

FAO : Lisa Roberts, New Anglia LEP

Dear Lisa

Re: Breckland Council response to the Local Energy East Strategy

Please find below Breckland Council's initial response to the draft Local Energy East Strategy. Formal endorsement of the strategy by Breckland Council will require further time but we have done our best to respond to the draft in the limited time made available.

Introduction

Breckland Council supports the key objectives of the draft Local Energy East Strategy, in terms of the potential to increase high quality employment opportunities from clean energy sectors, in increasing the efficiency of energy usage in both home and business premises, and as a driver to improve productivity across the East of England economy.

Whilst we recognise the need to agree a delivery plan to support and implement the strategy's objectives, we would urge that this needs careful integration into each LEP's core delivery plan so that opportunities for local benefit and inclusive growth are not missed.

We would like to take the opportunity to comment on the four main themes within the strategy:-

Clean Economic Growth

Whilst there is a strong dialogue within the strategy to expand local employment opportunities close to the source locations of clean energy generation, we would suggest that more focus needs to be given to supply chain opportunities within both clean energy generation and in uses of clean energy. Specifically we would suggest that:-

- A supply chain audit is undertaken in the major sources of clean generation to establish what percentage of the total value of these major projects is being undertaken using local East of England suppliers. And from this analysis, proposals put forward to increase the percentage of local supply, especially in the sectors of advantage engineering and manufacturing.
- In looking to increase local supply content within clean generation, explore what additional leverage the the public sector could bring to bear, e.g. through the planning system.

The draft strategy correctly identifies the likely significant increase in electric vehicle manufacturing which stricter emission standards will bring about (page 10) but it does little to identify the sector growth opportunities which this could bring to the East of England (small mention on page 19), rather it concentrates on the need to build a network of charging points. Bearing in mind the growing expertise in both electric motor technology and power control systems at the Hethel Engineering Centre, it would seem opportune to explore the creation of a clean automotive engineering centre, including specialised manufacturing, along the Cambridge Norwich Tech

Corridor, especially as we have potential access to a world class testing circuit at Snetterton Heath. It would be a wasted opportunity to assume that the traditional centres of car manufacturing, especially engine and drive trains, will remain in the midlands and north east.

Whilst the strategy details the likely increase in electricity usage in the home for heating and car charging, we would suggest that the strategy should also encompass the specific opportunities for the East of England to become leaders in the development of underpinning technologies, especially in energy control systems and increased efficiency electric based heating. These are opportunities which could significantly increase advanced manufacturing activities in what is a worldwide market. Should we consider the establishment of a centre of excellence possibly in the Cambridge Norwich Tech Corridor?

We welcome recognition of need to support accompanying infrastructure to support the energy sector and would be interested to understand what further steps the LEPs plan to take, to add further weight to such infrastructure proposals.

New Anglia's Energy Sector Skills Strategy has identified a number of skills challenges in the existing energy economy. We would suggest that those large scale energy producers seeking permissions to operate in the New Anglia area are 'incentivised' to make significant contributions into local training funds for this key sector. We have observed plenty of local community engagement by some of these large producers but perhaps not much evidence of meaningful investment to support local training funding.

We would also suggest that the commitment to work with education providers and businesses to ensure a clear pathway into the offshore energy sector is widened to include other complimentary clean energy sectors, e.g. electric motors and energy storage technology.

Housing growth and commercial site infrastructure

We would strongly caution against some of the language used in the Snetterton Heath case study. In particular we would not agree that 'Protracted negotiation has been hampered by multiple landowner issues' was a significant factor to why it has taken so long to increase power capacity at this key employment site. We should perhaps be more diplomatic in our choice of wording at a time when we are encouraging the landowners to work more closely with public sector partners in the development of this major employment site.

Whilst the strategy identifies the potential increased requirements in electricity supply due to electric vehicle charging and a move away from gas powered domestic heating towards electric heating, the focus seems to be mostly on ensuring that the grid coverage and capacity is sufficient to meet the likely demand. We would suggest that the strategy should include an increased focus on how the design and construction of new homes can be influenced to lower overall energy usage and to mainstream local home based energy generation and storage.

The 'SmartLIFE' Construction Centres is a well-received case study but we would what level of consultations, to date, have taken place with the major house builders operating in the East of England?

We would suggest the same principles apply to commercial site infrastructure but with the additional potential to reuse 'waste' heat, the by-product of certain industrial processes, and local clean electricity generation through an expansion of local solar farms and other clean technologies. The East of England has the land available to do this, if carefully managed so as not to adversely impact on primary food production.

We would suggest that discussions with UKPN are undertaken to make it much easier for local energy production to be integrated into both the national grid and into robust local distribution networks. Local energy production for local consumption.

We would strongly support the need to build a much more robust local electricity distribution network. It seems ironic that the East of England has become a major electricity generation area and yet much of the distribution network is not in a fit state to support the economic growth aspirations of the region. It has taken the direct intervention of Breckland Council, with the support of the New Anglia LEP, to finance an upgrade scheme for Snetterton Heath, in the absence of an effective electricity power strategy for the region. Power poverty in the midst of power abundance needs to be dealt with as a matter of urgency.

It seems inconsistent that electricity DNOs are 'not allowed' to invest in network upgrades without these costs being picked up by an external funder, yet the equivalent water utility companies seem able to forward fund the majority of their network upgrades. Perhaps this assumption, concerning electricity DNOs, needs to be more strongly challenged.

Secure, local, affordable, low-carbon consumption

Whilst battery storage is a currently well publicised method of temporary energy storage, we would encourage the strategy to explore other energy storage technologies which might be viable as part of low carbon consumption mix. Specifically, we are aware of pilot projects in the East of England seeking support to commercialise the use of liquefied air as a temporary energy storage medium; a process which is capable of using 'off peak' electricity to liquefy air then releasing the air back into gaseous form to generate electricity when needed. This may have applications in both industrial sites and in large housing developments.

We would also suggest a need to look at investment strategy for energy resilience not reliant on storage – how will major investors and their insurers feel about investing somewhere where energy storage is the sole reinforcement strategy?

With regard to community scale energy schemes, we would suggest that this should also apply to the development of new housing developments so that house builders (much as we wish to remove barriers to housing building) are working at the cutting edge of energy distribution, usage and

storage, as an integral part of the housing scheme designs. Again we would ask that the strategy seeks to investigate how we can best lever and incentivise opportunities within this technologies. Perhaps the three LEPs can continue to lobby government to continue to increase energy efficiency standards through building regulations.

As one example, should accessible EV charging points and home based battery storage become obligatory in all new housing developments?

Clean transport networks

The strategy correctly identifies the region's reliance on large volumes of road freight traffic which both feeds the supply chains of our local industry and gets our large scale food production to market. Whilst the challenges of using EVs for freight transport are considerable, there is significant EV technology development within the region which might be supported to look at solutions beyond those currently successfully being development for car and bus transport. Perhaps there is also an opportunity that our expertise in clean transport technology should expand into hydrogen power if this is likely to coexist with EV as a future solution for heavy transport vehicles.

We fully support the development of an extensive network of publically accessible charging points, especially important to our rural environment, our local people and as support for our visitor economy. We would suggest that supporting the installation of EV charging points at strategic locations, suggesting limited coverage, needs to be rethought in light of much of the rural nature of our region. Consumers need to be able to access recharging at the same level of convenience as they expect for petrol and diesel refuelling. Unless there is some overriding technology issue, we would suggest that it is time to move beyond pilot schemes and into full scale roll out. It seems generally accepted that EV is likely to be the future for mass transport.

As a final point of feedback, we would encourage New Anglia LEP to fully involve Local Authorities at an early stage in the preparation of delivery plans relating to this key new strategy so that the benefits of the actions taken can be as inclusive as possible across the region.

Regards

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