

Community Energy Group Newsletter December 2012

Welcome to the first of our newsletters; providing you with updates from our **Community Energy Group Network** and information about our **Communities for Renewables Support Programme**. We have included information about our plans, progress so far, policy changes, upcoming events and useful case studies from across the network.

Please get in touch if there is information you would like us to include in our next edition.

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Community Energy Group Network News

Policy influence

We founded the Community Energy Group Network in response to local demand and because the government wants to hear from community energy groups. The network is being used to feed your views back to government and to facilitate shared learning. Selected communities were invited to the first meeting at the Met Office in Exeter on 30 October where we discussed DECC's call for evidence on community benefit. Following this, we collaborated with the World Wildlife Fund and Renewable UK and have submitted a response to the call for evidence, which can be viewed on the [Regen SW](#)

[website](#).

Regen SW chief executive Merlin Hyman has also been appointed to DECC's stakeholder advisory board. This gives us the opportunity to continue to influence the development of the Community Energy Strategy expected to be published by DECC next year.

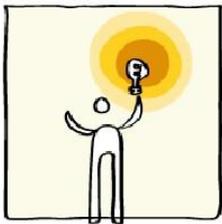
Policy influence is a big part of our work, so we will continue to keep you informed of future government consultations and let you know how we intend to respond and how you can get involved.

Local projects

We are hoping that TRESOC will receive a planning decision for the Totnes Community Wind Farm soon. South Hams District Council has postponed the decision until the Development Management Committee meeting on 16 January (still to be confirmed). So you can still support the project by writing letters to the members of the Development Management Committee and can find tools to do so at <http://www.tresoc.co.uk/LetterWritingToolkit.htm>. Any support on 16 January, such as banner making, would be greatly appreciated by TRESOC.

Contact details

We need to have accurate contact details for your group so if you have not done so already, please send us these and provide a secondary contact if possible. If you know of other active groups in your area who may be interested, please forward this to them and ask them to get in contact - the more engaged members we have the better!



The Communities for Renewables Support Programme

Raising the profile of community energy

The **Communities for Renewables Support Programme** has several priorities. At a time when energy policy is featuring heavily in the media, we are undertaking a proactive regional media campaign, highlighting positive renewable energy stories in order to keep the renewable energy debate balanced and informed.

We are raising our social media presence, linking up with other groups to counter misinformation in the media - if you haven't done so already, please follow the CfR Twitter feed, **@CFRcouk** and provide us with details of your groups' *Twitter*, *Facebook* or *LinkedIn* account so we can keep in touch this way.

Regen SW already liaise with local media and have provided several interviews and publications, many of which can be found on the Regen SW [website](#). Chief executive Merlin Hyman recently appeared on Radio Devon where he discussed wind energy in the south west, and you can listen to this [here](#).

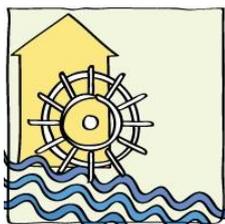
We have also written a letter to South Hams District Council in support of the Totnes Community Wind Farm application, which you can read [here](#). A decision on the project is likely to be made at the next meeting of the South Hams District Council Development Management Committee on 16 January.

Community Energy Champions

We have had a good response to our recruitment campaign for **Community Energy Champions** and we will be in touch with applicants shortly about taking this forward.

We are recruiting people who we hope will be able to work closely with us in this campaign and who will be willing to act as local spokespeople for community energy and CfR. We want people who would be available to be interviewed by the local media on sustainable energy issues, provide quotes for press releases put out by CfR/Regen SW and attend community energy group meetings within a certain radius of your home, presenting information about your community groups' activities and the CfR support programme. In return for your contributions you will receive training, which is likely to take place in early 2013, a fixed fee for speaking on behalf of CfR, and we will pay for you to attend specific Regen SW events as a Community Energy Champion.

To find out more about this opportunity and how to apply, please read our [flyer](#) or send a short biography, outlining your skills and experience in relation to the points above and send it to help@communities4renewables.co.uk.



Policy Updates

The Energy Bill

We want to keep you informed about government energy policy announcements and help you understand how these will affect your community.

On 29 November the government published the long awaited Energy Bill, which sets out reforms to the electricity market. The introduction of a feed-in tariff with Contracts for Difference (CfD) for low carbon electricity generation is a key part of the government's Electricity Market Reform (EMR) programme. CfD will replace the Renewables Obligation scheme, which closes to applications at the end of March 2017, and will be available to investors in large scale (greater than 5 MW) renewables, new nuclear and Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS). Although most community energy schemes are smaller than 5 MW and therefore will not be eligible for CfD, we hope to see more large scale community schemes come forward in the future.

For those community groups that are interested in larger schemes, the process of CfD is now spelt out with some clarity, but key decisions such as the strike price for different technologies will emerge over the next year.

For further information, see Regen's analysis at <http://regensw.co.uk/news/2012/11/29/government-publishes-energy-bill>. DECC's announcement can be found at http://www.decc.gov.uk/en/content/cms/news/pn12_151/pn12_151.aspx. And the full Energy Bill is available at <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/bills/cbill/2012-2013/0100/130100.pdf>.

Funding announcements

Defra has announced the launch of a [Rural Community Renewable Energy Fund](#). Loans of up to £100,000 will be available to go towards the cost of the feasibility and planning stages of projects. Communities that receive planning permission will repay the loans at a premium to allow the Fund to regenerate and help further communities. You can pre-register your interest on the [Defra website](#).

We would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate the winners of The Renewable Heat Premium Payment (RHPP) Community Scheme, a funding mechanism to assist communities in England, Wales and Scotland to support domestic renewable heat installations in privately owned homes. There were four successful applications in the south west:

- Exmoor Woodheat
- Sustainable Crediton Warm Homes Project
- Totnes Transition Streets Renewable Heat
- WREN Domestic Heat Project

Full details of the scheme can be found on the [Energy Saving Trust website](#).

Local policy

Devon's local planning authorities are working together to develop a landscape advice note on the siting, design and assessment of wind and solar PV developments. Regen has already engaged in this process and provided comments to Devon County Council on the Torrridge guidance. These comments can be found [here](#). It is hoped that there will also be a consultation event in the new year to allow people to influence the work further and we will keep you posted as to when this will be and how to get involved.



Case Studies

We want to promote positive action from local communities, so we'll be publishing case studies on a regular basis. We want to tell *your* stories because it's these positive activities that the government *need* to hear. We would love to write a short case study on each of the groups involved with the network so please can you let us know if you already have any case studies of your activities as we will look to take this forward with you.

We have already published several on our website, and these can be found on our [inspiring communities page](#).

We will use these in our presentations, at our events and will be sending these to DECC as appropriate, as part of our lobbying programme to support community energy.

In this edition of the newsletter, we shall focus on the worthy winners of *the 2012 South West Green Energy Award for Best Community Initiative*, sponsored by The Landmark Practice, **Bath and West Community Energy**, who had a highly successful year!

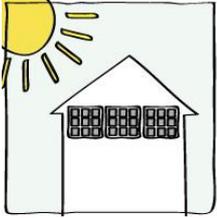
[To view the PDF, click here.](#)



BWCE collecting the 2012 South West Green Energy Award for Best Community Initiative.

From left to right: Colin Skellett - Wessex Water, Bernice Roberts - The Landmark Practice, Jeff Kenna - BWCE, Dr Stephen Bird - South West Water.

Please contact us with regard to compiling case studies so that we can produce as many as possible.



Events

Here is a quick update on some great events for you to put in your diaries:

Future events

Renewable Energy Marketplace, 19 March 2013

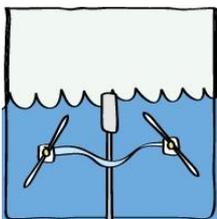
CfR will be organising a stand and activities session as part of the Renewable Energy Marketplace event that Regen SW holds at Westpoint Arena in Exeter every year. We are partnering with Friends of the Earth to provide **Community Energy Champions training sessions** on myth busting and dealing with the media and we will also hold a session exploring community energy business models at the event. We would like to invite communities to register their interest now to attend and provide materials for the stand. We have a limited number of free and reduced price tickets that we can offer. Please email us at help@communities4renewables.co.uk.

Recent events

The South West Green Energy Awards took place on 20 November and we were treated to a fantastic poem by Radio 4's Matt Harvey. Regen SW is pleased to be working with Matt to develop a series of poems in response to sustainable energy! The first in the series of poems 'The Shock of the New' which is about a solar farm was premiered at the awards and is available to view on [YouTube](#).

We would also like to highlight that Regen SW won the **BEST NOT FOR PROFIT ENTERPRISE** 2012 at the recent **Western Morning News Business Awards** dinner in Exeter.

Don't forget to tell us about events/milestones in your community so that we can link up our campaigns!



Useful Information

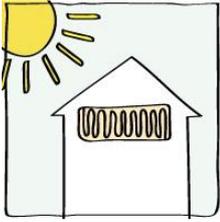
We know how hard it can be to combat the myths surrounding renewable energy which are used by opposition campaigners to support their arguments, so we'd like to keep our communities informed in order to best tackle these false claims.

The Centre for Sustainable Energy has published a report titled '[Common concerns about wind power](#)' which offers an independent perspective on wind energy. This document is very informative and provides useful information for rebutting myths.

For the industry's perspective, Renewable UK (formerly BWEA) has a concise document which moves to dispel common misconceptions about wind energy, and this can be downloaded below. If you need any support in providing the correct information to your community we are always happy to assist.

[Renewable UK's top seven wind farm myths dispelled.](#)

If you want to get involved in national campaigns or you'd like access to lobbying tools and advice, sign up to Action for Renewables at <http://www.actionforrenewables.org>



Keep in touch

Based in Exeter, the Communities for Renewables Support Programme team include Cheryl Hiles, Josie Ashe and David Gregory. To discuss how the Community Support Programme can help your community, contact us using the details below and we will handle your inquiries as quickly as possible.

Tel: 01392 494399

Email:

help@communities4renewables.co.uk

The team would also like to wish you a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!



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