

UPDATE ON RENEWABLE ENERGY ACTION PLAN

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The purpose of this covering report is to provide context to Members for the accompanying presentation, on the renewable energy sector in Argyll and Bute and how it can assist in combating climate change to deliver Scotland and the UK's climate change targets.
- 1.2 Argyll and Bute has a significant natural renewable resource ranging from wind, wave, tidal, biomass (from our forestry) and solar and this can be used as a mechanism to reduce our carbon footprint and help mitigate the impacts of climate change as well as delivering economic benefit to our communities. It is difficult to quantify exactly the reduction in carbon emissions as a total from all current renewable projects in Argyll and Bute. However, renewable projects do displace the need to generate electricity from fossil fuels, resulting in reduced total carbon emissions. Figures that are available at a Scottish level show that in 2016 renewable electricity generation displaced approximately 9,400,000 tonnes of CO₂, equal to around 21 per cent of Scotland's carbon emissions in 2015, the most recent year for which carbon emission statistics are available. Source: ([Scottish Renewables, Renewables in Numbers](#))
- 1.3 On the 20 December 2017, the Scottish Government published its first Energy Strategy which sets out their vision for the energy sector to 2050. The Strategy is focused on three main themes:
 - A whole system view – a programme of energy efficiency and a new target that by 2030 the equivalent of 50% of Scotland's heat, transport and electricity consumption is to be supplied from renewable sources
 - A stable, managed energy transition – the transition to a low carbon economy including use of Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS), low carbon energy production and support for new technologies and delivery models; and
 - A smarter model of local energy provision – through the use of innovative technology to meet local energy needs through local energy

solutions.

- 1.4 The energy industry in Argyll is based on the use of renewable sources of power with hydro, solar, biomass and onshore wind particularly widely deployed at scales ranging from small domestic to larger commercial developments. There is currently more than 1.5GW of operational and consented renewable energy projects across Argyll and Bute, which is estimated as being sufficient to power more than 100 million LED lightbulbs or approximately 700,000 homes. The 1.5GW can be further broken down into 800 operational renewable projects including 15 large scale development projects. (Appendix 1)
- 1.5 As well as the carbon benefits there are economic benefits derived from the construction and maintenance of renewable developments including supply chain opportunities for our businesses. In addition to this, the majority of the large scale windfarms pay community benefit or returns on community investment which amounts to more than £800,000 per annum. (2019 figures)
- 1.6 Both the Argyll and Bute Outcome Improvement Plan 2013 - 2023 and the Argyll and Bute's Economic Strategy identify the positive contribution that renewables can make to the Argyll and Bute economy, our carbon footprint and both seek to support the development of the sector. However, the sector is heavily affected by activities and policies created at both the Scottish and UK Government level and over the past few years there has been an impact on onshore wind from the removal of the UK Government subsidies support system. This has resulted in a slowdown in the number of new developments moving into construction. However as the industry has sought to secure new financial models for delivery consented on shore wind farm projects are starting to move to construction. An example of one such project is Beinn An Tuirc Phase 3, construction has commenced on the site of the 14 turbines (maximum height of 126 meters from the base to the tip of the blade) wind farm with a maximum output of 50MW.
- 1.7 In addition, potential opportunities are once again being considered for offshore wind on the west coast of Scotland where previously the focus has been on the east. The recently announced Scottish Government consultation for the Sectoral Marine Plan for Offshore Wind Energy (closing date on the 25th March 2020.) includes a proposed site off the west coast of Argyll.
- 1.8 It is also worth noting that the move towards local energy networks (local energy needs met through local energy provision, ideally through renewables) also offers potential benefits for our communities particularly in areas where the Grid is constrained. The ACCESS project on Mull is a good example of this as is the Islay Local Energy project currently at a very early stage of consideration. However this type of network is still at a very early stage in terms of development.
- 1.9 The Argyll and Bute Renewable Energy Alliance (ABRA) established in 2011, brings together key public and private sector partners - including Argyll and Bute Council, the Scottish Government, Highlands and Islands Enterprise, Marine Scotland, Scottish Power Renewables, Scottish and Southern Energy, The

Crown Estate Scotland, Scottish Natural Heritage and Skills Development Scotland. ABRA strives to ensure a greater awareness of the strategic issues relating to renewable development across Argyll and Bute, and to act as a key mechanism to assist with delivering the Renewable Energy Action Plan (REAP). The REAP was endorsed in 2010 and is reviewed on an annual basis by ABRA to assist Argyll and Bute realise its vision for the development of the renewable energy sector. The REAP is due to be reviewed and updated again this year and will be presented to members at the annual ABRA meeting in September 2020. The annual review seeks to reflect any changes coming forward across the sector and this year it is anticipated that there may be more focus on offshore wind opportunities. Key issues that are contained within the REAP each year relate to grid capacity/investment, skills and training and supply chain opportunities. Members of ABRA are also keen to consider widening the remit to cover energy as opposed to just renewables.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1.10 Members of the Climate Change Environmental Action Group are asked to consider report and accompanying presentation.

2.0 IMPLICATIONS

2.1 Policy

Argyll and Bute Outcome Improvement Plan 2013 - 2023 and Economic Strategy and the Renewable Energy Action Plan recognise the importance of renewables to the local economy and to our communities and in reducing carbon emissions

2.2 Financial – None directly from this paper

2.3 Legal – None

2.4 HR - None

2.5 Fairer Scotland Duty - None

2.5.1 Equalities - protected characteristics - None

2.5.2 Socio-economic Duty

Renewable sector offers opportunities to assist communities across Argyll and Bute to become more sustainable

2.5.3 Islands

Our islands offer significant opportunities to deliver on the climate change targets given the natural renewable resources they offer.

2.6. Risk

It is important that we maximise the opportunities from our natural renewable resources in a sustainable manner to deliver climate change targets and realise economic opportunities.

2.7 Customer Service – none

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Appendix 1 – Renewable Energy Developments Chart Jan 2020

