

“A Community-based approach to renewable energy, and other business initiatives”

Introduction

This short paper represents an update on the original “Egni Trefin Energy” project and explains what steps have recently been taken to progress the initiative. It also includes a provisional timetable of activities for the grant period, namely November 2023 – 31 March 2024

Stage One

Stage one of the project represented the work of carrying out a feasibility study into the possibility of generating electricity in the local community, using Trefin as a focus for the initiative. A grant of £10,600 was secured from Cwmpas, a government agency, and this grant enabled a small project management group to be formed to steer the work. Cwm Arian Renewable Energy was commissioned to undertake the feasibility study and a very detailed report was prepared, containing an analysis of the various options of generating electricity, including solar, wind, hydro and tidal. Cwm Arian, in arriving at its recommendations,

- conducted an electronic survey of residents’ views
- visited each house in Trefin to assist residents in completing the survey
- undertook a geographical survey of Trefin and adjoining villages
- undertook scientific research
- presented a financial/business assessment of possible wind and solar projects
- assessed the planning challenges
- and arranged an open community meeting, inviting representatives from key government bodies and renewable energy organisations/enterprises to give short presentations

The following summarises the headline conclusions of the study, recommending that:

- the community be encouraged to progress the project to the next stage since it would be beneficial to residents of the four villages referred to in the report, in the medium- and longer-term, and it would mean that the community could retain control over renewable energy developments in the area
- the project be extended to encompass Trefin, Porthgain, Croesgoch and Llanrhian
- a community renewable energy enterprise be established, with a name which was acceptable to the wider community, with a strong Welsh flavour
- the long-term goal be that the community explore in greater detail, the feasibility of generating electricity from wind power, and possibly solar panels.
- the community enterprise explores the potential of setting up peripheral business initiatives, to generate funding to underpin the main project and to create work opportunities for young people in particular

Stage 2

Llanrhian Community Council has recently been successful in its bid for further funding, in the sum of approx. £12,000 from Cwmpas to progress the Renewable Energy project to the next stage. The grant is for a set period and must be spent by 31 March 2024. The objective, as stated in the grant application, is to establish a Community Enterprise and to appoint a strong Management Board. The

Board in turn will be asked to lead the project and to draw up a realistic and achievable strategic plan for the community enterprise, based on the views of the residents of the four villages, and informed by more detailed research conducted by renewable energy experts.

Llanrhian Community Council has also secured free consultancy time from a business expert, who will advise officers of Llanrhian Community Council and ultimately the new Management Board on the nature and structure of a community energy enterprise.

The overall objectives of the second stage of the project can be summarised as follows:

- To establish a Community Enterprise which will oversee a series of business opportunities within the area, but ultimately be focussed on developing an achievable and viable renewable-energy initiative, for the benefit of the community
- To establish a strong Management Board for the Community Enterprise, drawn from the local community, which will be expected to develop a short- and medium-term strategy, to underpin a long-term vision of developing a community renewable energy project
- To develop a plan to create job opportunities for local people by mapping a strategy to create small-sized business opportunities, working closely with Pembrokeshire College
- To promote the Welsh-language by embedding the Welsh-language into the operation of the new enterprise and by developing a Welsh language policy eg requiring Welsh-language competency in most of the posts, developing a bi-lingual working environment

Ultimately, our aim is to develop opportunities to strengthen the local economy and through generating new jobs, to set a firm footing for this small region of Pembrokeshire, which, previously, was a largely Welsh-speaking community.

Stage 2 of the Community Renewable Energy Project – Draft Timetable.

The following is an initial draft timetable of events and targets for stage 2 of the project:

Target date	Actions
Mid-November	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting with the Cwmpas business consultant • Email sent to the residents of LCC community • Open launch meeting inviting community engagement, to have been arranged • and invitations to sit on the interim Project Board circulated.
End of November/beginning of December	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open Community Meeting to have taken place • Residents invited to share ideas on project goals and to suggest names for the Community Enterprise • Advertisement for a part-time Administrative Officer for the project
End of December	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project Board to have arranged a meeting with the Cwmpas consultant • Project Board to have mapped out a plan for the project and to agree on deadlines and priorities. • Project Board to have short-listed for the Administrative Officer, set up interviews and hopefully offered the successful candidate a three-month, part-time position • Project Board to have made recommendations of the name of the Community Enterprise and the legal structure of the Enterprise

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project Board to have made recommendations on establishing a Management Board for the Community Enterprise and expression of interest circulated widely.
End of January	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meetings with professional experts to have been arranged to determine a legal, financial and governance structure for the Community Enterprise • The Administrative Officer in post • Web-site launched and social-media operational • The Management Board for the Community Enterprise established • Potential office for the Community Enterprise identified, and arrangements for an office and opening times agreed • Launch of the Community Enterprise and first meeting of the Management Board
End of February	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Enterprise is operational and short- and medium-term strategies agreed • Long-term priorities identified and renewable energy experts commissioned to conduct a detailed assessment of 2 or 3 potential initiatives • Policies in place, including Welsh-language policy • Series of meetings to have been held with key organisations, including Pembrokeshire County Council; National Park; Pembrokeshire College • Arrangements for quick wins to have been made – eg Energy Saving Assessments of local houses, charging points • Potential peripheral business opportunities identified and business plans to be drawn up • Potential sponsors for the Community Enterprise to have been identified and approached • Policy on Share-holding to have been drawn up • Second open community meeting to have been arranged, at which an overview of developments, reports of meetings, visions for the future are shared, and projects leading to short-term gains launched
End of March	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further grant opportunities to have been explored to support the medium and long-term plans of the project • Priorities for business initiatives to have been agreed and potentially, business plans prepared – grant opportunities or collaborative initiatives explored • Full Short- and Medium-term strategies agreed and long-term renewable-energy priorities, signed off, potentially with business plans drawn up with the assistance of experts and potential sites identified • Full report published
1 May, 2024	Launch of Stage 3

Expressions of Interest

Members of the community are invited to contact Neil Prior or Delyth at LCC to register their interest in supporting the project, by emailing croeso@connectedcommunity.wales

07 November, 2023