



Advising on a net-zero economy that is fair for all

Scotland's Just Transition Commission Innovation and Delivery at Scale

11 December, 09:45 – 15:30

Commission attendees

1. Professor Jim Skea (Chair)
2. Lang Banks – representing WWF Scotland
3. Colette Cohen
4. Professor Mike Danson
5. Richard Hardy – representing Prospect Union
6. Charlotte Hartley – representing 2050 Climate Group
7. Norman Kerr
8. Rachel McEwan
9. Tom Shields
10. Professor Karen Turner

Apologies

Dave Moxham

Kate Rowell

For agenda item 1 only:

Simon Roberts, Chief Executive of Centre for Sustainable Energy

For agenda item 3 only:

Mark Bustard, Industrial Biotechnology Innovation Centre

Dr Gareth Davies, Aquatera

Neil Kermode, European Marine Energy Centre

Megan McNeil, Community Energy Scotland

For agenda item 5 only:

Councillor Steven Heddle, Orkney Islands Council / COSLA environment and economy spokesperson

Robert Leslie, THAW / Orkney Housing Association

Adele Lidderdale, OREF

Councillor Steve Sankey, Orkney Islands Council

Items and actions

1. Welcome and presentation from Simon Roberts

- 1.1. Professor Jim Skea welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies from Kate Rowell and Dave Moxham were noted.
- 1.2. Simon Roberts gave a presentation on the Centre for Sustainable Energy's recent project 'Smart and Fair'. This gave an overview of some of the social justice issues attached to innovation in the energy system.¹
- 1.3. Next, the Commission discussed topics and questions they wished to raise in advance of the first information gathering session.

2. Information gathering session one.

- 2.1. The Chair welcomed guests to the session and started the questioning.
- 2.2. The group began by discussing the relationship between innovation and the domestic renewable energy supply chain. It was acknowledged innovation had not always led to the creation of as many jobs as had been hoped, such as in the case of offshore wind. While the pandemic had focused minds on shortening supply chains, it was felt nonetheless that a step-change in approach would be needed if Scotland was to fully maximise future opportunities. Suggestions included ensuring supply chain representatives were included in all Government working groups, and radically overhauling funding mechanisms to ensure it is fit-for-purpose.
- 2.3. Discussion then turned to the question of how the many innovation activities underway in Orkney had been received by the community. Regular dialogue was said to have helped the community appreciate the benefits organisations such as EMEC brought to the islands, and was also central to plans underway in relation to the ReFLEX project. Community groups in particular were highlighted as trusted intermediary's, who often provided a one-stop shop for people to get involved or learn about the various innovative projects underway in Orkney.

¹ The presentation has been included along with the meeting papers

2.4. Returning to the question of how Scotland could better nurture innovation and deliver economic gains, the overarching message was that greater co-ordination and consistency of purpose was needed from the various public sector actors. Innovation in the energy sector could often be a slow process, and consistent support across finance, legislation and policy from the public sector would be needed for Scotland to lead in this area. There was said to be scope for far more prescriptive requirements relating to use of local supply chains in developments. Finally, it was recognised that in previous years the opportunities stated by industry and Government had been overly ambitious. There was said to be a need to reset expectations and drive towards achieving these.

3. Information gathering session two.

3.1. The Chair welcomed guests to the session.

3.2. The session started with discussion of the high rates of fuel poverty in Orkney and why this was the case when the islands generated so much energy. The poor condition of the housing stock was recognised as the primary cause of this, but regulation and funding received from central government was said to also put the islands at a disadvantage relative to other areas. More attention needs to be paid to specific island circumstances. The new requirement for policies from Government to have an Islands Impact Assessment could help matters in future, but it was felt too early to say

3.3. The question of whether Orkney benefited sufficiently economically from the various pilot and demonstrator projects it hosted was then covered. Institutions like EMEC were said to make a significant contribution to the local economy. However, it was felt that again regulation held back the full energy potential of the islands from being realised. The lack of an interconnector with the mainland was discussed in depth. Many efforts had been made to progress this but to date had been blocked by Ofgem, there was still hope that this may change in future.

3.4. While this situation was felt to hold Orkney back, it was noted the circumstances had driven a lot of the innovation projects on the island. The ReFLEX project in particular was a response to the need to waste less energy and build a more flexible responsive grid. While the barrier presented by not having an interconnector to the mainland was frustrating, it was noted that opportunities still existed for the energy resources of the islands to be made to work for local communities. Orkney Islands Council were also said to be actively considering

different ways of using community energy projects in a closed-grid to deliver cheaper energy to public sector property.

4. Review of information gathering sessions and wrap up

- 4.1. The Commission discussed the evidence sessions and the presentation they had heard earlier in the day. It was agreed that the sessions had been helpful in understanding some of the issues attached to innovation underway in Orkney and across Scotland.
- 4.2. An overview was provided of the recent publication 'Reimagining a net zero north sea', published by OGTC in collaboration with Offshore Renewable Energy Catapult. The report highlighted the opportunity for the UK to be a global leader in clean energy.
- 4.3. There was then a discussion regarding Professor Skea's recent meeting with Fiona Hyslop, Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Fair Work and Culture regarding the situation at Bifab. It was agreed a letter would be drafted from Professor Skea following up from the meeting, re-emphasising the need for the joint working group with UK Government to engage widely.
- 4.4. Finally, there was discussion regarding an upcoming meeting to cover activities in the new year leading up to publication of the Commission's final report. The secretariat committed to sending out a draft timeline and evidence summary in advance of this.

Action Point 1: Commission to draft a letter to Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Fair Work and Culture

Action Point 2: Secretariat to share high level outline of the evidence provided over the past two years