

# My BEIS inquiry

## Inquiry

The Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) Committee launches the 'My BEIS Inquiry', inviting stakeholders and the wider public to come forward with suggestions for issues the Committee should investigate over the course of this Parliament.

The BEIS Committee is open to looking at issues from across the policy remit of the Department, including areas such as business, Industrial Strategy, consumer protection, corporate governance, jobs and working conditions, energy policy, clean growth and climate change.

How to take part?

### Submit your proposals

The Committee wants to hear your ideas about areas it should look into.

proposals for inquiries should outline briefly:

- the nature of the issue that the Committee should explore;
- why it deserves attention;
- how Government policy in this area could be developed or improved.

A selection of the proposals will be shortlisted for an opportunity to give a five minute 'pitch' to the Committee in person at a public evidence session in Westminster later this year. Members of the Committee will have the chance to ask questions about the proposal at the end of each 'pitch'. The aim of the meeting would be for Committee Members to learn more about the issue you have raised before taking a final decision on subjects to launch an inquiry on.

The Committee will be selecting submissions based on merit, in particular it will be looking for inquiries that:

- are within the Committee's remit;
- are timely;
- have potential for high impact;
- bring a new issue to the forefront or a fresh perspective to an existing problem.

The Committee is not able to take up individual complaints or cases. 'Pitches' will take place in public evidence sessions to ensure participants' concerns reach a wider audience and be entered into the permanent parliamentary record.

The Committee values diversity and encourages proposals from people it wouldn't normally hear from, and suggestions for work in areas that it has not previously considered.

The deadline to submit inquiry ideas is Tuesday 31 March 2020.

[Read our FAQs](#)

**Please outline the issue that you would like the Committee to look into**  
(200 words)

Community energy is people acting together locally to create replicable climate solutions - building and owning renewable generation, tackling fuel-poverty, energy education... As a motivated, knowledgeable and trusted intermediary, community energy is essential to advocating for and delivering the energy transition.

“The future of energy is local” Chris Skidmore/Claire Perry. “Community energy is a key cornerstone of the government’s transition to a smart, low-carbon energy system” Claire Perry.

Yet for the last 5 years, community energy has suffered policy setbacks that leave it frustrated and stalled. These include removing the Feed-in Tariff, Export Tariff, Urban Community Energy Fund and Tax Relief, punitive business rates on roof-top solar, planning constraints on on-shore wind and increasing VAT on solar panels, batteries and ‘energy saving measures’

from 5% to 20%.

Community energy can be a huge powerhouse of the energy transition but only if supported to get active.

Key issues:

The lack of

- formal recognition of the importance of people and community energy in policy.
  - strategy to involve the public in the urgent net-zero transition.
  - any practical or financial support for community energy despite supportive words from ministers
  - progress on 'Local Area Energy Planning.'
  - central support or coordination for local Climate Emergency Planning.
- (200)

**Why does this issue deserve attention?** (200 words)

The future of energy is zero-carbon, flexible, smart and **local**. People and community energy must be at the heart of energy policy and climate emergency planning. The Committee on Climate Change says the net-zero transition cannot happen without the consent and participation of the public, that 62% of necessary measures are dependent on behaviour change and that the government currently has no strategy of engagement.

Community energy is key to this engagement, harnessing the passion, knowledge, skills and capital in the community to create replicable local climate solutions and ensure that no-one is left behind. Community energy delivers 12-13 times the community benefit of commercial installations.

However, this potential powerhouse for transformation needs some minimal support. Since the Community Energy Strategy 2014, which envisioned one million homes powered by community energy in 2020, we have experienced little but policy set-backs (outlined above). The consequence is less than 10% of that potential realised and a highly motivated and well-connected resource is going to waste at a crucial time. (167)

**How could Government policy in this area be improved?** (This might include the creation of new policy or changes to existing policy) (200 words)

- Prominent statements in the Energy White Paper and Net-Zero Plan that People and community energy are central to energy policy and the net-zero transition.
- Community energy supported by a new Community Energy Strategy, a community energy team at BEIS and a good cross-departmental working group receiving input from the sector itself. Support knowledge sharing e.g. via the Community Energy Hub.
- Government, together with Ofgem, the energy networks and community energy should identify and fully resource an approach to 'Local Area Energy Planning' that sets out a core role for community energy groups and informs national policy.

Support:

- Reinstate Social Investment Tax Relief (SITR) for community energy.
- Create a new Urban Community Energy Fund to complement the Rural Community Energy Fund.
- Create a new grant programme to bring Local Authorities and community energy together to do projects (as part of Public Sector Decarbonisation Roadmap).

Regulation:

- Ofgem to have decarbonisation and social benefit in their official mandate. (155)