

*Transforming energy in Wales key note address Lesley Griffiths AM, Cabinet Secretary for Energy, Planning and Rural Affairs, Welsh Government*

It's a pleasure to be here at today's event for "Entrepreneurial Women in Renewable Energy". I am delighted to be able to open today's meeting and wish I were able to stay to hear more from the line up of women driving change in the energy sector. I am sure you will all find something to inspire you in their stories. All of you in this room are active and important allies in delivering the energy transition we need here in Wales.

I spent last week at the Global Climate Action summit in San Francisco, where it was inspiring to see so many women leaders taking action in their regions.

I was fortunate enough to attend a meeting with Christina Figueres, who was instrumental in driving forward the United Nations Paris Agreement, which was recognised as an historical achievement.

Christina is now appointed as Global Ambassador for the Under2 Coalition, of which Wales was a founding signatory.

I met many inspirational leaders at the summit, leaders of states and regional governments from all over the world who are focused on action and implementation to tackle climate change. I took great pride in sharing the work we are doing here in Wales on energy and decarbonisation.

We have a good story to tell and it was a privilege to represent the Welsh Government. It's also a privilege to have been the Cabinet Secretary for Energy, Planning and

Rural Affairs for the past two years. I have met many individuals who work in the energy sector and are innovative and inspirational in helping drive the change needed.

I'm sure all of you here today are aware of changes decarbonisation is demanding from within the energy landscape. Changes in the way energy is generated; changes as we become more efficient in using energy; and changes as previously separate systems start to become more integrated. For example, electric cars are becoming increasingly popular with consequent demands on the electricity grid.

Welsh Government needs to drive forward a whole system approach for Wales. Capturing the benefits from the transition to a low carbon economy will contribute to increasing prosperity and wellbeing in Wales.

We have a commitment to achieve at least 80% reductions in our carbon emissions by 2050. I have recently announced our first two carbon budgets for Wales and interim targets for 2020, 2030 and 2040. This is a significant milestone in terms of providing clarity and certainty for government, business and stakeholders with regard to Wales' pathway to a low-carbon society.

We are currently consulting on our Low Carbon Delivery Plan and will publish this early in 2019. I hope you and the organisations you represent will take this opportunity to input to this consultation, which will form the basis for our work over the next ten years.

A key part of developing our decarbonisation pathways will be around the energy we use and generate. We are already taking action to curb emissions from fossil fuels, building on our moratorium on fracking in Wales.

Last year we set renewable energy targets for Wales. These targets demonstrate our commitment to supporting a low carbon economy – as well as making sure the people of Wales benefit from the energy transition from innovation and early adoption.

The transition to a distributed energy system is an opportunity to have more locally owned energy developments, which retain more benefits within Wales.

Alongside the ambitious 70% target for renewable electricity, we set a target for one gigawatt of locally owned electricity by 2030, and an expectation for all new developments to have an element of local ownership from 2020.

We recently published a call for evidence on local ownership of energy developments and will shortly be publishing our response. Jennifer Pride from my Energy Policy Team will be speaking about this in more detail this afternoon.

To meet the 2030 renewable energy targets and our decarbonisation goals, we need transformational change. This must be developed and led at the local and regional level in order to be acceptable and effective.

We will need local and regional approaches to energy planning to inform local action, alongside our energy policy input to national infrastructure planning. The recent work led by the Institute of Welsh Affairs in the Swansea Bay City Region, which Poppy will speak about later, shows how it is possible to propose a vision and an ambition for a region.

We are working with local government and others to develop Welsh approaches to supporting local and national energy planning, building on what works.

At the UK level, UK Government has a critical role in shaping regulation to ensure our energy supplies are affordable, secure, and low carbon. However, I feel UK Government policy is currently hampering our ability to deliver in Wales.

I have written to both Greg Clark and Claire Perry to ask them to reconsider their approach to support for renewables. Should UK Government go ahead with their plans to close Feed in Tariff in April 2019, there will be no support available for wind and solar, two of the lowest cost electricity generating technologies. I have repeatedly called for UK Government to re-open Pot 1 under Contracts for Difference, and to commit to regular commitment to pot 2 and pot 1 auctions.

The Feed in Tariff scheme has been a success in Wales, acting as a powerful incentive and enabler, resulting in widespread adoption of renewable technologies. FiT has helped Wales move towards our vision of a low carbon economy. To the end of June 2018 under FiT almost 54,000 installations had deployed in Wales with an installed capacity of 455 MW. We need some mechanism to enable this to continue.

I have also sought clarity from UK Government in relation to funding for marine energy. Much of our 1200km of coastline is potentially suitable to support tidal energy developments. We have 2 of the largest zones for demonstrating wave and tidal stream arrays. I want to further increase Wales' global profile as a location for marine energy. To support this ambition we will be hosting a marine energy summit this autumn.

In Wales we are focusing on driving change using the levers we have.

I have set an ambition for a carbon neutral public sector by 2030 and three stretching renewable energy targets, both of which will help us to decarbonise our energy system, reduce long term costs and deliver greater benefits to Wales.

To support developments, we have made significant progress in ensuring we have a streamlined planning system in place, for example, by establishing the Development of National Significance regime.

To deliver decarbonisation we need a strategic framework to guide the right energy developments to the right place for Wales. Key to this will be the evidence on energy we feed into our National Development Framework.

From next April we will have responsibility for the consenting of energy generating projects up to and including 350 Megawatts, both onshore and in Welsh waters. We will also have consenting powers for overhead electric lines of 132 Kilovolts or less where they are associated with a devolved Welsh generating station.

In April, I released a consultation which describes how these new powers will unfold and take effect in Wales. The consultation describes our proposed short-term and long-term arrangements.

We need a fit for purpose grid to deliver the transformation in the energy system we need for Wales. The electricity and gas grid we need for the future will look very different to what we have now. I have convened a group to work with us on developing a network suitable to support future energy systems.

This will work alongside our activity on local and regional energy planning, to help identify areas where grid improvements may be needed. We will be looking to the energy regulator, Ofgem, to create the right framework for network owners to make investment where we can show it is required.

In summary, I feel we are creating a strong policy and regulatory framework within Wales to direct action by public and private organisations on decarbonisation and energy. We are also providing support through a number of support and funding programmes, to enable the development of local plans and pipelines of projects across Wales. This policy and supporting environment, I hope, creates space for leaders such as you in this room, to work together to help deliver a more prosperous low carbon Wales.

I look forward to seeing the future take shape, increasingly in the hands of entrepreneurial women.