



Minutes • 11 August 2026

**Directorate for Energy
Supply Chain (DESC)**



11 August 2026

MINUTES - POLICY CERTAINTY SUB-GROUP

Minutes of the meeting of 11 August 2026 held via Teams

The meeting focused on gathering and interpreting member evidence for the DESC Policy Certainty Sub-Group, particularly around how policy uncertainty affects UK supply chain capability, investment, bidding behaviour and competitiveness in energy transition projects.

Present

Rebecca Groundwater, EIC (RG)

Neil Golding, EIC (NG)

Ian Molloy, EIC (IM)

Jack Boggis, EIC (JB)

Frazer Budd, McDermott (FB)

Carl Townsend, Sentinel ICCS (CT)

David Allely, Allelys Heavy Haulage (DA)

Jasmina Tuncheva, FRACHT (JT)

Paul Ashton, Powertherm (PA)

Stuart Billingham, KOSO Kent Introl (SB)

Luke Pirie, Oceaneering (LP)

Andrew Ball, Murphy Group (AB)

1 Key points discussed

• Project mapping and timelines

- RG explained that more member responses were still being sought.
- JB showed an early mock-up of project timelines, using a Net Zero/Net Bid example, showing roughly 2–2.5 years between initial bid and contract award.
- JB will overlay further member data and produce timelines showing bid-to-award timescales.

• UK capability and competitiveness

- FB questioned whether the UK still has process engineering and chemical engineering EPC capability at scale.
- AB argued that UK capability does exist, especially in pipelines and some process plant delivery, citing firms such as Murphy, Balfour Beatty, Costain and others.
- However, participants agreed that capability is being weakened by uncertainty, with firms shifting people and resources into more certain sectors or overseas work.

• Impact of policy uncertainty

- A recurring theme was that delayed government decisions make it difficult for businesses to invest, plan workforces, retain people or justify apprenticeships.
- AB described energy transition opportunities as sitting in strategy documents “like a wet lettuce” because companies cannot build firm business plans around them.
- There was concern that if government finally approves projects too late, UK firms may no longer have the workforce or supply chain available to deliver them.

• Diversification and overseas work

- Several members explained that, while UK energy transition opportunities remain uncertain, companies are filling capacity with international work or other sectors.
- McDermott is focusing on HVDC platforms in the European North Sea and LNG/process plant work in East Africa.
- LP noted that a large proportion of his company’s UK workforce supports overseas work because that is where demand, sanctions and returns exist.
- Murphy has moved pipeline resources to Canada and is investing in power, water and other infrastructure sectors where there is clearer demand.

• Hidden costs of opportunity tracking

- SB stressed that bid costs are only part of the burden.
- Companies may spend years tracking potential projects, attending events, trade shows and government briefings, and incurring travel, hotel and staff costs before a formal bid even exists.
- These prospecting costs can be substantial, with some exhibitions costing £20,000–£25,000 each and annual activity potentially exceeding £100,000.

• Workforce and skills risks

- Participants highlighted how quickly skills can disappear from a business if a sector is not active.
- SB gave an example of his firm having lost power-sector experience over time, making recent power-related work more difficult.
- Apprenticeships and succession planning are challenging because it takes years to train people, while project pipelines remain uncertain.
- Major projects such as HS2 or defence contracts can also distort local labour markets by raising pay rates and drawing skilled people away from other firms.

• Need for a clearer cross-sector pipeline

- NG suggested that the group needs a clearer visualisation of the opportunity pipeline across all relevant sectors, not just carbon capture and hydrogen.
- This could include offshore wind, nuclear, hydrogen, carbon capture and other areas.
- The aim would be to show government the volume, timing and uncertainty of opportunities in a simple form.

• Government engagement and messaging

- The group wants to use the evidence to engage ministers and civil servants.
- RG said the material should help demonstrate both measurable costs and less visible business impacts.
- The goal is to have something ready for the Labour Party conference and other September political events.

2 Actions and next steps

- **JB** to continue overlaying member data and producing project timelines.
- **RG** and **NG** to review the evidence with Jack at the end of the week.
- **RG** to circulate the collated material to members for comments and sense-checking.
- A short follow-up meeting may be arranged if needed.
- **RG** to resend the question set to **DA**.
- Members who have not yet submitted information are encouraged to do so.
- The team will consider incorporating:
 - trade show and prospecting costs,
 - hidden costs of long-term project tracking,
 - cross-sector opportunity pipelines,
 - workforce and skills impacts,
 - export and overseas-work evidence.



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