

PRESS RELEASE

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## GREEN AND PLEASANT LAND

### ***South West comes out on top for domestic green energy***

- ***Industry report highlights ‘forests’ and ‘deserts’ of small-scale renewable technologies across Britain***
- ***South West is leading the way, with one in every 15 households installing green technology***
- ***Cornwall is the ‘pacesetter’, home to more than two per cent of all installations***
- ***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 the South West winning 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 shows that the South West has the highest proportion of installations, with one in every 15 households (seven per cent) choosing green energy.

It is also the only region where more than one in every 20 households (five per cent) has solar panels (Solar PV) installed, with other parts of the country averaging between three and five per cent.

Appropriately for one of the sunniest places in Britain, Cornwall is the pacesetter for solar power, with nearly 20,000 Solar PV installations; almost twice that of Wiltshire, with the second highest number in the country.

In 2018, around 37 per cent of its electricity came from renewables (up from six per cent in 2009). By 2020, the county credited two-thirds of its drop in carbon emissions to the decarbonisation of electricity.

Its success can be attributed to the county’s long-standing commitment to the low-carbon agenda, with Cornwall Council<sup>1</sup> taking a ‘joined-up’ approach to working with partners, communities, and the private sector.

Initiatives to date include:

- the Green Cornwall Programme (2009) supporting the increased use of renewables, retrofitting of houses, and community and council-owned renewable energy projects.
- a large, revolving community Feed in Tariff (FiT).

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<sup>1</sup> Cornwall Council, 2010-11 Green Cornwall - Our Strategy for a greener, sustainable, low carbon Cornwall - 2011-2020 (biannual review). Available at: <https://www.cornwall.gov.uk/media/3624737/Green-Cornwall-Strategy-2011-2020.pdf>

- Cornwall's 2019 Climate Change plan, examining how whole house retrofit of social and privately rented properties can play a part in accelerating zero carbon homes<sup>2</sup>.

## Forests and deserts

Mapping its own data against official statistics<sup>3</sup>, 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 the South West, 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.<sup>4</sup>

Since 2008, MCS has registered 1.2 million installations of the five major renewable energy technologies across the country<sup>5</sup> – which include solar panels, ground source heat pumps and biomass technology – generating 34,000GWh-plus of energy, and saving nearly 10 million tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>e. 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).

Ian Rippin, CEO of MCS, says: "The South West is one of Britain's biggest contributors in the race to net zero, with rural locations and an ongoing commitment to Solar PV driving these figures.

"Our research shows that people living in rural areas are much more likely to invest in solar energy for their home. Among the 40 local authorities with the highest percentage of Solar PV installations, half of the homes are in Designated Rural Areas.

"The success of domestic renewables here demonstrates the importance of a raft of combined initiatives under a unified strategy. Cornwall's 'whole-house' approach to retrofit for example, ensures the most appropriate materials and insulation are in place before energy needs are addressed through small-scale renewables.

"In addition, around 60 per cent of the properties are designated rural, with 16 per cent of homes having no access to the main gas grid."

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.

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<sup>2</sup> The plan supports Whole House Retrofit of social homes and commits to demonstrating 'leadership in building zero carbon council homes' as well as to looking at offering loan funding for private sector landlords to help tackle the approximately 4500 private sector rented homes in Cornwall that do not meet the Minimum Energy Efficiency Standard (MEES).

<sup>3</sup> 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).

<sup>4</sup> 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.

<sup>5</sup> 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.

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).

**ENDS**

**For further information, please contact Rumpus PR on 0161 942 9988 or [mcs@rumpuspr.com](mailto:mcs@rumpuspr.com)**

## **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](http://www.renewingbritain.com)

### **Fast facts about renewable technologies in the South West**

- The South West has the highest proportion of small-scale renewables, equating to one in every 15 households (seven per cent).
- It is the only region where more than one in 20 households (five per cent) have Solar PV.

- Around one in 200 homes has an air-source heat pump (ASHP) installed.
- One in every 770 households (0.13 per cent) has a groundwater source heat pump (GWSHP); the highest proportion in the UK.
- Has the highest proportion of Solar Thermal installations (one in every 455 households at 0.22 per cent).
- Cornwall
  - Home to more than two per cent of all Britain's small-scale renewable installations (24,000).
  - In 2018, around 37 per cent of its electricity came from small-scale renewables (up 6 per cent versus 2009)
  - In 2020, the county credited two-thirds of its drop in carbon emissions to the decarbonisation of electricity.
  - 15 per cent of its energy from renewables by 2020 (up from 2 per cent in 2009)
  - Ranks within the top 30 locations for ASHPs.
  - Within the top 50 local authorities to Biomass and Solar Thermal.

### **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](http://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>.