PRESS RELEASE

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NOT SO GREEN AND PLEASANT LAND

Report reveals Britain's renewable energy 'deserts'

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

An industry report into Britain's uptake of small-scale renewable technologies is lifting the lid on renewable energy 'deserts', with swathes of the country yet to invest in green energy for their homes.

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 startling lack of buy-in from homeowners.

The data shows that the number of installations since 2008 equates to just 100,000 a year across England, Wales, and Scotland. 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.[1]

Since 2008, MCS has registered 1.2 million installations of the five major renewable energy technologies[2], generating 34,000GWh-plus of energy, and saving nearly 10 million tonnes of CO_2e. 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).

Britain's winners and losers in the race to net-zero

By mapping its own data against official statistics[3], MCS has identified 'forests' and 'deserts' of renewable technologies across the country.

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] 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.

[2] The main 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.

[3] 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).

Predictably, adoption of renewable heat correlates with areas where many consumers have no access to mains gas or where fuel poverty is widespread.

Among Britain's deserts, which are mainly urban areas, 10 of the lowest ranking local authorities for small-scale renewables are London boroughs[3], with fewer than one in every 127 households opting to go green.

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

On the opposite end of the scale are Britain's 'forests': rural or semi-rural areas that have led the way in adopting green technology, accounting for 18 of the top 20 local authorities.

The Orkney Islands and the Western Isles are the top two areas in Britain for installations. One in five properties on Orkney has some form of small-scall 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.

Cornwall is also a leader in adopting green energy, generating 37 per cent of its electricity from renewables, with almost 20,000 Solar PV installations recorded to date.

Up in the North East, Sunderland – where fewer than one in every 100 homes is designated rural – has one of the lowest average disposable incomes, and one of the highest rates of Solar PV installations (7.6 per cent).

Yet even with the stellar performance of Britain's 'forests', many local authorities have an installation rate of fewer than five per cent of households, including most of Lancashire, West Yorkshire, the West Midlands, and South Wales.

Looking to the future

"The data speaks for itself: Britain is a divided country when it comes to the investment in small-scale renewables, with myriad factors affecting uptake," says Ian Rippin, CEO of MCS.

"However, true change is happening at a local authority level; something which central government should learn from. 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."

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: "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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For further information, please contact Rumpus PR on 0161 942 9988 or 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

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.