

PRESS RELEASE**23 March 2021****LONDON LOSING THE RACE TO NET ZERO**

- ***Industry report highlights where Britons are falling short in the uptake of domestic green energy***
- ***10 local authorities with lowest rates of home installations are all London boroughs***
- ***The current rate of installations across Britain would take 250 years to reach all households, a stark contrast against 'net-zero by 2050' target***

An industry report into Britain's uptake of small-scale renewable technologies is lifting the lid on renewable energy 'deserts' across the country – with London being among the worst offenders.

The report, titled *Renewing Britain: The Changing Landscape of Home-Grown Energy*, dives into 14 years' worth of data held by MCS – the national standards organisation for renewables – and reveals a significant lack of buy-in from homeowners.

Analysis shows that the 10 local authorities with the lowest rates of installations are all London boroughs, with a rate of fewer than one in every 127 households opting to go greener.

One startling example is the City of London, which has just 32 renewable installations among its residents, accounting for a mere 0.58 per cent of households.

By comparison, Hackney is home to 803 small-scale renewable installations, equating to one in 128 households, while Kensington and Chelsea local authorities have logged just 219 households with Solar PV (solar panels); a rate of one in 400 households.

The figures paint a bleak picture of the uptake for sustainable, home-grown energy in the Capital, set against the government's target of net-zero carbon emissions by 2050.

Deserts and forests

Mapping its own data against official statistics¹, MCS has identified 'forests' and 'deserts' of renewable technologies in England, Scotland, and Wales.

The company examined the rural and urban nature of each region against the percentage of households with some form of renewable technology installed, and considered other factors such as household income, levels of fuel poverty, and to what extent an area is on or off the gas grid.

¹ MCS worked with data technology specialist, Quanovo, which used MID data augmented with external data from the UK Census and the Office of National Statistics (ONS).

The data shows that the number of installations since 2008 equates to just 100,000 a year. At this rate, it would take 250 years for renewable technologies to reach 26.5 million households: a significant stumbling block for the UK's target of net-zero by 2050.²

Since 2008, MCS has registered 1.2 million installations of the five major renewable energy technologies across the country³, generating 34,000GWh-plus of energy, and saving nearly 10 million tonnes of CO₂e. The equivalent to the electricity used to power 9.65 million homes.

The analysis also shows that the path of growth has been volatile, with the number of installations spiking and dropping in line with changes to government incentives, including the Feed in Tariff (FIT) and Renewable Heat Incentive (RHI).

However, the Carbon Trust has stated that the RHI has 'failed' in London, with only 304 domestic RHI applications having been made for Air-Source Heat Pumps from April 2014 to January 2020.⁴

Despite these figures, there are several urban and semi-urban areas that buck the trend. Urban Enfield in London has the eleventh highest percentage of Ground/Water-Source Heat Pumps, while Stirling and Peterborough have the highest levels of Solar PV installations.

By contrast, Britain's 'forests' – rural or semi-rural areas that have led the way in adopting green technology – are leading the race to net-zero, with the Orkney Islands and the Western Isles coming out as the top two locations in Britain for installations. One in five properties on Orkney has some form of small-scale renewable technology, while the Western Isles has the highest level of fuel poverty in Britain (36 per cent) and highest proportion of homes with Air-Source Heat Pumps.

Looking to the future

Ian Rippin, CEO of MCS, says: "While sluggish or non-existent demand for renewable technologies is most evident in central and Greater London, our research shows that this is a common theme among large, urban areas.

"Typically, the adoption of renewable heat correlates with areas where many consumers have no access to mains gas or where fuel poverty is widespread. That said, in London, the areas with the lowest rates of installations tend to be those with the highest average disposable household incomes, such as Westminster, Hammersmith and Fulham, Kensington and Chelsea.

"Above all, what our report shows is that Britain is a divided country when it comes to the investment in small-scale renewables, with myriad factors affecting uptake. However, true change is happening at a local authority level; something which central government should learn from."

Off the back of its report, MCS is lobbying government with three key recommendations for a "carefully considered, long-term roadmap" for the broad adoption of renewables in Britain, and the decarbonisation of homes.

1. **Learn from the successes** of the devolved administrations and other tiers of government identified in the report: in particular, Scotland's "whole-system" approach, which sets the benchmark on a national level.
2. Use those lessons to **set clear, evidence-driven, and ambitious targets** delivered through long-term incentives to close current gaps and drive an increase in installations.

² 1.2m installations over 12 years averages at 100,000 per annum (accepting current rates at around 73,000 per annum). 26.5m homes – ONS data.

³ The focus of this report is on the five major technologies for generating electricity and heat that have been deployed at the largest scale: Ground/Water-Source Heat Pumps, Air-Source Heat Pumps, Solar PV, Solar Thermal, and Biomass.

⁴ Carbon Trust Heat Pump Retrofit in London. 2020. Available at: <https://www.carbontrust.com/resources/heat-pump-retrofit-in-london>

3. **Devise an integrated package of support** for small-scale renewables that is targeted to people and the areas they live. Cost reduction to improve accessibility and consumer awareness founded on impartial, independent advice should be at the heart of any support package.

Rippin concludes: “Domestic renewables have come a long way since 2008, when just 43 installations were recorded, with short, sharp injections of support for consumer incentives having been shown to drive temporary demand.”

“This report paints an invaluable picture of the past to help inform our current path to net-zero. MCS and the wider the industry is here to continue supporting the government as we move into a crucial period in addressing the climate emergency.”

MCS is overseen by the MCS Charitable Foundation, which works to increase public confidence, awareness and access to renewable energy and low carbon solutions across the UK.

Adrian Ramsay, chief executive officer of the MCS Charitable Foundation, commented: “This report is a really valuable tool for policymakers, researchers and the renewables sector in understanding the trends and patterns of the last 14 years, and setting agendas to deliver the transformational change the industry needs to create a resilient and greener future.”

MCS is at the heart of three new government incentive schemes, including the Green Homes Grant, a Smart Export Guarantee in place of the FiT, and consideration of a Clean Heat Grant to replace the RHI from 2022.

Renewing Britain intends to help government and industry to learn from thriving markets (forests) and identify barriers in areas where renewables have made little or no penetration (deserts).

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NOTES TO EDITORS

About *Renewing Britain: The Changing Landscape of Home-Grown Energy 2008 – 2021*

Delivered by MCS (Microgeneration Certification Scheme), this eye-opening report shines a light on Britain’s relationship with small-scale renewable technologies over the past 14 years. Analysing data from the MCS Installations Database (MID), it offers a comprehensive analysis of what has gone before, providing an opportunity for learning and growth in line with net-zero by 2050 targets.

View and download the full report online here www.renewingbritain.com

Fast facts about London and renewable technologies

- 10 local authorities with the lowest percentage of renewable installations are London boroughs, with a rate of fewer than one in every 127 households.
- 12 of the 32 London boroughs have fewer than 1,000 Solar PV installations, and have under 8,000 combined.
- 18 of the 20 local authorities with the smallest proportion of households with Solar PV are London boroughs (12 of the inner London boroughs and six of the 20 out of London boroughs).
- Only one in 3,000 Greater London households has an Air-Source Heat Pump (ASHP), around 0.03 per cent.
- In Greater London, fewer than one in 5,000 households has a Ground/Water-Source Heat Pump (G/WSHP).
- Seven out of the 20 local authorities with the lowest percentage of Biomass installations are in London.

Areas with the lowest home-grown energy

1. Wandsworth - 0.79%
2. Lambeth - 0.79%
3. Hackney - 0.78%
4. Islington - 0.75%
5. Camden - 0.73%
6. Tower Hamlets - 0.69%
7. Hammersmith and Fulham - 0.61%
8. City of London - 0.58%
9. Westminster - 0.49%
10. Kensington and Chelsea - 0.30%

Top 10 areas of home-grown energy

1. Orkney Islands - 20.80%
2. Western Isles - 14.95%
3. Mid Devon - 14.56%
4. Stirling - 14.10%
5. Peterborough - 13.04%
6. South Cambridgeshire - 12.61%
7. South Hams - 12.19%
8. Torrington - 12.08%
9. Mid Suffolk - 11.44%
10. South Norfolk - 11.20%

About MCS

www.mcscertified.com

With energy costs constantly rising and climate change affecting us all – low-carbon technology has a bigger and bigger role to play in the future of UK energy.

We're here to ensure it's a positive one.

Working with industry we define, maintain and improve quality – certifying products and installers so people can have confidence in the low-carbon technology they invest in. From solar and wind, to heat pumps, biomass and battery storage, we want to inspire a new generation of home-grown energy, fit for the needs of every UK home and community.

About MCS Charitable Foundation

<https://www.mcscharitablefoundation.org/>

MCS Charitable Foundation is an independent UK-wide charity, whose mission is to accelerate the widespread adoption of renewable energy and low carbon technologies.

With growing concern about the climate emergency and energy costs on the rise, the need to advance low carbon solutions has never been greater. MCS Charitable Foundation wants everyone to have access to affordable and reliable renewable energy, so that we can have warm, comfortable homes as part of a resilient, zero carbon future.

For more information, visit <https://www.mcscharitablefoundation.org/projects>.