

FELLOWS ENVIRONMENTAL NEWS UPDATE – 27 FEBRUARY 2012

1.1 Schemes

Latest FiTs Scheme Plans

Government announced plans (9 Feb) to ensure the future and longevity of the FiT by making it more predictable and transparent to provide greater confidence for consumers to invest in a wider range of renewable technologies. This steers away from the recent focus on solar PV Cells which was in part due to a 45% reduction in installation costs since 2009. Greg Barker (Climate Change Minister) hopes the change will instigate two and a half times more installations than originally projected for 2015.

A 21p/kWh tariff will take effect from 1 April 2012 for domestic-sized solar systems and there will be other tariff reductions for large scale renewables. Initial plans to demand Level 'C' EPC for energy efficiency has been reduced to a Level 'D' requirement to qualify for the full FiT – this should cover approximately 50% of housing already but if the demand is likely to rise to Level 'C' or a commitment to installing all Green deal measures in the future. A multi-installation rate of 80% will be introduced for companies installing solar systems when they already receive FiTs for a system of 25 or more solar installations. Lastly, the tariff for micro-CHP will be increased. Full plans yet to be released.

£250m Weekly Collection Fund Applications

The first two submissions to DCLG for part of the Weekly Collection Fund are being prepared by Bath & North East Somerset and St Albans City councils. St Albans are attempting to provide a weekly food waste collection service to help them achieve 60% recycling rates by reducing the amount of waste which currently accounts for >30% of their current household landfill. Bath & NE Somerset wish to provide wheeled bins to households to go alongside their current weekly residual and recycling collections (in plastic bags). Any unused funding could finance an extra recycling box per household.

These applications follow last week's claims from Bristol City Council that the Fund favours councils currently with poor performances who, up to now, have failed to take any real steps towards improved waste management. Bristol hoped to use Funding to support nappy collections and a waste reduction scheme but are categorized as ineligible for the scheme due to not having, and not looking to include, a weekly residual collection in their waste management strategy – key prerequisites for any funding.

1.2 Documents Released

Peter Gleick Admits to Releasing Heartland Institute Documents

Water and climate analyst Peter Gleick has admitted to tricking the libertarian Heartland Institute into turning over confidential documents detailing their plans for discrediting climate change last week. In the Huffington Post, Gleick wrote that his judgement had been blinded by his frustration of on-going, anonymous attacks on climate change science, which led him to using a fake name to obtain the materials from HI. He has apologised to the HI but environmentalists worry that the admission crosses a new line in the spiteful debate between scientists and those who believe in the need for action on climate change and the few who deny any of these man-made issues.

Ofgem Release Road Map to Big 6 Monopoly Intervention

As part of a drive to increase competition and avoid a total dominance of the energy market by the Big Six, Ofgem has published a [Roadmap](#) which minimises red-tape for small suppliers and sets out three clear objectives the Big Six will have to meet. Large suppliers must increase the range of projects which support hedging and introduce robust reference prices and a more effective near-term trading market. The Six have simplified tariffs & auctioned short-term power and allowed deferrals on door-step sales but the pace of change needs to be hastened for the sake of independent suppliers. The Roadmap is well received but there is wonderment at the time such a document has taken to publish and the exclusion of suppliers' lack of investment in renewables and why their profits go abroad.



1.3 Waste and Recycling News

Commingling Waste Regulation Amendments Proposed

Defra have released a consultation [letter](#) (open until 12 April) detailing amendments to the Waste Regulations (2011) forced by the Campaign for Real Recycling judicial review in opposition of commingled recyclable collections (initially adjourned for 6 months to allow Defra's amendments). The consultation still permits Councils to collect recyclable materials using a commingled approach but it now acknowledges that commingled is not the same thing as a separate collection, a definition which will be removed from the regulations. Commingling is still allowed due to the inherent difficulties of creating a one-size-fits-all approach for councils and the fact that commingling material standards from MRFs have risen. A Defra Action Plan on Quality is to be published in Spring.

WRAP & LARAC Defend AWC's Link to an Increase in Pests

A report released by LV Home regarding pests states that the number of pests has risen over the past year. 65% of the pest-controllers interviewed suggested the reduction of waste collections (ie. change to Alternate Weekly Collections) was a possible cause. This was circulated by the national press even though five other, more likely, reasons were suggested in the same report (people bringing pests into the UK 83%; litter discarded near homes 82%; restaurants waste left on streets 81%, the warmer and wetter climate 75%; people feeding squirrels and foxes 69%). LARAC claim that unproven links crop up frequently and that there are many other potential explanations such as the mild winter, excess bird feeding and increases in domestic chickens. WRAP added that if waste is stored in appropriate and secure containers, there is "no possibility of AWC leading to increases in foxes and rats".

Compliance Assessment Review Tool (CART) Released for MRFs

Axion Consulting and 360 Environmental have joined together to offer CART to aid MRF operators ensure their site is compliant with waste legislation. This external audit combines Axion's experience as waste plant operators with 360 Environmental's expertise helping companies to understand and comply with a range of legislative requirements such as Duty of Care, permitting and producer responsibility. CART covers a full review of documentation and procedures to validate a site's compliance performance, providing a report listing the critical enforcement issues and all non-conformities with potential enforcement and commercial risks.

European-wide Plastic Bag Ban?

The European Commission could propose a blanket ban on plastic bags next month with the release of its green paper on plastic waste. 70% of people who voted on the EC's recent public consultation voted in favour of an outright ban and in England there is a gathering of momentum for such a ban, with high profile e-petitions supporting the cause. Some professionals are of the opinion that a system of charges would be preferable to a full ban due to the fact that plastic bags are still environmentally preferable than some of the alternatives which might become widely used following a ban.

UK Paper Production Outperforming Europe

UK 2011 production levels are up on 2010 whereas Europe saw a 2% drop in paper and pulp production for the same period including a 1.5% drop in reused paper. UK investments in mill capacity alleviated any worries with investments including Palm Paper newsprint, Norfolk, DS Smith office pulp, Kemsley and SAICA board, Manchester. UK recycled paper amounts have stagnated at 8.03million tonnes but this is likely to be in part due to the lightening of packaging balancing the increase in volumes collected. There is a low demand for newsprint (expected to rise with the publishing of The Sunday Sun) which is thought to be the reason behind high stock levels at UK mills.

UK Wants Time for European End of Waste Implementation

Defra is arguing for the inclusion of a significant transition period for operators of AD and composting plants prior to the adaption of the EU End of Waste Criteria for Biowaste currently being developed. The UK is unique in having produced its own criteria (via WRAP/EA Quality Protocols) and so may need time for operators working under PAS100 and PAS 110 standards to re-align to the new criteria. Perhaps more importantly, the UK certification bodies will need time to adapt their audits for checking criteria compliance & if these audits and certifiers require accreditation, yet more time will be required.



Large Fine for Attempted International Export of 290t Illegal Waste

BW Riddle and Chungs UK Ltd were both fined £5,000, the maximum fine for illegal shipment, as well as being ordered to pay £6,500 towards legal costs. This followed ten containers, all loaded at BW Riddle's metal recycling site for export by Chungs, being stopped at Felixstowe ferry port following routine checks which found non-suitable materials for transportation to China under international convention. Colin Riddle was also charged, and fined £4,000, for failing in his Duty of Care after not filling out his paperwork to describe the waste. The EA pointed out that the waste was not hazardous.

United Arab Emirates Ban Plastics

UAE has brought forward their ban on all disposable plastic products to take effect now having initially been pencilled in for 1 January 2013. The ban covers all packaging and disposable articles made of fossil-fuel-derived plastic polymers including flexible shopping bags and semi-rigid packaging for food, magazines, consumer-durables, garbage bags and wraps among other items. Plastics will require an ECAS registration certificate issued by Emirate Authorities but only those made from Oxi-Bio plastics will be accredited. These have a controlled lifespan and can fully biodegrade either on land or water.

Kerbside Carton Recycling on the Rise

Bristol City and Bath & North East Somerset are the latest councils to introduce kerbside collections for drinks cartons, a previously problem material that is now included in the waste strategies of 162 out of 406 national authorities. This figure of 40% has risen from 31% at the start of 2011 and 4% in 2006. Drinks cartons can be easily recycling using a pulping process where the paperboard and non-fibre layers are separated for separate uses; the wood fibres can produce high strength paper products and the polymer/foil layers used for energy recovery. Removal from the waste stream is fundamental.

1.4 Energy News

Government support of Wind Power Diminishing

A [report](#) released by the Electricity Network's Strategy Group (ENSG) has shown the backing for wind power received from Government to have diminished substantially over the past two years. The report gives the most up-to-date view of officials, Ofgem and investors and estimates that a 4GW reduction has occurred in the forecast for wind energy production for the year 2020 since the last report was released in 2010, now down to 28.3GW. Increased public and political anger over the sight and cost of turbines has caused Government to quietly shelve plans for the technology. A further 1GW of green energy has been removed with 2020 targets being made thanks to a 5GW increase in nuclear energy.

The reports also suggests the cost projections to link new power generation to the national distribution network has risen from £4.7b to £8.8b over the same two year period to finance the connection of offshore wind and marine energy from the Scottish Islands to the mainland as well as the installation of two undersea cables to transfer power from generators to consumers from Scotland to England and from North to South Wales. DECC officials say the report does not give the best or full picture.

British Gas Offer

British Gas is offering their clients £50 for every 'vulnerable' friend, relative or neighbour they refer to BG to receive free loft or cavity wall insulation, with no maximum limit for referrals. In this instance, 'vulnerable' denotes people on pension credit, certain income-related benefits or receiving child tax credit and having an income of less than £16,190. The referred customer will also receive £50 upon completion of the insulation works as well as the reduced heating bills following the works.

Eden Project Employee-Owned Solar System

The Eden Project has installed 200 solar panels on the roofs of storage buildings with funding from Ebico, the only not-for-profit electricity supplier in the country. Employees can now buy shares in the project, with the proceeds being used to pay Ebico back. Savers will receive a proportion of the Feed in Tariff for the next 25 years which is expected to pay back 10% of investment per year. The alterations to the FIT means small scale solar projects are less appropriate for community or group financing and so this is likely to be one of few solar joint ventures whereas technologies such as Anaerobic Digestion or Wind are likely to prosper.



Trump's Anti-Wind Pledge

In concordance with The Heartland Institute's recent additional press, it has come to light that Donald Trump, US multi-million tycoon who has already opposed plans for an off-shore wind farm to be erected in view of his luxury golf course in Scotland, is to financially support an anti-wind power campaign. Trump will support Communities Against Turbines Scotland (CATS) with members of the Trump organisation set to meet the campaign group next week to finalise the his support. Trump wrote to Alex Salmond arguing how the Scottish First Minister was 'hell bent on destroying Scotland's coast with wind turbines' and subsequently has been quoted saying '...wake up to the devastation this is causing....ugly monstrosities.....horrendous machines'. It is highly possible Trump's opposition of wind energy will increase their popularity.

1.5 Vehicle News

Plug-in Grant Now Available for Vans

Motorists buying an ultra-low emission van can now receive up to £8,000 or 20% of the cost to help purchase the vehicle as part of the Plug-in Grant initially only available to car buyers. In a bid to be technology-neutral, any van is eligible providing it emits <75g/km CO₂. Currently this covers four vans with a further three set to be released before summer.

1.6 Other News

Chancellor urged to Drop Carbon Price Floor Plans

The Confederation of Paper Industries (CPI) has warned Chancellor Osborne that the Carbon Price Floor (CPF) could damage energy intensive industries. Energy price predictions show how the paper industry's energy bills could rise 2.4% from 01 April 2013 in the first year with the new CPF, rising to a 22.3% increase by 2020. These increases could render the sector's CHP plants uneconomic. The CPF was first introduced by Osborne in the 2011 budget as part of the Electricity Market Reform to provide support and certainty to the price of carbon in the power sector to encourage investment.

Emergency Drought Summit Held

Caroline Spelman called a summit attended by water companies, wild-life groups, businesses and NGOs on 20 February to discuss ways to ensure an adequate water supply exists this summer. Another year of below average rainfall and a second successive dry winter has led to the South East being declared a drought zone. The energy secretary urged water companies to come up with ways to reduce water waste and usage and discussed methods of limiting the impact of drought in the future. Meanwhile, water companies have pledged to reduce wastage and increase leak detection. The summit was seen as a success but everyone is being urged to use less water starting now.

Food Prices set to Rise for Spring Crops

The onset of drought conditions is likely to cause an increase in food prices this summer as growers in the South East contemplate cancelling orders for potatoes, carrots, onions and lettuce seed. In the next few days-to-weeks, decisions will be made as to what crops the farmers believe they can grow efficiently with the predicted continuation of low water levels. Many farmers have had their license to take water from rivers and underground sources removed already. Greenhouse and organic crops should experience less disruption due to the better water management but even so any increase in water price, as is certain this spring and summer, will add to the cost of food for the general public.

Water Security Competition Receives Government Funding

Government has provided the UK Water Industry with £4m to help with the challenge to improve water security. A [competition](#) is being run with investment from the Technical Strategy Board, Defra, Natural Environmental Research Centre (NERC) and Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC). The aim is to provide £1m to fund SME feasibility studies, £2.5m for collaborative research and design projects which utilise an end-user, and £0.5 for specific space-saving solutions. The competition opens 19 March, with registration until 25 April and submissions by 02 May.

