

Press Release: Clean energy project would be owned by the local community

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This week exciting plans have been revealed for West Berkshire's first community owned wind turbine. Matt Partridge and his wife, Rachel, have submitted plans for a wind turbine that would help fight global warming. If West Berkshire Council grants permission for the project, the local community would be invited to buy shares in the wind turbine, which is likely to cost over £1million, allowing investors to share in the profits.

Commenting on the proposal, Matt said "Global warming is already with us. Negative changes are being witnessed now and they will only get worse, perhaps much worse, unless we quickly reduce our greenhouse gas emissions. The wind turbine would not only help fight global warming, but would provide a fantastic opportunity for the local community to own the project and 'do their bit' to tackle pollution."

Matt and Rachel are working with Energy4All¹ to help with their plan to set up a co-operative that, it is hoped, would eventually own and operate the wind turbine. Angela Duignan from Energy4All commented: "Energy4All has recently been working on a community-owned wind farm of five wind turbines in Oxfordshire. For this project, Westmill, people were invited to invest between £250 and £20,000. To date, the Westmill co-operative has raised over £4million and has over 2,300 members and it is hoped the project will be operational by next Spring! We look forward to working with Matt and Rachel and hope to achieve something similar for the Baydon Meadow project."

The wind turbine, if granted permission, would add considerably to West Berkshire's contribution to UK and international efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. In so doing, it would provide enough clean electricity to supply approximately 640 typical UK homes² (about one-third of the homes in Baydon and Lambourn³) while reducing the social costs of climate change by over £2million during its operational life⁴.

The proposal would see a single wind turbine of up to 81m to its highest point at Baydon Meadow, approximately 100m north of the M4 and about ¾ mile north-west of the 153m mast at the Membury motorway services. The wind turbine proposed is smaller than the wind turbine visible from the M4 near Reading, at about two-thirds the height. However, because of stronger winds at the Baydon Meadow site, energy output would be roughly equivalent⁵.

Matt went on to add "This project has quite a long history but the new proposal is quite different from the previous project while policies are much more supportive now. As well as the community ownership plans, regional planning guidance⁶ now states that small projects can be accepted in AONBs⁷ while it also suggests that the best place for new renewable energy projects is in "major

transport corridors”, like the M4. The Government’s 2006 Energy Review has also added great emphasis to meeting UK renewable energy targets, while recent reports from Sir Nicholas Stern⁸ and the IPCC⁹ show ever more clearly that time is running out if we are to avoid the worst effects of climate change.

Dr Keith Richards OBE, Chief Executive of TV Energy¹⁰, which supports the scheme, added “As a region the South East is still sadly low on sustainable energy supply. A modest sub-regional target for renewable electricity in Thames Valley/Surrey by 2010 was adopted in the regional planning guidance, and will pass through to the emerging South East Plan. To make this target we need an additional 1.4 MW generating capacity per month up to December 2010. This situation calls for brave and positive steps on the part of our elected representatives. If we’re to stand a chance of meeting the targets, significant schemes like the Baydon Meadow Wind Turbine will be essential.”.

Vince Taylor and Barry Flisher of Lambourn Sustainability Forum¹¹ are also backing the project; “...This project has our wholehearted support and we welcome it not only for its economic benefits but particularly for its contribution in reducing the carbon footprint of Lambourn and the Lambourn Valley. This is a fine example of how even a small community can be seen to be addressing major climate issues. We look forward to working with the developer to ensure that everyone in the local area benefits from this...”.

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Notes

¹ Energy4All was formed in 2002 and has become the UK’s leading expert in community-owned renewable energy schemes by encouraging people from all walks of life to embrace renewable energy projects and help fight against climate change while also maximising the social, economic, and environmental benefits of schemes to the community. See www.energy4all.co.uk.

² Based on detailed calculations available in the planning application documents.

³ Household data from 2001 census (Baydon and Lambourn, with some 215 and 1,674 homes, respectively).

⁴ Based on detailed calculations available in the planning application documents. However, it should be noted that future changes in the power generating mix and fuel costs in the UK over the life of the wind farm means this figure may change over time.

⁵ The wind turbine visible from the M4 near Reading has a hub-height of 85m, a rotor diameter of 70m and a maximum, tip-height of 120m. The Baydon Meadow proposal would have a hub-height of 50m, rotor diameter of 62m and a maximum tip-height of 81m. Ecotricity, the owner/operator of the Reading wind turbine, estimates an annual output of 3.5 million units (kWh) compared with an estimate of approximately 3 million units (kWh) for the Baydon Meadow project.

⁶ Regional Planning Guidance for the South East of England and the South East of England Regional Spatial Strategy (the “South East Plan”) are available from: www.southeast-ra.gov.uk.

⁷ Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

⁸ The Stern Review is available from: www.hm-treasury.gov.uk.

⁹ IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) documents are available from: www.ipcc.ch.

¹⁰ TV Energy (TVE) is a ‘one stop shop’ for all matters relating to the understanding, promotion and delivery of renewable energy projects. By definition it is a ‘not for profit’, independent regional renewable energy agency. See www.tvenergy.co.uk.

¹¹ Visit the “Sustainability” pages at www.lambourn.info.