

Pen y Cae Renewable Energy Project

With many thanks to the Monmouthshire LEADER programme and the Monmouthshire Well-being Community project, we have been able to finance a definitive report of the possibilities for utilising only renewable energy sources for our project at Pen y Cae, in the Mynydd Du forest, Grwyne Fawr, near Abergavenny.

The background to the project is well-documented elsewhere, including on the Grwyne Fawr CIC website (<https://grwynefawrcic.org/2019/06/08/pen-y-cae-project/>).

With the assistance of the two funds above, we have now had a definitive report produced for us by Atega – Monmouthshire based renewable energy experts – which allows us to proceed with the project with a much larger degree of confidence.

Part of our negotiations with Natural Resources Wales (NRW), owners of the building have been around the way in which it will be provided with power. This report answers those questions.

We have now published the full report on our website, making the information available to any person or group who is in need of an off-grid energy solution. It is difficult to know at this stage how many groups or individuals will access this information, but the website views/visitors statistics will, in time, provide an accurate figure.

The project is in the process of planning a number of information dissemination actions/ promotional / marketing activities. The ideas for these are well advanced, but unfortunately NRW have informed us that they require a full application for the event, which is expected to take at least 12 weeks. Therefore the events, originally planned for June/July will now take place in September.

Despite this delay, we have had very positive responses to the project idea from over 2 dozen organisations who are probable users of the facility. These range from local schools (primary and secondary), Scouts, children with disabilities groups, outdoor activities groups, the Black Mountains Land Use Partnership and the Brecon Beacons National Park.

Initial hits on the website total twenty already, despite the information only being posted in the last few days.

In terms of the specific Performance indicators:

6a Launch Event: As described above the launch event has unfortunately been delayed until September due to the requirement by NRW for a formal application, the process of which can take at least 12 weeks.

6b Number of participants: Invitations to the launch event will be sent to all of the organisations who supplied letters of support in the first instance. Other organisations have also been identified in the interim, so the total number of invitations will be in the region of 30.

6c Feasibility study: Completed and forwarded.

6e Stakeholders engaged: An update newsletter will be sent to all potentially interested parties informing them of the work done to date (this is also available to the general public on the GF CIC website) and informing them of the proposed launch / planning event to take place in September. As in 6b above the numbers are in the region of 30.

The project has received tremendous interest in the local area and has encouraged a number of professional people to offer their services for free for specific tasks. E.g a local builder has examined the structure for us and declared it to be in excellent condition; a locally based lawyer has offered to act for us in any legal issues with NRW; a bat expert has given us an opinion on the likelihood of bats in the building (probably none).

Liaison with the BBNP planning department has confirmed full planning permission, in perpetuity, for the building's use as an outdoor activities centre.

Conversations with NRW show that they are completely behind the project and are willing to give us a lease, in effect, on our own terms.

We therefore feel that, with the additional information given to us by the renewable energy survey, we are now well on the way to making this project into a reality. The timescale has unfortunately slipped due to the slowness of the NRW application processes, but the working group are keen to push on as quickly as possible.

A full report on the project will be given to the AGM of the Grwyne Fawr CIC on July 19th.

