

Local Energy Matters

Covering the EPN region: March 2020 edition

East of England energy news

Work starts on UK's first EV forecourt

On 10 March, work begun on an electric vehicle (EV) charging forecourt in Essex that will be able to charge 24 cars at once. The forecourt is being built by Gridserve, a solar generation and battery developer. Gridserve plans to build more than 100 EV charging forecourts across the UK, investing £1bn. The first site is at Great Notley, close to Braintree off the A131, and is funded by a government grant of £4.86mn.

The station will be powered by a combination of roof-mounted solar panels, connections to nearby solar farms and battery storage. Customers will be able to charge their vehicles between 20-30 minutes and to cater for them during this wait time, there will be a lounge with free Wi-Fi, meeting rooms, a coffee shop and a small supermarket.

The aim of the charging station is to give drivers the confidence to purchase an EV, overcoming range anxiety. Toddington Harper, CEO of Gridserve, said: "We've designed our Electric Forecourts entirely around the needs of electric vehicle drivers, updating the petrol station model for a net-zero carbon future. Many more people want to buy electric vehicles but are worried about how to charge them. We will help solve that challenge and deliver the confidence needed to make the switch to electric transport."

Covid-19 delays low carbon energy developments

Due to restrictions on national and international movement, the ban on gatherings and the guidelines stating that people should be working from home, many low carbon energy developments will be put on hold until restrictions are lifted. In the East of England, work on two large low-carbon energy generators, the Boreas offshore wind farm and nuclear power station Sizewell C, has been suspended until further notice.

An application for Sizewell C was expected to be submitted at the end of March, however, this timetable has now been pushed back. EDF are yet to announce a new timeline but have confirmed that a limited number of workers are carrying out essential maintenance on nuclear power plants. Humphrey Cadoux-Hudson, EDF's managing director of nuclear development said "We are ready to submit the application, but we recognise that many people in Suffolk, including the Local Authorities, are adjusting to new circumstances created by the coronavirus crisis".

Vattenfall's Boreas offshore wind farm has also been placed on hold. All public hearings have been postponed, as well as planned site visits. A decision on the 200-turbine development was expected to be announced in June. The revised timeline for this project is also yet to be released.

Norfolk homes don't meet energy efficiency targets

According to research by the BBC, it has been reported that across the country, two thirds of homes of homes fail to meet long-term energy efficiency targets. In areas of Norfolk, the proportion of households with an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) below C grade are higher than the national average of 66%. In North Norfolk, 73% are below a C-grade. These homes are more expensive to heat and use much more energy than A, B or C graded homes and also have a greater carbon footprint. West Norfolk also has a higher percentage than the average. 34,738 homes out of the 51,234 homes in West Norfolk (68%) had an EPC rating below a C grade.

Despite efforts to insulate homes and provide grants for home improvements, 12mn homes across the UK fall below grade C. To tackle this issue, the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) said it was investing "over £6bn" towards upgrades and it was "also exploring how to halve the cost of retrofitting properties and investing over £320m into helping heat homes with lower carbon alternatives, such as heat networks and heat pumps". It highlighted that from April 2020 landlords cannot let a rental flat or house in a new tenancy or a renewal unless the property has a grade of E or higher.

However, Norwich has produced some leading examples of energy efficiency. Goldsmith Street in Norwich, built to Passivhaus standard, won the Stirling prize for architecture in 2019. Heating bills in the 105 council houses can be as low as £150 a year if the building is operated correctly.

Peterborough designs largest smart city project in UK

The Peterborough Integrated Renewables Infrastructure project (PIRI) announced plans for the design of the largest city-wide energy system in the UK. The £2mn project combines a heat network, energy generation and storage and comprehensive EV charging infrastructure. The project is expected to take two years and is being led by Peterborough City Council in partnership with SSE Enterprise, Element Energy, Cranfield University, Smarter Grid Solutions and Sweco UK. PIRI will be funded partly by IK Research and Innovation funding as well as private sector investment.

Marco Cereste, cabinet member for the environment at Peterborough City Council, said, "This exciting announcement will give Peterborough the opportunity to use its own green, locally produced electricity and heat to benefit residents. It's a landmark step in our aim to be carbon-neutral by 2030 and will be the most exciting and innovative clean, green energy project the city and indeed the country has ever seen."

This project is designed to pilot innovative new ways to store and distribute electricity and heat as part of a commitment to net zero. UK Minister for Business, Energy and Clean Growth, Kwasi Kwarteng, concluded, "Every corner of the UK has a part to play as we eliminate our contribution to climate change entirely by 2050. This innovative project in Peterborough will deliver energy savings and reduce carbon emissions – a win-win for communities and the environment."

Other local energy headlines

2019 a record-breaking year for UK renewables

On 26 March, the Government released statistics that showed a record breaking 36.9% of the UK's electricity was generated by renewables in 2019. More than half of this was provided by wind farms. Wind generated 32TWh in 2019, 20% of total UK electricity generation. 9.9% was generated offshore and an equal amount generated onshore. The figures also show a 45% reduction in UK greenhouse gas emissions from 1990 in 2019.

Community investment reaches £1mn for Sussex projects

Brighton and Hove Energy Services Cooperative (BHESCo) has reached a £1mn milestone in a scheme to finance energy projects. The fund, first launched by BHESCo in 2015 has funded 50 community-owned projects, which will reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 5,478 tonnes over their lifetime. BHESCo offers property surveys and arranges the installation of energy saving technology. Measures include LED lighting, Solar PV, insulation, heat pumps and boiler replacement. BHESCo said “We believe we are ideally suited to capitalise on the business opportunities offered by the sustainable energy transition and we will continue to pursue our successful ‘Pay As You Save’ finance strategy to enable everyone in our community to improve the environmental credentials of their property.”

Founder and CEO Kayla Ente said: “Ultimately, what drives me the most is a wish to help other communities around the country to start their own energy co-ops, expanding on the local energy model and bringing more democratic ownership of our energy resources to residents across the UK.”

New hydro-electric plant to power businesses in Cheshire

Dane Valley Community Energy plans to install and operate a hydro-electric generation plant on the River Dane at Congleton, Cheshire. Siemens Digital Industries, who have a site locally, has agreed to purchase the green energy produced by the plant to power its local factory. The funding for the plant has been raised by a community shared ownership scheme.

Andrew Peters, Managing Director of Siemens Digital Industries, Congleton said “Siemens have been supportive of this project from its inception. It provides an excellent opportunity for business and the local community to work together to provide practical solutions to the environmental problem of global warming which is affecting us all. Our manufacturing site at Congleton is always striving to improve its sustainability by reducing carbon emissions and to enhance its interactions with the local community.”

Pembrokeshire smart energy project gets £2mn funding

Pembrokeshire County Council announced on 8 March that it has received £2mn funding for local smart energy projects. These projects will include community energy pilot projects looking at detailed designs of local energy systems as well as biomass for biogas injection and the integration of hydrogen into transport and heat.

Paul Miller, the County Council’s Cabinet Member for Economy, Tourism, Leisure and Culture said “Pembrokeshire has played a key role in the UK’s energy production and supply for decades, and this project paves the way for an exciting future based around renewable energy. The Council is delighted to be working with partners as part of its net zero carbon agenda.”



Energy: Net zero

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