

PRESS RELEASE

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GREAT SCOT!

Scottish Isles lead the way for renewables in Britain

- ***Industry report highlights ‘forests’ and ‘deserts’ of small-scale renewables across the country***
- ***Orkney Islands and Western Isles come out on top for home-grown green energy***
- ***20 per cent of homes in Orkney have some form of installation***
- ***The current rate of uptake across Britain means it would take 250 years for renewables 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 green energy ‘forests’ and ‘deserts’ across the country – with Scotland leading the race to net-zero.

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 – revealing those regions that are leading the way in the adoption of small-scale renewables.

Analysis of Scotland’s performance shows that the country is setting the standard for small-scale renewable technologies in Britain, with stand-out performance in terms of domestic renewable heat, particularly in areas that are off the main gas grid.

The highest proportion of installations can be found in two of Scotland’s most remote locations: Orkney Islands, where one in five households (20.8 per cent) has some form of renewable energy, closely followed by the Western Isles, where one in seven households has opted to go greener (14.95 per cent).

The data also unveils a strong correlation between areas with high rates of installation and fuel poverty. The Western Isles has the highest levels of fuel poverty in the UK (36 per cent) and the highest proportion of homes with Air-Source Heat Pumps (ASHPs) – one in 11 households.

Overall, the five local authorities in the whole of the UK with the highest rate of installations of ASHPs are all in Scotland where rates of fuel poverty are high¹.

Though successful in many areas, there are still ‘deserts’ for renewables in urban parts of Scotland, notably the major cities Edinburgh, Glasgow, Dundee and Aberdeen. However, semi-urban Stirling bucks this trend, with the second-highest level (12 per cent) of Solar PV installations.

¹ Scottish House Condition Survey: Local Authority Analyses to 2016-2018: [Scottish House Condition Survey: Local Authority Analyses to 2016-2018 - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-house-condition-survey-local-authority-analyses-to-2016-2018/pages/2016-2018-gov.scot)

Superstar of the North

The Orkney Islands set targets for 2030 to increase its decarbonised energy use from 10 to 50 per cent – a tactic that seems to be working.

As of 2020, the Orkney Islands had cemented its position as a superstar local authority for small-scale renewables, with the highest rate of MCS certified installations in Great Britain (equivalent to 20 per cent of homes).

Among its achievements, Orkney ranks number one for Ground and Water-source heat pumps, and Solar Thermal; number two for ASHPs, and sits within the top 10 for Biomass (as a percentage of homes). Plus, seven per cent of households have an MCS certified small wind turbine.

Orkney has a long-standing commitment to sustainable energy, driven by a series of linked programmes and strategies:

- Sustainable Energy Strategy 2017-2025, which will include guidance on how customers can access 'appropriate and impartial advice and support where and when it is needed'.
- Fuel Poverty Strategy 2017-2022, aiming to reduce it by 2022 and eradicate it in Orkney by 2032.
- Skills Strategy 2017-2022, Orkney's response to Scotland's skills investment plans to ensure the 'right skills are available in the right people at the right time'.

These initiatives echo the country's national "whole-system" approach, introduced by the Scottish Energy Strategy in 2017. This means supporting and delivering solutions to meet local needs, planned and deployed on an area-by-area basis, with Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategies to help Scotland meet its new target of generating 50 per cent of energy from renewable sources by 2030.

Forests and deserts

Mapping its own data against official statistics², MCS has identified 'forests' and 'deserts' of renewable technologies across 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.

Despite the success of Scotland, data shows that the number of installations across Britain 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 2050.³

Since 2008, MCS has registered 1.2 million installations of the five major renewable energy technologies across the country⁴, 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 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 FiT and Renewable Heat Incentive (RHI).

² 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).

³ 1.2m installations over 12 years averages at 100,000 per annum (accepting current rates at around 73,000 per annum), assuming one installation per household. Does not include 2020 data. 26.5m homes – ONS data.

⁴ 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.

Nearly nine out of 10 (87 per cent) of Scotland's domestic RHI installations were installed in off-grid areas; compared to 68 per cent in England and Wales. In total, systems in Scotland accounted for approximately 20 per cent of the total number of those accredited under the domestic RHI.

Ian Rippin, CEO of MCS, says: "Our data clearly shows that Scotland is setting the benchmark for encouraging the uptake in small-scale renewables at a local and national level.

"While adopting greener energy in many rural areas of Scotland has resulted from necessity – being off-grid, for example – the country's devolved power over things like subsidy, grants and consumer initiatives is proving highly successful.

"It demonstrates the importance of having a raft of combined initiatives under a unified strategy, rather than piecemeal approaches that have no long-term impact."

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.
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.

"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.

"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 renewable technologies in Scotland

- Scotland has the two highest proportions of installations in Britain: the Orkney Islands, with one in every five households (20.8 per cent), closely followed by the Western Isles, with one in seven homes (14.95 per cent).
- Orkney Islands is the superstar local authority with the highest rate of MCS certified installations in Great Britain (equivalent to 20 per cent of homes).
- Stirling home to second-most installations of Solar PV – 12.4% of households.
- Top five local authorities for ASHPs all in Scotland: The Western Isles (9.7%), Orkney Islands (6.4%), Shetland Islands (4%), The Highlands (2.5%) and Dumfries and Galloway (2.4%).

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. Torridge - 12.08%
9. Mid Suffolk - 11.44%
10. South Norfolk - 11.20%

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%

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>.