

Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee

16th Meeting, 2023 (Session 6)

Tuesday 9 May 2023

Scotland's electricity infrastructure: inhibitor or enabler of our energy ambitions?

Note by the clerk

1. In February, the Committee decided to conduct an inquiry into "Scotland's electricity infrastructure: inhibitor or enabler of our energy ambitions?"
[Read more about the inquiry on the Scottish Parliament website.](#)
2. This inquiry will scrutinise what electricity infrastructure will be needed to realise the ambitions set out in the Scottish Government's recently released [Draft Energy Strategy and Just Transition Plan](#), and what will be needed to deliver that infrastructure.
3. This is a short "snapshot" inquiry leading to a report with recommendations for the Scottish Government as it finalises its new Strategy. It will also help inform the Committee's future scrutiny of specific aspects of energy and climate policy and practice. Issues the Committee is likely to consider during the inquiry include—
 - the suitability of the different electricity technologies that the Scottish Government wants to play a role in future energy supply (onshore/offshore wind, marine, solar, hydro);
 - the relationship between technologies (e.g. intermittent renewables, pumped hydro, battery technologies, hydrogen etc.);
 - these technologies' compatibility with the current and planned electricity network;
 - the regulatory regime within which they operate; and
 - whether the current planning system is geared to support and enable development of the infrastructure we will need within the right timeframes to reach net zero.
4. The inquiry is about electricity infrastructure in a broad sense, incorporating supply, transmission, distribution and storage. Substantial investment and changes in all these asset types will be needed for Scotland to meet its ambition to achieve [net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2045](#).

5. Planning for future electricity infrastructure in Scotland requires simultaneous consideration of the forms of supply, the relationships between supply and storage assets, and the readiness of the electricity transmission and distribution networks for change. While the Scottish Government has significant control over the supply sources sited in Scotland, largely through devolved planning powers, the governance of electricity networks is a reserved matter.
6. The [inquiry homepage](#) sets out 13 key questions the Committee posed in its targeted call for views to stakeholders.
7. In response, the Committee has received the following submissions of written evidence—
 - [Arup](#)
 - [David Garvie](#)
 - [EDF Renewables](#)
 - [Energy Saving Trust](#)
 - [North Ayrshire Council](#)
 - [Nuclear Industry Association](#)
 - [Ofgem](#)
 - [Professor R A Williams, FREng FTSE, FRSE, Heriot-Watt University](#)
 - [RWE](#)
 - [Scottish Renewables](#)
 - [ScottishPower Renewables](#)
 - [Scottish Trades Union Congress \(STUC\)](#)
 - [Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks \(SSEN\) Transmission and SSEN Distribution](#)
 - [SGN](#)
 - [SSE Renewables](#)
 - [Statkraft](#)
 - [West of Orkney wind farm](#)
8. On 21 March, the Committee held its first evidence session, hearing from a panel of industry stakeholders and experts. [Read the Official Report - 21 March 2023](#)
9. On 28 March, the Committee held an evidence session with officials from [Ofgem](#), the energy industry’s statutory regulator. [Read the Official Report - 28 March 2023](#)
10. On 18 April, the Committee held an online engagement event with small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) working on innovation in renewable energy systems.
11. On 24 April, the Committee undertook a fact-finding visit to ScottishPower Energy Networks’ control room and Whitelee onshore wind farm.
12. On 27 April, the Committee held an evidence session with Andrew Bowie MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Minister for Nuclear and Networks) for the UK Government. The session provided an opportunity to explore the intersection of devolved and reserved responsibilities in relation to Scotland’s future electricity infrastructure. [Read the Official Report - 27 April 2023](#)
13. On 9 May the Committee will take closing evidence from the Scottish Government. As part of this session, the Committee will discuss the Scottish Government’s vision for future electricity infrastructure as set out in its Draft Energy Strategy. The Committee will also pursue a range of themes arising from

its inquiry work. The Committee will hear from Neil Gray, Cabinet Secretary for Wellbeing Economy, Fair Work and Energy, and supporting officials as listed in the agenda.

14. Following the conclusion of evidence taking, the Committee expects to report in early summer. The Scottish Government must then reply to the report.