

LISMORE RENEWABLE ENERGY PROJECT

NEWSLETTER March 2014

The Lismore Community Trust has made a breakthrough! Lismore has been awarded a grant to pay for a feasibility study to see if we can generate renewable energy on the island.

We have selected two firms of consultants to do the study on the possibilities for small wind turbines and hydro power.

This is the timetable for their work and what to expect:

The wind consultants, Community Energy Scotland, will visit the island on Tuesday 11 March to walk over the sites offered in principle by landowners, in the company of a Trust representative. The hydro consultants, Adrian Laycock Ltd, will do a desk study of data on hydro potential.

They will gather the information we have asked them to. They will produce reports and in July there will be a community meeting to discuss their findings and recommendations.

Where has this idea come from?

The Community Trust is carrying on the work of the Community Council's Energy Project of several years ago, and has picked up some of the work it started. The survey the Trust did when it was founded showed renewable energy to be a high priority amongst residents.

The purpose of the study is to see if it would be feasible to generate electricity on the island to earn income from the government which would be spent on community projects that would be decided by the Trust Board. We are following in the footsteps of many island communities up and down the coast, including Tiree, Gigha, Muck, Mull, and many of the Orkney islands. Others, such as Jura and Islay, are also currently considering similar action.

What will happen?

The consultants will produce reports that will give us options for development. There will be early contact with organisations such as the council and SNH and a study of technical data. There will be visits to potential wind turbine sites. Together, the two consultants will tell us if there is enough water flow for hydro development, and where wind turbine(s) might be erected to minimum inconvenience but capable of producing electricity. They will

recommend the type of turbine that might be installed, and estimate how much electricity and income might be produced. The strong likelihood is that if we could install one or more wind turbine(s) it (or they) would be at the smaller end of the range, for environmental reasons. Similarly, any hydro turbine would be small.

Who are the consultants?

We are using Community Energy Scotland (CES) www.communityenergyscotland.org.uk to investigate wind generation, because CES has experience in setting up schemes for community benefit in the Highlands and Islands. Its work for us will include detailed site analysis, and it will produce technical, environmental and business advice. Our hydro specialist is Adrian Laycock www.adrianlaycock.com based locally but with international experience; he will assess the potential of our burns to produce hydro power.

Where will the money come from?

The trust has obtained a grant of £9,960 from the government's CARES scheme (Community and Renewable Energy Scotland) which covers the whole of the costs of employing these consultants.

After that we would have to raise more money to make a planning application and to purchase and install any energy-generating equipment. We would need to find significant funds to do that but there are loans available repayable from the proceeds of the project.

The consultants would give us advice about this and any alternatives to obtaining a loan. The Trust intends to make sure there is no financial risk to the island and its individual residents, and this is something the consultants will advise us about.

The turbine(s) would be owned by the Trust and the consultants will give us suggested business models for rewarding landowners (eg by rent) over the lifetime of the project.

Who is behind this?

The project is the work of the Community Trust and its Energy Sub-Committee, whose monthly minutes are on the web-site. The sub-committee's members are Beth Campbell, Yorick Paine, Carol MacLean, Liz Buckle, Stephen Green and Douglas Thorburn. We have a Development Officer at CARES who advises us. We are grateful for the support and interest of many residents who have spoken to us, and particularly to the landowners who have expressed active interest so far.

6 March 2014