

The IDRIC Policy News Update provides a monthly summary of key policy developments relevant to industrial decarbonisation at UK level and in the devolved administrations.

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Industrial Decarbonisation Policy News - March 2024

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March highlights:

- **At UK level**, following the Government's Spring Budget, energy market reform and grid infrastructure expansion remained in focus, with the start of the second REMA consultation and updates from Ofgem and National Grid ESO on plans for supporting grid development. The Environment Agency published research on the environmental capacity of industrial clusters and new permitting guidance on green hydrogen permitting, while several parliamentary inquiries are looking into industrial policy and net zero energy systems. A new Parliament report finds little evidence on the impacts of the Levelling Up funding. As part of a drive to deliver the skills needed for the net zero transition, EPSRC is funding 65 new doctoral training centres, including on Green Industrial Futures, led by IDRIC.
- **In Scotland**, the Government published its vision for the use of bioenergy, while Climate Change Committee's recent progress report casts serious doubt on Scotland's ability to achieve its net zero targets. Further criticism comes from the Holyrood' Economic and Fair Work Committee after cuts to the Just Transition Fund for the North East in the 2024-25 budget published earlier this month.
- **In Wales**, former Economy Minister, Vaughan Gething (Labour), is appointed new Welsh First Minister, becoming the first black leader of a national government in Europe. In the Senedd, inquiries into the green economy and the future of steel in Wales are continuing, with evidence heard from industry and academia.
- A range of **consultations and calls for evidence** are inviting views, from supply chain development for hydrogen and CCUS (GIGA consultation), planning and permitting reform, to electricity networks and bioenergy, among others.

- **At EU level**, the European Commission is accelerating funding through the Just Transition Fund to support to boost new manufacturing capacities and projects in regions most affected by the transition to climate neutrality.
- Last but not least, several new **IDRIC research outputs** shed light on energy and resource efficiency, guidance for a just transition in key industry clusters, and more.

This and more below...

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UK policy and regulatory developments

UK halves greenhouse gas emissions

Department for Energy Security and Net Zero

28th March 2024

Provisional data shows UK territorial greenhouse gas emissions have been reduced by 53% between 1990 and 2023, or 50% when including emissions from international aviation and shipping. This makes the UK the first major economy to halve its carbon emissions. DESNZ attributes the cut in emissions predominantly to a shift in the energy generation mix, in particular the move away from coal to renewables. The electricity supply sector saw a drop in emissions of 19.6%, homes had a fall of 7.2%, and industry had a 8.0% drop. Overall, UK territorial greenhouse gas emissions reduced by 428 MtCO₂e between 1990 and 2023. Not included are emissions from the UK's global supply chain.

More info [here](#).

New guidance on the production of green hydrogen published

Environment Agency

28th March 2024

The Environment Agency has published guidance on emerging techniques for the production of hydrogen from water using electrolysis (green hydrogen). The guidance – developed in consultation with industry, other UK regulators and other stakeholders – is designed to help businesses design and develop industrial facilities for the production of green hydrogen.

The guidance published by the EA helps companies understand the risks that must be managed and outlines the available techniques for preventing or minimising emissions and impacts on the environment. As well as providing permitting advice to operators, the guidance gives an insight to the public on how environmental regulations and standards are being applied in order to protect communities from risk of harm.

More info [here](#).

Ofgem publishes multiyear Strategy for delivering clean, affordable and secure energy system

Ofgem

28th March 2024

'Protect, Build, Change, Deliver' sets out the regulator's objectives and priorities for the next five years and beyond. The five priorities include: 1) Shaping a retail market that works for consumers, 2) **Enabling infrastructure for net zero at pace**, 3) Establishing an efficient, fair and flexible energy system, 4) Advancing decarbonisation through low carbon energy and social schemes, 5) Strengthening Ofgem as an organisation.

In the chapter on infrastructure sets out several objectives of particular relevance for industrial decarbonisation. These are, among others:

- **Strategic planning:** recent and planned steps for a more coordinated planning of transmission and distribution infrastructure, centred on 3 anticipatory plans for a more joined-up approach at all levels: the Strategic Spatial Energy Plan (SSEP), the Centralised Strategic Network Plan (CSNP) and the Regional Energy Strategic Planners (RESPs). The plans will be produced by NESO, the new National Energy Systems Operator, later in 2024, which will be regulated and licensed by Ofgem.
- **Expanding electricity networks:** plans to enable anticipator investment including through delivering the Accelerated Strategic Transmission Investment (ASTI) framework and streamlining of regulatory approvals process for onshore transmission projects, the Offshore Transmission Owner framework and electricity interconnectors.
- **Facilitate the deployment of low carbon technology.** As Ofgem is set to become the economic regulator for nuclear, CCUS and hydrogen transport and storage sectors, the strategy discusses plans around business models, price control models and regulatory framework and guidance. It also discusses how Ofgem plans to support the development of long-duration electricity storage (LDES), although governance and roles are still under discussion.
- **Network performance and connections.** The strategy recognises the need to tackle delayed connections to transmission and distribution grid (generation and demand) and the need for the connections to be fully aligned with strategic planning. It sets out plans for increased monitoring and accountability of network companies' delivery of supply and infrastructure, as well as actions for a more transparent, data-driven, connection process and more effective use of network capacity (moving away from first-come, first-served approach).

More info [here](#).

Two electricity superhighway between Scotland and England fast-tracked

Ofgem

27th March 2024

In March, Ofgem fast-tracked two high voltage 'superhighways' () between Scotland and England under the Accelerated Strategic Transmission Investment (ASTI) framework. The two proposed two-gigawatt high voltage direct current (HVDC) are to bring in energy from North Sea windfarms.

- **The Eastern Green Link 1 (EGL1)** will be a 196km multi directional subsea cable between Torness in East Lothian, Scotland and Hawthorn Pit in County Durham, England, involving 176km submarine cable and 20km of underground onshore cable (project developer: SP Energy Networks and National Grid Electricity Transmission).

- **The Eastern Green Link 1 (EGL2)** will link the Scottish and English transmission networks from Peterhead in Aberdeenshire, Scotland to Drax in North Yorkshire, England, involving a 436km submarine cable and around 70km of onshore cable buried underground (project developer: Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks Transmission and National Grid Electricity Transmission).

Developed by Ofgem, the ASTI framework is designed to speed up the delivery of strategic energy projects to feed in more electricity generated by offshore wind to British consumers. A total of 26 projects have been identified by Ofgem for progression under the ASTI process.

More info [here](#).

New Industry and Skills ministers appointed

Cabinet Office / Department of Business and Trade, Department for Education

26th March 2024

In a mini-shuffle triggered by resignation of two ministers, Nus Ghani MP was moved from her post as Minister for Industry at the Department of Business and Trade to Minister for Europe at the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office. Alan Mak MP will take over her post in a new expanded role as Minister for Industry and Economic Security at both the Cabinet Office and the Department for Business and Trade. Luke Hall MP was appointed as the UK Government's new Minister for Skills, Apprenticeships and Higher Education this week. This follows the resignation of Robert Halfon, who resigned from the post after announcing his decision to not run for re-election at the next general election.

Environmental capacity for carbon capture and hydrogen in industrial clusters

Department for Energy Security and Net Zero / Environment Agency

21st March 2024

The Environment Agency has published two reports from its ongoing investigation into the environmental capacity for deploying carbon capture and hydrogen production technology in the Humber and Teesside industrial cluster. The two reports cover: a snapshot view of industry plans at a cluster level, a full review of evidence on water availability and quality, a partial review of air quality and the risk of flooding, impacts that deployment may have on the receiving environment, including habitats, as well as consideration of how these factors will be influenced by a changing climate. The research carried out from 2021 to 2023 was sponsored by the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero. Work in future phases will complete the review of environmental capacity issues in the Teesside industrial cluster by considering air quality. The webpage also contains a list of useful links to guidance and information on permitting for industrial decarbonisation.

More info [here](#).

Research on community benefits for electricity transmission network infrastructure

Department for Energy Security and Net Zero

21st March 2024

DESNZ published research to understand community views and preferences on electricity transmission network infrastructure, and measures that could improve its acceptability, including

community benefits. The research was conducted in 3 case studies areas where there are proposals for transmission infrastructure projects classified as essential by the National Grid Electricity System Operator to enable the government's 2030 offshore wind ambitions. The case study areas were: Inverness / Keith, Lincolnshire County and East Suffolk, Dover, and Thanet local authorities

More info [here](#).

Beyond 2030 report: £58bn investment needed for a grid fit for the future

National Grid ESO

19th March 2024

The Beyond 2030 sets out a new and upgraded network needed for a fully decarbonised electricity system of the future by 2035, taking into account the expected increase in electricity demand across the economy. To connect an extra 21GW of offshore wind as well as a breadth of other low carbon generation across Britain, offshore and onshore network upgrades of £58 billion are recommended. This is expected to create and retain 20,000 annual jobs. The report sets out a national blueprint for a future transmission grid as well as 12 regional blueprints for different parts of the UK with detailed maps outlining plans for new and upgraded transmission infrastructure. The report builds on top of the Holistic Network Design; the Centralised Strategic Network Plan will be published in 2026.

More info [here](#).

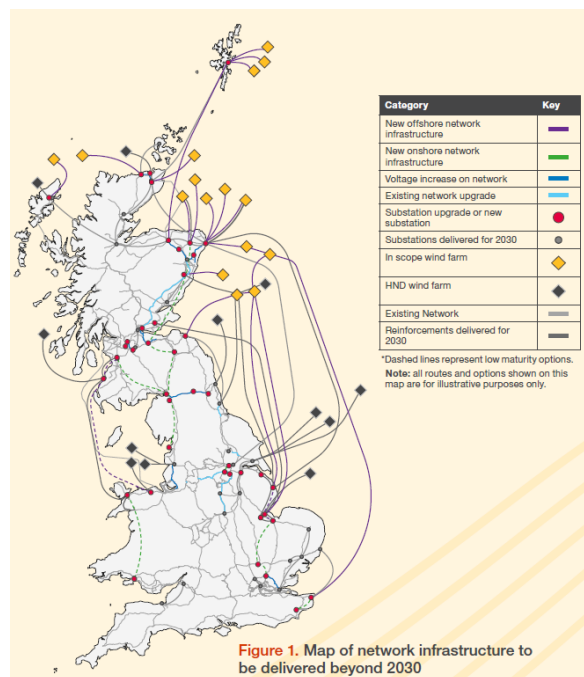


Figure 1. Map of network infrastructure to be delivered beyond 2030

New doctoral training centres to revolutionise the UK's skill-base in key industries

Department for Science, Innovation and Technology

12th March 2024

Science and Technology Secretary Michelle Donelan set out plans to revolutionise the UK's skill-base in key industries, including engineering, chemistry, biology, semiconductors, quantum technologies and future telecoms or Artificial Intelligence. The plans are backed by £1.1 billion funding, which will support the funding of 65 doctoral training centres in these key growth areas, including a new doctoral training centre building on the work of IDRIC to create key skills for industrial decarbonisation.

Led by Professor Mercedes Maroto-Valer, the new **Centre for Doctoral Training in Green Industrial Futures (CDT GIF)** brings together four world-leading university partners (Heriot-Watt University, Imperial College London, University of Bath and University of Sheffield) and industry partners. 100 students are trained to doctoral-level degrees (PhD) in pathways including Carbon Capture, Utilisation and Storage (CCUS), green hydrogen and sustainable fuels, CO2 removals, energy & resource efficiency and systems integration. Alongside the technical research, the CDT-GIF students will address the social, policy, regulatory and economic challenges and study how these technologies are integrated into the industrial system to mirror the 'real-world' industrial landscape, create optionality and flexibility in net zero pathways and deliver practical, joined-up solutions for end-users.

More info [here](#).

Second consultation on electricity market reform published

Department for Energy Security and Net Zero

12th March 2024

The Government seeks views on proposals for reforming electricity markets through the Review of Electricity Market Arrangements (REMA) to support the delivery of a fully decarbonised electricity system by 2035. The consultation seeks views on how to address four key challenges.

- Passing through the value of a renewables-based system to consumers, with proposals around fairer electricity pricing
- Investing to create a renewables-based system at pace, incl. reform options for the Contracts for Difference scheme
- Transitioning away from an unabated gas-based system to a flexible, resilient, decarbonised electricity system, incl. through Power CCUS, Hydrogen to Power and Long Duration Electricity Storage and additional business model support needed
- Operating and optimising a renewables-based system, cost-effectively, including through options for strengthening locational signals and nodal pricing.

The consultation is open until 7th May. A summary will be published in summer 2024, with a view to finalising policy developments in mid-2025.

More info [here](#).

Government announces additional funding for green industries

HM Treasury / Department for Science, Innovation and Technology

4th March 2024

Ahead of the Spring Budget, the Chancellor Jeremy Hunt announced a significant investment package in the UK's life sciences and manufacturing sectors, which includes an increase of up to £120 million to the Green Industries Growth Accelerator (GIGA) to further support expansion of low carbon manufacturing supply chains across the UK. The government confirmed that the total fund, which has now increased to almost £1.1 billion, will be split between the clean energy sectors, including around £390 million earmarked to expand UK-based supply chains for electricity networks and offshore wind sectors, and around £390 million for carbon capture, utilisation and storage and hydrogen sectors. To inform the design of Green Industries Growth Accelerator, DESNZ recently opened a call for evidence hydrogen and CCUS supply chains (see below, 27th February).

More [info](#).

Spring budget with announcements on grid connections, green industry funding and CBAM

HM Treasury

6th March 2024

Headline commitments in the Government's Spring Budget set out by Chancellor Jeremy Hunter at the beginning of March included a series of personal taxation and benefit reforms. Announcements of particular relevance for industrial decarbonisation include:

- **Grid connections and planning:** The Government will publish a consultation on a proposed 'Accelerated Planning Service', alongside new measures to constrain the use of extension of time agreements and identify local planning authorities who are using these excessively.
 - Additionally, a consultation response on the consenting process for Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs) and the updated National Networks National Policy Statement will be published.
 - The Government will implement a new connections process from January 2025 and work with the Electricity System Operator to outline further interim reforms to the grid queue process by summer 2024. The government will establish the National Energy System Operator (NESO) in 2024, and will publish new community benefits guidance by June.
 - The Government will publish a Regulator Performance Framework in the coming months to encourage regulator agility, efficiency and responsiveness, following the Growth Duty extended to Ofwat, Ofcom and Ofgem in the Autumn Statement.
- **Contracts for Difference (CfD) Allocation Round 6:** The full parameters have been published and £1.25 billion provided for this round: £120 million for established technologies, £105 million for emerging technologies, inclusive of a minimum ringfence of £10 million for Tidal Stream projects, £800 million for offshore wind.
- **Green Industries Growth Accelerator (GIGA):** A further £120 million has been allocated to GIGA. GIGA was originally announced as a £960m fund in Autumn 2023 to support the expansion of strong and sustainable clean energy supply chains in the UK, including carbon capture, utilisation and storage (CCUS), engineered greenhouse gas removals (GGRs) and hydrogen. £390million is expected to support supply chains of offshore wind and £390million for supply chains of CCUS and hydrogen. This sits alongside the £300 million already allocated to nuclear fuels for the High Assay Low Enriched Uranium (HALEU) programme.
- **Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism:** The Chancellor has provided an update on the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism, which will be introduced from January 2027, and apply to goods imported in the aluminium, cement, ceramics, fertiliser, glass, hydrogen and iron & steel sectors. The details will be subject to public consultation later the year.
- **Apprenticeships:** Additional plans have been announced for a £50 million Apprenticeship Growth Sector pilot to boost funding for apprenticeships in advanced manufacturing, green technologies, and life sciences.
- **Levelling Up and Freeports:** The Government unveiled further details on the Investment Zones in Greater Manchester, Liverpool City Region, North East of England, South Yorkshire, West Midlands and West Yorkshire. The tax reliefs available within Freeport tax sites are to be extended from five to ten years, until September 2031 in England, and September 2034 in Scotland and Wales.

More info [here](#).

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UK Parliament

Report: No compelling examples of Levelling-up delivery so far

Public Accounts Committee, House of Commons

15th March 2024

In a report published, the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) warns that councils have been able to spend just a fraction of the Government's promised Levelling Up funding, with only just over 10% of the funds provided to reduce inequality under the Levelling Up agenda actually spent and making a difference on the ground. The Report argues that Government is unable to provide any compelling examples of what Levelling Up funding has delivered so far. It finds that more impactful bids to funding lost out due to optimism bias in favour of so-called 'shovel-ready' projects. Yet, the report raises concerns that not enough was done by DLUHC to understand the readiness of schemes and the challenges facing local authorities before funds were awarded.

More info [here](#).

Report: Long-duration Energy Storage

Science and Technology Committee, House of Commons

13th March 2024

The Committee's report on long-duration energy storage concludes that the Government must act fast to ensure that energy storage technologies can scale up in time to play a vital role in decarbonising the electricity system and ensuring energy security by 2035. Whilst the Committee welcomes the Government's recent reforms to the energy system, such as committing to produce a Strategic Spatial Energy Plan, the report raises concerns that it is not clear who will be responsible for implementing this plan or how future energy supply crises will be managed.

The Committee calls on the Government to:

- commit to a strategic reserve of long-duration energy storage vital for energy security;
- urgently make key decisions and coordinate the delivery of its energy system plan;
- set an explicit minimum target for long-duration energy storage;
- set out the details of its long-duration storage business model;
- clarify the role of hydrogen in the future energy system and deliver no-regrets investments in hydrogen production and storage;
- act with urgency and reduce timelines for grid connection and planning delays;
- engage and communicate with the public to ensure support for vital hydrogen and electricity infrastructure.

More info [here](#).

Inquiry: Industrial Policy

Business and Trade Committee, House of Commons

12th March 2024

The Committee on Business and Trade continued its inquiry on Industrial policy, hearing oral evidence from a number of policy experts on how the UK's advantages can be exploited for economic growth ([transcript](#)). A previous oral evidence session took place on the 20th February questioning former Business Secretaries Lord Mandelson, Vince Cable and Greg Clark as well as Lord Harrington over how to boost UK industry and foreign direct investment (FDI) ([transcript](#)).

More info [here](#).

Inquiry: Keeping the power on: our future energy technology mix

Energy Security and Net Zero Committee, House of Commons

6th and 20th March 2024

This inquiry looks at how the energy mix of the UK needs to change in the near future and what technologies (small fission reactors, hydrogen, geothermal, tidal, wave, solar, batteries storing renewable-derived energy, and biomass) might be applied immediately to deliver a national capability to keep the power on while delivering against net zero targets. In evidence sessions during March, the committee heard evidence from the following witnesses: Andrew Bowie MP, Minister for Nuclear and Renewables (DESNZ), Dan Osgood, Director of Energy Markets and Analysis (DESNZ), Keith Bell (Climate Change Committee), Craig Dyke (Electricity System Operator), Tim Ambler (Adam Smith Institute), Doug Parr (Greenpeace UK), Robert Gross (UKERC), Jim Watson (UCL).

More info [here](#).

Inquiry: A flexible future for the grid

Energy Security and Net Zero Committee, House of Commons

20th March 2024

This inquiry looks at how the grid develops, whether there is a need for one size fits all solution or whether more local solutions might deliver quicker benefits. The inquiry is likely to touch on planning, devolution of decision making, the potential for new pricing that reflects more local solutions, and REMA. This month's session heard evidence from the following witnesses: Alice Delahunty (National Grid Electricity Transmission), Christianna Logan (SSEN Transmission), Phil Jones (Energy Networks Association), Eleanor Warburton (Ofgem), Claire Dykta (Electricity System Operator), Graham Pannell (Independent Renewable Energy Generators Group).

More info [here](#).

Inquiry: Enabling sustainable electrification of the UK economy

Environmental Audit Committee, House of Commons

12th March 2024

- Rt Hon Graham Stuart MP, Minister for Energy Security and Net Zero, DESNZ
- Emily Bourne, Director for Energy Systems and Networks, DESNZ

- Eleanor Warburton, Ofgem

The evidence session examined the potential for announced reforms to speed up grid connections; whether the recently updated National Planning Policy Framework will support energy infrastructure rollout in local communities; how the Government, Ofgem and the National Energy System Operator will interact to decarbonise the economy, and whether action is being taken to address skills shortages that could be hindering timely grid connections.

More info [here](#).

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Scotland

Committee criticises budget cuts to Just Transition Fund

Scottish Parliament Economy and Fair Work Committee

25th March 2024

Concluding its inquiry into the Just transition for the North East and Moray, the Economy and Fair Work Committee published its final report. Against a backdrop of a 75% budget decrease for the Just Transition Fund for the coming financial year, the Committee calls for clarity on how the Scottish Government intends to support jobs and build skills for the energy transition. The Committee also criticises the delays in bringing forward Scottish Government strategies, such as the Energy Strategy and Just Transition Plan, regional just transition plans, and the Climate Change Update and warns that these delays have an economic impact on business, investor confidence and community action.

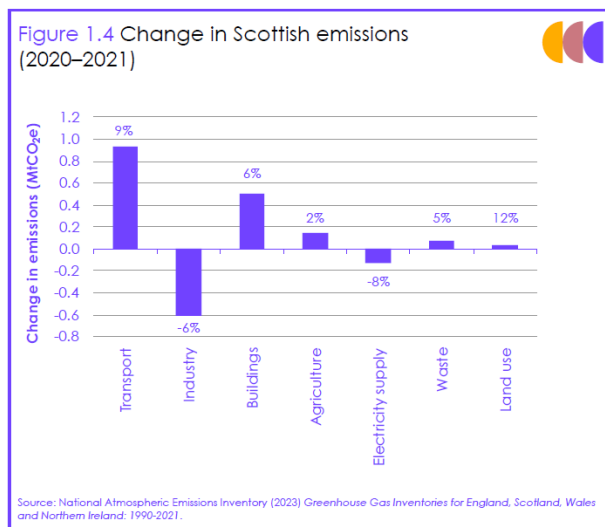
More info [here](#).

Scotland’s 2030 climate goals questioned by climate watchdog

Climate Change Committee

20th March 2024

In its newest Progress in reducing emissions in Scotland report, the Climate Change Committee gave a scathing critique of Scotland’s climate change policy and sees the 2030 target as ‘no longer credible’. It says: ‘Continued delays to the updated climate change plan and further slippage in promised climate policies mean that the Climate Change Committee no longer believes that the Scottish Government will meet its statutory 2030 goal to reduce emissions by 75%. There is no comprehensive strategy for Scotland to decarbonise towards Net Zero.’ Meeting the 2030 targets would require an acceleration in emissions reduction in Scotland that now ‘beyond what is credible’.



While **industry** is among the two sectors where emissions reductions have taken place between 2020-2021 (the other being electricity generation), the CCC attributes the fall by 6% in emissions from industry to the extensive maintenance in oil and gas production during that time, rather than a sign of deeper decarbonisation. While there has been some progress in carbon capture, utilisation, and storage (CCUS), in particular the awarding of Track-2 status for the Acorn CCUS cluster, there has been minimal progress in other areas of industrial decarbonisation:

- **Industrial Resource efficiency:** The Circular Economy Bill is expected to help reduce industrial emissions, but more measures are needed to increase efficiency of resource use, with particular opportunities in construction materials
- **Industrial energy efficiency and industrial electrification:** there is no clear strategy and certainty on funding in Scotland once Scottish Industrial Energy Transformation Fund (SIETF) ends in 2024
- **Industrial CCUS:** current funding arrangements under the Scottish Government's Emerging Energy Technologies Fund are set to end by 2026. The UK Government has detailed policy mechanisms to support CCS in industrial clusters, but it is less clear how Scottish industrial sites outside Acorn will be supported to adopt CCS.
- **Hydrogen Use and supply:** in the Hydrogen Action Plan, the Scottish Government has committed to provide £100 million to renewable hydrogen projects up to 2026. The first tranche of funding has been launched with the £10 million Hydrogen Innovation Scheme for the development and demonstration of renewable hydrogen technologies. The envisaged release the remaining £90 million via a Green Hydrogen Fund at the start of 2023 has not yet happened.
- **Bioenergy:** As part of the 2020 CCPu, Scotland committed to publishing a Bioenergy Action Plan by 2023. The Bioenergy Action Plan must clarify the Scottish Government's position on bioenergy, setting out its best use, delivery mechanisms, funding, licensing requirements, future timelines and sustainability and food security implications
- **Engineered removals:** the Scottish Government aims to achieve -3.8 MtCO₂ engineered removals by 2030, but a feasibility study published by the Scottish Government estimates potential for only -2.2 MtCO₂ by 2030 in Scotland.
- With most policy powers related to industry reserved to the UK Government, co-ordination with the UK Government remains key.

As set out in its 2023-24 Programme, the Scottish Government is to set out its Green Industrial Strategy in the coming months, with measures to help businesses and investors realise the opportunities of Net Zero, create jobs in new industry sectors, and supporting the development of sectoral Just Transition Plans.

More info [here](#).

Scottish Government sets out proposals for bioenergy

Scottish Government

20th March 2024

The Scottish Government published a draft policy statement on bioenergy which sets out the Government's views on how bioenergy can be used to reduce emissions and proposes using some agricultural land specifically to grow crops which can be converted into bioenergy. In the longer term it is proposed that bioresources which are available should be prioritised towards applications with carbon capture. Additionally, the Scottish Government proposes that domestic biomass supply chain is scaled up. The draft statement is currently out for consultation until 12 June 2024.

More info [here](#)

Scottish Government publishes 2024-25 Budget

Scottish Government

5th March 2024

The Scottish Government won the vote to pass its 2024-25 Budget Bill by 68 votes to 55 in the Scottish Parliament. Enabling the economy to transition to Net Zero is one of three strategic priorities for the new budget, with £1.3bn allocated for Wellbeing Economy, Fair Work and Energy, and 4.1bn for Net Zero and Just Transition.

More info [here](#).

Consultation on resourcing Scotland's planning system

Scottish Government

28th February 2024

The Scottish Government opened a consultation on how best to resource the planning system, improve capacity and build resilience particularly within planning authorities, to deliver on the goals set out in the National Planning Framework 4, adopted last year. The [accompanying document](#) sets out a number of ongoing and proposed actions to improve the funding for planning authorities, ensure sufficient recruitment and training, and strengthen leadership and collaboration across levels of government, councils, and wider stakeholders. The consultation will be open until the 31st March.

More info [here](#).

Consultation on Masterplan Consent Areas

Scottish Government

28th February 2024

The Scottish Government has launched a separate consultation on the proposal of introducing Masterplan Consent Areas (MCAs) which will give planning authorities expanded powers to proactively consent the type and quality of development they wish to see in their areas. MCAs are a key component of the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 and aimed at streamlining consenting processes. MCAs are similar to previous Simplified Planning Zones (SPZs), but are broader in scope, being able to give other types of authorisations than just planning permission, and have refreshed procedures for preparing a scheme. While MCAs will not be part of the development plan, they will be a delivery mechanism which can support the spatial strategy and policies and proposals in the development plan. The consultation closes on 22 May 2024.

More info [here](#).

Bills before the Scottish Parliament:

- [Circular economy \(Scotland\) Bill](#): currently at Stage 2. The Bill requires Scottish Ministers to introduce measures to help develop a circular economy, including publishing a circular economy strategy and developing circular economy targets, as well as measures to reduce waste and improving waste monitoring. The Bill was introduced to parliament in June 2023.

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Wales

First Minister Vaughan Gething announces new Welsh Government Cabinet

Welsh Government

21st March 2024

Following his official appointment as Wales's new First Minister, Vaugh Gething announced his top ministerial team for a Wales, including:

- Jeremy Miles MS as new Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Energy & Welsh Language
- Huw Irranca Davies MS as new Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change & Rural Affairs
- Julie James MS as new Cabinet Secretary for Housing, Local Government and Planning

In a written statement, First Minister Gething said: 'This Ministerial team will answer the call of the generation in waiting to create a stronger, fairer, greener Wales. We will take action to strengthen our economy by providing opportunities for everyone and being steadfast in our commitment to a just transition to net zero. Our goal to deliver green prosperity is reflected by the creation of a new Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Energy and Welsh Language.'

More info [here](#).

£5.9 million of Welsh Government support given to businesses investing in research and innovation

Welsh Government

26th February 2023

Over fifty projects have been given support from the Welsh Government to invest in equipment that will help develop and embed new innovative products and services. In a cross-government approach, grants have been awarded from both the economy and climate change portfolios, with projects that support Wales's move towards a circular, net zero carbon economy also recognised. Grants from the SMART Capital Equipment Fund and the Circular Economy Fund for Business were given to support organisations to invest in innovation with the aim of improving people's lives, growing the economy and addressing the climate and nature emergencies.

More info [here](#).

Bills before the Welsh Senedd

- [The Infrastructure \(Wales\) Bill](#) is currently going through the Senedd, with plenary discussions of amendments taking place during March 2024 (Stage 3 in the legislative process). The Bill aims to establish a unified infrastructure consenting process for specified types of major infrastructure, including energy, transport, waste, water and gas projects. More info [here](#).

Parliamentary Inquiries

- [Green Economy](#) – The Economy, Trade, and Rural Affairs Committee continued its inquiry hearing evidence from Felix Milbank (Federation of Small Businesses Wales), Jessica Hooper (RenewableUK Cymru), Ben Burggraaf (Net Zero Industry Wales) and Tom Hill (Marine Energy Wales). According to Burggraaf, key industry asks for Welsh Government include: set out a clear industrial strategy for Wales and actively using devolved power, with more collaborative action and public-private partnerships needed to advance planning and permitting, skills development and linking renewable energy generators with industrial demand. Clear asks from UK Government are needed to ensure fair distribution of revenues, including from the UK ETS.
- [Future of Welsh Steel](#) - Economy, Trade, and Rural Affairs Committee. The Committee questioned Secretary of State for Wales, David Davies, on the negotiations between UK Government and Tata about the closure of the blast furnaces and government funding support for new electric arc furnaces to be built by 2027, the job losses expected and what other options had been explored, the future of steel in the UK and the implications of the CBAM, and if the UK Government is doing enough to prevent long-term impacts of the closures on the Port Talbot community, among other topics.

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European Union

Commission speeds up support to boost new manufacturing capacities in regions most affected by the transition to climate neutrality

European Commission

8th March 2024

The Commission has disbursed €5.9 billion in pre-financing under the Just Transition Fund (JTF) to European regions to support to new manufacturing capacities and projects in strategic sectors, such as digital technologies, deep tech innovation, clean and resource-efficient technologies, and biotechnologies. This injection of liquidity was enabled by the entry into force of the Strategic Technologies for Europe Platform (STEP) initiative on 1 March. The possibility to use these funds to support private sector entities in regions with weaker financing capacity also aims to help reinforce the level playing field in the Single Market and enhance territorial cohesion.

JTF is the first pillar of the Just Transition Mechanism (JTM), implemented under the overall framework of Cohesion Policy, which is the main EU policy to reduce regional disparities and to address structural changes in the EU. Equipped with a total budget of €19.3 billion, the JTF aims to ensure a just transition to net zero by alleviating the impact of the climate transition, supporting local economic diversification, the reskilling of workers and jobseekers, and the reconversion of the specific EU regions. STEP aims to address the needs of EU industry and boost investments in critical technologies in Europe. STEP seeks to reinforce, leverage and steer EU funds to deep-tech innovation, digital, bio, clean and resource efficient technologies, in the EU, and in people who can implement those technologies into the economy.

More info [here](#).

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Policy consultations and calls for evidence

- [SEPA Environmental Authorisations \(Scotland\) Regulations 2018: Proposed types of authorisation for Waste, Water and Industrial activities](#), Scottish Government, closes on 12th April 2024
- [Net Zero and Trade](#), House of Commons Energy Security and Net Zero Committee, call for evidence, closes on 19th April 2024
- [City Regions and Growth Deal](#), House of Commons Scottish Affairs Committee, call for evidence, closes on 21st April 2024.
- [Enhanced weathering: spreading rock dust to remove greenhouse gases](#), Parliamentary Office for Science and Technology POSTnote, closes 22nd April 2024
- [Green Industries Growth Accelerator: hydrogen and CCUS supply chains](#), UK Government closes on 23rd April 2024
- [Climate change - draft Scottish National Adaptation Plan 3](#), Scottish Government, closes on 24th April 2024.
- [Electricity distribution network study](#), National Infrastructure Commission, call for evidence, closes on 10th May 2024
- [Masterplan consent area regulations](#), Scottish Government, closes on 22nd May 2024
- [Investing in Planning: resourcing Scotland's planning system the Planning System](#), Scotland Government, closes on 31st May 2024
- [Draft Bioenergy Policy Statement: Consultation](#), Scottish Government, closes on 12th June 2024

IDRIC Research Spotlight

A selection of recent policy-relevant publications by IDRIC researchers and partners.

More research outputs can be found in the [IDRIC knowledge hub](#).

ARTICLE: Energy, material, and resource efficiency for industrial decarbonisation: A systematic review of sociotechnical systems, technological innovations, and policy options

Jinsoo Kim, Benjamin K. Sovacool, Morgan Bazilian, Steve Griffiths, Minyoung Yang

Hanyang University, University of Sussex, Aarhus University, Boston University, Colorado School of Mines, Khalifa University of Science and Technology

This paper explores how improving energy, material and resource efficiency is crucial for industrial decarbonisation, offering benefits like cost savings, increased energy and resource security, and increased productivity. Despite its potential, however, efficiency practices are underutilised. Through a comprehensive review of more than 2.8 million references and 380 studies on industrial decarbonisation, the paper examines the socio-technical aspects of industrial supply chains, from raw

materials and feedstocks, pre-processing, manufacturing, to waste and recycling. Barriers to decarbonisation, including economic and organisational challenges, are identified, along with policy measures to overcome them. The paper concludes by outlining areas for further research.

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REPORT: Enabling a place-based, just transition to net zero – Guidance for stakeholders in Milford Haven

Jo Hamilton, Huei-Ling Lai, Patrick Devine-Wright, Stacia Ryder, Abigail Martin

University of Essex, University of Sussex

March 2024

The report synthesises findings from four IDRIC social science research projects involving academics from four UK Universities (Exeter, Sussex, Manchester and Leeds). It offers science-informed and evidenced-based recommendations for governments, industry, host communities and associated organisations, to help enable a place-based, fair industrial transition in Milford Haven, an important part of the South Wales Industrial Cluster. Informed by the Place-Based Just Transition framework, the recommendations include the development a place-sensitive approach grounded in the lived experiences of host communities, sustained engagement with stakeholders and host communities, the consideration of local needs identified by residents, improved governance structures for industrial decarbonisation, and the negotiation of trade-offs to ensure a fair transition for host communities like Milford Haven.

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REPORT: Enabling a place-based, just transition to net zero – Guidance for stakeholders in Ellesmere Port

Jo Hamilton, Huei-Ling Lai, Patrick Devine-Wright, Sarah Mander, Diarmaid Clery

University of Exeter, University of Manchester

March 2024

The report synthesises findings from four IDRIC social science research projects involving academics from four UK Universities (Exeter, Sussex, Manchester and Leeds). It offers science-informed and evidenced-based recommendations for government, industry and associated organisations to help enable a place-based, fair industrial transition in Ellesmere Port, a central node for the Northwest industrial cluster. Informed by the Place-based Just Transition framework, these recommendations include the development of a place-sensitive approach to industrial decarbonisation grounded in the lived experiences of the host communities in Ellesmere Port, their sustained engagement, the creation of an organisation overseeing the regulation of community benefit funds and employment pledges, the need to address community concerns about 'greenwashing' while rebuilding trust between residents, local industry, and local government.

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REPORT: Enabling a place-based, just transition to net zero – Guidance for stakeholders in Grangemouth

Huei-Ling Lai, Jo Hamilton, Patrick Devine-Wright, Abigail Martin

University of Exeter, University of Sussex

March 2024

The report synthesises findings from four IDRIC social science research projects involving academics from four UK Universities (Exeter, Sussex, Manchester and Leeds). It presents science-informed and evidenced-based recommendations for government, industry and associated organisations to help enable a place-based, fair industrial transition in Grangemouth, a key industrial site in Scotland. Informed by the Place-Based Just Transition framework, the recommendations include aligning with existing initiatives and advocate for a place-sensitive and community-driven approach to industrial decarbonisation in Grangemouth, emphasising the need for sustained engagement with host communities and workers, grounded benefits of industrial decarbonisation to meet local needs, improved government mechanisms, and bottom-up processes for industrial decarbonisation.

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REPORT: Ten interdisciplinary lessons for industrial decarbonisation practice and policy: IDRIC's First Research Synthesis Report

Benjamin K. Sovacool, Abbas Abdul, Rafiu, Marc Hudson, Marcelle McManus, Anna Korre, Isobel Marr, Clare Howard, Mercedes Maroto-Valer

March 2024

This report is the first in a series of research synthesis reports. It draws from a research synthesis following an initial analysis of all available outputs from IDRIC Wave 1 & 2 projects, in Autumn 2023. This led to ten crosscutting findings relevant for net-zero policy and practice. These cover aspects as diverse as energy efficiency, heat integration, hydrogen, diverse energy carriers production and utilisation, CCUS, negative emissions technologies, systems integration, emissions accounting and energy policy and regulation. IDRIC will continue to build on this synthesis activity and disseminate the findings, in future reports.

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POLICY BRIEF: Assessing the role that a CO₂ transport and storage sector could play in transitioning away from oil and gas extraction

Antonios Katris, Karen Turner, Hannah Corbett

Centre for Energy Policy, University of Strathclyde.

March 2024

This brief produced by the Centre for Energy Policy explores the opportunities that could emerge from the transition away and decline of the oil and gas industry and assesses the role that a nascent CO₂ transport and storage sector could play in ensuring the continued employment of infrastructure, supply chain and workforces. This will be particularly important in the current context of persistent skills and worker shortages which could hinder industrial decarbonisation efforts and constrain the extent of wider economic gains.

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VIDEO: Will industrial decarbonisation produce resilient communities? – Understanding risk

Karen Henwood, Nick Pidgeon, Harriet Smith

Cardiff University

This animation exhibit explains how deliberative workshops were conducted in South Wales, the second biggest industrial and power carbon emitting region in the UK. The workshops were carried out in 2022 at Port Talbot and Pembroke Dock, sites identified for new technological energy infrastructures. The research is of interest to industrialists, policy makers and academics working on the decarbonisation of industry. The animation explains how researchers developed tools using maps and photographs to situate industrial visions in Place understood as 'Infrastructural Ecologies'. This research brings together the experience of the material fabric of industrial spaces with social aspects of everyday life, showing that attending to how stakeholder visions are received by local people supports broader aims of co-producing pathways to change. The animation was made by artist Efa Blosse-Mason in response to the researchers' script.

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