Lancashire County Council

Environment, Economic Growth and Transport Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the Meeting held on Thursday, 26th October, 2023 at 10.30 am in Committee Room 'B' - The Diamond Jubilee Room, County Hall, Preston

Present:

County Councillor Rob Bailey (Chair)

County Councillors

S Rigby	J Mein
A Cheetham	J Oakes
S Clarke	J Purcell
G Dowding	J R Singleton JP
J Gibson	

County Councillor Jennifer Mein replaced County Councillor Sean Serridge at the meeting.

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from County Councillors Alan Schofield and Kim Snape.

2. Disclosure of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interests

None were disclosed.

3. Minutes of the Meeting Held on 21 September 2023

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held on 21 September 2023 be approved as an accurate record.

4. Electricity North West – Enabling Net Zero Infrastructure

The Chair welcomed to the committee Helen Norris, Stakeholder Engagement and CSR Manager, Cara Blockley, Head of Distribution System Operations and Paul Bircham, Safety, Compliance and Markets Director from Electricity North West Limited (ENWL).

The committee was presented a report which provided an update on progress in enabling net zero infrastructure in Lancashire.

Comments and questions raised by the committee were as follows:

- The development of flexible services for electricity usage was being encouraged for domestic customers to access. Requirements for flexible services (location and time) were published by ENWL to the market to provide an opportunity for external companies to access this service and generate revenue.
- It was confirmed that there were no capacity constraints on the network in respect of the distribution side. However, there were constraints on the National Grid and in particular with low carbon generation projects. There was also an issue with a connection point into the grid at Heysham needing to be upgraded and that was causing a queue whilst additional capacity was built there. On timescales, the committee was informed that on a number of sites information had been reported by the National Grid that those connections would in the extreme cases be in a position to proceed by 2037. A five-point plan had been put in place by the Electricity System Operator which could significantly reduce this timescale.
- On what the connections queue would look like, it was noted that there was a total of 19 nodes where ENWL connected to the National Grid for the whole of the north west, with up to 12 large connection projects per node that needed electricity grid capacity calculated. Clearance was then required from the National Grid to confirm there was adequate electricity capacity for the projects to be implemented.
- It was highlighted that nationally, the number of energy generation projects that wished to connect on to the network, considerably exceeded the nation's renewable energy generation requirements. However, it was reported that a number of these projects would not come to fruition, usually referred to as "Zombie Projects". It was estimated that around 25% of total these projects in the national queue were not expected to materialise. However, action had been undertaken by the system operator, to address these issues to help speed up and enable the right projects to connect and to remove those that were stalling the process.
- ENWL's Distribution Future Electricity Scenarios (DFES) strategy 2022 had projected that take up of Electric Vehicle (EV) and Air Sourced Heat Pumps would increase to 220,000 EV's by 2028 and 32,000 Air Sourced Heat Pumps by the end of 2038. Figures were based on correlated local and national data projections. The take up of heat pumps in the North-West was expected to be slower than the national average, as the majority of homes utilised gas for heat, were less energy efficient and the homeowners had household incomes that were below the national average.
- On assisting local authorities with developing five year housing plans, it was explained that the Stakeholder Engagement team regularly reviewed published spatial plans and correlated those with applications received for specific housing development schemes.
- It was noted that investment expenditure was being focused on 11 substations identified across Lancashire where the growth in electricity demand was forecasted to be greatest, and where additional capacity was required to meet future requirements for energy supply for those local populations.

- Representatives highlighted that Electricity Northwest was prohibited from providing electricity meters or devices directly into people's homes. Essentially, ENWL was prohibited from operating beyond the meter. However, upgrades to the supply of electricity for households could be delivered up to the electricity meter for instance if a customer wished to install a charging point for an EV. The installation of heat pumps and solar panels was issue for developers to respond to the market versus what consumers wanted and any planning constraints they had to operate within.
- It was confirmed that ENWL were looking into specific innovation projects which would address the challenges of achieving net zero in terraced housing through its Net Zero Terrace project.
- Offshore wind farms were primarily viewed as a more reliable source of renewable energy than onshore wind farms, due to the consistency of wind speed at sea. Additionally, representatives highlighted that new nuclear power stations were being constructed across the UK to provide a reliable baseload of energy support, as future renewable energy generation projects were progressed.
- It was highlighted that ENWL were looking to export the CLASS (Customer Load Active System Services) technology developed in the Northwest throughout the UK. Global interest in this technology was increasing and ENWL was looking to support that.
- It was confirmed that energy supply and demand would be met in time for 2050.
- One of the confirmed benefits of smart street technology was that it reduced the electricity consumption for people along a specific residential street.
- It was noted that ENWL was collaborating with the National Grid and the system operator to develop a plan to operate electricity que for capacities and prioritisation in a more efficient way. Discussions were ongoing with the National Grid about projects in the north west and assisting with their five-point plan to commence rollout within a quicker timeframe.
- On how the reduction of voltage provided cheaper prices for customers, it was explained that ENWL had to operate within a range of 230volts, however most devices within people's homes consisted of small transformers that operated at 10volts (direct current). A reduction in the supply would therefore not affect those devices and save money for customers.
- Representatives explained that the electricity network portion of an energy bill that would go to ENWL was around £123 for a typical household per year. The majority of the bill went towards the generation of the electricity and the costs of the suppliers. A significant portion of the bill was supporting the roll out of renewable technology, and therefore was not expected to increase to fund the rollout of future renewable technology. It was highlighted that in the future those subsidies should reduce and would not be required as technology became more widespread and well established.
- It was suggested that a future meeting involving representatives from the National Grid and their role in energy supply and enabling net zero infrastructure should take place.
- It was also suggested that the Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change give further consideration on Lancashire County Council's role in Electricity North West Limited's Local Area Energy Planning Process (LAEP).

Resolved: That:

(i) Further consideration be given to inviting representatives from the National Grid on enabling Net Zero Infrastructure to a future meeting of the Environment, Economic Growth and Transport Scrutiny Committee.

(ii) The Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change give consideration to the role Lancashire County Council has with Electricity North West Limited's Local Area Energy Planning (LAEP) process and confirm the council's position on this.

5. Ultra-Low Emissions Vehicles and LCC Fleet

The Chair welcomed to the committee County Councillor Rupert Swarbrick, Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport, Andrew Burrows, Fleet Manager and Oliver Starkey, Head of Service Public and Integrated Transport.

A report was presented to the committee which provided details on measures to introduce ultra-low emission vehicles (ULEVs) into the Lancashire County Council fleet. The challenges presented by this, how they could be overcome and the technology and options that may be applicable to the fleet in the future were provided. The report also updated the committee on progress since the former Internal Scrutiny Committee report on ULEVs on the 4th March 2022.

Comments and questions raised by the committee were as follows:

- On the use of hydrogen for refuelling vehicles, the development of future hydrogen infrastructure would be considered as long as the hydrogen was classified as green. It was felt the use of hydrogen was one element the county council should keep an open mind on and consider if it became more readily accessible within Lancashire. The technology would only be utilised for vehicles above 3.5 tonnes. The Chair noted one an example was the hydrogen powered refuge collection vehicle in St Helens.
- Officers noted that the development of a completed ULEV fleet by 2035-36 was considered a realistic timeframe. Funding for the development was available up to 2028, whilst funding for 2028-36 was to still be confirmed.
- On the increase of the ULEV fleet from 5% in 2023/2024 to 15% by 2024/2025, officers explained that this increase would be sourced from the availability of suitable commercial vehicles.
- Regarding a query on how lithium batteries were disposed of and potential fire risks within electric vehicles, electric vehicle charging points were situated 8 metres away from buildings to mitigate the risk from a potential fire from an EV. Manufactures of these batteries were also under obligation to safely dispose of them once they had come to the end of their life cycle.
- Members of the committee requested that a breakdown of the current ULEV fleet and projections for vehicle replacements was provided at a future meeting of the Environment, Economic Growth and Transport Scrutiny Committee.

Resolved: That a briefing note setting out the breakdown of the current fleet (including school buses) and the projection of future funding required to introduce Ultra-Low Emissions Vehicles into the fleet be provided to the Environment, Economic Growth and Transport Scrutiny Committee.

6. Work Programme 2023/24

The committee was presented a report which provided members of the Environment, Economic Growth and Transport Scrutiny Committee with the committee's work programme for 2023/24.

It was confirmed that the Carbon Capture in Grasslands topic that was marked as a reserve topic on the work programme would be considered as an agenda item for the April 2024 meeting.

Resolved: That the Environment, Economic Growth and Transport Scrutiny Committee's work programme for 2023/24 be noted.

7. Urgent Business

There was no urgent business.

8. Date of Next Meeting

The Next meeting of the Environment, Economic Growth and Transport Scrutiny Committee would be held at 2pm on Tuesday 5 December in Committee Room B – The Diamond Jubilee Room, County Hall, Preston.

H MacAndrew
Director of Law and Governance

County Hall
Preston