

PRESS RELEASE

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How smart solar at scale can power UK's economic recovery

In its latest report, *'Smart Solar at Scale: Meeting the UK's net-zero emissions and clean growth targets'*, ResPublica argues that the energy sector can play a central role in powering the UK's economic recovery, post-Covid-19. The report makes the case for scaling up the development and implementation of smart solar and battery storage technologies to meet the UK's objectives for both carbon reduction and clean economic growth.

ResPublica says that the cost of energy and the concept of a fixed block of energy demand are the key challenges that need to be addressed. Existing energy regulations and legislative frameworks stand as barriers in resolving these issues and in reaping the benefits that Renewable deployment at scale can achieve.

ResPublica argues that increasing renewable capacity and storage on both sides of the meter allows for the localised and decentralised production of energy, which combined with advancements in battery storage technologies can unlock the capacity needed by the grid, to overcome shifts in demand.

The report examines the way energy storage is defined in current legislation and how this complicates and reduces the security of investments in it, furthering potential users' lack of confidence in a storage service. In addition, the report looks into the lack of clarity of when storage can co-locate with renewables without interfering in existing agreements, which itself is also part of wider issues with transmission access rights.

ResPublica further suggests that Smart solar and batteries will play a critical role in delivering cost-effective, low-carbon energy which is secure and accessible to everyone. It will reduce the costs of energy systems, providing next-to-zero baseload costs of electricity. It will ensure advantage for the UK in an area where competition is fierce and of high geopolitical importance. So, a clear decision to continue the path of investment in smart solar can help ensure the country remains globally competitive, particularly now that we have left the EU.

Phillip Blond, Director of ResPublica said:

“We could be on the verge of a carbon-free energy system that delivers an abundant supply of close to zero-cost energy to all our homes and businesses. A system where real time energy data drives the demand and supply of energy through smart enabled premises and decentralised networks; and where neighbouring homes and businesses trade their surplus energy with each other. This is a vision of a highly distributed and widely owned energy infrastructure that enfranchises its customers and delivers clean, reliable energy at ever lower costs”

Prof. Jacopo Torriti, Report Author, said:

“Renewables are already playing a critical role in delivering low-carbon energy as they account for about one third of the overall national electricity supply. We need to ensure that renewables become increasingly cost-effective as this will make future electricity accessible to everyone. At the moment, the market does not sufficiently exclude high emitting power plants and too little value is given to low carbon flexibility. Our report suggests that investments in demand side response as well as electricity storage have significant potential in reducing the costs of balancing demand and supply”

ENDS

FACTS AND FIGURES:

- UK Energy bills have risen by 38% between 2007 and 2019, with 10% of all households in England living in fuel poverty.
- Public backing for renewable energy is higher than ever, with 80% of the public in support.
- The UK lags many European nations in the proportion of renewable energy which it consumes and has just about met its 2020 target of consuming 15% energy from renewable sources.
- With a view to 2025, the cost of batteries will decrease by a significant percentage (between 19% and 25%)

About ResPublica

ResPublica is an independent non-partisan think tank. Through our research and policy innovation, we seek to establish a new economic, social and cultural settlement. We aim to combat the concentration of wealth and power by distributing ownership and agency to all, and by re-instilling culture and virtue across our economy and society.

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