

Cross-Party on Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency

13 June 2023, 7.00pm

Minute

Present

MSPs

Sarah Boyack MSP

Brian Whittle MSP

Jackie Dunbar MSP

Invited guests

Emily Rice, Senior Scotland Policy Analyst, Solar Energy Scotland

Non-MSP Group Members

Colin Campbell

Colin Greenshields

Colin Pritchard

Pete Roche

Karen Freel

Antoine Regius

Agnes Holmes

John Birchmore

Apologies

Audrey Nicoll MSP

Mark Ruskell MSP

Agenda item 1 – Introduction from the Chair

Brian Whittle MSP welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Agenda item 2 - Approval of minutes from the last meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting, held on 18 April 2023, had been sent round group members in advance and the secretariat received no requests for additions or corrections.

The group agreed that these provided an accurate account of the meeting (proposed by Colin Pritchard, seconded by Sarah Boyack MSP).

Agenda item 3 – Approval of the annual return

The annual return was circulated to the membership on 7 June in advance of the meeting. No suggestions or corrections to the annual return were suggested. The group approved the annual return (proposed by Sarah Boyack MSP, seconded by Colin Pritchard).

Agenda item 4 – Election of Office Bearers

The nominations for the positions of Convener (x2) were circulated to the membership on 7 June in advance of the meeting. No one else was nominated.

The nominations for the 2 secretary posts were also circulated in advance of the meeting. No one else was nominated.

- Sarah Boyack MSP was moved for convener by Jackie Dunbar MSP and seconded by Colin Pritchard.
- Brian Whittle MSP was moved for convener by Jackie Dunbar MSP and seconded by Colin Pritchard.
- Jack Norquoy of Scottish Renewables and Elaine Waterson of Energy Saving Trust were moved for the secretariat positions by Sarah Boyack MSP and seconded by Jackie Dunbar MSP.

The group's office bearers are therefore:

Conveners:

- Sarah Boyack MSP
- Brian Whittle MSP

Secretaries:

- Jack Norquoy, Scottish Renewables - Secretary (Renewable Energy) and Treasurer
- Elaine Waterson, Energy Saving Trust – Secretary (Energy Efficiency)

Agenda item 5 – Topics for Future Meetings

The topics that the group will look at over the coming year have not yet been decided. Brian Whittle MSP asked all in attendance to either e-mail the secretariat with their thoughts on topics or to add these to the meeting chat.

Agenda item 6 – Presentation from Emily Rice, Solar Energy Scotland

Emily Rice began by providing figures for the amount of solar deployment in Scotland, including that there are 137,416 solar PV installations (2009-2023) and 4,695 solar thermal installations on domestic roofs in Scotland, and that as of April 2023 there was 4,659 MW of utility scale solar projects with planning applications submitted in Scotland. Emily emphasised that rooftop installations in Scotland had grown considerably in popularity since the start of the energy price crisis.

Emily compared the policy landscape of 2021 with that of 2023 noting that there has been an incredible amount of movement in the period between 2021 and 2023 highlighting in particular that Scotland now has its first ever solar vision. Emily went on to say that Solar Energy Scotland have asked the Scottish government to set a target for solar deployment in Scotland – and that this target of a minimum of 4GW with an ambition to reach 6GW of solar energy deployed by 2030 would put Scotland in line with deployment trajectories of other European economies.

Emily outlined a range of other policy proposals from Solar Energy Scotland and also outlined some of the work that Solar Energy Scotland is currently engaged with, including the Solar Energy Scotland Grid Forum and work on biodiversity and ecological monitoring. Emily went on to discuss solar and the decarbonisation of heat, highlighting that:

- In a typical heat pump-heated Scottish home, the installation of a solar system would mean heating bills would be reduced by £961 per year, saving 34.1 tonnes of carbon across the system's lifetime.
- For a typical gas-heated Scottish home, installing a solar heat system could reduce energy bills by £313 annually, saving an estimated 75.42 tonnes of carbon over the systems lifespan.

Emily then spoke about the work of the UK Solar Taskforce whose role is to drive forward the increases in solar needed to meet the expectation of 70GW by 2035 as recommended by Chris Skidmore's Review of Net Zero Policies.

Agenda item 7 – Q & A and discussion

A range of questions and comments were directed at Emily Rice and included:

- Brian Whittle MSP asked for more information about how solar can be used with other technologies.
- Pete Roche asked about how much work is being done by local authorities and whether any work is being done to think about legal templates for people with shared roofs (tenements).
- Sarah Boyack MSP noted that Edinburgh Solar Co-op puts solar pv on the council's school roofs, said that it would be a very positive development if a shared legal approach could be developed, noted that the lack of deployment of solar on tenement roofs was a huge missed opportunity and emphasised that taking this forward would require cross party thinking and experience from industry about what works.
- Sarah Boyack MSP asked if the presentation could be shared with those present.
- Colin Campbell asked if there were any equipment manufactures in Scotland and whether they had the capacity to fulfil the proposed target.
- John Birchmore said that he was involved with a charity in West Linton which was looking at developing a solar farm to support the village he lives in, noted that proposed changes to the UK Energy Bill would make community solar power more difficult and asked if Solar Energy Scotland was doing anything about this.
- Alan Beale asked about ways to increase levels of solar deployment.
- Brian Whittle read out some questions from the meeting chat including questions about the ethics of the manufacturing supply chain and the raw materials required and about how solar power has innovated over the years.
- Colin Greenshields asked for more information about the impact on biodiversity and about the baseline that had been used for Solar Energy Scotland's work on this.

Agenda item 8 – AOB

No other business was raised. Brian Whittle MSP thanked Emily Rice g, noted that it would be useful for him and Sarah Boyack MSP to catch up after the meeting about solar in Scotland. The meeting was then brought to a close.