

# Over £2m invested in energy transition projects by Wales & West Utilities

Gas infrastructure business Wales & West Utilities invested £2.2m over the last 12 months in energy system transition projects. A newly-published annual innovation report for 2022/23 reveals that the Newport-headquartered firm launched 19 projects across Wales and the south west of England.

These were funded by an investment of £2.2m, which included £1.5m of Network Innovation Allowance funding. The new projects explore how the UK's existing gas infrastructure can be repurposed for renewable energy while providing new data.

The launched projects include HyLine Cymru, a study conducted to assess the feasibility of a dedicated hydrogen pipeline built from Pembroke to the Swansea Bay area to link hydrogen production with industrial demand.

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If built, the pipeline would help deliver commercial-scale hydrogen production in Pembrokeshire, Port Talbot and in the Celtic Sea, while also providing infrastructure for industry in the region to begin fuel-switching their processes to hydrogen. The pipeline could allow industrial customers to move to hydrogen as early as 2030, offering a path for decarbonisation and in turn creating new jobs.

Another project by Wales & West Utilities provided scope on how gas networks can support the decarbonisation of the aviation sector using hydrogen at scale. The sector currently contributes to 2.5% of global CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and 7% of the UK's greenhouse gas emissions.

The study explored the barriers and challenges of using hydrogen to decarbonise the sector, not only as a direct fuel source for future aircraft, but also to produce sustainable aviation fuel (SAF) in the aerospace supply chain. It also looked at how Wales & West Utilities' own infrastructure may be able to help decarbonisation by introducing 100% hydrogen and hydrogen blends into the future energy system.

Wales & West Utilities said a total of 38 projects are planned for the rest of the year and moving into 2024. The business plans to invest £400m in the gas network between 2021 and 2026. By 2035, it aims to deliver a "net zero ready network" to the areas most likely to convert to hydrogen.

Innovation manager Sian Rowlands said: "The Annual Innovation Report demonstrates the extensive work we've been doing to provide invaluable evidence to drive change in the energy sector. This year we've included a wider view of our portfolio, showing how our projects build on each other and the value they provide in the journey to a net zero energy system."

She added: "More than ever, we're inviting innovators to put forward their ideas. Thanks to NIA, almost half (47%) of our projects were undertaken in collaboration with other networks. Collaboration sits at the heart of the solution, and at WWU, we're determined to be a part of that solution."

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