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#### in response to the Great British Energy Bill

#### **Biographies:**

**Professor Aoife Foley** is Chair in Net Zero Infrastructure at The University of Manchester and Editor in Chief of Elsevier's Renewable & Sustainable Energy Reviews, the leading global sustainability journal in the world. She has a BE in Civil & Environmental Engineering (1996), a PhD in Energy Engineering (2011) from University College Cork and an MScEng in Transportation Engineering (1999) from Trinity College Dublin. Prior to joining academia fulltime in 2011, she spent 15 years in senior project management roles in industry. She led key transformative projects in energy, telecoms, transport, and pharmaceuticals. Her research expertise covers gas and power systems, energy markets, energy system modelling, demand response technologies (e.g., energy storage). Aoife has given keynote presentations across the world and has received multiple awards including for research innovation leading to real world impact (e.g. Bill Curtain Award 2019 from the ICE; Jose Maria Sarriegi Major Catastrophe Research Award 2019 from the Queen of Spain). She is a Chartered Engineer, Fellow of Engineers Ireland and Senior Member of the IEEE. She has won research awards of £4M from the Irish Environmental Protection Agency, Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland, Science Foundation Ireland, the US National Foundation, EU Interreg Programme, the Department for Economy in Northern Ireland, HM Treasury, and the EPSRC.

**Dr Dlzar Al Kez** is a Research Associate in Net Zero Infrastructure at The University of Manchester. He received the BSc in Electrical Engineering from the University of Sulaimani, Sulaymaniyah, Iraq (2009) and the MSc degree in Electrical Power Engineering from the University of Southampton (2012) and a PhD in Electrical Engineering and Electronics Engineering from Queen's University Belfast. He has over 14 years of experience in both academia and industry, having worked with Sakar Power Generation, electrical design firms, and as a laboratory manager. Prior to pursuing his PhD, he was the Director of the Telecom Power Department at IQ Group, the largest fibre optic internet provider in Iraq. He is a Chartered Engineer (CEng) and a Member of the IET. His research interest includes power system dynamic, stability issues with high distributed generation penetration, energy storage, smart appliances and data centres.

**Professor Alice Larkin** is Professor in Climate Science & Energy Policy as part of the Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research in the School of Engineering. Alice trained as an astrophysicist at the University of Leeds (1996), did her PhD in climate modelling at Imperial College (2000), then worked in science communication. She returned to academia in 2003 joining the interdisciplinary Tyndall Centre to research conflicts between climate change and aviation. In 2008 she was appointed as a lecturer to direct projects on international transport and food supply scenarios within a climate change context

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and was Director of Tyndall Manchester between 2013 and 2016. In 2017 Alice became the Head of School of Mechanical, Aerospace and Civil Engineering, and then from 2019 to 2023, the Vice-Dean and Head of the newly formed School of Engineering. Her research interests continue to focus on the decarbonisation challenges surrounding aviation and shipping, and connections with carbon budgeting and the wider energy system more generally.

**Professor Carly McLachlan** is Professor in Climate as part of the Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research in the School of Engineering. Carly is the Director of Tyndall Manchester - an interdisciplinary team working on policy relevant research on climate change. She is based within the School of Engineering at The University of Manchester. Her research interests focus on how stakeholders, including publics, engage with energy and sustainability issues and how 'evidence' is used within this. She has a BSc in Management (2003) and a PhD in Science, Technology and Innovation Policy (2009) from The University of Manchester. Her current research focuses on city and local authority climate action. Carly is also Associate Director of the ESRC Centre for Climate Change and Social Transformation (CAST).

**Dr Tim Braunholtz-Speight** is a Lecturer and Research Fellow based in the Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research. He has a BA in Politics and Philosophy (1993) and an MA in the Politics of International Resources and Development (2000) from the University of Leeds and a PhD in Power and community in Scottish community land initiatives (2015) from the University of Highlands and Islands. He is currently researching city-level action to mitigate climate change, as a member of the CAST Centre. His other recent work includes a study of local energy business models as part of the EnergyREV consortium, the UKERC Financing Community Energy research project, and a study of community infrastructure businesses funded by Power to Change. His previous experience includes studies of alternative finance in the UK, and community ownership and land reform in Scotland. Prior to joining the Tyndall Centre, he has held research posts at the University of Leeds, the Overseas Development Institute, the University of the Highlands and Islands, and Leeds Beckett University.

**Dr Andrew Welfle** is Senior Research Fellow within the Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research at the University. He has a Master's in Sustainable Business (MA) from the University of Leeds and a Master's in Energy & Sustainable Building Design (MSc) from De Montfort University and a PhD in Environmental Engineering from The University of Manchester. Andrew is a Chartered Engineer and has over 15 years' experience working on energy, sustainability and climate change projects. He is the University of Manchester's 'Sustainable Futures' Challenge Lead for Net Zero and completed a 6-year term as a Topic Representative within the UK Supergen Bioenergy Hub network and (>£5m) research programme. Andrew has also worked for the UK Department for Energy & Climate Change (DECC) and previously worked in industry for a large engineering consultancy (AECOM).

# The following submission of <u>2,530 words excluding bibliography</u>, which demonstrates our expertise, reflects the diverse research and ideas collated across the aforementioned authors.

### Submission

#### Summary:

It is welcome to see commitments made by the new government in the GB Energy Bill. One of the most significant opportunities presented by the Bill is the potential for an accelerated transition to a low-carbon economy. The Bill has the potential to drive a faster transition to a low-carbon economy, positioning the UK as a leader in combating climate change. The Bill reflects the efforts made by successive governments to steer the UK on a pathway towards decarbonisation. However, it should be recognised that there is much work still required to align with the challenges laid out in the Paris Climate Agreement and its principle of equity.

By establishing GB Energy and providing it with substantial funding, the government creates a powerful tool for driving clean energy deployment and growth in jobs and skills. It is hoped that this could lead

to faster-than-expected reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, positioning the UK as a leader in global efforts to combat climate change. An accelerated transition could also result in earlier realisation of health benefits from cleaner air and water, improving the overall quality of life for citizens.

These themes outlined in the call for evidence are explored in more detail below in the form of a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis. We are also happy to meet with stakeholders in any government departments, Members of Parliament, The Lords, Ofgem, the National Energy System Operator, GB Energy and stakeholders to provide specific in-depth details on delivering our recommendations and explain our findings based on our evidence listed in the Bibliography.

#### **Recommendations:**

- Use language that recognises that this is a 'whole system' challenge.
- Take a regional approach to energy resource optimization with more decentralized energy systems to enhance local security and reduce grid strain using smart grids, embedded and distributed energy sources, large growing loads such as data centres, advanced weather warning systems, sustainable AI and IOT, energy market mechanism and smart systems.
- Create an integrated multidisciplinary team of engineers, quantity surveyors, scientists, social scientists and economists to undertake to mitigate against risks and ballooning costs and negative societal impacts.
- Enhanced R&D investment is required for hydrogen and ammonia storage technologies, as well as in nature based solutions (NBS), Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS), Carbon Capture, Utilisation and Storage (CCUS) and other emerging technologies to ensure actual deployment, scalability and efficiency, if and where appropriate.
- Enhance R&D investment in demand-side technologies and system efficiencies that together can ease pressure on supply and storage infrastructure.
- Develop heat networks as they are key to decarbonisation of the buildings sector.
- Provide hydrogen production, biomass, demand response, geothermal, solar and onshore repowering interventions across sectors for energy diversification as part of an energy market restructuring.
- Collaborate with international partners to mitigate geopolitical energy risks.
- Adjust tax arrangements for transport entities wishing to plug into UK ports.
- Comprehensive support for airport, rail and bus hubs in their decarbonisation plans using an integrated approach.
- Growing public sector investment alongside citizen finance could be used to develop more energy projects, and spread the financial benefits of those projects, more widely than would otherwise be the case.
- Run programmes to train, upskill, reskill and redeploy tradespersons, scientists, technicians and engineers to support the low carbon transition.
- Undertake a public education scheme with building retrofitting to include controls, in addition to insulation, so citizens and business owners become more efficient informed energy users.
- Develop standardised measurement frameworks, carbon accounting and certification rules, and risk and rating obligations across sectors and supply chains for Scope 1,2 and 3 emissions urgently to apply equitable carbon pricing and to ensure carbon investments will provide returns to investors. Carbon markets need careful oversight and regulation.
- Establish clear benchmarks and timelines for phasing out fossil fuel dependency in tandem with realistic scaling and deployment of our low carbon and carbon capture technologies to have a structured exit, reusing infrastructure for low-carbon energy opportunities (e.g. geothermal, hydrogen storage) and create an orderly transition of businesses operating in fossil fuels to low carbon opportunities.

#### A: Clean Energy Production, Distribution, Storage, and Supply:

Diversifying the UK energy mix with renewables, biogas, green hydrogen, green ammonia, and e-fuels enhances security and flexibility, reducing risks from relying on a single energy source amid geopolitical market volatility. This diversification can support various sectors, including industrial processes, transportation, and agriculture, providing pathways for regional transitions. It will also provide dispatchable energy to balance both the UK baseload and variable peak demands.

Utilising existing infrastructure, like grid and storage facilities, can streamline the clean energy transition and minimize new development costs. However, maintaining both fossil fuel and clean energy systems could complicate operations and increase expenses. Timely and urgent upgrades, such as smart grid technologies, are essential to avoid inefficiencies and supply issues during the transition.

Despite an £8.3 billion government investment, financial challenges persist in developing infrastructure and adopting clean technologies. Support mechanisms, such as subsidies and loans, are crucial for sectors struggling to meet ambitious clean energy targets. Current storage solutions for hydrogen and ammonia are still maturing, posing risks of supply gaps. Additionally, the taxation of electricity versus untaxed fuels may hinder international transport decarbonisation efforts.

Technological hurdles remain for large-scale deployment of clean energy technologies. Hydrogen production and carbon capture technologies face developmental challenges that could slow progress. The expectation is that hydrogen in all colours will scale-up rapidly, but there are significant technical (and economic) challenges, particularly around green hydrogen, as well as around its appropriate applications and use. The urgency of cutting greenhouse gas emissions must be aligned with timelines for achieving the Paris Climate Agreement goals, given that costly climate impacts that will only accelerate with a failure to deliver.

Realising and prioritising the huge opportunities in the UK for renewable energy system expansion, including ultimately in using surplus electricity to generate e-fuels, demand response opportunities (e.g. hot water heating, storage heating), coupled with associated upgrading and expansion of electrical infrastructure development, must be central to the UK's transition plans. Striking the right balance between massive electrification, and diversification across other energy sectors is critical to not over investing in electricity grids. Diversification is paramount, considering these costs will be socialised and reflected in energy bills. The reconfiguration of the gas grid also needs to be funded, so diversification is key to balance and spread costs.

We are also mindful of the huge commitment to floating offshore wind that may not deliver in the timescale discussed, plus there may be also sucken costs, which is why repowering onshore is suggested as a more prudent approach to guarantee energy supply. The urgency of cutting greenhouse gas emissions complicates timelines for achieving the Paris Climate Agreement goals.

Reliance on imported fuels exposes the UK to geopolitical risks, making supply vulnerable to global disruptions. A shift toward a smart energy market that uses AI and advanced weather forecasting is necessary for balancing where possible reducing demand across sectors, positioning the UK as a leader in smart and renewable technology.

#### B: Reduction of Greenhouse Gas Emissions from Energy produced from Fossil Fuels:

Carbon Sequestration (CS), Carbon Capture, Utilisation, and Storage (CCUS), and Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS) offer opportunities to reduce emissions from fossil fuel-dependent industries, like Tata Steel and British Steel, by capturing carbon directly from production processes. This approach can mitigate environmental impacts while allowing continued operations during the transition to cleaner technologies. However, delays in CCUS and CCS implementation could hinder emissions targets, necessitating contingency plans. In addition, bioenergy with carbon capture and storage (BECCS) is receiving attention to support the net removal of carbon from the atmosphere. Although these technologies are advancing, many questions remain as to the scale of technology deployment that may be achieved and the extent that sustainable biomass supply chains may be established. Large scale deployment of BECCS technologies in the UK will likely require trade-offs in where UK biomass resource are prioritised, and/ or extensive increased access to sustainable resources from international markets. This typically leads to credibility questions and market challenges.

While carbon sequestration in land and seas presents nature-based solutions for carbon offsetting, the high costs and logistical barriers of CCUS/CCS technologies may lead to increased energy prices and affect industrial competitiveness. Without substantial financial support or incentives, many businesses may struggle to justify the investments needed for implementation, which could inadvertently prolong reliance on fossil fuels. Moreover, it is likely that any nature-based sequestration (also called nature based solutions - NBS) will be required to offset agricultural emissions given their scale, and so should not be considered as an offset for energy system emissions where carbon reduction should be prioritised.

GB Energy's strategy should integrate multiple sectors—industry, manufacturing, agriculture, transport, and nuclear—to target energy and emissions reductions and decrease fossil fuel dependency. Opportunities include heat networks, biofuels, hydrogen, and electrification of farming machinery. However, companies may hesitate to adopt new technologies due to costs and uncertainty, potentially slowing progress toward emissions goals. Building partnerships with industry and the private sector, alongside Great British Nuclear, could facilitate technology transfer and accelerate adoption.

Agriculture poses unique challenges due to its varied emissions profiles. Reducing methane and nitrous oxide emissions while promoting the electrification of farming equipment can enhance decarbonisation efforts, allowing the sector to contribute to the UK's energy supply through biogas production. However, opportunities to do so around methane and nitrous oxide are more limited that mitigation energy-related greenhouse gases.

#### C: Improvements in Energy Efficiency:

Enhancing energy efficiency and reducing energy use in buildings is crucial for reducing carbon emissions. Upgrading insulation, heating systems (like heat pumps), and retrofitting with energyefficient materials can significantly lower energy consumption in residential and commercial sectors. These measures align with GB Energy's goals of promoting cleaner energy use, lowering electricity demand, and improving living conditions. Additionally, energy efficiency can reduce energy bills, alleviate energy poverty, and enhance public health through better indoor air quality.

However, retrofitting the UK's existing buildings is complex and costly, particularly for older, inefficient properties. The financial and logistical challenges of large-scale retrofitting may impede GB Energy's targets, especially in low-income areas lacking resources. A shortage of skilled labour further complicates these efforts. Furthermore, a bigger media campaign on energy saving and smart controls in our existing building stock should be part of any retrofitting schemes so that citizens and business owners alike understand the savings, emissions reductions and techniques to improve their heating and cooling needs.

In the transport sector, electrification of public and private transport has faced challenges, with missed targets contributing to public scepticism about government policies. Integrating electric vehicles and expanding public transport are essential for reducing fossil fuel reliance. Investment in active transport infrastructure, such as cycling and walking paths, can also lower urban energy use and promote healthier cities. However, high upfront costs for infrastructure and vehicle replacements slow adoption rates, making incentives and subsidies vital for encouraging transitions.

Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) can optimize energy consumption across sectors. Low-carbon data centres, smart grids, and IoT devices enable real-time energy management and improve supply chain sustainability, plus also optimise whole system energy integration across sectors. ICT also aids in tracking Scope 3 emissions, helping industries reduce carbon intensity, thereby enhancing the UK's competitiveness in low-carbon trade. Cybersecurity measures are essential to protect these systems from threats that could disrupt energy management.

While energy efficiency gains in industry, agriculture, and transport can lead to emission reductions, these improvements are often incremental rather than transformational. Many industries are near their efficiency limits, requiring new processes or technologies that are costly and time-consuming. Strong incentives and a restructured energy market that allows broader participation can provide alternative revenue streams, easing the financial burden of new low-carbon infrastructure.

#### D: Measures for Ensuring Energy Supply Security:

The UK's reliance on imported equipment for energy-efficient technologies (e.g., smart meters, turbines, solar panels) and fossil fuels and biomass exposes it to supply chain vulnerabilities. Disruptions due to geopolitical tensions or trade restrictions threaten the rollout of these technologies and the UK's decarbonisation efforts. This jeopardizes the integrated energy system envisioned by GB Energy, which relies on smooth transitions across sectors. To mitigate risks, establishing resilient supply chains and exploring local sourcing options are essential.

By linking electricity, gas, and liquid fuels across sectors and systems, GB Energy can address renewable variability and enhance resilience against geopolitical tensions. For instance, electrifying the rail freight network reduces diesel reliance, contributing to energy security and emissions reduction. However, GB Energy's focus on electricity decarbonisation overlooks critical energy end-uses and the need for a comprehensive approach that includes geothermal heating, air source heat pumps, and enhanced public transport. An integrated energy system across sectors is vital for achieving full decarbonisation.

As the UK transitions to renewable energy, intermittency poses risks. While energy storage technologies can help, they are not yet widespread enough to ensure energy security during low generation periods. Investing in diverse energy storage solutions, like compressed air, must be balanced to avoid idle facilities. Optimizing the type, amount, and location of storage is crucial to minimize costs and hidden expenses. Improving load, grid, and network planning through localized solutions, such as distributed energy generation and demand-side management (e.g. EnergyCloud), can relieve pressure on central power stations. This flexibility can accommodate renewable energy and reduce the need for large-scale infrastructure investments. Hydrogen storage, ammonia, and biogas can support industrial demand, while electrifying the freight rail network enhances energy security and reduces fossil fuel dependency. We also reiterate that repowering onshore is very critical, floating offshore has immense opportunities, but in the short to medium term a prudent contingency is repowering onshore to maintain security of energy supply. This must be done in timely manner to avoid capacity issues in the next five to seven years.

Decentralizing the energy system with microgrids and local renewable generation can enhance energy security. Community energy projects, such as those by Energy4All and Ripple Energy, play a crucial role in deploying clean energy. Supporting these initiatives with financial security measures will help promote local energy solutions. Partnerships with community energy groups can accelerate the adoption of energy efficiency measures.

The shift to low-carbon economies offers the UK a chance to lead in exporting energy-efficient goods and services. By integrating energy efficiency across industries, the UK can reduce Scope 3 emissions and improve competitiveness in global markets focused on sustainability. This aligns with increasing demands for lower-carbon products in light of environmental, social, and governance (ESG) requirements.

GB Energy's plans to maintain North Sea oil and gas production conflict with the Paris Climate Agreement and exacerbate global inequalities. The reliance on Integrated Assessment Models, which prioritize speculative technical fixes over social and demand-side changes, poses risks. A shift in decision-making approaches is urgently needed to address climate impacts and support the decarbonisation and reskilling of the oil and gas sector and the shipping industry. Finally, we applaud the government on locating GB Energy HQ in Aberdeen, which is a world leader in engineering and infrastructure, as a positive first step to decarbonise the oil and gas industry and the shipping industry.

#### Disclaimer

The views and opinions expressed in this paper may not necessarily reflect those of The University of Manchester and or any of our research funders.

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