

Local Energy Matters

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East of England energy news

GB arm of IRENES project kicks off

The GB launch event for the Integrating RENEwable energy and Ecosystem Services (IRENES) project was held on 10 January at Anglia Ruskin University in Cambridge. The project, which is funded by €1.5mn (£1.3mn) from the European Regional Development Fund, will study how energy policy can incorporate an ecosystem services approach to deliver additional benefits to both people and to the environment. Over the course of the four year project, teams of academics from 10 universities in five countries – the UK, project lead Italy, Germany, Romania and Estonia – will address a range of existing policy instruments, seeking to understand and share best practice on the wider environmental management of the low-carbon economy. In GB, the key policy instrument is the Clean Growth Strategy and Anglia Ruskin University will be working alongside the University of East Anglia. The focus will be particularly on the decarbonisation of heat.

In addition to the academic institutions, a stakeholder group for the project has been assembled including participants from the wider energy industry, in particular distribution network operators, local government, businesses and major energy users such as the water sector and the NHS, the Local Enterprise Partnerships, and non-governmental organisations.

The IRENES project covers a number of initiatives and local projects across GB. In the East of England, there is a focus on decarbonisation of heat and community energy, as illustrated in the example of the Swaffham Prior Community Heat Project.

Case study: Swaffham Prior Community Heat Project

Sheryl French, Programme Director at Cambridgeshire County Council, introduced the Swaffham Prior Community Heat Project. The project is aimed at households in Swaffham Prior that are reliant on oil heating and those that may have already been considering upgrading their heating system but cannot afford to invest in installing a heat pump. The project will supply low-carbon energy to households at the same or lower cost than oil. Households will be connected to a heat network supplied by centralised heat pumps in an energy centre. Plans have been put in place to put the pipelines under roads and the location for the energy centre has identified as an existing building in the village. So far, the project has 133 households involved and households can expect to be connected to the network by March 2021.

The project will analyse the selected policy instruments and real-world impacts. By comparing between countries, a guide to best practice will be produced. The Growth Strategy considers socio-techno-economic influences to identify barriers to the decarbonisation of all sectors in the UK economy. Since the UK launch, the project has also launched in Germany and Romania.

First regional energy transformation plan for East of England

On 20 January, the *Energising the East* report was launched in Norwich. Commissioned by Dr Catherine Rowett, Green Party MEP, the report focuses on a low-carbon transition for the East of England. The report indicates that, in order to keep global warming under 1.5°C, the entire region cannot emit more than 200.5mn tonnes of carbon emissions before 2100, and current emissions are around 33mn tonnes a year. Remaining within the budget requires cumulative emissions cuts of 13.5%/year to 2030, when the region will become carbon neutral. The report sets out a plan to remain within the budget which includes a requirement to provide deep retrofits for 2.6mn homes, install heat pumps in 1.5mn further homes, and mount solar arrays on 1.5mn homes. In addition, 200,000 industrial and commercial buildings would be fitted with solar arrays averaging 40kW.

Cadent to build first solar farm in North Norfolk

A new solar farm comprising of 388 panels will be built at an existing Cadent site in Brisley on 10 January. Cadent's first solar farm will power its north Norfolk network of above ground gas installations and help deliver savings on both carbon emissions and business costs. The panels, located on a site screened by trees, can generate on cloudy days as they don't need direct sunlight to work. The new site has a peak generation capacity of 130kW and is estimated to generate 120MW hours a year, which is enough to power the site and nine other above ground Cadent installations in the region. Surplus electricity will be fed into the local electricity distribution network to power local buildings. Each panel has an operational lifetime of 25 years and special power optimisers have been installed to keep the array generating as efficiently as possible.

UKPN awarded Carbon Trust Standard for Carbon

On 17 January, UK Power Networks (UKPN) issued a press release confirming its actions in reducing emissions and engaging with staff and customers about lowering their emissions has achieved the Carbon Trust Standard for carbon – the first electricity network operator to do so. The Carbon Trust's Standard for Carbon is the world's leading independent certification of an organisation's achievements in managing and reducing its greenhouse gas emissions. UKPN received this certification having reduced carbon emissions by 6.6% since 2016/17. The certification is also aligned with the organisation's own ambitions to reduce its carbon emissions with the Green Action Plan – designed to minimise impacts to the environment and help communities reach Net Zero in line with the UK government's targets by 2050. John Newton, Associate Director at the Carbon Trust, said: "We are delighted to certify the real reductions that UK Power Networks has achieved over the past two years and look forward to continuing work with the company to benchmark its progress as it implements its Green Action Plan."

UKPN publishes updated innovation strategy

UKPN unveiled its updated innovation strategy on 30 January, targeting three innovation pillars: Efficient and Effective, Net Zero Ready and Future Ready. Efficient and Effective will address existing challenges such as maintaining security of quality and supply, delivering customer services at the lowest cost and increasing visibility and coordination of data. Net Zero Ready aims to enable carbon emission reductions by facilitating the connection of low carbon technologies quickly and at low cost. Future Ready addresses provision of services for distributed energy resources, optimisation of transmission and distribution, and greater collaboration. The updated strategy will increase the visibility of UKPN's focus and processes and will be implemented alongside trialling and roll-out of new smart solutions to enable greater flexibility and resilience.

Other local energy headlines from across GB

New Welsh homes to be powered by clean energy by 2025

The Welsh Government has issued plans to power Welsh homes with 100% clean energy. At present, 9% of all greenhouse gas emissions in Wales are attributed to its housing stock. Houses built after 2025 will be more energy efficient – producing 80% less carbon emissions – and be cheaper to run under the recent proposals. Beyond widespread targets set for the region, the Welsh Government also stipulates the benefits that local residents could receive as a result of the plans including improved energy efficiency by 2020, improved air quality and bill savings of as much as £180 per year. Within this proposal, construction of the largest carbon neutral development will be built outside of Tonyrefail, Rhondda Cynon Taff – with none of the new 225 new homes being connected to mains gas. Instead, water warmed by the earth 150m underground and pumped into the house provides heating, as well as solar panels, while batteries store energy which can also be sold back to the National Grid.

£6.1mn awarded to York bus companies to support Clean Air Zone scheme

Announced on Friday 17 January, the City of York Council has awarded more than £1.6mn in Clear Air Zone funding to five bus companies to retrofit or replace a total of 93 buses to meet the Euro VI emission standard. The bus operators are to use the funding to meet the cost of retrofitting respective vehicles to meet the emission standard, which sets maximum limits on which vehicles are allowed to emit for particular harmful gas. £1.654mn has been distributed among Arriva Yorkshire (£252,000) to retrofit 14 buses, First York (£1.188mn) to retrofit 66 buses, Harrogate Coach Travel (£70,000) to retrofit 5 buses, and Transdev (£18,000) to retrofit one bus. Reliance Motor Services was awarded the remaining £72,000 to retrofit 5 buses and £54,000 towards the cost of three new Euro VI buses. The updates will ensure every bus operating frequent services on or within York's inner ring road will meet the Euro VI emission standard when the Clean Air Zone launches on 31 January.

Islington supported by Honda and Moixa to electrify fleet

Moixa and Honda announced on Thursday 16 January that it is to launch its first stage of electric vehicle (EV) charging partnership to support Islington Council in meeting its climate goals. The partnership between Honda and Moixa (developer of smart battery and EV charging software) anticipates to support the council's goal of electrifying its fleet of more than 500 vehicles, reducing 1,400 tonnes of CO₂ emissions per year in the process. With concerns over air pollution, as London surpassed its annual legal limit of air-pollution within one month last year, the partnership aims to reduce harmful air pollution, save money for essential services, and help Islington to meet its 2030 net-zero carbon emissions target. The project will see five bi-directional vehicle to grid chargers manufactured by companies EVTEC and Honda, and installed by Moixa, to allow for EV batteries to be charged when power is at its cheapest and cleanest.

Newcastle Council opens District Energy Centre

On 15 January, Newcastle City Council announced the opening of The District Energy Centre, a £20mn facility on the Newcastle Helix site. The Combined Heat and Power (CHP) unit is connected to a 5km pipeline that will supply up to 450 homes and 10 buildings with heat. The centre is a joint venture between Newcastle City Council and ENGIE – a partnership that will see further energy innovation projects. The project was funded through the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the Government’s Local Growth Deal through the North East LEP. Leader of Newcastle City Council, Cllr Nick Forbes, said “the opening of the District Energy Centre is a significant boost to our climate change credentials and will provide affordable and sustainable heating to residents and cutting-edge businesses which are bringing high quality jobs to the city.” Nicola Lovett, Chief Executive of ENGIE UK and Ireland, added, “we are delighted to be marking the completion of the new Helix Energy Centre, the first of what we hope will be many innovative low carbon energy projects delivered by our long-term partnership with Newcastle City Council.”

Co-op Energy launches community energy tariff

Co-op Energy have announced a new Community Power Tariff that sources electricity from 90 local renewable energy generation projects across the UK. The tariff has been set up as part of a joint venture between the Midcountries Co-operative and Octopus Energy and was launched at the start of 2020. The tariff will cost £88 a month for a typical household, and profits will be reinvested back into community energy projects. Greg Jackson, CEO of Octopus Energy said: “Being able to buy locally-sourced clean, green energy is a massive jump in the right direction for this country’s ailing power grid and carbon emissions. Investing in more local energy infrastructure and getting Britain’s homes run by the sun when it’s shining and the wind when it’s blowing can end our reliance on dirty fossil fuels sooner than we hoped.”



Energy:2030

Energy:2030 provide's you with up-to-date news and insight into domestic and international market developments in the renewable heat, transport and electricity sectors. Energy:2030 will help you keep track of the steps our global energy industry is taking as it transitions into the future.

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