

Holyrood pitches renewables target even higher

Scotland's renewable electricity target for the next decade is being raised from 50 per cent to 80 per cent, First Minister Alex Salmond announced today.

The FM confirmed the Scottish Government's increased national target – now 80 per cent of Scottish electricity consumption to come from renewables by 2020 – ahead of a major international conference in Edinburgh next week to help accelerate investment in the growing low carbon economy.

Scotland's existing target was established in 2007 and, aided by a rapid expansion in wind power, the country is on course to exceed its interim target of 31 per cent in 2011.

The Scottish Government has now calculated that significantly higher levels of renewables could be deployed by 2020 with little change to the current policy, planning or regulation framework in Scotland. A separate study for industry body Scottish Renewables, published today, reports similar conclusions.

Mr Salmond said:-“Scotland is blessed with abundant natural energy sources, particularly in our seas, where Scotland is estimated to have a quarter of Europe's potential wind and tidal energy capacity and a tenth of its wave resource. We are already on the path to a low carbon economy – Scotland gets nearly a quarter of its electricity from green sources.

“Scotland is ideally-placed to help lead the renewables revolution and taking account of the levels of planned investment over the next decade, I believe it is now time to aim higher and to go further.

“Recent work by Scottish Enterprise has shown the huge

potential for employment in the renewable industry, with up to 28,000 direct jobs being created to service the Scottish, UK and worldwide markets for offshore wind turbines. It has also been estimated that 60,000 new green jobs could be created by 2020 in low carbon industries

“Strong leadership is needed across government and industry to attract the investment to deliver these jobs, so the Scottish Government is today raising the renewable generation target for 2020 to 80 per cent.

“We already have some seven Gigawatts (GW) of renewables capacity installed, under construction or consented around Scotland. Given the scale of lease agreements now in place to develop offshore wind, wave and tidal projects over the next decade it is clear that we can well exceed the existing 50 per cent target by 2020.

“The global imperative to cut emissions, coupled with rapid advances in energy efficiency and production, mean the global economy of 2050 will be vastly different from today’s. However, the next ten years is the decisive decade for determining the shape, scale and pace of the renewable revolution and the transition to a low carbon future.

“The value of the global low carbon economy is estimated to reach some #4.3 trillion by the middle of this decade so now is the time to act. Next week senior figures from the financial and energy industries will join government and other public sector leaders in Edinburgh to identify how we best maximise the huge opportunities before us. It is vital that all of us work with ambition and vision to seize the moment and secure a sustainable future for the next generation.”

First Minister Alex Salmond will open the two-day Scottish Low Carbon Investment Conference on Tuesday September 28, where speakers and delegates will discuss the multi-billion pound opportunities presented by renewable energy and other low

carbon developments.