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Smith hails progress on green electricity transmission charging

Press release by SNP MEP Alyn Smith

SNP Member of the European Parliament Alyn Smith has today (Wednesday) hailed a revelation that National Grid experts are working on a new model of transmission charging which could see grid connection costs for renewable operators halved as a major step forward in resolving the thorny issue of locational pricing. Smith has also welcomed a consultation by National Grid into "Charging for Island Connections" and urged Scotland's islands to get involved.

Smith, shortlisted in the Politician of the Year category at the Green Energy Awards to be announced in Edinburgh tonight, had organised a hearing in the Brussels Parliament, gathering stakeholders from all sides of the energy compass to discuss the ongoing European Commission investigation into the UK's model of electricity transmission charging, which Smith believes unfairly disadvantages renewable developments in Scotland. The one and a half hour meeting saw spirited debate on the issue, and input also from four Irish MEPs, as Smith has explicitly brought the Irish into the discussion to raise the knock on effects of the UK pricing regime on the electricity market across the internal EU border in Ireland.

Speaking after the meeting, Smith said:

"I was, and remain, of the view that the locational pricing regime is holding back development in Scotland, but I was heartened to see everyone round the table, and a real willingness to discuss the issues. Of course, the issue is not a straightforward one when you get to the technical details of the legislation, but that is my point: if the legislation is delivering perverse outcomes then the legislation needs to be viewed in a new light, or scrapped altogether. We change the law every day in the European Parliament, this is fixable with sufficient political will to do it. Crucially, there was agreement around the table that none of the present rules we are trying to negotiate are set in stone.

"I was particularly pleased to hear the National Grid representatives mention, as they have in other fora, that they are working on a new interpretation of the regime which would see costs for wind, and I take it other renewable generators, halved, given that the renewables sector operates to a different and differing load factor. I have today written to National Grid asking for more details of this scheme and when we might see it rolled out as this is a major step forward and indicates just how fast I suspect this agenda is going to move, when movement comes.

"Less positively, the European Commission representatives also expressed a preliminary view from their initial analysis of the UK regime, that it is, in their view, not discrimination against renewables under the strict terms of the Directive. I have long said that the discrimination is de facto rather than necessarily de jure and I would have hoped for a sparkier attitude from the Commission, though the investigation is not over yet and we have yet to meet the new Energy Commissioner to put some fire in his belly on the issue.

"The fact is, if we are serious about the economic benefits of Scotland's green energy enlightenment, then we need to knock down the barriers holding us back. There remain a number of steps to go in this campaign but I was genuinely heartened to see the willingness to discuss, and all parties went away from the meeting in the certain knowledge that this issue is not going to go away."

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NOTE TO EDITORS

The organisations represented at the meeting are listed below.

UK Department for Energy and Climate Change National Grid
Scottish Government
Scottish Renewables
Highlands & Islands Enterprise
European Wind Energy Association
Scottish and Southern Energy
European Commission, DG TREN
Scottish Power
EDF Energy
Iberdrola
ENTSO-E
Shetland Isles Council
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