East Kintyre Renewable Energy Group (EKREG)

Virtual AGM by Zoom

October 2020

Chairperson's Report

Since being incorporated on 12 September 2019, EKREG members have met fortnightly to advance the objectives set in their Articles of Association.   Despite the coronavirus pandemic, members have continued to meet fortnightly over Zoom.

Since being formed EKREG has been in contact with every windfarm operator or developer in Kintyre with a view to establish their appetite for Community Shared Ownership (CSO) in new developments. The response has been mixed with the main interest coming from the large multinational companies who are already established in Kintyre.   However, with new guidance from the Scottish Government regarding CSO published in 2019, companies are having to thoroughly research all aspects of CSO and this is taking time.

As probably every new windfarm development in Kintyre will impact on more than one Community Council area, EKREG has had to develop systems and processes that will enable multi-community engagement in CSO.   This is being trialled with Scottish Power Renewable's (SPR) Beinn an Tuirc 3 (BaT3) Windfarm Development, which is now at the latter stages of construction.

In order to bring the disparate communities in Kintyre together for CSO offers, EKREG has met with most of the Community Councils and agreed MoUs for EKREG to act on their behalf. At present, 5 of the 6 Kintyre Community Councils have signed MoUs with only Tarbert and Skipness outstanding. The island of Gigha has also signed a MoU and it is anticipated that South Knapdale will do likewise.

In parallel with this, EKREG has developed a set of Model Rules for a multi-community Equal Shares Community Benefit Society that will effectively guarantee an equal split of surplus funds between the impacted communities.   These rules, to be known as Multi-Community Shared Ownership in a Renewable Energy Project, have been approved by the Financial Conduct Authority and, thanks to a grant from the Energy Saving Trust, registered with them. The rules are now being widely publicised to encourage others to use them when windfarm developers offers CSO to a number of impacted community council areas.

Much time has also been spent by members in researching the financing by communities of their share in any CSO offers that are made. Enquiries with the Scottish Government, ethical banks and Argyll & Bute Council has established a willingness to engage with EKREG in considering loan opportunities. The board is now confident that the financing of CSO offers is achievable.

Despite the ongoing pandemic, EKREG and the impacted Community Councils held a virtual meeting with SPR in March this year to discuss the proposed timetable for CSO in BaT3. Agreement in principle was also reached that Community Benefit Funds (CBF)

from BaT3 would be routed directly to the Community Benefit Society, established to manage the CSO, and split equally between the 3 impacted communities.

In preparation for the disbursement of funds to the impacted community's charities, EKREG has created a template for a single tier SCIO and associated governance documents.   East Kintyre Community Council has already agreed to adopt the template and create an East Kintyre Community Fund and it seems likely that West Kintyre Community Council will follow suit.

EKREG has also been instrumental in helping establish an East Kintyre Community website where information about the group can be found along with agendas and minutes of all meetings. The website presence helps project a professional image of EKREG to the communities of Kintyre, public authorities at both national and regional level and also the wider corporate community.

The Chair would like to thank all directors for the massive amount of groundbreaking work that has been done over the last year, bringing the communities of Kintyre together and putting in place the structures that will help deliver CSO.   It is hoped that by this time next year the first funds will be flowing to the communities in Kintyre.

Alasdair Bennett
Chair
EKREG