



York Community Energy | 15 Priory Street York YO1 6ET | info@yorkcommunityenergy.org.uk

31st July 2018

Dear Rachel Maskell MP and Julian Sturdy MP,

In early July, York Community Energy joined forces with St Nicks to put on an Energy Cafe event to mark the Climate Coalition's Speak Up Week and Community Energy Fortnight. The event was well-attended by residents from across York who discussed energy and climate change. They generated many ideas on how these two big issues could be tackled together, and we list key points below.

As local organisations working towards a One Planet York, i.e. a sustainable city, we realise the limits of what we can fully achieve locally without changes on the national level, and we look to you to support these efforts at national governmental level.

Summary

We wish to draw particular attention to the following three key policy recommendations which were strongly supported and which would make a positive change to UK energy policy:

- Every new law should be assessed for its effect on the UK's obligations under the Climate Change Act and Paris Agreement.
- The Zero Carbon Homes Code should be reinstated for new buildings, and ambitious targets should be set, and support provided, to improve the energy efficiency of existing homes.
- Barriers to onshore wind energy should be removed from the planning system and support should be provided to community energy through tax incentives, increased feed in tariffs, or other forms of funding.

We hope you find this useful feedback from your constituents and look forward to hearing your thoughts and plans on the policy wishes we report here.

Yours sincerely,

Richard Lane, Ivana Jakubkova, Kit Bennett & Andy Wilson
on behalf of York Community Energy

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Energy Cafe Policy Proposals

Policy Making

There were two suggestions for the overall principles that should be applied in policy making: that the UK should have a new, clear, up to date and future looking energy policy to address both the short and the long term, and that every new law should be assessed for its effect on the UK's obligations under the Climate Change Act.

Incentives and Green Taxes

There were two suggestions for support to be provided to an increase in energy storage capacity, either through financial incentives for the provision of such capacity, or through the provision of an interest-free loan, or possibly a lease scheme.

There were also two suggestions for the taxation system to be used to promote environmentally friendly behaviour. One suggestion was for individual environmental footprints to be factored in to the rate of council tax they pay. The other suggestion was for unsustainable houses, energy sources and building materials to be taxed more heavily and for the revenues from this tax to be used to support sustainable projects.

Building Standards

It was suggested that regulations be introduced requiring every new building to have either solar panels or a green roof. Other suggestions included having solar panels on every building, and aiming to install solar panels more widely on existing housing and street furniture.

There was widespread support for improved energy efficiency in homes. According to participants in the event, building standards for homes should be enhanced to either the Zero Carbon Homes Standard, or the Passivhaus Standard and legislation should guarantee the insulation standards of buildings.

Participants also suggested that existing properties should be retrofitted to improve their insulation standards. One suggestion was aimed specifically at improving the insulation of rental and council properties by using sustainable materials.

It was suggested that building regulations be improved, with more rigorous testing of buildings. Another suggestion was to bring building control inspection back into the public sector. This was suggested due to concerns that private sector building inspectors may be acting in the interests of their customers, the developers, rather than rigorously enforce building standards for the benefit of future occupants and the environment. The structure of the current system creates a perverse incentive in the sector.

One suggestion was for consideration to be given in building design to the orientation of the building so that solar gain can be used in an optimal manner.

It was suggested that water meters and smart energy meters be more widely adopted.

Support for Alternative Building Materials

There was widespread support for the wider use of alternative building materials, including straw, hemp and lime render in construction, as these are more environmentally friendly than traditional materials, such as concrete.

One participant pointed to the Lowfield Green site as a potential exemplar for low carbon construction, if this can be made a requirement in masterplanning & procurement.

Energy Generation

It was suggested, with wide support, that the current barriers to onshore wind in the planning system be removed.

It was also suggested that community funds from existing renewable energy developments (including offshore wind) could be used to provide grants and interest-free loans to householders & community facilities for renewable energy development (eg solar PV). This would allow currently unused funds to be spent supporting further renewable energy development, with community involvement.

It was also proposed that York be kept free from fracking, as part of the process of decarbonising energy supplies.

Transport

One suggestion was for the Transpennine railway line to be completely electrified. Another suggestion for electrified transport was that in future, all buses should be electric, charged from renewable energy generated onsite at public transport infrastructure where possible.

Waste

It was suggested that kerbside recycling should be extended to businesses.

Education

There were two suggestions for improved provision of information on energy performance to homeowners. One was for user manuals to be provided to the owners of new build homes to give advice on effective conservation of energy in a new, efficient home. The other was for there to be guarantees on the accuracy of Energy Performance Certificates, with accountability if a certificate is found to be inaccurate.

Another suggestion was for York College to open a local franchise of the School of Natural Building.