

Response ID ANON-9HVG-FZCX-S

Submitted to **Energy Strategy for Northern Ireland: Consultation on Policy Options**

Submitted on **2021-06-29 16:08:06**

1 - Introduction

a) I am responding to this consultation as:

Business energy consumer (1-49 employees)

b) Based on your response to (a) - where do you live or work:

County Tyrone

Other::

c) Based on your response to (a) – where best describes the area you live or work in:

Rural (countryside area, outside of a town or city)

d) What is your name or organisation?

Name:

Rural Community Network NI

e) Do you give permission for your name to be released?

Yes

f) Do you identify as:

Male

g) Please select your age range.

45-54 years

2 - Energy Strategy Framework

Q1: Do you agree with the overall goal of achieving net zero carbon energy no later than 2050?

Yes

Q2: Do you agree with the proposed vision of “net zero carbon and affordable energy” for the Energy Strategy?

Yes

Q3: Do the five principles identified provide clear direction around the approach that we want to take with the Energy Strategy?

Yes

Q4: Are there any key delivery priorities for the Energy Strategy not captured?

Yes

If "yes", please outline below what you believe should be included.:

Q5: Do our proposed indicators adequately allow us to measure success at achieving the proposed Energy Strategy outcome?

Do our proposed indicators adequately allow us to measure success at achieving the proposed Energy Strategy outcome? - a) Carbon emissions from energy-related sectors:

Yes

Do our proposed indicators adequately allow us to measure success at achieving the proposed Energy Strategy outcome? - b) Jobs and turnover in the low carbon and renewable energy economy:

Yes

Do our proposed indicators adequately allow us to measure success at achieving the proposed Energy Strategy outcome? - c) Domestic energy costs relative to household income:

Yes

Do our proposed indicators adequately allow us to measure success at achieving the proposed Energy Strategy outcome? - d) Business energy purchases relative to turnover:

Yes

Do our proposed indicators adequately allow us to measure success at achieving the proposed Energy Strategy outcome? - e) Households in fuel poverty:

Yes

Do our proposed indicators adequately allow us to measure success at achieving the proposed Energy Strategy outcome? - f) Relative electricity & gas prices:

Yes

If you selected "No" to any of the above, please outline below any alternative metrics we could consider::

The Department should also consider an indicator on usage of energy in agriculture relative to turnover.
Consider carbon capture and 'green' credentials of some energy sectors and promote these

3 - Scenarios to Net Zero Carbon Energy

Q6: Do you think there are significantly different illustrative scenarios which should be developed?

No

If "yes", please provide further information.:

Unsure that there are other significantly different illustrative scenarios which should be developed but we would make the following comments:

Scenario 2 High Electrification scenario Key assumptions will need to consider further incentivisation for the adoption of electric vehicles by individual households in rural communities as well as the location of public charging infrastructure. Investment in electricity network will also need to be part of this scenario. Will also need further consideration about how an increase in public transport and active travel can be achieved in rural communities. Provision of public transport for dispersed rural communities has been cut back as it is more difficult to do. Government needs to consider rural shared mobility projects which integrate with public transport networks to allow more rural citizens to choose public transport. The EU funded SMARTA 2 project assessed some of these rural shared mobility demonstrator projects across Europe <https://ruralsharedmobility.eu/about/>

Scenario 4 Diverse scenario key assumptions also includes reference to an increase in public transport and active travel. See comments above on Rural Shared Mobility projects as to how these objectives can be achieved in rural communities.

The replacement of OFCH will require serious public investment in retrofitting for lower income households. Any assessment of the costs and feasibility of a transition from heating oil to biofuels in home heating as an intermediate step needs careful consideration and management. There is a risk that, even a temporary expansion of the use of biofuel in home heating as an intermediate step might produce perverse incentives and lead to unintended consequences in terms of land use and biodiversity that may undermine, or clash with climate change objectives.

4 - Placing You at the Heart of our Energy Future

Q7: Do you agree with the four consumer population groups we have identified?

Do you agree with the four consumer populations we have identified? - Domestic consumers living with more vulnerable circumstances:

Yes

Do you agree with the four consumer populations we have identified? - Other domestic consumers:

Yes

Do you agree with the four consumer populations we have identified? - Small business consumers:

Yes

Do you agree with the four consumer populations we have identified? - Larger business consumers:

No

Please advise below on key considerations within each::

RCN welcomes the intention to enable and protect domestic consumers living with more vulnerable circumstances and we particularly welcome the inclusion of consumers living in rural areas. Rural citizens will face additional challenges to decarbonise home heating as the majority of rural areas do not have access to gas as an intermediate option. They also face additional challenges regarding transport as most rural households are dependent on private car and public transport and active travel is more difficult to provide in rural communities.

To ensure transition to a zero carbon energy system is just, low income households must be enabled to access funding to retrofit insulation and zero/low carbon heating systems.

We suggest that DfE work closely with colleagues in DfC as they have decades of experience of the delivery challenges for delivering fuel poverty schemes to

vulnerable households.

Q8: Do you agree with the five measures identified to “enable and protect” consumers?

No

If "no", please outline below what else should be included?:

A further principle to ensure a just transition in energy production and usage should underpin the whole strategy to reset how we view energy production and consumption across all parts of society and to align with the 'just transition' principle underpinning the Climate Change bill currently at committee stage in the NI Assembly.

Q9: Do you agree with the proposed scope of the “one stop shop”?

Yes

Please outline below any different activities you think should be included.:

A one stop shop may be a useful initial entry point for citizens seeking advice on energy issues. The strategy also needs to consider citizens, not just as energy consumers, but also as micro producers. Many households are already involved in micro generation and this has the potential to grow further in the future,

A Community energy audit service could be developed as a way of auditing vulnerable and low-income households across NI. This could involve home visits to audit electricity provider and tariff, heating provider and eligibility for energy efficiency or fuel poverty interventions. As well as the positive impacts for vulnerable households this could make a significant contribution to the net zero carbon target. Consumer panels could be set up in conjunction with food banks/ social supermarkets etc. to hear from agencies and vulnerable groups directly about their challenges in relation to energy and to explore proposals to address fuel poverty and energy efficiency.

Q10: Which approach do you think should be taken to create this organisation?

Expand remit of an existing organisation

Please outline below your rationale.:

The Sustainable Energy Authority Ireland, referred to in the consultation document as an example of good practice could be expanded to include a remit for NI.

Q11: Do you believe that additional financial assistance to protect certain groups of consumers should be introduced?

Yes

Domestic consumers living with more vulnerable circumstances, Other domestic consumers, Business energy consumers (1-49 employees)#, Business energy consumers (50+ employees)

If "yes" please provide more details below on what support you think would be needed. :

Where new support policies are being introduced government must ensure that rural citizens needs are considered to enable them to access that support.

Depending on the scale and costs required for all citizens/businesses in transition support should be considered on the just transition principle.

In rural communities households with low incomes will need support to retrofit their homes. Some will need support to convert to electric vehicles.

When home heating has become decarbonised electricity prices must be regulated to ensure fuel poverty levels are reduced and eventually eliminated.

5 - Grow a Green Economy

Q12: Do you agree with the four identified priority clean energy sectors:

Do you agree with the four identified priority clean energy sectors - Energy efficiency:

Yes

Do you agree with the four identified priority clean energy sectors - Renewable energy:

Yes

Do you agree with the four identified priority clean energy sectors - Hydrogen economy:

Yes

Do you agree with the four identified priority clean energy sectors - Circular economy:

Yes

Please advise below on any additional areas that you believe should be prioritised and your reasons for this.:

Q13: Do you agree with the economic growth opportunities identified within energy efficiency?

Yes

Please outline below any supporting policies you believe are needed to take advantage of these?:

Support for skills development in construction sector around retro fitting, installation of zero carbon heating and cooling systems and building to passivHaus standards.

Establishing comprehensive baselines on energy efficiency assessment in residential/industrial/retail/agriculture sectors.

Significant upgrade in design and build standards for new homes to reduce costs of retro fitting in future enforced by building control in local councils.

Exploration of community energy projects and district energy schemes and support to establish these were possible.

Q14: Do you agree with the economic growth opportunities identified within renewable energy?

Yes

Please outline below any supporting policies you believe are needed to take advantage of these?:

In relation to skills development general point is that government and Invest NI should support companies to better convert these opportunities into job creation or new businesses.

There is also scope for government to ensure that community owned energy is part of the renewable energy mix in the future. Some examples of community owned renewable in NI but much more significant community energy sector in Scotland that we can learn from. This may reduce community objections to siting of renewable energy infrastructure in local communities if they have a significant share in the income generated.

Q15: Do you agree with the economic growth opportunities identified for hydrogen production, demand and manufacturing within the hydrogen economy?

Not Answered

Please outline below any supporting policies you believe are needed to take advantage of these?:

Q16: Do you agree with underpinning principles identified within the circular economy?

Yes

Please outline below any supporting policies you believe are needed to take advantage of these?:

Agree with the principles but policy development under this stream needs to consider how farming and forestry can deepen the circular economy.

Development of green public procurement should be used to ensure circular economy principles are spread across private sector enterprises seeking to tender for public services.

Q17: Do you agree that we should develop a green innovation challenge fund?

Not Answered

If so, please outline below what scale and type of innovative projects should this support?:

Q18: Do you believe that we should work with the Northern Ireland Utility Regulator to review how energy regulation can facilitate a green recovery and green innovation?

Not Answered

If so, please outline below how can this be done in a way which protects consumers from the higher risks associated with innovation projects?:

Q19: Do you agree with a focus on research mapping, research funding, business linkages and UK opportunity scanning to maximise the impact of the local research base with clean energy specialisms?

No

Please outline below specific opportunities in the local research base that could be progressed.:

Opportunity scanning needs to include the UK but also the Republic of Ireland and wider EU to ensure we can take advantage of where local research base can make wider connections so that potential opportunities are realised.

Q20: Do you believe that utilising and tailoring existing education and training routes can meet the short-term skills needs of the clean energy sector?

Not Answered

Please outline below how activities within these routes can be shaped to meet the needs of the sector:

Q21: Do you agree with the proposal to establish an Energy Skills Forum to shape the future skills needs of clean energy sector?

Not Answered

If so, please outline below what you believe is the role, remit and membership of such a group::

Q22: Do you believe that there is a need for specific measures aimed at ensuring a just transition in Northern Ireland?

Yes

If so, please outline below what the focus of these should be in addition to the education and training routes already proposed for a low carbon workforce::

Consideration will need to be given to supporting businesses involved in peat extraction to stop extraction due to the importance of peatlands as a carbon sink and if rewetted the potential they have to sequester even more carbon.

Similar supports have been developed in the Republic of Ireland as Bord na Mona have reduced the extraction of peat. The extraction of peat for fuel or for horticulture is significantly smaller in NI but support will be needed to ensure it stops.

Consideration will also need to be given to the many small businesses who distribute home heating oil as we transition from fossil fuels to electricity for home heating purposes.

Training and support for community-led /social enterprise sectors to avail of support in their quest to deliver green energy, manage community energy projects. Support to develop partnerships and collaboration between researchers, communities and businesses in a bid to develop successful green energy projects and innovation.

6 - Do More with Less

Q23: Do you agree that an energy savings target should be set for Northern Ireland?

Not Answered

Q24: Do you agree that Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards should be set to drive improvements in energy efficiency?

Not Answered

If "yes", please outline below what type of building should be the early priorities for introducing minimum standards?:

Q25: Do you agree with the general scale and proposed pace of change outlined in the five phase plan for building regulations?

Not Answered

If "no", please outline below what achievable timescale or programme should be implemented, and your rationale for this.:

No specific comment on timescales but would make the following points:

"The alignment of fuel pricing with carbon impacts is also an issue that must be addressed if we are to avoid low carbon heating systems being both more costly to install and operate than higher carbon options"

RCN would be concerned that further increases in fossil fuels has potential to lead to an increase in fuel poverty in vulnerable rural households. We would reiterate the principle that any policies to support energy transition needs to consider the impacts on vulnerable households.

Q26: Do you think that we should seek to explore how the rates system can be used to encourage energy efficiency?

Not Answered

If "yes", please outline below key issues that would need to be considered.:

Q27: Do you agree that we should introduce a pilot domestic retrofit scheme by spring 2022, followed by a substantive scheme as part of a "one stop shop" approach?

Yes

If "yes", please advise below what changes are needed to the wider energy efficiency support landscape to ensure a joined-up approach?:

Yes but need to ensure that any substantive scheme is well designed, funded and delivered to give confidence to home owners/landlords to make significant upgrades to their properties. NI need to learn from the scrapping of the UK government flagship Green Grants Scheme which was criticised for being too bureaucratic to access for applicants. Its collapse has created uncertainty in the private sector who had been anticipating an increase in retro-fit business. Lessons from the RHI scheme must also be incorporated in any future scheme design.

Q28: Do you agree that we should ring-fence the Public Service Obligation (PSO) funding for vulnerable consumers, including the fuel poor?

Not Answered

Please outline below any changes you believe should be made to the level and scope of the PSO for energy efficiency.:

Q29: Do you believe that green private finance solutions have a role to play in supporting domestic consumers to invest in energy efficiency?

Not Answered

If "yes", please outline below which specific green finance solutions should be explored?:

Q30: Do you agree that Invest NI should deliver a pilot energy efficiency support scheme for businesses, to be followed by a substantive scheme delivered through the proposed "one stop shop" organisation?

Not Answered

If "yes", please outline below what type of support do you believe is most appropriate for different groups of business consumers?:

Q31: Do you believe that green private finance solutions have a role to play in supporting non-domestic consumers to invest in energy efficiency?

Not Answered

If "yes", please outline below what specific green finance solutions should be explored?:

Q32: Do you agree that we should seek to develop skills and capability, enhance quality assurance and standards, and use an accreditation body to provide guarantees on work undertaken by the energy services for retrofit sector?

Yes

If "yes", please outline below how can we help to prepare the sector for these changes?:

Consumer trust and confidence is key - we must ensure that retro fit scheme installations are independently assessed to give consumers confidence if we are to achieve the targets we are setting.

Q33: Do you agree that information, awareness and behavioural change should be a key strand of future energy efficiency support?

Yes

If "yes", please outline below which key behaviours that should be targeted?:

Potential for quick wins in reducing energy consumption for little or no investment. Information and advice to householders and landlords on simple measures such as over-heating of rooms, installation of loft insulation to correct depths and installation of thermostatic radiator valves should be minimum we can achieve almost immediately.

Q34: What measures do you think can have the most impact on changing behaviours to change how we travel and reduce private vehicles?

Please explain your rationale below::

Active travel has an obvious and important role in decarbonisation of the transport sector, but the challenges of active travel are significantly different in rural communities compared to cities and towns. The former Infrastructure Minister Chris Hazzard launched a NI Greenways Strategy in 2016 <https://nigreenways.com/northern-ireland-government-greenway-strategy/> which set out plans for up to 1000 km network of Greenways across NI. Some of these proposed routes could have potential to increase active travel for commuting to work.

There remain serious concerns in rural communities about the safety issues of primary school age children walking to school where there are no footpaths and busy traffic. There may be greater potential in decarbonising the school transport issue in rural communities by providing comprehensive travel to school by bus for all pupils. This would involve a significant additional initial investment, but this may be offset by significantly reducing the numbers of children being driven to school. There is potential to significantly increase the proportion of active travel journeys taken by rural citizens, but this will take concerted investment and tailored solutions to be meaningful in rural communities. Where government invests in public transport that is cost effective for the end user and meets their travel needs then modal shift can be achieved.

We are yet to see a similar application of transport planning to achieve modal shift in rural communities. This is, in our view, pressing if NI has any hope of meeting its net zero carbon target. 35% of the NI population live in rural communities. Most rural citizens depend on private cars as their primary mode of transport and they drive more miles (often in older diesel vehicles) although they are less likely to spend time idling in traffic. The dispersed nature of the rural population means that public transport solutions are limited so the aim of transport policy must be to accept that the initial and final parts of a journey may be by car but that the aim should be to get that driver out of the car and onto the public transport network as quickly as possible. This should be complemented by cross departmental work to improve broadband connectivity which could reduce the need for commuting and allow many rural workers to work from home for at least part of the week. The Covid 19 lockdown demonstrated the potential and the challenges that widespread working from home brings. In many rural households it has also demonstrated the limitations of broadband connectivity which will need ongoing investment to bring up to a decent standard.

The shift towards active/sustainable transport needs more specific thought in rural communities. The challenges are different and solutions need to be different. Demand responsive public transport and rural shared mobility projects need to be developed to facilitate modal shift in rural communities. See <https://ruralsharedmobility.eu/smarta-2/> for demonstrator projects and policy papers,

Only when public/active travel solutions are cheap/free and meet people's travel needs is when we will see significant change in travel behaviour.

Continued investment in future proofed rural broadband infrastructure can reduce the need for commuting and promote business growth in rural communities . One of the key lessons from the pandemic is clear demonstration of the number of jobs that can be done remotely for at least part of the working week.

7 - Replacing fossil fuels with Indigenous Renewables

Q35: Do you agree with setting a 70% renewable electricity target by 2030, whilst retaining the flexibility to increase this to 80%?

No

Q36: Do you agree with the criteria identified that would allow us to consider any future increases in the renewable electricity target?

The following criteria has been identified that would allow in order to consider any future increases in the renewable electricity target? Please select those that you agree with. (Tick all that apply) - Projects can be delivered in a cost-effective manner.:

The following criteria has been identified that would allow in order to consider any future increases in the renewable electricity target? Please select those that you agree with. (Tick all that apply) - Offshore wind can be delivered by 2030.:

The following criteria has been identified that would allow in order to consider any future increases in the renewable electricity target? Please select those that you agree with. (Tick all that apply) - Storage technologies can minimise system curtailment of renewables.:

The following criteria has been identified that would allow in order to consider any future increases in the renewable electricity target? Please select those that you agree with. (Tick all that apply) - Greater clarity on electricity demand for heating and transport.:

The following criteria has been identified that would allow in order to consider any future increases in the renewable electricity target? Please select those that you agree with. (Tick all that apply) - Consumers' bills are not disproportionately impacted.:

If you selected "No" to any of the criteria above, please outline below which alternative criteria might be used instead?:

Q37: Do you agree that we should explore with the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) the possibility of extending the Contracts for Difference scheme to Northern Ireland?

Not Answered

If "yes", please outline below what terms would be needed to ensure generation in the region whilst protecting consumers?:

Q38: Do you believe it is possible that an offshore wind project in Northern Ireland could be operational before 2030?

Not Answered

If "yes", please outline below what targeted actions could be taken to deliver this.:

Q39: Do you believe that a fixed platform offshore wind project should be targeted to be part of the renewable generation mix?

Not Answered

If "yes", please outline below how you propose some of the associated challenges could be overcome?:

Q40: Do you believe that floating platform offshore wind offers the best long term opportunities for offshore wind in Northern Ireland's waters?

Not Answered

Q41: Do you believe that other marine renewables can play a key role in our renewable generation mix?

Not Answered

If "yes", please outline below what technologies offer the greatest potential and what steps can be taken to support these:

Q42: Do you agree that a strategic approach to planning the location of renewable projects should be taken?

Yes

If "yes", please outline below the practical steps that could be taken to deliver this.:

A strategic approach to planning the locations of renewables projects must also involve collaboration with host communities, government, developers and grid operators are only part of the overall development.

A plan led approach rather than a developer led approach may lead to earlier and more meaningful community engagement. RCN and Community Places have undertaken project work with rural communities to explore the challenges and opportunities around the siting of Renewable Energy Technology in 2016. For

further detail see <http://www.ruralcommunitynetwork.org/publications/publicationdocument.aspx?doc=605>

Q43: Do you believe that there should be a requirement for renewable developers to share some of the financial benefits of developments with local communities?

Yes

If "yes", what share do you think would be reasonable?:

The Department should enable community owned models for the development of renewable energy technology (RET). Community owned renewables make up a significant proportion of the renewables sector in Scotland, Denmark and Germany. Access to finance which allows Community organisations to partner with private developers in renewable energy development has been shown to reduce community objections to the siting of RET.

If we are to achieve further onshore wind development then a transition to significant levels of community ownership will be required. It is disappointing to note that the Energy Strategy does not consider any role for the community and voluntary sector or social enterprise sectors in the further development of renewables projects.

If "no", please outline below your reasons why::

Q44: Do you agree with taking separate approaches to on-gas grid and off-gas grid consumers?

Yes

If "no", please outline below what approach should be taken?:

Q45: Do you agree that we should not rule out potential low and zero carbon heat solutions at this stage?

Yes

If "no", please outline your rationale below.:

Q46: What low and zero carbon heat solutions do you believe we should prioritise for trials?

Please outline below what low and zero carbon heat solutions you believe we should prioritise for trials?:

Trials on the use of heat pumps to suit our specific circumstances and buildings should be done. If OFCH boilers can be replaced with air source heat pumps and low temperature radiators which provide thermal comfort within the same price range then this may be the best option for a large number of households on moderate incomes. If they require much deeper retrofit to work effectively then any future scheme will cost significantly more and may need to be further subsidised.

Please outline below where such trials should be focused. What key issues should be tested within each trial?:

Trials should focus on:

Attaining levels of thermal comfort at a reasonable operating cost over a sustained period of time.

Assessing a range of property types and locations

Determining cost and effect of additional retro fitting measures such as improvements in insulation.

Q47: Do you believe that the role of heat pumps will be different depending on whether consumers are on or off the gas grid?

Not Answered

Please outline below what you think the specific roles should be:

Q48: Do you agree that Northern Ireland should develop a pilot grant scheme to support low carbon heat technologies for domestic and small non-domestic consumers?

Yes

If "yes", please outline below the key issues that need to be considered in designing and delivering such a scheme.:

That applicants are well advised on the costs and benefits (long term) of the low carbon heat technologies they are installing before they take part in the pilot.

That a range of house types and a range of different applicants take part in sufficient numbers to enable the Department to have confidence in data emerging from any scheme.

The Strategy is putting a lot of emphasis on heat pumps to decarbonise heating especially for off grid households. We need to be sure that they will work for all consumers.

Q49: Do you agree that legislative and regulatory steps should be taken to facilitate biomethane injection into the gas network?

Not Answered

Not Answered

Q50: Do you believe that support should be provided to encourage biomethane production for injection into the gas network?

Not Answered

If "no", please outline below what alternative approach should be taken to decarbonising the gas network.:

Q51: Do you agree that the local Gas Network Operators should develop and publish a plan to decarbonise gas out to 2050?

Not Answered

If "yes", outline below what key issues must be considered within it?:

Q52: Do you believe that on-gas grid consumers should have the option to retain oil boilers for use with biofuels?

Not Answered

If "yes", please outline your rationale for your answer below.:

If "no", please outline below what is a viable timeline for introducing a ban on oil boilers for on-grid consumers?:

Q53: Do you believe that off-gas grid consumers should have the option to retain oil boilers for use with biofuels?

Not Answered

If "no", please outline below what is a viable timeline for introducing a ban on oil boilers for off-grid customers?:

Q54: Do you agree that the local Oil Industry should provide a plan on how biofuels could play a role in decarbonising heat out to 2050?

Not Answered

If "yes", please outline below what key issues must be considered within it?:

Q55: Do you believe that support should be introduced to promote the uptake of biomass for off-grid consumers?

Yes

If "yes", please outline below what support is needed and where it should be focused.:

This may be worth considering for off grid consumers but the Department would need to consider in advance the anticipated number of residential/other properties where biomass may need to be deployed. The Department would also need to work closely with DAERA to assess where demand for biofuels will be met and the potential impact on carbon targets in agriculture and forestry sectors.

Q56: Do you believe that the sale of coal and wet wood should be banned in Northern Ireland?

Not Answered

Not Answered

Please outline your reasoning: :

A ban on the sale of coal and wet wood should be introduced but the Department would need an accurate assessment of how many homes in NI still rely on solid fuel as a primary heat source and how these homes can be prioritised and supported to transition to cleaner heating alternatives.

Q57: Do you agree that we should develop a Northern Ireland specific strategy that sets an overarching, long-term plan for cleaner, greener transport and shows how we will meet net zero emissions within the transport sector?

Yes

If "yes", please outline below what Northern Ireland specific issues need to be factored into this in order to accelerate the uptake of Zero Emissions Vehicles?:

Ensure that the grid is upgraded to allow widespread EV charging across the Network.

Expand the number of EV public charging points and facilitate the installation of rapid charging points.

Consider how public/active transport can be better facilitated in rural communities with dispersed settlement pattern to reduce the mileage required for EVs - seen

as a way of facilitating connection with public transport network.

Costs of EVs still a factor and most moderate/low income households will need to support to convert from petrol/diesel to EVs.

Q58: Do you agree that an EV communication campaign should be run in Northern Ireland?

Yes

If "yes", please outline below what key messages would be most impactful for consumers as part of this?:

Q59: Do you agree that the private sector and local government have a key role to play in developing EV infrastructure?

Not Answered

If "yes", please outline below what barriers can government address to ensure that such projects are commercially viable?:

Q60: Do you agree that we should develop an EV Charging Infrastructure Plan in collaboration with public and private partners?

Not Answered

If "yes", please outline below what the key priorities of the plan should be?:

Q61: Do you agree that public sector contracts can be a key driver for developing technologies and markets for alternative fuel vehicles?

Not Answered

If "yes", please outline below what specific opportunities are there that could be progressed?:

Q62: Do you agree that collaborative research will be important to demonstrate alternative fuels?

Not Answered

If "yes", please outline below what are the best routes to identify and progress potential projects?:

Q63: Do you believe that fuels such as Compressed Natural Gas/Liquid Natural Gas and/or synthetic fuels can play a role as an interim measure to decarbonising transport?

Not Answered

If "yes", outline below how the government can help to encourage the private sector to trial and use these fuels?:

Q64: Do you believe that Carbon Capture Use and Storage can play a role in Northern Ireland?

Not Answered

If "yes", outline below what potential applications could be the initial focus for demonstration projects?:

Q65: Do you believe that our approach to petroleum licensing should change in line with our commitment to decarbonise energy?

Yes

8 - Create a Flexible and Integrated Energy System

Q66: Do you agree that the Electricity Network Operators should provide a pathway to creating a flexible and integrated energy system?

Not Answered

If "yes", please outline below evidence to demonstrate what the priorities of such a plan should be?:

Q67: Do you agree that conventional power generation can play an important role in the pathway to decarbonised energy?

Not Answered

If "yes", outline below what opportunities and barriers exist for such plants?:

Q68: Do you believe that further interconnection will be needed in the future?

Not Answered

If you answered "yes", is a new revenue mechanism needed to bring forward this investment? Please outline below.:

Q69: Do you agree that our power system should be based around flexible solutions to align demand and supply?

Not Answered

If you answered "yes", please outline below what key decisions are needed to achieve this.:

Q70: Do you believe that the SEM and DS3 offer sufficient market routes to support the deployment of flexible technologies for generators of all sizes?

Not Answered

If "no", please outline below evidence that demonstrates what additional market routes may be needed.:

Q71: Do you agree that a policy framework should be put in place to enhance access to and use of consumer data?

Yes

If "yes", please outline below the key considerations that need to be factored into this framework.:

The development of smarter grids, appliances and home energy systems which can respond more flexibly to demand, and supply will need to be accompanied by much stronger legislation and regulation of private companies use of individual citizens data. Currently many citizens remain suspicious of how private companies will use their data and much stronger regulation is needed to enable trust to be rebuilt. Data accessibility will be key to enabling consumers and providers to make more informed decisions. The further development of data regulation will require transnational co-operation which may be further complicated as the UK has exited from the EU.

Q72: Do you believe that we should take forward the Energy Data Taskforce recommendations in Northern Ireland?

Not Answered

If "yes", please outline below on key differences with Great Britain that need to be factored in.:

Q73: Do you agree that a Cost Benefit Analysis of smart meters should take into account the broader benefits they can bring to consumers as an enabler of energy data and a smart system?

Not Answered

If the Cost-Benefit Analysis for smart meters is not positive, please outline below on what alternative approaches can be taken to deliver these benefits for consumers?:

Q74: Do you believe that financial support should be provided for micro-generation to increase the number of active consumers in Northern Ireland?

Not Answered

If "yes", what should this support look like? Please outline below. :

If "no", what are the alternatives? Please outline below.:

Q75: Do you agree that network charging would need to change if the electricity system becomes more decentralised?

Not Answered

If "yes", outline below what principles do you believe should be adopted in distributing future network costs across consumers?:

Q76: Do you agree that a new regulatory framework is needed to protect consumers who engage in decentralised arrangements?

Not Answered

If "yes", outline below what consumer protection measures should be part of this?:

Q77: Do you believe that energy communities have a role to play as part of the energy transition?

Yes

If "yes", outline below what support is needed to progress these?:

Many rural areas have abundant wind energy resource and they may have access to land to enable geothermal or ground source heating systems if geological conditions are suitable. Significant support and development will be needed to encourage individuals to see renewable technologies as viable and the transition as achievable. It is vital that this investment is made, especially in rural communities where households are so dependent on oil fired central heating. The regulation of geothermal and ground source heating contractors and their skills development is another issue that needs to be considered so that householders can have confidence that these systems can be maintained and repaired at affordable rates, well into the future.

If "no", outline below what are the alternatives?:

Q78: Do you agree that the potential of geothermal energy should be further explored, supported by a legislative and regulatory framework?

Not Answered

If "yes", outline below what applications do you believe there are for geothermal energy in Northern Ireland?:

Q79: Do you agree that further trials of heat networks should be carried out?

Yes

If "yes", please outline below what key issues do you think should be tested through these?:

Handiheat project is a transnational fuel poverty project funded by the EU Northern Periphery programme. The NI Housing Executive and ARC Healthy Living Centre in Irvinestown are NI partners. They are working to develop sustainable solutions that will protect rural communities from energy price fluctuations and improve social wellbeing and quality of life. The project aims to develop a small district heating scheme using renewable energy and incorporating battery storage to heat homes in Irvinestown. Details here: <http://handiheat.interreg-npa.eu/about-the-project/>

9 - Delivering the Strategy

Please provide any additional comments you may have on this consultation here:

Please comment::

Our Delivery Priorities