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Moderator questions in Bold, Respondents in Regular text.

KEY: Unable to decipher = (inaudible + timecode), **Phonetic spelling** (ph) + timecode), **Missed word** = (mw + timecode), **Talking over each other** = (talking over each other + timecode).

Steven Agnew: Hello everyone. If others have said it is good to get out of-, out of the bedroom but it's also a wee bit out of the comfort zone, I have to say and particularly the, the comfort of my slippers. There, there are advantages to working from home, it has to be said. So, I'm delighted to be here to speak as the, the head of RenewableNI and indeed I'm, I'm, I'm delighted so many of our members are, are, are speaking with you today because they can-, they can probably tell you the, the, the story better than I can but I want to thank Invest NI for, for the invite and for putting on today's event. RenewableNI is the trade association for the renewable electricity industry in Northern Ireland. We were co-founded by RenewableUK and Wind Energy Ireland. A, a, a, kind of, collaboration coming together to, to create the, the trade association in, in Northern Ireland but I think as, as, as our next slide will show, we're increasingly becoming an independent association in the sense of developing our membership locally and, and indeed developing our, our, our team.

Our members are engaged in wind, solar and batter storage and, and, as well as onshore and offshore and small scale and, and large scale. I think it's important to, to, to point that out because you often get a debate, 'Is it onshore? Is it offshore? Is it wind? Is it solar? Is it small scale? Is it large scale?' It, it, it's all of those things if we're going to meet our, our decarbonisation ambitions. And as I've said, you'll, you'll, you'll see in the slide that, the, the list of our members and a number of them are speaking today. If you don't see your own company here but you do see yourself engaging within the renewable electricity industry, speak to me about RenewableNI membership. And this is just some of the forums that our, our members get access to and you'll, you'll see now the-, our offshore working group which we setup about a year ago and I, I, I'm going to say prescience on my part, too much has changed in, in, in the past year in terms of offshore so much has, has, has developed that I think it was definitely the right time to setup that group.

It was to inform our response to the energy strategy because I felt we, we were liked in terms of what were asking for on, on offshore but we're, we're, we're really seeing the, the, the offshore industry grow in Northern Ireland, albeit we don't yet have, have projects in or on the water but I, I think as a trade association sometimes we need our members when it-, when it comes to, to offshore, we're really being led by our members who, who are really driving things forward. So, from 40 by twenty to zero by 50 and I've deliberately mixed metrics here because if we-, if, sort of, looking at the policy context and Richard will be more than familiar with this journey, we started off with a, a 40% renewable electricity target by, by 2020 but even as the, the, the head of the association for renewable electricity, renewable generation I, we recognise as, as a means to an end. It's a means to decarbonisation. Where we need to get to is to zero

carbon. To zero-, to net zero greenhouse gases and, and, and we've really seen the policy environment change in that regard and some of these reports in between have, have been reports we've commissioned.

I suppose looking backwards, the Wind Dividend Report by Baringa showed that our investments in renewable electricity have, have not just helped decarbonise but have also put a downward pressure on the wholesale price of electricity. Resisting the, the, some of the increases in consumer bills. More recently our, our Achieving Zero report maps out to fully zero carbon power system in, in Northern Ireland and that ultimately and I'll, I'll talk a wee bit about the, the 80 by 30 target, the 80% renewables target by 2030, but really it's, it's, it's that full decarbonisation that, that-, it is the prize, is the-, is the aim. So, we, we worked very hard to get an 80% target. We've just achieved it but we're already thinking ahead to, to, to where we're going next and our, our Powering A Green Economy report looked at onshore wind and the potential it has in terms of the Northern Ireland economy potential to increase GVA by, by over £3 billion, it was authored by KPMG and, and you've heard from Russell today. Most, most of my figures tend to come from Russell or indeed from, from colleagues in Baringa. So, RNI's key objectives as, as you can see there as I say, ultimately we want to get to zero carbon electricity by 2035.

80 by 30 is an incredibly important target but as a staging post and I think what we need to do is learn the lessons of the strategic energy framework which was incredibly successful in getting to over 40% renewables by 2020 but there was almost a cliff edge, you know, and I remember in my former role as an MLA asking somebody in the department, DANI (ph 05.28) as it was then, you know, what do we do after 2020? And it was as if there is no after 2020. We need to get away from that type of thinking. We need to look at the end goal and work our way back rather than just the staging posts along the way, as important as they are to measure our, our projects. There's going to be a number of enablers. I, I've, I've picked out a few key ones. It, it's already been referenced by, by Richard. Extension of the CFD scheme to Northern Ireland. That's going to be vital.

We're the only part of these islands without a support scheme for renewable electricity and we, we, we had a three year hiatus that's probably a kind word, where we develop no new large scale renewables in Northern Ireland because we, we, we, we had that, kind of, cliff edge of, of support of the narrow (ph 06.17) and then nothing to replace it and we're starting to catch up on ourselves now with the first two new wind farms connected at the beginning of this year but, you know, when we look at where we are now and where we need to get to in terms of decarbonisation we couldn't afford those three years and we really need, and I'll use the term that's been repeated-, we really need to accelerate things now if we're going to achieve our, our 80 by 30 target or indeed our, our zero carbon power by 2035 that, that we'd like to see and, and, and that-, I suppose to put that target in context, that's a GB target currently. It, it, it doesn't extend to Northern Ireland but already Boris Johnson's talking about bringing that target date forward. We'll, we'll see if that comes to pass but it just shows the, the speed at which we need to be moving. A facilitative planning regime and, you know, most of the frustrations we have as an industry are, are from our onshore members who, who are seeking planning permission now but I have to say we, we have DFE here today.

I'm not sure if we have DAERA but when our members in, in the offshore sector speak to us they say, 'We're engaging with DFE, we're engaging with DAERA, things are moving in the right direction, you know, we don't quite have everything we want yet but we, we feel like it, it's-, we're getting there.' When I ask about-, well, what about DFI? Because at the end of the day you have to bring the electricity onshore. They've told us we're not ready to engage yet. That's not good enough because it is the single biggest frustration of our members, whether that be offshore or onshore, is the planning system. If we do not meet our 2030 target it will not be for the lack of will of the renewable electricity industry. It will be the lack of planning consent that'll beat us and it's the one thing that members tell me over and again. And if I sound frustrated because I suppose I'm getting members sending me, 'Steven, it's not good enough,' it's my job to, to, to try and improve that. I'm passing that frustration on because ultimately DFI-, and I don't believe they're in the room today and I think that speaks volumes.

They need to be in the room, they need to engage early. Will made the point that the Crown Estate are engaging with National Grid early and, and, and about learning the lessons of how we do things at, with, with greater pace. Engage in early from all stakeholders needs to happen in that includes DFI. Enabled by delivery of offshore and the reason why that's such a general comment is I'm, I'm going to, kind of, go in to, to, to the, the, the various aspects of enabling offshore. So, we need Northern Ireland offshore action plan and as Richard has alluded to that's already underway. I, I, I know there's a working group being established and, and RenewableNI is, is delighted that we'll play our part in that. So, that's something we need. It's happening. We need inclusion in the Crown Estate leasing. Again we, we, we've heard from Will. When I spoke to Will, I think it was probably about six months ago it was probably, you know, there were a number of things needed to be in place before Crown Estate would even look at Northern Ireland but if we look at those things, at, at those challenges that Will put to me, thanks to the work of DFE, thanks to the work of DAERA, thanks to the work of Sony and others, those things are starting to, to, to get put in, in place and whilst we don't yet have a, a Northern Ireland leasing round secured, at least we've got Crown Estate here today and they are engaging with us and, and again it feels like that's coming.

We'll always want it quicker, that, that's the nature of a trade association but it, it, it's in process. A strategic environmental assessment, again speaking to DFE they're in the process of commissioning that so it's coming. An offshore connections process, we've started engaging with Sony on this. They'll be part of the, the offshore working group and, and again we, we're not there yet. We don't know quite yet what that process will look like but, but it's coming and the de-commissioner of, of last resort and again, that's something the DFE is, is, is looking at. So, there's a number of things we need to-, a number of boxes we need to tick before we get what ultimately will be a new industry for Northern Ireland. It's, kind of, in a way it feels like what, what's coming but has, has, has never quite come yet, is, is the offshore industry but it really feels-, and we, we, we've seen the SBM project launch two weeks ago. Two weeks ago? And we, we, we'll see further announcements in terms of offshore projects for NI, so this really is an industry that, that, that's ready to kick off.

And the benefits of-, I'm delighted Russell was here to, to present some figures because I suppose we, we haven't quite, quite gathered the figures yet. We, we're working with BBGA associates to do a supply chain study to show what the potential is for, for, for Northern Ireland, but there will be jobs in offshore as, as was pointed out. The, the, the turbines are one third of, of the investment made in, in offshore. We will really see local benefits for supply chain companies here in Northern Ireland both from our domestic market as, as, as well as the wider markets of, of these islands. Energy security has, has never been higher up the agenda and again I, I, I come, I, I suppose, back to my point on, on planning consents. In, in England there's effectively been a moratorium in onshore development. The prime minister has come on out and said basically, 'That has to go.' There, there's recognition. Boris Johnson's now talking about renewable development as being part of our national security and, and, and the need to accelerate the rollout of new renewables. We need that type of, of energy. We need that type of direction from government here in, in Northern Ireland if we're developing our, our local energy security. We, we've so much potential. We, we, we are at over 40% renewables but again we, we need to get ourselves weaned off imported fossil fuels.

Consumer savings, there, there's-, come to some figures later on this but what renewables does is, is keep the pressure down on, on wholesale price and, and while maybe consumers aren't seeing that at the minute because gas is still the price setter. As we move to more and more greater levels of renewable penetration we'll, we'll, we'll see a greater impact of, of, of that price and I'll, I'll get into the detail on that note-, a wee minute but one thing I, I will say. We, we've talked about the extension of the CFD to Northern Ireland. Right now those who, who've been successful and CFD contracts in Great Britain are paying huge sums back to the consumer because that's how the CFD work. It's a-, it's a-, it's a price, it's a risk sharing-, it's a price guarantee and when the market price goes up, as it has now, renewable generators pay back to the consumer and, and that's what we need to see. That, that type of, of, of risk sharing for Northern Ireland so that we give confidence for renewable energy investors but also we give security to consumers that, that the market price won't rocket up and, and what that brings, and it comes to my next point is, is price stability. The, the fuel price of renewables is zero.

It doesn't go up, it doesn't go down. So, once you've made the initial investment you've got predictability of price and, and again that's something that consumers could really do with presently. And obviously carbon reductions, you know, as I say, renewables are a means to an end and this is about the decarbonisation journey and again I'll, I'll, I'll come to some figures on that. So, we commissioned Baringa to, to produce our achieving zero report which, which had two phases. It, it, it looked at getting to 80% renewables and then ultimately to a fully zero carbon electricity system. And they, they, they, they benchmark because at that time we, we, we, sort of, anticipated that there would be a 70% target we were still at that point campaigning for an 80% by 2030 target and so Baringa benchmarked a, a, a lot of their work against the 70% target looking at what additional 80% would bring. And in terms of carbon emissions it would reduce CO2 emissions in the power sector, going from 70% to 80% by 600,000 tonnes of, of carbon dioxide per year and, and I suppose to put the 80% target in, in context, in total it would reduce carbon emissions from the power sector by 75% from where we are today.

So, we're, we're currently at around about 2.8 mega tonnes of carbon from our power system. We, we can reduce that down as I say by, by around 75% by getting to, to 80% renewables by 2030. And Baringa also estimated then what would the additional savings be for consumers and this is net savings. This is after all the investments we need to make in, in grid infrastructure and, and, and through the renewable support team however it, it looks like. NEI did a piece of work called Network for Net Zero that said going to 70% would actually result in a net 1% saving on consumer bills. Sort of, building on that then bring electrical under 80% and they said there would be an additional £50 million saving in 2030 for consumers. So, report after report after report after report shows that the more renewables we get into the system, the more we depress the, the wholesale price and the better it is for consumers.

So, I suppose just to, to finish off, RenewableNI is running a number of webinars on various renewable topics and the reason why I've kept our past webinars on is not just because I'm lazy and didn't want to update the slide, but it's because the, the webinars are available on our website. It, it's a free series sponsored by A&L Goodbody so we're able to provide them free and provide the videos on our website for those who can't attend at the time. So, as you see we're, we're, we're going offshore on the, the 6th of September. So, you know, we'll, we'll hopefully by that stage have, have our BBGA work completed and have a lot more figures for you about the, the, the local market. So, that's everything from me. Listen, thank you very much for your time. I look forward to chatting during the break.