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Scottish Community Energy Coalition (SCEC) Manifesto

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Background

Community Energy in Scotland

In the wider European context Scotland is regarded by some to be at the forefront of community energy: there are already many examples of community energy initiatives across the country that range from independent grid management and renewable electricity generation on the Isle of Eigg to innovative partnerships between commercial developers and community organisations at Fintry and Neilston. In support, the Scottish government has set a 500MW target of locally and community owned energy by 2020 and provides funding for initiatives through its Community and Renewable Energy Scheme (CARES) and Renewable Energy Infrastructure Fund (REIF).

However, despite the available support community ownership of renewable energy projects in Scotland is amongst the lowest in Europe. This begs the question what can Scotland learn from other European countries including Germany and Denmark.

Community Power

Friends of the Earth Scotland works as part of an international campaign called Community Power that brings together twelve organisations from across Europe. The aim of Community Power is to speed up the development of community renewables across Europe through a favourable legislative framework. Find out more: communitypower.eu.

Scottish Community Energy Coalition

To achieve Community Power across Europe it is vital for us to build a broad level of support at national levels and create synergies between organisations and individuals fighting for a community energy revolution.

Through Community Power the Scottish Community Energy Coalition has the resources to run exciting campaigns that inform Scottish policy makers and the public and demonstrate the positive impact of community energy at a local and international level. We will kick off with an exciting launch event in Spring 2014.

Community energy 2020 - communities across Scotland owning, generating and saving energy together for the benefit of all.

The Scottish Community Energy Coalition is part of a wider UK coalition that was set up by Forum for the Future in 2012. Much of energy legislation is currently not devolved, which means decisions regarding this are made in Westminster rather than in Holyrood. Therefore it makes sense for us to be part of a wider coalition that can influence the UK government whilst working in a Scottish group that can focus on devolved powers such as planning law. Our Vision for 2020 has been adapted from the UK Community Energy Coalition:

We believe that community energy can and should:

1. Enable willing communities in Scotland to collectively play a substantial role in meeting Scottish and UK targets for carbon and renewables by saving energy and creating a secure, clean and affordable heat and electricity supply
2. Increase the scale of investment in renewable energy and energy saving and attract new individuals, communities and institutions to invest
3. Encourage people to act cooperatively to create sustainable communities and give everyone an equal opportunity to own and control shared assets democratically
4. Respect communities, the landscape and wildlife through genuine stakeholder involvement and management of natural assets for the benefit of current and future generations
5. Increase people's awareness and support for renewable energy projects and encourage energy saving
6. Include frameworks that enable communities that generate electricity to sell directly to themselves

Our commitments

To make this happen, we will collectively:

1. Promote community energy with our members and wider stakeholders as a positive and powerful voice
2. Share best practice and create an evidence base for the value that community energy creates
3. Ask the Scottish, UK, and EU Government to join us in dramatically scaling up community and co-operative energy by integrating support for the sector across all policies in a public, long term and stable way and ensuring communities have access to appropriate financial and capacity support

Coalition governance

The Scottish Community Energy Coalition is led by a steering group that meets four times a year to plan joint activities and campaign asks. The steering group also determines new members to the coalition that will be invited to join (free of charge) and feed into these regular meetings. Changes to membership and the coalition manifesto will be decided by a simple 2/3 majority vote.

In addition ad-hoc meetings might be arranged when needed for instance to respond to government consultations. Through the Community Power campaign, Friends of the Earth Scotland is able to provide subsidies for travel expenses to enable partners from remote locations to participate. A member of the steering group will also attend meetings of the UK Community Energy Coalition.

Definition of community energy

The term community energy is used in a variety of different contexts including energy efficiency projects, grid management, collective power purchasing and energy generation. In addition, it might describe a local community or a community of interest.

For the purpose of the Scottish Community Energy Coalition, we think it's more useful to define community energy through common characteristics. These include:

- Ordinary people (i.e. not just energy specialists) are involved in developing and/or running the project through community groups such as cooperatives or development trusts
- There is a co-operative, democratic or specifically non-corporate structure
- There are tangible local benefits to people living or working close to projects
- The profits go back to the community or are re-invested in other community energy schemes.
- Generation of renewable energy such as solar, wind and hydro; but rejection of non-renewable and fossil-fuel sources to meet demand

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