

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

SELECT COMMITTEE - RENEWABLE ENERGY

MINUTES of a meeting of the Select Committee - Renewable Energy held in the Bewl Room, Sessions House, County Hall Maidstone on Tuesday, 24 January 2012.

PRESENT: Mr K A Ferrin, MBE (Chairman), Mr C Hibberd, Mr D A Hirst, Mr R E King, Mr T Prater, Mr C P Smith, Mrs P A V Stockell and Mrs E M Tweed

IN ATTENDANCE: Ms C McKenzie (Sustainability and Climate Change Manager), Mr N Hilkenne (Economic & Spatial Development), Mr A Morgan (Energy Management) and Mrs C A Singh (Democratic Services Officer)

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

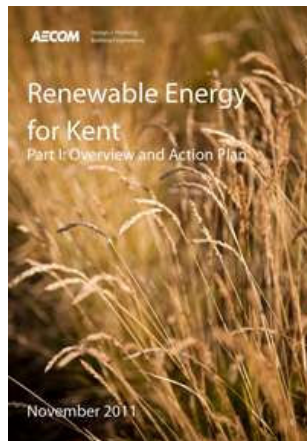
1. Renewable Energy Select Committee 'one year on' monitoring report *(Item 1)*

1. Ms McKenzie gave a presentation, using overheads; a copy is appended to these Minutes. She highlighted the key progress since the Select Committee last met. Points raised included:

- Looking at the Public Sector's Estate
- Renewable Energy Study

2. Ms McKenzie advised that in May 2011 Kent County Council commissioned AECOM to test and confirm the availability of renewable resources in the county and consider the likelihood of these resources being developed. An Action Plan was drawn up and currently out for consultation, which would conclude in the Spring 2012. The results of the consultation would be use to build a Kent strategy. Please see below the extract from www.kent.gov.uk

3. The study has now been completed and AECOM's findings and recommended actions are available below. The findings of the study, maps and recommendations do not represent the views of the County Council on deployment of renewable energy at this stage. In this respect KCC will continue to work with partners and stakeholders to refine the recommendations and develop an achievable strategy and action plan for Kent.



4. The study has two parts, one providing an overview and action plan for Kent and the other providing the detailed evidence on which the recommended actions are based. Read the full reports: [Renewable Energy for Kent. Part 1: Overview and Action Plan \(PDF, 1.4mb\)](#) and [Renewable Energy for Kent. Part 2: Underpinning the Vision \(PDF, 5.2mb\)](#) (*This link was sent to Members outside the meeting*)
5. Ms McKenzie advised that £1.8million had been invested in KCC's estate which would accrue £4.8 million in savings +/-5% reduction CO².
6. **Key Projects – Some Highlights, further information available.**
 - There were currently 28 renewable energy projects.
 - LED lighting being placed in Sessions House and Invicta House with a saving in Invicta House of £33k per year alone.
 - Two key KCC properties were Invicta House and Ashford Highways Department £250k on £3 million return with old feed in tariffs. Officers had looked at the possible 50% cuts but the business case was still there, but this would depend on whether the cuts would be made in December or 3 March as KCC would not in a position to go ahead on 3 March.
7. **Biomass** - Permission had been given to build a business case for a Kent Downs AOB Project.
8. **Recommendation in Report** - Energy Display Screens – These would be erected in Sessions House in the next 2 weeks at a cost of £12k.
9. **Working with District Councils** – A Climate Change Network had been established. This work would be extended out to other Public Services such as the Police Service, Health Authority and Fire Service. The project had won an award.
 - Work had been undertaken with the Kent Public Sector supply chain businesses identifying savings of £4m savings.
10. **The Wind Energy Sector** - There was a lot of activity in the wind energy sector including the following:

- The London Array - The foundations for Phase 1 were nearly all in place and the first turbines would be installed at the end of January.
 - An extension of 17 turbines was proposed for the Kentish Flats wind farm.
 - The proposed Vestas wind turbine manufacturing and assembly plant at the Port of Sheerness could create 2000 jobs on the Isle of Sheppey. The planning application had been submitted for the development. Swale recently led a visit to Vesta in Denmark, which KCC attended. Vesta remained positive about the project even though the company was undergoing a restructure. The new turbine to be built at Sheerness was a key part of the Company's future and its scale required plant to be integrated with a suitable port close to markets.
 - Mr Hilkenne advised that the government had identified Sheerness as one of the five lead centres for Offshore Renewable Engineering in the UK. The other centres were the Humber, Teesside, Tyneside and Great Yarmouth/Lowestoft.
11. **Skills** - DONG Energy had placed 9 apprenticeships at the Swale Skills Centre. Thanet College had secured funding for a new £6.5 million renewables training facility due to open in 2013. Swale Skills Centre had 10 apprenticeships. Thanet College had funding for the new facility.
12. **Biomass Wood Heat** - Work had been carried out with 40 sites, one supplier had won a contract of £40 million. There were 2 County Council trade exporting companies abroad. Low carbon companies business valued the opportunity of visiting trade fairs abroad.
13. **Retrofit Domestic Properties** - There had been a recent project on this which contained extremely high figures. The Gross Value Added (GVA) value in the report with a caveat of £600million added to the GVA but had to reach that potential. It was a fast and slow business. 600 homes had been targeted, both flue poor and high carbon users. Over 200 measurers had been put in homes with a £200 annual saving.
- Members were advised that a Kent Home Improvement Partnership was being developed so that negotiations could happen in priority areas.
14. **"Plan Local" event** - This entailed working with local communities but was limited due to the resources available.
15. **Five Challenges**
16. (1) **Finance** - Is a key issue as one size does not fit all.
- A Member asked what the scale of the issue was and how much demand was there for retrofit? Ms McKenzie advised that it would cost millions of pounds to retrofit KCC's estate. There would have to be permission on a case by case basis. She gave the example that to fit retrofit boilers in the KCC estate would equate to £20 million.

- A Member asked how engaged KCC's Finance Department was with these issues and whether there was an option to invest money KCC would be recouping from Iceland in improving the estate and receiving a better payback. Ms McKenzie stated that the Finance Department was involved but it relied on a strong business case. Solar Energy had a 25 year payback for £13k payback on £250k, 13% payback with £3 million return. Finance would be able to use KCC money if there was a good business case.
 - A Member suggested that the Leader of KCC, Mr Paul Carter, should be consulted on this as he engaged with Kent businesses.
 - A Member referred to a slide from the presentation with houses covered in snow and suggested that there were pressures on the building trade with the building by-laws to keep the new buildings "light" and therefore those roofs could not take any prolonged weight from heavy snow fall that would settle and last due to the houses being so well insulated.
17. (2) **Resources** - It was still unclear what KCC would be able to provide for schools especially academies. If KCC charge the schools they may not want the retrofit. KCC wanted to work on those schools with the biggest energy bills or the school that come to us that need hand holding through the process.
18. (3) **Carbon Emissions** - Ms McKenzie suggested that tackling this issue could be tricky as it would require Kent residents taking up loans for retrofit. There would be no public money but there may be grants available.
- a) A Member suggested that there would be very little public interest. The public were interested in their bills so there needed to be effort in reaching their hearts and minds. Ms McKenzie felt that there needed to be a clear landscape of communication on where the public could go for help/assistance.
 - b) In response to whether resources ran to producing a leaflet, Ms McKenzie advised that her Team had tried to do this. In the future this would be put in the hands of the providers. KCC could look to procure providers.
 - c) In reply to a question, Ms McKenzie advised that information had been produced by KCC through the Centre Energy Saving Trust. Work was also being carried out with District Councils rather than working with the national campaign. It was not the County Councils responsibility it was a District Partnership issue. All public services needed to be involved which was work in hand.
 - d) In response to a question, Ms McKenzie suggested that the District Councils could look at creating and providing an approved Installers Network.
 - e) In reply to a question on electric cars, Mr Morgan advised that electricity was a dirty carbon. The infrastructure for electric cars would increase but it

was still early days. Before Kent puts in the infrastructure it would need to put in the investment. The Team would keep a watching brief. A Member added that the battery of electric cars was huge and extremely heavy although they had been trying to improve this over the past 50 years.

19. (4) **Planning** – There had been inconsistencies in how renewables were incorporated in new buildings. There needed to be a level playing field for builders as keeping up with new technology was proving difficult for them.

a) In response to a question, Ms McKenzie explained that how much renewable energy put into a new build depended on the code that the building was built to. Mr Hilkene explained that the government was making its expectation on the building codes. This was also coming through the building regulations too with an emphasis for every area to do “their own thing”. KCC can play a role in bringing people together.

b) A Member commented on the building regulations advising that most builders were using timber frames with foam insulation, which was highly inflammable. This was a great cause for concern for the Fire Service. He felt that builders should return to using spun glass, which was less flammable; although would not achieve the same insulation as foam, which was imported from Germany. Ms McKenzie was aware of the concerns of the Fire Service on retrofit and the insulation used in new builds.

c) A Member asked whether there was sufficient information being supplied to the District Councils on how cheap it was to incorporate new energy in new builds. It was suggested that they would start with the correct pitch of the new houses roofs enabling Photo Voltaic to be installed and harvesting rainwater etc. He considered that there were large housing estates such as in Ashford where it would be cheap to install. A Member advised that Maidstone Borough Council was already doing this, although the developers often moaned about the increased costs.

20. (5) **Proposed Action Plan** – The action plan would include:

- Development , Division and Direction
- Identify Projects
- Economic Hub around renewables
- Expertise Networks
- Wide base/Community base Scheme
- Coordinating Funding – to maximise resources

21. Members suggested a future meeting be organised to allow Members and stakeholders to comment on the Study.

22. **Next Steps** - Members were advised that the consultation would end on 10 February; Ms McKenzie sought Members views on how to take this forward. Points raised included the following:

a) It was suggested that Mr Matthew Burrows, Director, Communications should be involved;

- b) The increase in fuel costs needed to be factored in. Mr Morgan advised that this had been done for up to five years anything beyond that is very difficult;
 - c) It was suggested that a business case could be made on one off projects and used to show the benefits to businesses. Ms McKenzie advised that there were already many case studies and they could be put on KCC website.
23. On the conclusion of Ms McKenzie's presentation the Chairman sought further comments from Members, which included the following:
- a) The Chairman said that there was a lot happen in the renewable energy area. He was made aware that Marks and Spencer plc had a contract for hydrogen powered vehicles.
 - b) A Member referred to recommendation 4 on the action plan advising that the gas price was likely to drop. Shell gas in the USA price had reduced significantly.
 - c) It was suggested that the District Councils should be encouraged through the Locality Boards. An example was given of Ashford District Council proposal to sell Brentford Quarries and build houses it could be suggested that KCC support the developers install solar heating if the developers would not be keen.
 - d) In response to a question on the Joint Chief Executive paper, Ms McKenzie advised that the meeting was to take place on 26 January and then would be discussed at the Kent forum on 8 February. There would also be a Medway paper focused on the Environment Strategy which looked at the economy prospective. Following on, there would be a look at the Natural Environment. Ms McKenzie advised that not all District Councils saw environment issues as a priority but 10% of their wider role.
 - e) Concern was expressed on the newer housing estates dependency on gas and considered that if there were circumstances where gas was unobtainable those houses would have no heating. He considered that this would, potentially, cause an enormous crisis.
 - f) It was suggested that the most favourable areas within the corporate estate should be look at first. Also identified was the Ashford estate and Invicta House.
 - g) It was advised that residential houses still had to have an energy rating, which was part on the sale details. It was the role of the Energy surveyors to produce this.
24. **Report/Action Sheet** - The Chairman invited Members comments. The points raised included the following:

- a) It was suggested that there needed to be more publicity on what KCC was doing within renewable energy.
- b) The Chairman was keen to keep this topic moving and proposed that a Conference/Seminar be set up, if funding was available, to show the work KCC was undertaking on Renewable Energy, the investment needed and the saving that can be made. Ms McKenzie said that the skills needed in the sector could be highlight. The invitation would be to all Members of the County Council.
- c) It was suggested that the Kent County Show could be a way to showcase the work on renewable energy to the public.
- d) It was considered that local authorities did not use their investment enough and suggested that if KCC was determined with retrofit, it could be a good investment and produce good financial returns.

25. RESOLVED that:

- a) the comments and suggestions made by Members be noted;
- b) Ms McKenzie agreed to put a proposal to the Chief Executive of the Kent Forum that a conference to organised to demonstrate the potential savings around this topic;
- c) Ms McKenzie use the support of the Select Committee Members as “Champions for Renewable Energy” be noted; and
- d) the information given in the report and to Members be noted, with thanks.