



# ENERGY STRATEGY E-BULLETIN

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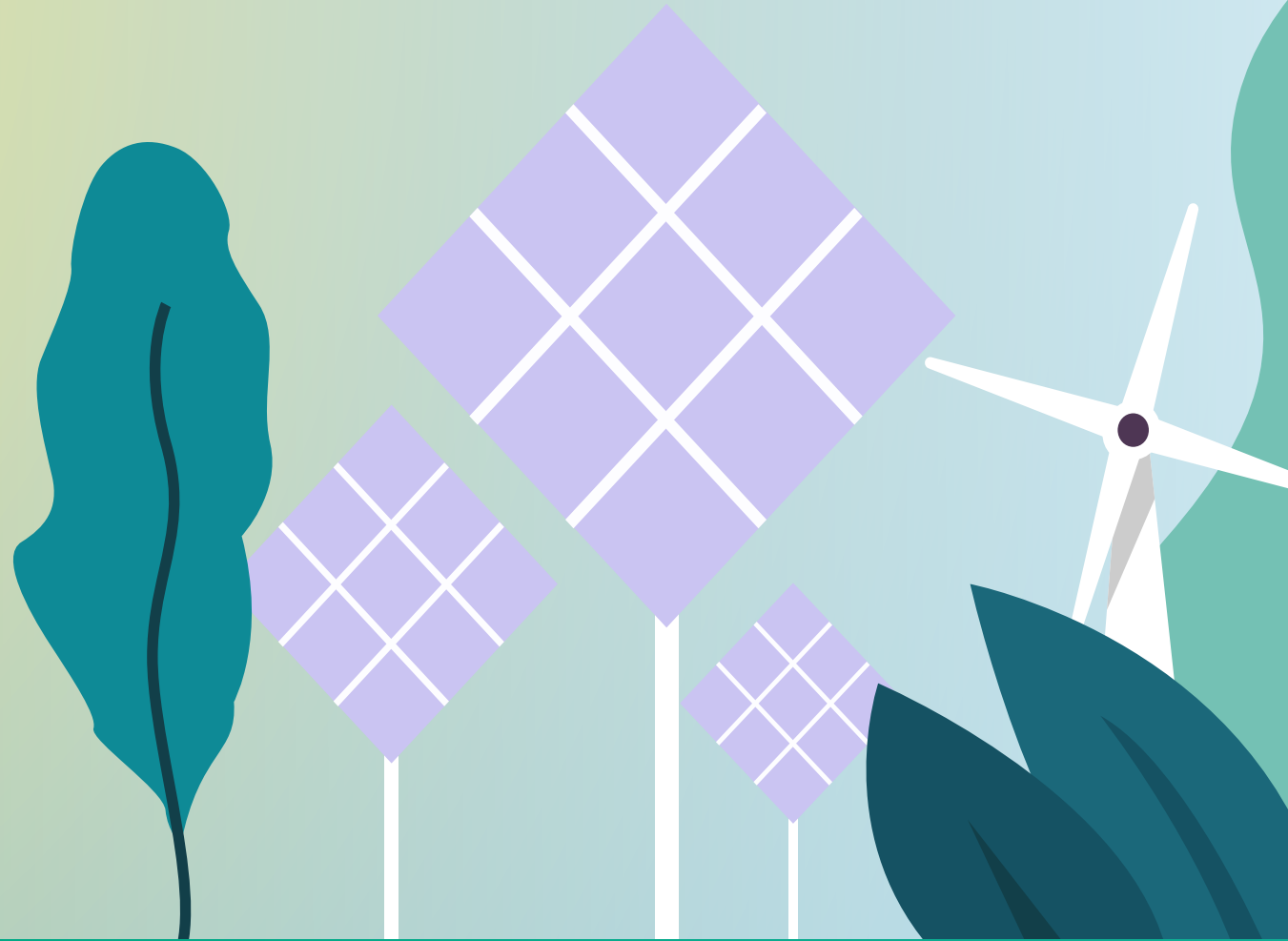




## WELCOME TO THE ENERGY STRATEGY E-BULLETIN – ISSUE 27

**In this edition, we focus on Minister Murphy’s announcement of additional funding for the NI Sustainable Energy Programme (NISEP), which will result in a range of energy efficiency measures being installed in approximately 1,000 low-income households.**

We share an update on the DfE Permanent Secretary’s keynote address at the AgendaNI, NI Energy Forum. We also have details on the Advice NI Sustainable Energy Communities NI project, and the recent Biomethane Call for Evidence stakeholder engagement workshops.



## NORTHERN IRELAND SUSTAINABLE ENERGY PROGRAMME (NISEP)

**Department for the Economy Minister, Conor Murphy, has announced an additional £2.5m funding package for the NI Sustainable Energy Programme (NISEP).**

NISEP is a series of energy efficiency schemes with 80% of funding targeted at low-income households, delivered by the Energy Saving Trust on behalf of the Utility Regulator. This additional £2.5m funding will result in a range of energy efficiency measures being installed in approximately 1,000 low-income households.

*Making the announcement, Minister Murphy said: “Last year, my department provided £1m additional funding to NISEP, which helped almost 500 homes become more energy efficient. Today, I am pleased to announce that I am doubling that level of funding to £2.5m. This will allow 1,000 more vulnerable households across the north to install energy efficiency measures such as loft and cavity wall insulation.*

*This will not only improve the warmth and comfort of their homes but also lower their energy bills and reduce their carbon emissions.”*

*“I have been clear that decarbonisation is the cornerstone of my Economic Vision but that a transition to a greener and more sustainable economy must be a fair and just transition for all. At this time of severe budget pressures, this additional £2.5m funding indicates my ongoing determination to help those most vulnerable in our society.”*

Turning to how the funding will also help inform and support the delivery of the NI Energy Strategy, the Minister concluded:

*“Today’s funding announcement is a key deliverable from the 2024 Energy Strategy Action Plan. It will also provide critical commercial and consumer insight for officials on the development and delivery of a domestic energy efficiency programme as outlined in the Energy Strategy – Path to Net Zero Energy.”*



Further information on NISEP, eligibility criteria and how to apply can be found at: [\*\*Northern Ireland Sustainable Energy Programme - Energy Saving Trust\*\*](#)

## SUSTAINABLE ENERGY COMMUNITIES NI PROJECT LAUNCH

**A Sustainable Energy Communities NI (SEC NI) project, funded by The National Lottery Community Fund, has been launched in Belfast.**

Advice NI is the lead partner of SEC NI, an initiative designed to foster community-led sustainable energy solutions across Northern Ireland. The SEC model originated in the south of Ireland, where it is led by Atlantic Technological University on behalf of Sustainable Energy Authority Ireland.

Developed in response to the significant impact the energy price crisis was having on households across Northern Ireland, SEC NI will work with four communities to develop bespoke Energy Master Plans. The four community locations across Northern Ireland are –

- Mount Vernon (Belfast)
- Dolmens Climate Action Network (Castlewellan)
- Ballymacash Sports Academy (Lisburn)
- Lisnaskea Community Enterprises (Enniskillen)

The Department for the Economy (DfE) is represented on the advisory group for SEC NI. Speaking at the launch of the project, Anne-Maire McConn, DfE's Director of Energy Strategy and Corporate Services, praised the ethos of SEC NI:

*“One of the key strengths of the SEC project is that it involves partnership between the communities and between technical and project expertise. By building from the ground up, with bespoke community energy solutions, you will increase the chance of success, as the communities themselves have essentially co-designed their energy solutions.”*

*This project clearly demonstrates the level of commitment from all involved to really make a difference here in the North, to foster greater energy citizenship and offer participating communities the support and resources needed to become leaders in sustainable energy.”*

The goal of the SEC NI project is to have four community-based Energy Master Plans (EMP) and energy solutions ready for implementation.





## NORTHERN IRELAND ENERGY FORUM 2024

The AgendaNI Northern Ireland Energy Forum took place on 17th September at Titanic Belfast.

The event was attended by over 250 delegates, there to discuss energy policy and the latest developments from across the sector, including:

- Decarbonising the Northern Ireland economy
- Regulatory outlook for the energy sector
- The future of the electricity grid
- Heat networks as part of a just transition to net zero
- Planning and environmental aspects of energy projects
- The role of wind energy in achieving 80% electricity from renewables by 2030
- Meeting the need for long term energy storage
- Developing a biomethane sector in Northern Ireland
- Skills for the energy transition
- Developing a hydrogen economy

Ian Snowden, Permanent Secretary of DfE, gave the keynote address, and highlighted that 'Delivering on decarbonisation' is one of the key priorities set out by Economy Minister, Conor Murphy.

Ian outlined the urgency with which we must approach the task of decarbonisation:

*"When the first Energy Forum was held in 2001, we still had almost three decades to spare before we would reach the very significant milestone year of 2030.*

*At the turn of this year, we will have 5 years left. That's just 60 months.*

- 60 months to achieve 80% electricity from renewables.
- 60 months to deliver an enhanced electricity system that supports the decarbonisation of all of power, heat and transport.
- 60 months to deliver the economic opportunity through defossilisation of our energy system."



DfE Permanent Secretary, Ian Snowden speaking at the NI Energy Forum

## NORTHERN IRELAND ENERGY FORUM 2024

Ian also highlighted the opportunity of decarbonisation,

*“Make no mistake, there is an economic opportunity in decarbonisation that, if it is properly grasped, will be nothing short of transformative for the health and prosperity of our citizens. This opportunity is not just once-in-a-generation – it is unique.*

*Unless you want to get into the realms of science fiction, it is very difficult to imagine that we are going to have to make such a radical whole system change to the way we generate, store, distribute, buy or deal with energy ever again.”*

And emphasised the need to protect the most vulnerable in society,

*“As we accelerate towards net zero, protecting low income and vulnerable consumers is key. The only way this can be achieved is through collaboration with communities, businesses, local government, statutory partners and all those who have an interest in creating an inclusive and equitable path towards a sustainable future.”*



## BIOMETHANE CALL FOR EVIDENCE: STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT WORKSHOP

**The potential role of green gas in our energy and transport system has continued to evolve since the launch of the NI Energy Strategy in 2021 and, led by DfE Energy Group's Gas Team, the focus of late has been on biomethane.**

Minister Murphy highlighted the opportunity around biomethane in his Economic Statement of February 2024 and, through extensive research with DAERA, AFBI and academics at QUB, we now see the energy potential for a home-produced sustainable gas using slurry, silage and food waste, from our agriculture sector. This is especially relevant as the uptake of biomethane will create demand for biogas from Anaerobic Digester plants, growing a market for green jobs and potentially resolving waste and soil nutrient issues/runoff which are damaging our local environment.

In collaboration with DAERA and the UR, the Gas Team co-designed a call for evidence "Developing biomethane production in Northern Ireland,"

which opened on 17th May. Following two successful workshops at Belfast Met and Loughry College, the call for evidence closed on 23rd August with extensive positive engagement by over 115 industry stakeholders.

Research also suggests that using biogenic carbon, captured in the biogas-to-biomethane cleaning stage, could both assist our food sector and lead to the production of eFuels when combined with green hydrogen. In addition, digestate, another by-product of the biogas production process, could be processed into biofertilizer

or other chemicals for use by our farming community or exported.

The next stage following the review of responses to the call for evidence will be particularly interesting, moving towards development of a consultation paper on biomethane. This will continue to include close liaison with DAERA and the UR as side policies in alternative sustainable agriculture and secure affordable gas will likely be developed in synergy with the Department's.

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