

Yes Scotland claim independence will transform energy policy

Independence is the key to cleaner, sustainable energy policy

Scotland needs independence to deliver a 'transformational' energy policy and rid the country of nuclear weapons, leading environmental campaigner Stan Blackley said today.

He said it was clear that Scotland's renewables policy was already delivering jobs, investment and environmental benefit – but that the UK government was putting these under threat.

✘ Mr Blackley, Deputy Director of Communities at Yes Scotland, told delegates at a Scottish Renewables conference in Edinburgh this morning that only independence would give Scotland the power to fully realise its potential as a world leader in a clean and sustainable energy.

He said:- 'It's clear to me that a Yes vote in 2014 will give us options and opportunities, by putting us in charge of Scotland, while a No vote would give us nothing more than the status quo – more of the same, or perhaps even less.

'At best, a Yes vote will give us the opportunity to deliver transformational change and, at the very least, it gives us more powers, which is important, as all of our jobs are currently being made that bit more difficult than they could and should be by the limitations of the current devolution settlement.

'For example, we can promote renewable energy through the planning system, and by showing consistent policy support, but without the power to regulate the energy market we can do nothing in Scotland to shift the incentives towards renewables and a sustainable energy policy.

'We could be devoting far more resource to improving the energy performance of our building stock, on energy efficiency and demand reduction, but without the power to define the energy companies' obligations we'll always get less bang for our buck.

'We can argue the case for high voltage North Sea grid connections, but without the status of a member state in

Europe we're left with UK Energy Ministers to speak for us – Ministers whose priority seems to be new nuclear power stations and the dash for unconventional gas.

'I believe we can run and represent ourselves better than that.'

Mr Blackley rejected claims by No campaigners that constitutional uncertainty was hurting inward investment.

He said: 'The report of the Scottish Parliament's Committee Inquiry into Scotland's renewables targets published in November last year specifically stated that this was not the case.

'A report from Pinsent Masons published in December last year stated that Scotland is the most attractive place in the UK for people to invest in renewable energy.

'In July last year, the UK Government's own figures, released by DECC, showed £2.3 billion worth of renewables projects announced in Scotland between April 2011 and July 2012, with an associated 4,600 jobs.'

Mr Blackley also dismissed claims that the rest of the UK wouldn't buy its electricity from an independent Scotland.

He said: 'The UK Government admits that energy is a cross-border asset. The rest of the UK will need Scotland's renewable electricity to meet its legally binding renewables and carbon emissions reduction targets...

'The idea that the rest of the UK wouldn't buy electricity from an independent Scotland is ludicrous, especially when the UK Government recently announced that it'll be buying electricity from Ireland.

It has already been confirmed that any UK future market will see Contracts for Differences available to generation from across and outside the UK.

'And with Ofgem fast-tracking £7 billion worth of upgrades to the grid in Scotland to boost transmission, the UK market will remain. However, we'll also see increased demand from the wider European market with improved interconnection, so Scotland may not even need to sell its spare electricity to the rest of the UK as other buyers will exist.'

Photo by Bill Fleming Photography courtesy of Yes Scotland