

Geoff Raw
Chief Executive
Brighton & Hove City Council
Town Hall
Norton Road
Hove, BN3 3BQ

17 April 2020

LETTER TO POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Dear Geoff

Re: Local Electricity Bill

I am submitting the following letter on the subject of a 'local electricity' bill under Council Procedure Rule 23.3 to be included on the agenda for Policy & Resources Committee.

In recent years, the UK government's approach to energy generation has been focused on large, expensive projects which, in the case of Hinkley Point at least, are likely to be redundant before they are even commissioned. Instead what is needed is local generation of renewables; the solar panels on a block of flats for example, a solar farm, a ground-source heat network. As these technologies become more effective there will be increased capacity to sell surplus energy to local people, and for communities to manage and govern low cost, efficient and environmentally sustainable energy supply.

Yet currently, that is precisely what cannot happen in the UK. As Steve Shaw, the director of Power for People has pointed out, "communities are unable to sell clean, renewable energy that they generate to local people. This is because the huge setup and running costs involved make this impossible. This is blocking the remarkable potential for new community energy companies to spring up across the country."

A Local Electricity Bill which creates a 'right to local supply' would make the costs of selling local energy proportionate to the scale of a local supplier's business. Such legislation granting people the 'right' to a local supply would make community energy companies viable, creating local economic benefits and a cleaner and more resilient energy system.

I note that such a Bill is due to be re-introduced in Parliament and debated in the House of Commons on Tuesday 28th April. The Bill is co-sponsored by Peter Aldous MP (Labour), Alex Sobel MP (Labour Co-Chair of the Parliamentary Net-Zero All Party Parliamentary Group), Wera Hobhouse MP (Liberal Democrat), Caroline Lucas MP (Green), Sir Graham Brady MP (Conservative), John McNally MP (SNP)

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Environment Spokesperson), John Penrose MP (Chair of the Conservative Policy Forum), Ben Lake MP (Plaid Cymru) and supported by a cross party group of 48 other MPs.

I am confident that this is a bill which all of our local MPs will support. Unfortunately, the timing of Council meetings during the lockdown has prevented any expression of support for the bill from the Council itself ahead of the parliamentary debate.

However, given

- (i) the efforts that this council has made to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and promote renewable energy;
- (ii) the central role councils can play in creating sustainable communities, particularly through the provision of locally generated renewable electricity;
- (iii) that very large financial setup and running costs involved in selling locally generated renewable electricity to local customers result in it being impossible for local renewable electricity generators to do so,
- (iv) that making these financial costs proportionate to the scale of a renewable electricity supplier's operation would create significant opportunities for councils to be providers of locally generated renewable electricity directly to local people, businesses and organisations, and
- (v) that revenues received by councils that became local renewable electricity providers could be used to help fund local greenhouse gas emissions reduction measures and to help improve local services and facilities

I ask the committee to:

- find and determine an appropriate way of voicing its support for the Local Electricity Bill, which, if made law, would make the setup and running costs of selling renewable electricity to local customers proportionate by establishing a Right to Local Supply;
- find appropriate ways to inform the local media of this decision and write to the organisers of the campaign for the Bill, Power for People, (info@powerforpeople.org.uk) expressing the council's support for such measures;
- as far as possible, identify ways that this council can seek to uphold the principles of 'right to supply,' in local decision-making regarding community energy, where it is possible for the council to do so.

I recognise the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic is having on the capacity of the council, so ask that measures are taken as appropriate to officer capacity. I would appreciate any steps this council can take to demonstrate its support for local energy legislation, in order to meet our targets of carbon neutrality by 2030.

Yours sincerely,

Cllr Siriol Hugh-Jones

