Energy and People: attitudes, behaviours and policies
Edinburgh Centre for Carbon Innovation, University of Edinburgh
High School Yards, Edinburgh, EH1 1LT
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Summary Notes

Note: Presentations and links to project findings are available through UKERC and ClimateXChange websites: www.ukerc.ac.uk and www.climatexchange.org.uk

Introduction
Ragne Low (Knowledge Manager) introduced for ClimateXChange (CXC), Scotland's centre of expertise on climate change.

Dr Mark Winskel (Research Co-ordinator) introduced for the UK Energy Research Centre (UKERC). UKERC is a key part of the UK Research Council's Energy Programme. It conducts independent, interdisciplinary research across the 'whole energy system'. The workshop is one of a number of events UKERC is hosting in Scotland in collaboration with CXC. It features presentations from senior interdisciplinary researchers who have contributed to recent UKERC research on public attitudes, behaviours, demand and governance.

The format for the meeting was presentations from researchers followed by panel discussions and Q&A.

Professor Nick Pidgeon (Cardiff University) 'Public Attitudes to UK Energy System Change'

Nick underlined that the UKERC research findings he presented were based on robust social science research. Nick led a large, 2-year analysis of UK public attitudes to the UK energy system, and energy system change. Headline findings included: a substantial majority of the UK public supports 'radical' system change and the need for an 'energy transition'. There is little variation from different sample populations across the UK. Affordability matters more than 'least cost', and price stability is important.

Responsibility for leading change is seen to lie with national government, suggesting the need for a 'social contract' between national governments and the public – although this is out of step with the realities of the privatised energy market.

Dr Joanne Wade (independent consultant) 'Local Governance of Energy in England and Wales'

Joanne presented findings from case studies in England and Wales on local energy governance, at the city / local authority level. At the highest level, active local authorities can be categorised as offering provision (such as Woking), or co-ordination (such as Oxfordshire). The majority of local authorities in England and Wales are in a 'do nothing' category, though this doesn't mean there are no community-level projects. There may be

higher levels of community engagement in communities with co-ordinating rather than provisioning authorities, but they tend to be small scale, non-infrastructure projects.

Finance from local government is mostly directed to the later stages of project development, so the early stages of innovation and project inception find financing to be scarce. Other messages: national frameworks matter a great deal in the UK; business models often lack a local perspective; and, local actors have their own aims, which may be at odds with national aims.

Dr Nicola McEwen (Edinburgh University) 'Local Governance of Energy in Scotland'

Nicola presented Scottish case findings, focussed on grassroots community groups in the Highlands and Islands. The primary motivation for community groups is often income generation and reduced energy costs. At Eilean Siar on the Western isles almost all energy was imported 10 years ago. Motivating factors in this case were grid constraints on renewables exports, community land-ownership and a desire for self-governance. Environmental factors are often marginal.

Panel Discussion 1

What role for businesses and utilities? What are the prospects for building links between energy developers and communities?
There is a deep distrust of the energy companies, but this may or may not matter for community energy and other interventions, such as demand management. Indeed, a level of distrust may be healthy; at the same time, distrust doesn't necessarily provide a foundation for bottom-up action.

The possibilities vary on a technology-by-technology basis. The detail matters: e.g. there may be less willingness in some family and housing circumstances for remote switching of appliances such as fridges. On a community-level, developers often don't know who to talk to, and they find it easier to deal with individuals rather than communities.

What or who is a community?
There are many varieties of communities. The degree to which this matters also varies.

Project tendering often pays insufficient attention to the need to build durable organisational capacity and relationships. Output metrics dominate.

Dr Charlie Wilson (University of East Anglia) Household refurbishment and the Green Deal: understanding behaviours for effective policy

Charlie presented the results of a 2-year project analysing homeowner refurbishment decision making. The project involved a novel combination of quantitative and qualitative research methods. Policy tools often conceive home efficiency as isolated decisions, but the project revealed how they are situated in everyday domestic life, and are long processes juggled against and often driven by other commitments.

Energy efficiency is not a distinctive part of everyday life. For policy, this suggests that a focus on cost savings and thermal comfort may not be meaningful or productive. Rather,

energy efficiency policy should focus on ongoing renovation decisions, and embed this in people's efforts to make their lives more manageable and enjoyable. Policy should try to open-up opportunities to piggyback on existing plans for amenity renovations, at an appropriate point and/or through innovative financing approaches.

Professor Jillian Anable (Aberdeen University) Decarbonising Personal Transport: behaviours, choices and policies

Jillian presented a summary of research carried out with colleagues on personal transport decarbonisation, involving projects from UKERC, the ETI and others. The research has considered the use of different policy instruments: VED differential rates, feebates and scrappage schemes. Feebates emerged as the most effective instrument. The research is distinctive because it includes consumer segmentation and modelling of non-economic attitudinal parameters. More recent work is looking at 'rhythms of demand' and the positive use of 'disruption' to promote change, rather than enablement.

Dr Nick Eyre (University of Oxford), Demand Reduction, Energy Efficiency and policy effectiveness: what works?

Nick leads UKERC research on energy demand. He gave an overview of trends and drivers. Energy demand in the UK has been falling for several years, and the effects of the recession and 'exporting emissions' to other countries are not the only causes. There has been a 20% fall in gas use in the UK over the last decade. Policies such as regulations on condensing boilers and insulation programmes have been an important part of this.

At a global and system-wide level, energy efficiency and conservation are hugely important for energy system decarbonisation: more important than supply-side measures, according to IEA modelling. Demand side measures are often understood simply as negative costs, but these are difficult to capture in practice and need careful, detailed policy interventions – and perhaps, sociological advisors in government departments. For research, this requires deeply socio-technical and multi-level approaches, reflecting the heterogeneity of populations and the different stages of innovations.

Public investments in R&D can be critical: £1m investment in lighting research has paid huge dividends. Differentiated polices are needed for different stages in the s-shaped uptake curve: for early adopters, incentives and engagement can work, but for late adopters regulation is often needed. In terms of multi-level governance, local bodies may be critical agents of change, and small countries / devolved regions can have advantages here, in terms of coherence of powers. Scotland has maintained some interventions, such as advice networks and fuel poverty programmes, that no longer exist in the rest of the UK. Recent policy changes in the UK represent a significant downgrading of policy ambition on efficiency.

Panel Discussion 2

What are the policy implications from peoples' 'non-rational' behaviours, and the reluctance of national government to intervene in some areas? How can policy reach issues such as

status and identity? Is the Scottish Government's 'Individual, Social and Material (ISM)' framing a useful one?

Policy tends to focus on fiscal instruments, and people do claim to base their decisions on cost, but there are other factors at play such as people's own thresholds and short-cut evaluations.

Companies are very well aware of the non-economic aspects of consumer behaviour.

Despite the evidence on feebates for transport, they are politically difficult to implement because of industry resistance. Manufacturers make more profit on larger vehicles than smaller and electric vehicles.

In domestic efficiency, there is a problem of reaching 'non-renovators', but there are some spillover effects from the Green Deal assessments – we don't yet know how much is truly additional here, or would have happened anyway.

Local authorities are key agents, but how can they be best reached?

Local authorities can make a difference, but they need to be given a statutory duty – energy is not a local authority responsibility.

How can the private rented sector be reached by policy?

The private rented sector is notoriously inefficient in energy terms, and governments are very cautious in regulating here. Change can happen, but it often takes a long time (e.g. disability access).

What are the prospects for innovation in ownership models? Is there research evidence?

There is increasing interest in 'prosuming' energy citizens (who both produce and consume energy), but little actual evidence of their possible impact. Energy service provision remains a challenge in the UK – small scale renewables might act as a disruptor to bring about change.

Mark Winskel closed the meeting and thanked the speakers and attendees. Please direct any comments or questions on the event to Mark Winskel at UKERC, at mark.winskel@ed.ac.uk or Ragne Low at CXC at Ragne@sniffer.org.uk