Garry Charnock
Nigel Farren
Stephen Frankel
Nicholas Gubbins
Dan McCallum
Agamemnon Otero

Becky Willis
Simon Sjenitzer
Ravi Gurumurthy (DECC)
Katherine MacNeill (DECC)
Melissa Smith (DECC)
Ian King (DECC)
Will Walker (DECC)
Lara Phillips (DECC)

Note

1) Welcomes and introductions

The CECG members and DECC strategy team briefly introduced themselves.

2) Strategic context of the Community Energy Strategy (CES)

Ravi noted that ownership of the Strategy within DECC has moved from the Communications Directorate to the Strategy directorate, with more people working on it as it's a Ministerial priority. He also noted that the open policymaking approach to date would be continuing.

3) CES process & project plan

Janos noted the timings for the project and Call for Evidence (CfE). The name of the document was briefly debated and it was agreed that the CfE needed to have some substantive content for respondents to engage with, and that the CECG would have input into the questions with sufficient time to comment. The CECG also asked for consultation on the draft strategy, and Ravi agreed that the CES team would consider how best to iterate it between us to ensure that thinking is shared.

CECG members asked about the geographical scope of the Strategy and Katherine explained that whilst DECC was engaging with the Devolved Administrations, the scope could only be finalised once we have concrete proposals. The DECC team is thinking about how best to consult in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland during the CfE.

Action: Will to send stakeholder engagement plans to Peter when they are ready. Stephen noted that as community energy becomes more mainstream, the stakeholders become broader e.g. including suppliers and DNOs.

4) CES vision & purpose

Melissa outlined possible visions for Community Energy (CE), noting that these are not alternatives, but that they help to think about what the Strategy is setting out to achieve and these were discussed in detail. The consensus from the CECG was that the CE representatives thought that

outlining different visions in this way was a rigorous and helpful step, and agreed that a combination approach was needed with elements of several of the visions.

5) CES policy analysis

The CES team have been reviewing all of DECC's policy areas to analyse the current CE activity, the reported outcomes and to identify areas with further potential for CE. Energy savings were discussed as an area where CECG members had seen good results from CE projects. CE representatives requested sustainable funding – the LEAF grant scheme has ended and unlike for generation where FiTs provides a revenue stream (which some projects have used to fund energy efficiency) it is hard to find a way to derive a sustainable income stream from energy saving measures although some potential routes were discussed.

Other areas discussed were heat, energy generation, joint ownership models, electricity demand management, and innovation in different areas. In several policy areas, the CECG thought that DECC had a role in bringing together groups of stakeholders with an interest to discuss possible solutions to issues raised by the existing CE sector. **Action: CES team** to incorporate ideas from this discussion in work on the call for evidence and strategy.

6) AOB

CECG members noted several areas that they would like to discuss with DECC/Ofgem: the threshold for eligibility for community FiTs, access to the market for independent generators and the time taken to obtain a grid connection. **Action: Becky Willis** agreed to write down some of these issues and send to Will Walker to facilitate meetings.

CECG members asked that a date for the next meeting be fixed with sufficient notice to enable the majority of members to attend. **Action: Will Walker**