

To ask the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail the current percentage of energy that is generated from renewable sources.

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In the twelve month period to end January 2014, approximately 18% of electricity consumption was from renewable sources. The Programme for Government target is 20% by 2015.

Mr Daithí McKay (SF - North Antrim) It is estimated that we are on track to achieve the Programme for Government target of 4% renewable heat by 2015. However, to verify progress, DETI will carry out analysis as part of a future review of the Renewable Heat Incentive.

14/02/2014 Answered on 26/02/2014 Renewable energy

To ask the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what consideration he has given to increasing the budget for the Renewable Heat Incentive.

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At this stage I am content that the current budget for the Renewable Heat Incentive (RHI) is sufficient to cover the existing level of uptake and future projections based on trends.

Mr Phil Flanagan (SF - Fermanagh and South Tyrone) As the scheme develops, particularly with the proposed introduction of the domestic RHI and the extension of the non-domestic scheme to support new technologies, DETI will continue to monitor the budget requirements.

28/11/2013 Answered on 09/1

To ask the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for an update on progress towards achieving her Department's Programme for Government 11/15 target to encourage 20 per cent of electricity consumption from renewable sources and 4 per cent renewable heat by 2015.

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As of end August 2013, the annual average percentage of electricity generated from renewable sources was 14.9% and we are on track to meet the Programme for Government target of 20% by 2015.

Ms Anna Ló MBE (APNI - South Belfast) The collection of up to date data on renewable heat demand is less straightforward as there is no centralised heat network that can be monitored. Initial uptake of the Northern Ireland Renewable Heat Incentive and Renewable Heat Premium Payment suggests that we are in line to meet the 4% milestone in 2015.

03/10/2013 Answered on 16/10/2013

20 Jan 14

Renewable Heat Incentive

3. Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for her assessment of the level of uptake of the renewable heat incentive. (AQO 5323/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The Northern Ireland renewable heat incentive (RHI) was launched on 1 November 2012 for the non-domestic sector. As a result, 11.5 megawatts of new renewable heat capacity has been installed. Performance over the first 12 months of the scheme compares favourably with Great Britain. While accounting for less than 3% of the UK heat demand, the number of Northern Ireland applications equates to 6.8% of GB applications and 3.2% of accredited heat capacity. That demonstrates that the Northern Ireland scheme is punching above its weight.

In addition, the performance of the renewable heat premium payment scheme, which provides support for the domestic market, has been very positive. Over 11 megawatts of new renewable heat capacity has been supported through that scheme. I believe that the deployment of over 22 megawatts of new renewable heat capacity in the past 18 months is a good start towards achieving the Executive's target of 10% renewable heat by 2020.

Mr Agnew: I thank the Minister for that information. When does she anticipate the domestic roll-out of the RHI? Will there be a renewed emphasis on the renewable heat incentive through marketing to promote the domestic scheme and increase promotion of the commercial RHI?

Mrs Foster: We hope that the domestic RHI will be rolled out at the same time as in Great Britain so that those can dovetail together. We held a consultation that resulted in the receipt of around 50 responses. We have been looking at those to see whether we can answer the questions that have been raised. That will happen in the near future, and we hope that it will be as successful as the payment schemes in the domestic sector.

Mr I McCrea: Will the Minister outline whether businesses can avail themselves of the Carbon Trust loan scheme, as well as getting support through the RHI?

Mrs Foster: Yes. That subject caused a lot of concern to people who had availed themselves of the Carbon Trust loan, and we have been able to get clarity on it. An installation that has been done with a Carbon Trust loan is eligible to be considered for accreditation under the Northern Ireland renewable heat incentive scheme. Where an applicant has availed themselves of what is called de minimis aid, such as the Carbon Trust loan, prior to making an RHI application for accreditation, the RHI aid will be provided on the basis of the

European Commission's de minimis regulations. We were able to get an answer to that question. I know that members of the Committee in particular were concerned about that because a lot of people had taken advantage of the Carbon Trust loan scheme. We are pleased to be able to provide that clarification.

Mr McKinney: Does the Minister have any plans to further improve the uptake of the renewable heat incentive?

Mrs Foster: We are keen to promote the renewable heat incentive alongside energy efficiency, because we believe that energy efficiency has to be in place as well. In fact, energy efficiency measures can often be the most cost effective way of bringing down people's energy bills. We will engage in a positive campaign. The Member may be aware of our Energy Wise campaign, which we rolled out to promote energy efficiency. We hope that people will take up the message and get involved because not only is it good sense but it reduces bills.

To ask the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for her assessment of whether subsidies for biomass disincentivises energy efficiency; and if so, what measures can be taken to combat this.

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My Department is very keen to promote energy efficiency alongside incentives for renewable heat technologies, such as biomass, as it is widely recognised that energy efficiency measures can be the most cost effective method for reducing energy bills. Indeed my Department has sought to promote positive energy efficiency behaviours through the EnergyWise campaign. In designing the domestic Renewable Heat Incentive (RHI) DETI has included energy efficiency assumptions that will ensure that the tariffs are most appropriate and most beneficial for those that have already carried out energy efficiency improvements in their homes. In addition, by proposing to 'deem' payments there is a further incentive for those installing biomass under the future domestic RHI to be as efficient as possible. In addition, the existing Renewable Heat Premium Payment (RHPP) scheme does however have prescriptive eligibility requirements regarding loft and cavity wall insulation.

Mr Steven
Agnew
(GPNI -
North
Down)

Again, within the existing RHI for commercial premises it is assumed that the installation of a biomass boiler, or another renewable technology, would be the final action taken by a business seeking to become 'low-carbon', with the costs involved in installing renewable heating much greater than those involved with simple energy efficiency measures