Green Economy
Teeside

Putting the North East at the heart of the new industrial revolution.
The North East of England has the highest unemployment rate in the country and is rated amongst the lowest in terms of life expectancy and household income. At the same time, the North East is “the last remaining net-exporting region in Britain” with a strong skills base and experienced workforce used to handling big industrial projects in the steel industry and in precision engineering.

This highlights that despite large industrial sectors, and despite coalition Government assurances about rebalancing the economy towards low carbon manufacturing outside London and the South East, the current economic set up is failing local people. The question is, can the emerging renewable energy sector create long term jobs and resilient communities in the region.

Hope for the future
Our close proximity to Round 3 off-shore wind sites including the giant Dogger Bank area puts Teesside in a great position to benefit from investment in the growing green economy.

Companies across Teesside and the North East have started to make the investment in becoming part of a world-class supply chain hub. From Tata Steel’s £2 million turbine component facility, TAG Energy’s £23m foundations plant and Stokesley-based MPI Offshore’s investment in installation and maintenance vessels. Companies like JDR Cables are already winning orders both in the UK and exporting overseas.

And off the coast at Redcar, the 30 turbines of EDF’s Teesside Wind Farm will be a clear demonstration of the potential for wind power to provide energy solutions for the 21st Century.

The offshore renewable energy sector is further supported by the region’s own research facility, the National Renewable Energy Centre (NAREC) in Blyth. The centre has invested £150 million to help advance offshore renewables including developments in marine and subsea technology.

And local communities are getting on board as well – projects such as capturing the power of the River Esk at Ruswarp, installing ground source heat pumps in the mines of Skinningrove and converting the Customs House in Middlesbrough to a state of the art youth centre powered by solar panels all contribute to the local economy and the region’s effort to tackle climate change.

Smaller businesses are benefitting too with over 100 small businesses within a 25 mile radius of Middlesbrough now accredited to fit renewable energy systems to homes, businesses and farmland.
The road to a low carbon economy on Teesside needs clear signposts. Failure from Government to steer investment in the right direction risks stalling the economic recovery of the North East before it gets out of the driveway.

Simon Bowens - North East Campaigner, Friends of the Earth

A dash for gas, new nuclear and large scale biomass offer a false promise of economic gain and energy security. Furthermore, they undermine renewable developments that support local skills with the potential to export goods and technologies. The government needs to make a clear stand and live up to its promise of ‘the greenest government ever’.

The bigger picture
The Government’s independent advisors, the Committee for Climate Change, have made it clear that the UK needs investment in clean, decarbonised electricity if we are to meet our Climate Change Act commitments to cut carbon emissions.

Friends of the Earth’s analysis shows that offshore wind could provide up to 40% of electricity demand in 2030 with all renewables contributing over 75% of demand.

Investments in the renewables industry, like manufacturing could ensure that the sector grows to be worth up to £75 billion within the next decade with further growth in the 2020s. This will provide secure, affordable and clean energy whilst breathing new life into areas like Teesside.

Investors in renewable energy need clarity from the Government’s Energy Bill on electricity market reform before committing millions on the manufacturing plants and generation sites required to build a UK offshore wind industry.

The Energy Bill fails to give that investor certainty and instead offers a huge “back-door” subsidy for the failing nuclear industry and is more likely to trigger a second dash for imported gas generation. And it fails to steer a clear course to the critical decarbonisation of our electricity supply.

And locally, leaders from business, politics, economic development, education and civic society need to join forces. We urgently need to lobby central Government to create an attractive framework for investors while also working together to build the skills, logistics and networks to attract those investors to Teesside.

Over 85% of people in the UK support renewable energy. Friends of the Earth’s Clean British Energy campaign aims to ensure that the Energy Bill secures a bright future for renewable energy whilst reducing demand. Only then will the UK become world leaders in tackling climate change and the bright new hope for places like Teesside will become reality.

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Sources
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For 40 years, Friends of the Earth has led campaigns resulting in significant change including:

> The world-leading Climate Change Act.
> Setting EU targets for renewable energy.
> Securing and protecting the feed-in tariff for solar and other renewable power.
> Legislation to eradicate fuel poverty.

None of this was done on our own – successful campaigns rely on working with others from many different sectors.

Will you be part of Clean British Energy? www.cleanbritishenergy.co.uk