

Local Energy Matters

Covering the EPN region: February 2020 edition

East of England energy news

Lotus opens EV hypercar factory in Hethel, Norfolk

On 20 February, Lotus announced the final production stage of a new manufacturing facility based in Norfolk. The factory will produce the Evija – Lotus' all-electric hypercar. The Evija is the first British electric hyper car and was announced in July 2019. Production will start in 2020 and is limited to 130 cars which have already been pre-ordered by customers around the world.

Phil Popham, CEO Lotus Cars, commented: "This is now the newest car production facility in the world, and to witness it move from the drawing board to reality has been deeply satisfying. It's testament to the commitment of all involved and is the perfect sleek and high-tech production home for the Evija at our iconic Hethel headquarters."

Energy more expensive for those living in rural East Anglia

A report commissioned by heating oil firm - BoilerJuice Connected - has highlighted that people living in rural East Anglia could be spending significant amounts more on household essentials compared to others in the UK. The report identified that groceries, electricity and petrol could cost households £3,300 more than the national average and classified that the cost of living for rural homeowners was a third higher than the national average, typically because rural households spend more on heating and transport fuels. In Suffolk, 40% of the population are classified as living rurally and in Norfolk more than 10% of households struggle to afford to keep their home warm.

Andrew Stringer, Suffolk Green Party spokesman for housing and economic development, said: "This all points to those living in rural areas having several challenges to living sustainably, lack of public transport and heating and transport technologies locking us in to financially and environmentally costly choices." Rik Martin, development manager for Community Action Norfolk, said: "It's not the cost, but the consequences that concern me. It is the increases in loneliness and isolation and mental health issues that result from lack of funds and opportunity"

Suffolk announces plans for all streetlights to be LED by 2022

Suffolk County Council's cabinet met on 25 February to discuss plans for a £9.8mn project to replace all Suffolk street lighting with LED by 2022 in efforts to reduce the country's carbon footprint. The proposal has been put forward by Andrew Reid, Suffolk County Council's cabinet member for highways, transport and rural affairs. Should the project be approved, all streetlights in the county could be replaced by Autumn 2022. There are currently in excess of 60,000 streetlights in Suffolk, which the council has responsibility for maintaining.

The plans have been proposed in response to expected rises in energy prices between 8% to 12% per year. The Council previously explored routes to reduce energy costs and the carbon footprint of its street lighting in 2010. Plans at the time predominately involved switching off some lights at night.

Benefits expected from the introduction of LED street lighting are significant reductions in energy consumption; particularly due to being able to dim the lighting on demand.

Mr. Reid said: "We recognise the importance of our environment in Suffolk and the impacts of climate change. "We will be replacing almost 43,000 lights with new energy saving LED lanterns. This will save approximately 60% of our current energy bill, which can be invested elsewhere".

Over 6,000 homes in the East without power during Storm Ciara

Thousands of homes across Suffolk and Essex reported power shortages after Storm Ciara hit the East of England on 9 February. According to UK Power Networks, 4,173 homes in Suffolk and 2,069 homes in Essex went without power after high winds damaged power lines. Areas among the hardest hit include Woodbridge in Suffolk where 183 homes lost power due to a fault in a high voltage overhead line. 26 properties in Rushmere St Andrew near Ipswich also lost power due to a similar fault. Rural Suffolk faced the hardest time, with 261 homes without power near Framlingham. Storm Dennis followed the week after, causing less disruption to the electricity infrastructure in the East of England.

Other local energy headlines

£90mn of funding to help UK decarbonise

On 18 February it was announced that £90mn had been awarded to projects to reduce carbon emissions across homes and businesses as part of the Department for Business, Energy, and Industrial Strategy's (BEIS) £500mn innovation fund. This includes £70mn to support the manufacture and use of hydrogen as an alternative to fossil fuels. £28mn has been awarded to projects developing hydrogen production, including two of Europe's first large hydrogen production plants. The remaining £20mn will see support to projects aimed at reducing household emissions and bills via national smart energy projects entering demonstration phase. This may see over 250,000 homes powered by local renewable sources by 2030.

UK's first post-subsidy community solar farm completed

Community Owned Renewable Energy Partners and Yealm Community Energy (YCE) successfully connected the UK's first subsidy-free community ground-mount solar on 10 February. The Creacombe community solar farm began construction in September last year and was energized in two stages, with 4.4MW pre-accredited for the last remaining community feed-in tariff in December, and 2.9MW of subsidy free capacity commissioned in January. Creacombe, together with nearby Newton Downs solar farm, will be able to generate enough electricity to supply homes across five local parishes, helping to meet Net Zero commitments. YCE expects to generate a surplus of several million pounds over the project's operational lifetime that will be used to fund local climate initiatives.

Chester Community Energy announces two new solar schemes

Chester Community Energy Ltd (CCEL) has worked with Cheshire West and Cheshire Council, Brio Leisure and Genfit Ltd to successfully commission two new solar PV installations at Christleton and Neston Sports Centres in Cheshire. The two projects have an installed capacity of 59.9kW and are expected to generate 48,000kWh of electricity in their first year, with a one percent annual decrease in output over the 25-year life of the panels. The installations are predicted to save 560 tonnes of CO2 over their lifetime. All electricity generated by the panels will be used by the sports centres, which purchase the electricity from CCEL under a power purchase agreement, providing a

significantly cheaper alternative to grid electricity. These payments and a small feed in tariff subsidy, will provide CCEL with an income of approximately £7,000 per year for each project.

Scottish Power launches 100% green energy tariff

On 17 February, ScottishPower confirmed that its new domestic fixed price tariffs will be supplied by 100% green electricity from its UK-owned windfarms. ScottishPower added that the tariffs will be supplied by “genuinely renewable energy and not just a result of Renewable Energy Guarantees of Origin certificate purchase”.

Why did Scottish Power highlight “genuine renewable energy?”

For every MWh of renewable electricity generated, an accredited renewable generator is provided with one “green certificate” – these are called Renewable Energy Guarantee of Origin certificates (REGOs). REGOs certify the electricity as being from a renewable source and are used by suppliers to confirm to the regulator, Ofgem, and to consumers, that they are providing renewable electricity. For every MWh of electricity sold to a consumer as “green”, a REGO certificate must be used to certify this.

However, REGOs can be sold separately to the electricity and there is a market developing which allows suppliers to buy REGOs without buying the equivalent power from renewable generators. The REGO does not link the time that power is generated to the time that it is consumed. This allows suppliers to claim a proportion of their supply is from renewable sources, without having bought the power matching renewable generation to consumption.

Consumer group Which? found that some suppliers use misleading terms to advertise such tariffs, with a wide range of words and phrases used to imply green or renewable tariffs. It noted that there are “big differences” in what suppliers do to support renewable generators, but its “not always clear” from their ads and websites.

Keith Anderson, CEO of ScottishPower, added his concern “that too many customers think they’re buying renewable electricity, when all they’re buying is a renewable certificate. Today we’re calling time on this so-called ‘greenwashing’”. ScottishPower currently supplies circa 5mn customers. However, the current capacity of its windfarms would only see around 1.5mn consumers on the new 100% renewable tariff.



Energy:2030

Energy:2030 provides you with up-to-date news and insight into domestic and international market developments in the renewable heat, transport and electricity sectors. Energy:2030 will help you keep track of the steps our global energy industry is taking as it transitions into the future.

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☎ 01603 604400 ✉ enquiries@cornwall-insight.com