

Panel discussion notes

Participants:

- [BG]: Barry Greig, Scottish Government
- [KA]: Karoliina Auvinen, Local Renewable Energy Association, Finland
- [IM]: Iarla Moran, Mayo Country Council, Ireland
- [BM]: Brian MacDonald, Group Water Schemes, Ireland
- [HH]: Hafliði Haflidason, Arioni Bank, Iceland

Do you agree that there is a need for energy and water planners to co-manage resources more comprehensively?

- [BG]: Scottish Water is the second largest energy consumer in Scotland. Renewable energy can be a good solution to this problem.
- [IM]: Energy efficiency should be thought about at first. Collaboration of the two sectors is a good idea.
- [BD]: In Irish Group Water Schemes, yearly 20% of the profit is put aside for investment purposes. This could be used for renewable energy investments.

Why do you think it is uncommon to see energy and water utilities collaborating? Are there some specific programmes in your country/region to encourage renewable energy investments in water utilities?

- [KA]: In Finland it is so that energy companies as well as water companies are state-owned. However, both exist separately. It is indeed a problem in the country. The reasons of unsuccessful collaboration is lack of political leadership in climate issues, lack of understanding between politicians and other officials, lack of climate related directions, lack of political will, and sometimes the proposals (e.g. to unite water and energy sector) just go to one Ministry where it is discussed and there it stops and do not continue going further to other Ministries, etc.
- [BG]: There are examples of this collaboration in Scotland. Political influence played an important role. What makes it favourable in Scotland is the geographical scale of the country: the territory is relatively small. Hence, it is easier to assemble all the decision-makers in one room and talk. What hinders the development of such collaboration are other problems such as lack of infrastructure.
- [IM]: Unavailability of capital is one of the key factors. Lack of training of water sector staff about energy issues.
- [BD]: In communities in rural areas it is lack of thought.
- [HH]: Lack of environmental awareness.

What are the key barriers in your country/region for water utilities investing in renewable energy? Do you have any experiences of legislative barriers hindering or even making investment in renewable energy impossible at water utilities (and/or local communities?)

- [KA]: In case of Finland, there is also a lack of political will, the energy market is very regulated, market-based price does not exist. Fossil fuel is incentivized and there are profitability problems in terms of renewable energy. There are administrative barriers e.g. for feed-in tariff for wind energy.

There are also bureaucracy problems: e.g. contracts and different forms are difficult to fill out. In general, lack of awareness and need more research to enhance profitability.

- [BD]: Lack of thought. Local communities are opposing e.g. to waste-to-energy installations. The community sector also “needs to see the figures” – to prove that renewable energy makes economic sense.
- [BG]: There are some barriers in planning legislation: e.g. onshore and offshore wind energy
- [IM]: No capital available

Water scarcity is largely absent from the debate over what energy sources are going to be the most reliable in the future. Likewise, energy issues are missing from Water Resources Management. Why do you think there is no legislation addressing the water-energy nexus?

- [AK]: There is the “silo” problem in EU legislation and on Finnish level as well. We should concentrate more on overall sustainability duty, in water, energy, waste and other issues as well. We need roadmaps of sustainability. There is also a need for easy access to politicians.

How could we enhance the performance of urban energy, water and wastewater management systems regarding sustainability criteria? Should governments encourage municipalities to incorporate integrated planning when building energy, water/wastewater, waste infrastructures?

- [BG]: Government should act as a catalyst in this problem.
- [HH]: In case of farmers, i.e. implementation of renewables on small-scale, there are “jungle of licenses” to get before actual implementation. This can be improved.
- [BM]: It is important to deliver this message to people.
- [KA]: It is important to let associations, for example Local Renewable Energy Association, in the discussions with decisions makers. They can facilitate the discussion between parties such as community, industry, government.

What message would you like us to take to Brussels?

- [BG]: Share examples of successful pilot projects.
- [HH]: Put more money.
- [BM]: Awareness. People should be educated about renewable energy. Changes in national planning. The EU should be in a facilitator role.
- [AK]: The renewable energy share in the 2030 framework for climate and energy policies is 27%. It should be increased at least up to 40%. National targets should be included as well (e.g. energy efficiency). Energy efficiency targets should be updated as well.
- [IM] Agree that 27% renewable share target is low.