



Scottish Islands Network Newsletter
January 2003

www.scottishislands.org.uk

The Scottish Islands Network aims to promote, publicise and advance the interests of the Scottish islands.

Hello and welcome to the second Scottish Islands Network newsletter. We had a very impressive response to the first newsletter and I'd like to thank those of you who took the time to tell others about us. We've been getting moved in to the new premises bit by bit this month. What a lively place the pier is throughout the day. Plenty to distract me out the window, so the sooner the new blinds arrive the better...Sadly, the hustle and bustle that goes on in other ports throughout the country is now severely jeopardised. 45% cuts have been imposed by the EC to preserve endangered stocks of cod, haddock and whiting and fishermen will be restricted to just 15 days at sea per month.

One of the most affected Scottish islands is likely to be Whalsay in Shetland, where fishing is the the economic mainstay and there are 8 white fishing boats in operation, employing 60 men - 15% of the island's total employed population (see www.fishing-news.co.uk for more information). The Scottish Executive has just announced a £50 million compensation plan, but with the restrictions due to start next week, it could be a case of too little too late for thousands of fishermen, their families and their communities.

RANT OF THE MONTH

My rant has been toned down this month with the good news that, following a successful lobbying campaign by local government representatives and Scottish MEPs, wind speeds will no longer be considered by the EC during their deliberations over the welfare of animals during transportation (last year, an EC Scientific Committee recommended that animals should not be transported by sea if wind speeds are in excess of force 5 / 24 mph).

Last month an on-line consultation about the proposals was announced, but it only lasted for 13 days - nowhere near long enough for officials and elected representatives to formulate their official responses. These recommendations have been floating about for several months now & a hurried consultation - of which very few people were aware - will not yield representative results.

A full copy of the Committee's report is at www.europa.eu.int/comm/food/fs/sc/scah/out71_en.pdf

The Scottish Islands Network will apply for funding to undertake a consultation of island communities looking at the transportation of livestock to and from the islands. We will be applying to the Rural Voices: Action Research Competition, being run by the Scottish National Rural Partnership. The competition has been launched to encourage rural communities to be directly involved in consultations on rural services. The aim of our research will be to collate evidence of existing good practise in the transportation of livestock, while exploring related services such as freight charges, island abattoirs and transport options throughout the islands. The information collected can then be presented to political representatives to enable them to rebut the EC Scientific Proposals within the European Parliament, whilst highlighting some of the problems with existing island services.

Applications to the Rural Voices competition must be submitted before 7th February. For further information and an application form visit www.scotland.gov.uk/ruralpolicy or contact the Programme Co-ordinator, Ousmane Diallo on 0131 244 4180. I'll let you know how the network's application goes in March when the competition winners are announced.

NEWS

Finance Minister Meets Island Leaders

Leaders from Shetland, Orkney and Western Isles Councils met with the Deputy Minister for Finance and Public Services, Peter Peacock last month to discuss the implications of European structural funding coming to an end in 2006. According to the minister: "It was a useful meeting which underlined the important role European funding plays in the Highlands and Islands. The councils put across a strong case for recognition of Scottish islands in any review of European Structural Funds. I was happy to assure them - and, indeed, the people living in our island communities - that I will ensure their voice is heard." Sadly it seems that Mr Peacock's use of the word 'islands' may not be generic as the islands other than those with unitary authorities look set to miss out on any financial aid after 2005, when a rationing system comes into effect.

Parcel Farce on Mull

There have been increasing concerns about the future of postal services in remote and island communities over recent months. With all the fuss about the running costs that Consignia are having to meet, I was surprised to hear about the increased workload they were giving themselves on Mull. Mail from some of the island's postboxes is no longer being sorted locally. Consequently letters sent from one Mull or Iona address to another may find themselves on a 2 day round-trip to Glasgow before delivery. Do you know of anything similar happening on your island?

Mull & Iona Get Greener

Mull & Iona Environmentally Sensible Solutions (MESS) has received a £34 000 Fresh Futures grant to help with waste disposal through the promotion of recycling and composting. Money paid to the Mull & Iona Community Trust (www.mict.co.uk) will help with plans to involve all islands communities in addressing issues of waste management. The Trust is currently appointing a Project Worker and an Administrative Worker to implement community recycling on Mull & Iona.

Highland Access Project

A £1.2 million 3 year project is now underway to implement the Highlands and Islands Access Strategy. The main objective is to work with landowners and communities and make existing paths more accessible. If you know of any relevant low level paths that may benefit from this initiative contact the Highland Access Project on 01463 702 288 for local contacts and further information.

Scottish Islands Network Meeting

Members of the Scottish Islands Network steering group met earlier this month in Portree on the Isle of Skye. High on the agenda was the need to increase our profile at a political level. It was decided that the councillors and officials involved in the network will seek a meeting in Edinburgh with Peter Peacock and other MSPs to draw attention to the economic situation facing the so-called small islands (those with mainland local authorities).

A letter has also been drafted on behalf of the Scottish Islands Network raising our concerns about the EC's Eurostat criteria for defining islands - which declassify a number of real islands in the Highlands and Islands area (those with populations of less than 50, those with fixed links and those which are less than 1km from the mainland). This letter has been sent to European Commissioner Michel Barnier to stress the need for amending these criteria so that they are not used as the basis of a definition for any future European regional policy decisions (Since the network meeting Commissioner Barnier's office have refuted any claims that these island definitions are to be imposed - stating that they have only been used by statisticians, not politicians. Nonetheless, as we pointed out last month a number of island communities have been omitted from Eurostat studies and consequently neglected when statistical analysis is carried out).

Following the local and Scottish elections in May, the network will hopefully consolidate and improve the structure of support for its activities at local authority level. We are also listening out for news of any forthcoming island conferences at which the network could be constituted - at the moment the councillors and officials involved are participating in the network of their own volition.

The steering group will be meeting again on Bute at the beginning of March.

RENEWABLES ON THE ISLANDS

Back at the beginning of 2000, the UK Government launched its Renewable Energy Obligation - aiming to generate 10% of the country's energy from renewable sources by 2010 and ensure that suppliers will be paid premium prices for power generated from renewable sources. At the end of 2000, the Scottish Executive announced its new targets - 13% renewables by 2003 and 18% by 2010 and last summer started to consult about the possibility of reaching a target of 40% renewables by 2020.

According to Greenpeace, Scotland has more than 1/4 of Europe's wind power resources. As an island nation we have no shortage of wave or tidal resources, yet out of 109 renewable projects approved since 1994, only 4 had been or were being constructed by 2000.

The Danish wind power industry was launched during the 1970s and 80s and the nation is the world leader in what is now a multi-billion pound sector employing 15 000 people and producing 95% of the world's wind turbine requirements. The Danish government had set itself a target of producing 1,500 megawatts of energy from windpower alone by 2005. This compares with an earlier UK target of producing 150 megawatts of power from all renewable sources.

There are currently 13 operational windfarms throughout Scotland and as many as 760 new wind turbines in up to 40 windfarms will be needed over next 10 years if the Executive is to meet its renewable targets. There are increasing tensions between nature conservation and green energy requirements. The development of environmentally designated areas and concerns about scenic impact are two of the main concerns.

So what's been happening on the islands? I thought I'd take a quick tour from North to South and look at some of the main renewable developments that have been taking place over the last few years.

Shetland

Fair Isle is one of Scotland's most remote islands and it is also one of its greenest. Homes on the island have been powered by the wind since 1982, when the Europe's very first commercially operated wind turbine project was switched on to replace expensive diesel generators. In 1996 a second turbine was installed on the island and in 1999 the Fair Isle Electricity Company became a community owned enterprise. Wind power now supplies 85% of winter and 50% of summer energy requirements to Fair Isle's 80 residents. For more information visit www.fairisle.org.uk.

In September 2002, a full-scale prototype tidal energy generator, known as "Stingray" was installed and operated in the Sound of Yell off Shetland. During the trial a successful continuous energy output was achieved and there are now plans to install a 5 megawatt Stingray demonstration farm next summer. There is a link to this project on the Marine Renewables website - www.marine-renewables.com.

For more details about renewable energy projects throughout Shetland visit the Shetland Energy Club website at www.users.zetnet.co.uk/s.e.c.

Orkney

In March 2000, construction began on the UK's tallest wind turbines at Burgar Hill, mainland Orkney. The two 65m tall towers are capable of generating 3.5 megawatts - potentially meeting 1/4 of the islands needs. Last year, the Scottish Marine Energy Test Centre became operational off Stromness and this summer, a full-scale floating wave power demonstrator device, known as Pelamis, will be installed at centre. See the developer's site for more information – www.oceanpd.com.

In September last year, Orkney-based company, Fairwind, announced their plans for the development of up to 4 windfarms with 30-50 turbines each. Landowners and communities are being encouraged to come forward with potential sites for the developments. A project of this scale would justify the creation of a subsea power link between Orkney and the mainland, according to Fairwinds. However, it has been announced that any renewable projects in Orkney not already constructed will have existing offers of connection to the national grid withdrawn because of current capacity problems. The only new project that is still guaranteed grid connection is the project at the Marine Test Centre.

Last October the first annual Renewables Reality conference took place in Stromness. This major international event was organised on behalf of the Orkney Renewable Energy Forum (www.oref.co.uk) to examine the practical implications of wind, wave and tidal energy projects. The conference also looked at

the role of islands in large-scale renewables projects. Details of last year's meeting are on the Renewable Realities website - www.renewablerealities.com

Western Isles

Plans to locate the world's largest windfarm at Barvas moor on Lewis, land publicly owned by the Stornoway Trust, were announced last year. The proposed farm would consist of 300 turbines, cost £600 million, create up to 900 jobs and be capable of producing up to 6% of Scotland's total energy needs. This would be the first major project to benefit the islands for decades and would coincide with the £12 million revamp of the Arnish oil fabrication yard which got underway last November. It is hoped that the Arnish yard will become a major centre for renewable manufacturing. With over 1/3 of the Western Isles designated for conservation - Barvas Moor included - the proposals have faced considerable opposition. In 2001 Comhairle nan Eilean Siar (Western Isles Council) sought the views of the UK Government, industry and academia in establishing the Western Isles as an Energy Innovation Zone. The Western Isles Alternative & Renewable Energy Partnership (WIAREP) was then established to promote the renewable energy sector and the resources available in the Western Isles (www.w-isles.gov.uk/wiarep/index.htm). The Western Isles also play host to ISLENET - The European Islands Energy and Environment Network, which was set up in 1994 (see www.europeanislands.net for more information). Three new wave power projects are also being planned for the islands, by Inverness-based company Wavegen. The government is set to invest £2.3 million in this development. Last October saw another key development in the Western Isles when the first solar-powered street lights were switched on in a trial that could see the introduction of similar systems in towns throughout the UK.

All of the large-scale developments proposed for the Western Isles, along with those in Orkney and Shetland are highly dependent on the creation of subsea links to the mainland grid system. The Scottish islands possess some of the best resources for the generation of renewable energy in the world, but these areas also support a very small proportion of the national population, which makes the existing grid system completely inadequate for exporting power on a major scale. A feasibility study into the creation of a multi-million pound subsea cable is being undertaken. Without a subsea link to the national grid, island produced renewables will never be generated on the scales that have been proposed.

Skye

Last November a £30 million windfarm to be located near Edinbane on the Isle of Skye was approved and construction is due to start this Spring for 18 months. The windfarm will consist of twenty-seven 100 meter tall turbines and will generate up to 21 megawatts of electricity - enough power for 30 000 homes. According to crofting law, Ruairidh Hilleary who owns more than half of the land on which the windfarm is to be built, must share half of the profits he receives from the development with the twenty-six crofters who occupy his land.

A second planning application to build a 14 turbine windfarm near Dunvegan was lodged last August and is currently under consideration. This development could potentially provide an income of up to £40 000 a year for the next 25 years to local crofters and the local community council. Plans for a 3rd windfarm in the south of the island were also announced this month.

There has been a lot of local controversy surrounding the windfarm plans, with many opposing their scenic impact and potential impact on the tourist industry. The Skye Windfarm Action Group has been set up in opposition to the projects. Visit their website at www.sw-ag.org

Small Isles

Until August 2000, the the island of Muck's 38 residents relied on uneconomical and unreliable diesel generators for their limited electricity supply. Two 60 ft wind turbines have been installed at a cost of £236,000 to harness the island's windy conditions and provide cheaper, more reliable electricity. Islanders are now paying 10p less for each unit of electricity they use. It would have cost up to £2 million to connect the island to the national grid. Income from the scheme will cover repair and maintenance and will eventually fund the replacement of the turbines at the end of their useful life in about 20 years time. Full details of the project are available at www.scotland.gov.uk/library/pan/pan45-04.asp.

The Eigg Heritage Trust was awarded a grant of £23 500 from the Scottish Land Fund in 2001 to build a water-powered generator to serve 5 of the community-owned island's households. Most of the energy needs for the shops and tearoom on the island are also met by hydro power. An island-wide energy feasibility study is underway to identify possible sites for small-scale wind or hydro-systems. To find out more about one of Eigg's hydro schemes visit the Glebe Barn Study Centre's website - www.ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/glebebarneigg/electr.htm

A small hydro electric scheme also serves the community of 30 permanent residents living and working on the Rum National Nature Reserve.

Slate Islands

Last November the island of Luing began to feed electricity into the national grid with the switch-on of a prototype demonstrator wind turbine. The turbine can produce 70 kilowatts of power and will generate £7 000 - £8 000 per year. The project started when developers NOI Scotland approached local landowner Shane Cadzow. The partnership would now like to see other island communities introduce the prototype.

Islay

In 2000 the worlds first commercial wave power project was installed off the west coast of Islay amidst calls for the government to cover the costs of connecting potential wave power areas to the national grid. The Wavegen operated LIMPET (Land Installed Marine Energy Transformer) is capable of producing up to 500 kilowatts of power. Visit www.wavegen.co.uk for further details.

An electric bus, donated by Greenpeace, is now being operated on the island by the Islay Development Company to promote the development of clean energy projects on the island.

There are plans for the installation of another two wave energy generators off Islay following trials of the Pelamis wave power device at the Marine Energy Test Centre in Orkney.

Arran

Last year plans were launched to establish a £5 million Biomass fuelled renewable energy plant near Lamlash on Arran. There was strong local opposition to the plan and the campaign group 'Arran Against Border Biofuels' was established amidst concerns about the experimental nature of the project - the first of its kind in the world.

Border Biofuels, the company behind the plans, have since gone into liquidation.

The Government has announced a £66 million support package for biomass developments throughout the UK. Such developments are seen to have huge potential for diversifying farm incomes.

The Future

The above are just some of the renewable energy projects that have been developed on the islands over the last few years. Please feel free to contact me with any updates or information about existing or forthcoming island renewable projects that have not been featured in this newsletter for my own records.

There are a number of positive aspects to the development of the renewables sector throughout the islands. The environmentally friendly image of renewables can be used to promote "Green Tourism" on our islands and there has been talk of the potential to create a totally green island, creating a model for development elsewhere. If you are interested in the concept of Green Islands, it's worth having a look at the following link – www.esru.strath.ac.uk/EanE/Web-sites/01-02/green_islands/index1.html. This link will take you to

Strathclyde University's Green Islands Project. Using Mull as an example, the project looks at ways of assessing islands' green energy potential.

Community ownership of renewable projects can create ongoing financial benefits and the setting up of renewable projects could help to make some community buy-outs financially viable.

Existing industries can also benefit and access new opportunities as their costs are reduced with cheaper electricity supplies (It is worth noting that it costs twice as much to heat a house in Shetland as it does in Cornwall!)

New government legislation supporting renewable developments will hopefully help to overcome the discrimination against peripherality and insularity that the islands have faced for so long. Renewables must not become another lost opportunity for the islands, but there must be careful monitoring to ensure that schemes are sensitively controlled and managed in consultation with local populations.

NOTICE BOARD

Community Energy Unit

Highlands & Islands Enterprise have launched a new Community Energy Unit to promote community renewables and provide advice to communities and individuals who want to set up small-scale renewables projects. For details of who to contact in your area for more information telephone Eric Dodd – the Unit's manager on 01463 667 271 or e-mail Eric.Dodd@hient.co.uk.

The Ropatec Windrotor

Ropatec is an Italian-based company producing the innovative vertical axis wind turbine, the Ropatec Windrotor, developed to supply decentralised wind power and encourage energy consumers to become their own suppliers. The Windrotor's vertical axis means it is independent of wind direction. It activates automatically in wind speeds of 2-3 m/s and has no cut off wind speed (highly beneficial in a Scottish island setting, where some test wind turbines have been unable to withstand extremely windy conditions). The noiseless Windrotor is designed to last maintenance free for 15 years. The device has to be positioned 10 metres above ground level and the rotors themselves vary in height from 1.5 to 4.4 metres. The Windrotor's compact size will appeal to those who would like to generate wind power without creating a serious scenic impact (more traditional wind turbines can be up to 100 metres tall).

Following 5 years of testing, Ropatec's Windrotors have now been introduced to the worldwide market. For further information visit the Ropatec website - www.ropatec.com - or write to Ropatec's UK Partner Company: Genasys Power Systems Ltd, 2 Park Rd, Swarthmoor, Ulverston, Cumbria, LA12 0HH. E-mail sales@genasys.demon.co.uk.

Heritage Lottery Officer Appointed

Cultural development agency Hi-Arts (www.hi-arts.co.uk) has appointed a Project Officer to help identify eligible projects and assist with applications to the Heritage Lottery Fund (www.hlf.org.uk). Any organisation in the Highlands & Islands wishing to submit an application or find out more should contact Helen Macdonald on 01463 720 897 or e-mail helen@hi-arts.co.uk.

Argyll & the Islands CED

The Argyll & the Islands Community Economic Development Programme encourages rural and island communities to develop and implement their own local priorities and projects. The programme can assist with the establishment of a local development plan or with the implementation of projects which involve and benefit the wider community. Community groups can also receive assistance to send representatives to attend conferences and training opportunities or arrange networking activities with other distant community groups with similar aims and objectives. For more information contact the CED Programme Manager, Clare Strain on 01546 605 417 or e-mail clare.strain@hient.co.uk

Scotland unLTD (www.unltd.org.uk) is a new organisation offering grants to individuals to complete projects of community benefit. The grants average £2000 and non-financial support is also given to awardees. Projects supported can include a wide range of initiatives such as childcare, food co-ops, credit unions, community enterprises etc. For further information contact Jim Bennett or Eileen Inglis on 0131 226 7333 or e-mail jim.bennett@scotlandunltd.com

Bute Advice Centre

Rothsay Jobcentre and Social Security Office will be undergoing a major refurbishment beginning on the 6th January to convert to a combined Jobcentre Plus office. The new modernised office will provide a one-stop shop offering improved vacancy and job search facilities as well as comprehensive assistance and advice on all benefit matters. The new facilities are currently scheduled to be available from the 17th March. For further information contact Jim Snoddy on 01700 895 510 or e-mail jim.snoddy@jobcentrepplus.gov.uk

European Small Island Hotel Federation

The Federation of Hoteliers of the Minor Islands of Europe (FAIME) was established in 2000. FAIME aims to group together hoteliers and those involved in providing tourist accommodation on the islands to provide a forum for a global view of the problems linked to living and working on islands where tourism plays a major role in the economy. The federation aims to guarantee island citizens the same rights as those who live on mainland Europe, with particular regard to essential services - eg. health, transport, water, education, refuse collection, energy saving and environmental issues. The safeguard and promotion of cultural traditions of each island is also very important.

If you are interested in becoming involved with FAIME please contact me for further information. E-mail scottish.islands@btopenworld.com or telephone 01478 611 285.

Island Peace Protests

Opposition to the current situation with Iraq is being marked with a vigil on the Isle of Arran next month. The vigil will take place along the sea front in Brodick between 6.45 and 7pm on the 3rd February. The vigil is entirely non-political and non-religious and is open to anyone wishing to pledge a small amount of their time in recognition of their stance on the matter. The organisers would love to hear from individuals elsewhere who would be interested in arranging similar, simultaneous vigils on other Scottish islands. For further information or to express your interest contact Isla Blair on 01770 700 755 or Nici McLellan on 01770 810 289. You can also e-mail Nici at soamesville@onetel.net.uk.

Apologies for my error in the last newsletter. The correct contact e-mail address for the Western Isles LEADER+ scheme is calum.maciver@hient.co.uk. The North Highland Leader + contact is now Wendy Gordon who can be contacted on 01463 702548

So that's it for now. Time to get back to the unpacking. If there is anything you would like to see covered in a future edition of this newsletter or if you would like to publicise anything on the Notice Board you can contact me on 01478 611 285 or e-mail scottish.islands@btopenworld.com. I look forward to hearing from you.

Cheerio for now, Lisa.

DISCLAIMER

Please note that the views expressed in this newsletter are for general information and they are not necessarily the views of the Scottish Islands Network.