

Green MEP slams government over failure on 'cheap' renewables



23 March 2017

Molly Scott Cato, Green MEP for the South West, has accused the government of failing consumers and the environment over energy policy. The accusation follows new projections from the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) which estimate that onshore wind and solar will be as cheap or cheaper than gas by 2020 [1]. BEIS now acknowledge an increased role for renewables, particularly due to potential improvements in battery storage. Molly Scott Cato said:

“Having hammered the renewables sector for ideological reasons, the government now discovers that wind and solar are set to become the cheapest ways to generate electricity.

“Government energy policy supposedly seeks to deliver secure, affordable and low carbon energy. They have failed on all three counts. But in particular we now see that by failing to pursue a transition to renewable energy they have missed the opportunity to provide electricity for the consumer at the lowest cost.”

Two years ago, Dr Scott Cato commissioned a report which concluded that the South West could generate over 100% of its energy needs from a mix of renewable sources and create 122,000 new jobs through a renewable energy transition [2]. She said:

“The UK has some of the best potential for renewable energy generation in Europe. It is clear that renewable energy should form the backbone of our economic strategy post-Brexit. This will not only be good for the economy and for creating thousands of new jobs, it would, by the government’s own belated acknowledgement, be good for consumers too.”

[1]

<https://www.carbonbrief.org/analysis-dramatic-shift-uk-government-outlook-gas-clean-energy>

[2]

<http://mollymep.org.uk/2015/04/17/power-to-transform/>

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Supporting People budget protected

The Supporting People programme provides housing-related support to help vulnerable people to keep their homes and live as independently as possible. £124.4m will be allocated amongst the twenty two local authorities in Wales.

The Cabinet Secretary made the announcement ahead of making the opening address at the Cymorth Cymru Conference in Cardiff where he told delegates:

“I am very proud that Wales continues to have a ring-fenced Supporting People programme and that we have protected this funding for another year. The support work undertaken by teams funded through Supporting People helps some of the most vulnerable people in Wales to remain in their own homes.

“But as I have said on many occasions, that doesn’t mean things should just stay the same. In a time of shrinking budgets it is essential we work together to make grant programmes more efficient and effective and where possible protect front line services. We must challenge the way in which we do things and ask questions

“I would like to thank all those housing support workers who make a real difference to the lives of people in need and at risk of homelessness”.

First Minister celebrates the inspiring winners of the 2017 St David Awards

The national awards celebrate the great deeds and extraordinary achievements of Welsh people from all walks of life – from saving lives to inspiring a nation.

Congratulating the winners, First Minister of Wales Carwyn Jones said:

“What a truly inspirational group of winners – I feel incredibly proud that we in Wales can call such an exceptional group of people our own. You make Wales what it is.

“Congratulations to everyone who has won an award and to all the finalists who made the award’s shortlist. You are a credit to your

families, friends and the nation. I hope you are rightly proud of your achievements.

"I would also like to remind everyone that if you have been inspired by the winners and finalists, nominations are now open for St David Awards 2018.

"The terrible events that unfolded in Westminster this week remain close to my mind. Tonight, we have heard so many uplifting stories showing us everything that is good about human nature. Stories about bravery, about sacrifice, and about hope.

"These awards are a poignant reminder of the kindness of humanity, and an important opportunity to say thank you to those people who go above and beyond – often endangering their own lives – to keep us safe."

The winners of the 2017 St David Awards are:

Bravery – Firefighters Gary Slack and Billy Connor

In August 2016, oncall firefighters Gary Slack and Billy Connor braved strong currents at Castle Beach, Tenby, to save 2 children from drowning.

Young person – Savannah Lloyd, mental health volunteer

Having battled mental health problems since she was 11 years old, Savannah uses her experiences to reach out and help others in similar situations.

Sport – Wales Football Team

The Wales Football Team, led by Chris Coleman, reached the semi-final of the Euros 2016. The squad were first class ambassadors for Wales, both on and off the pitch, and their strapline of "Together Stronger" has inspired the nation and captured worldwide interest.

Culture – Professor Jen Wilson, jazz musician and archivist

For more than 50 years, Jen has played a central role in promoting jazz music in Wales and in documenting its history and social impact – and in particular the role of women in jazz.

Enterprise – David Banner, Video Games Company Director

As well as being a multi-award winning games director and Managing Director of Wales Interactive, Dai has been instrumental in the growth of Wales' games industry. He founded the annual Wales Games Show in 2012 and created the GamesLab project, a digital development initiative for the University of South Wales, which has nurtured hundreds of students and provides a global platform for Welsh digital companies.

Innovation, Science and Technology – Professor Meena Upadhyaya OBE

Britain's first female British-Indian professor in medical genetics within the UK, Meena's career focused on identifying genetic disorders. Meena has made a difference to people's lives either through her medical research or community and charity work and received an OBE in 2016 for services to medical genetics and the Welsh Asian community.

Citizenship – Special Constable Cairn Newton-Evans, Dyfed-Powys Police

Having been a victim of a violent homophobic hate crime, Cairn joined the police to try to stop such attacks happening to others. Cairn is a regular volunteer and a passionate advocate for LGBT rights.

International – Dr David Nott OBE

Each year for the past 23 years, David has taken unpaid leave from his job as Consultant Surgeon at Chelsea and Westminster Hospital to work for aid agencies and provide surgical treatment to the victims of conflict and catastrophe. David and his wife, Elly, have also established the "davidnottfoundation", raising hundreds of thousands of pounds for charity and providing surgical training to frontline medics.

First Minister's Special Award – Sir Karl Jenkins and Dr Mererid Hopwood

The 21 October 2016 marked the 50th Anniversary of the Aberfan disaster, which tragically claimed the lives of 116 children and 28 adults.

Sir Karl Jenkins and Dr Mererid Hopwood were commissioned by S4C to compose a new choral piece in memorial of this disaster for this concert called Cantata Memoria and its world premiere was held at the Wales Millennium Centre.

The concert commemorated a very difficult time in Welsh history but it was handled in such a way that it took the families with it. It reflected the pain of loss while at the same time looked to the future. It was a very difficult balance to achieve but the piece succeeded and allowed our nation the opportunity to remember the day in a sensitive and dignified way.

Speaking about the First Minister's Special Award winners, Carwyn Jones said:

"What Sir Karl and Dr Mererid accomplished was incredible. Through their music, they brought together not only the community, but so many people from Wales and the world to share in this commemoration."

Welsh Government confirms commitment

to £1bn of innovative investment in infrastructure

At an event today, Finance Secretary Mark Drakeford, Health Secretary Vaughan Gething and Education Secretary Kirsty Williams launched the MIM to potential partners and provide an update about the three schemes being taken forward.

The new MIM has been carefully designed by the Welsh Government over the last 18 months to finance major capital projects while promoting the public interest and protecting the public purse.

Three major capital projects will be delivered through the model – completing the dualling of the A465 from Dowlais Top to Hirwaun; the new Velindre Cancer Centre and a significant tranche of the next phase of the 21st century schools and education programme.

At today's event at Penarth Learning Community, partners from the finance and construction sectors will hear about the model and the three capital schemes, including the assurance provisions and development timelines.

Professor Drakeford said:

“Over the last 18 months, we've worked closely with the Office for National Statistics and experts at the European Investment Bank to carefully design and secure our new Mutual Investment Model. It has been designed to promote and protect public interests, while also providing the right mix of incentives to private partners.

“I am pleased we've had such an interest in today's event from potential private partners. It is a clear sign that the market is interested in working alongside the public sector on these three important schemes.

“We are continuing to face unprecedented challenges to public finances so it is vitally important that we unlock all opportunities to boost infrastructure investment. This new public-private partnership model will deliver a £1bn capital infrastructure investment boost for crucial transport, health and education schemes.”

£57m link road to give Cardiff “major boost” ahead of UEFA Champions League final

In a visit to see the progress on the £57m Eastern Bay link road project, the Economy Secretary stressed the impact such projects can have on the local and wider economy, particularly in a city like Cardiff that regularly hosts major events.

Ken Skates said:

“It’s great to see the Eastern Bay link road project nearing completion. The new road will provide both Cardiff and Cardiff Bay with a major boost by greatly improving access, connections and journey times.

“And, of course, in the short term it will contribute to the success of the largest global sporting event of 2017 – the UEFA Champions League final, hosted here in Cardiff.

“The Welsh Government’s record in attracting major events to Wales is something I am extremely proud of. We already have a strong reputation as a world class host and we will continue to work to build on that, through June’s Champions League final and next year’s Volvo Ocean Race, amongst others.

“These are events which will see hundreds of thousands of extra visitors coming to Wales and to Cardiff in particular and it’s imperative that our infrastructure matches our ambition. The link road will be open to buses and coaches for the duration of the Champions League final weekend – providing quick and easy access to and from Cardiff Bay, and will be open to all vehicles shortly after the event.

“This summer we look forward to attracting visitors from all over the world and I’m delighted that we will be able to do so with this major link road in place.”

City of Cardiff Council Leader Cllr Phil Bale said:

“I am delighted that the Eastern Bay Link Road will be open to coaches and buses in time for the Champions League Final in June.

“With many thousands of football fans heading to Cardiff by coach for the game, the new link road will play a major part in helping to ease the flow of traffic around the city during what is sure to be one of the greatest sporting events the capital has ever hosted.”