

Community Power Event 2025

Generation & Repowering



Main Takeaways



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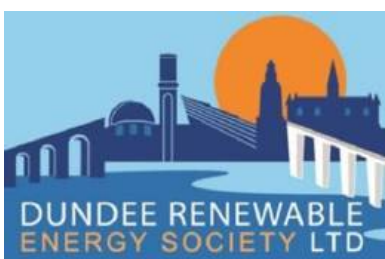
EVENT PARTNERS

We would like to thank our sponsors, members and supporters who helped us deliver this event.

The event would not have been possible without our generous sponsors:

SP Energy Networks, Howden, New Stream Renewables and Emergya Wind Technologies

Alongside Community Energy Scotland staff, representatives from many of our community member organisations helped deliver a range of presentations, sessions and workshops. Thanks also to the event venue, the Technology and Innovation Centre, Glasgow.



Cowal Community Energy



COMMUNITY POWER

The Community Power: Generation and Repowering event on February 18th at the University of Strathclyde Technology & Innovation Centre in Glasgow was an electrifying gathering of minds and ideas!



This vibrant event united community energy groups, industry sponsors like SP Energy Networks (SPEN), and government ministers to brainstorm ways to empower communities with more energy and tackle threats to existing community-owned energy in Scotland. The atmosphere was charged with innovative ideas, hope, and the determination to navigate the complex journeys of repowering and new generation projects.

The event was a fantastic networking opportunity, strengthening relationships within the sector and fostering peer learning. Our generous sponsors, SP Energy Networks, Howden, New Stream Renewables, and Emergya Wind Technologies B.V., played a crucial role, with exhibitors sharing collaboration opportunities with communities and stakeholders.

We were delighted that both Michael Shanks MP, Minister for Energy, and Alasdair Allan MSP, Acting Minister for Climate Change, joined our event. Their presence demonstrates the commitment of both governments to community energy and we look forward to working with them both in the future to achieve the best possible outcomes for our sector. Minister Shanks stayed for an interactive session led by our Policy Manager Amanda Grimm, where he and our CEO Zoe Holliday engaged with our members, responding to their questions.

Our members, including Tom Wills from Bressay Development Ltd, Calum MacDonald from Point and Sandwick Trust, and Graeme Murray from Cowal Community Energy, presented and discussed viable new generation projects, facilitated by our Technical Director, Mark Hull. The hands-on workshop on the repowering journey, led by Eibhlin Norquoy, Community Energy Scotland's Head of Trading, provided practical insights and inspiration.

In the afternoon in a panel discussion facilitated by Eibhlin Norquoy, our members Duncan Easter (Findhorn Wind Park Ltd), Jim Lee (Dundee Renewable Energy Society), Neil Mackinnon (Urras Oighreachd Ghabhsainn - Galson Estate), and Allan Wilson and Scott Wilson (Radio City Association) shared their experiences, inspiring other communities with their case studies.

The event received glowing feedback, with an average score of 4.7 out of 5! Attendees particularly valued the learning and networking opportunities.

Let's keep the momentum going and continue to drive forward the community energy movement!



SHAPING POLICY FOR COMMUNITIES' ENERGY NEEDS



Acting Minister for Climate Action, Alasdair Allan – Opening Address:

- *"Repowering offers a chance to think differently"* (about ownership of energy assets, the approvals process, etc). He wants to explore how to make the most of the opportunities it presents.
- After Minister Allan's talk, attendees agreed that planning is a major block, and that **Community Energy Scotland should feed this back.**
- **Community Energy Scotland will keep pushing for the Scottish Government to set up a short-life working group on repowering, to address the barriers and explore how to grasp the opportunities.**

Session 1: Shaping Policy for Communities' Needs – with Energy Minister, Michael Shanks:

- Minister Shanks stated repeatedly that *"ownership matters"*.
- He asked for input on the definition of community ownership. **Community Energy Scotland will continue to make the case for a category and target for 100% community-owned energy.**
- The Secretary of State charged Ofgem with finding ways to tackle regulatory barriers to community energy. He noted that, while the Clean Power 2030 document doesn't make provision for prioritisation of community energy, Government can issue further prioritisation documents. **We will continue to make the 'public interest case' for due discrimination in favour of community-owned energy, with regards to grid connections and a pricing mechanism that gives long-term income guarantee.**



COMMUNITY POWER- REPOWERING & GENERATION: SP ENERGY NETWORKS



Liam Cantwell, Community Energy Engagement Manager from our sponsor SP Energy Networks highlighted the links between policy and practical projects, and provided insights on what SPEN can do to support communities.

To sustain and encourage the growth of the community energy sector, there needs to be a focus on innovative strategies, effective engagement with new and existing partners, and collaboration across various sectors to ensure long-term success and resilience across communities.

He acknowledged that the journey and process are challenging. *"We need to make sure we recognise the problems and have honest discussions and put changes in place".*

"From a process point of view, SPEN can provide support to any community energy projects that are going ahead."

At the end, he introduced the SP Energy Networks sponsored interactive sessions: Repowering Journey and New Community generation.



REPOWERING JOURNEY

Where are you on the journey?



Community organisations' progress in repowering was scored from 1 to 5 in the below categories:

1. *Planning* 2. *Funding* 3. *Technology* 4. *Grid Capacity* 5. *New enabling infrastructure* 6. *Land agreements*
7. *Community*

An eighth category for organisational capacity was identified.

Key challenges were identified as below:

- The proportion of equity required for bank loans is likely to be very high without some guaranteed revenue prices (e.g. CfD)
- As the extent of insurance reduces, more sums are having to be saved to address turbine breakdowns and therefore less to the community.
- How much should be saved for repowering?
- How are the community engaged around financial decisions?
- Is there some way of avoiding corporation tax on the sums being saved for repowering?
- Unclear how long it will take for modification applications to be processed to add other technology in advance of repowering the site due to the current connections reform
- With ROCs ending in 2028, will life extension for some turbine become economically unviable?
- Difficult to get insurance for refurbished turbines.
- The cost of grid reinforcements or the securities and liabilities ahead of grid connection can be a show stopper – **Community Energy Scotland advocating for a Code Modification Proposal to reduce securities and liabilities in certain circumstances.**
- Worry that the community have forgotten how much effort and work was required at the beginning of putting in the wind turbine(s). Need to continue engaging with the community and delivering benefits.
- Is there an opportunity for communities to benefit from recycling or refurbishing facilities?



NEW COMMUNITY GENERATION

Viability of New Community Generation



What are our routes to successful/viable projects? Then and now- How do we get back to viability?

- CAPEX/MW installed (reduced capex per MW hour)
- Increase size (technology and site), over sizing and mixed technology
- Repowering
- Utilising existing infrastructure
- Release older sites.
- Used market
- Multi technology
- Grants

Case studies Summary:

Cowal Community Energy & Wind Farm Repowering: A newly formed community energy group rapidly mobilised to bid for the repowering of Cruach Mhor wind farm, securing £300,000–£350,000 in potential funding, with plans to pursue further opportunities if unsuccessful.

Point & Sandwick Trust – Lewis Battery Energy Storage System: A community-owned wind farm in Lewis (9MW) has generated £8.8 million in profit, and a new 20–25 MW/50 MWh battery storage project aims to enhance grid resilience and reduce diesel reliance by 2027.

Bressay Development Ltd – Community Energy in Shetland: Learning from limited community benefits in Viking Wind Farm, Bressay is exploring a community-owned solar project to tackle fuel poverty and grid constraints, with strong local support for community-led renewable energy.



CASE STUDIES



We heard from four organisations about their journeys to building renewable generation and life extend existing assets.

Dundee Renewable Energy Society partnered with multiple organisations to build 2.6MW ground mounted solar and supply electricity to the James Hutton Institute. They faced various challenges but raised a total of £3m including through shares, built local support and partnerships, and refused to be beaten. The process was not simple and took from 2017 – 2024.

Findhorn Wind Park installed 3 second hand Vestas wind turbines in 2006. The turbines were already 10 years old. Half of the wind farm output powers a local village. From 2014 they began to have major component failures. Four major components have been repaired and they keep cash to cover future major repairs. They have extended their planning permission so that the turbines can remain on site. The turbines are now 30 years old.

Radio City Association embarked on a community generation project in 2016. They secured CARES funding to develop the 3MW wind turbine of which they can export 2.5MW to the grid. Construction has been happening through 2024 and the turbine is due to be commissioned in early 2025. They are surrounded by privately owned turbines – delivering hardly anything to the area. Their single community owned turbine will return more in community benefit than the 42 commercially owned turbines in the area.

West Coast Community Energy is a partnership between Galson Estate Trust, Carloway Estate Trust and Barvas Estate Trust. In 2019 they started to develop a windfarm project which is currently planned to be 43MW. Technical studies have been completed and ecological surveys are ongoing. After years of gridlock, a distribution grid connection date of 2033 has been offered but they are waiting for an offer from National Energy System Operator (NESO). The estimated securities and liabilities for the connection are £9m but these may not be required. Development funding has been limited but crucial as costs are circa £900k for the development.

Funding during the development stage varied greatly for the above projects and has come from sources such as Big Lottery, CARES, Energy4All, revenue from community café and bike hire, revenue from existing turbine.

Top tips from the panel for those embarking on a renewable generation project were:

- Be ready to take your time – will take longer than expected. 6-7 years. People involved may change. Expect enormous barriers but believe you can overcome them. If you don't have the time, couldn't take on the problems, perhaps it's not for you.
- Make sure you have a good board behind you, access to good advice.
- Contact CARES as first point of call - and perhaps a local psychiatrist! Can't do it yourself.
- Need a good support network.
- Choose your battles carefully – have to make some compromises with certain organisations, have to live with some issues.



KEY POINTS & TAKEAWAYS



UK and Scottish Government:

- Repowering Offers a Chance to Think Differently:
- Ownership Matters: Highlighting the significance of ownership in energy projects.
- Planning as a Major Block: Recognizing planning as a significant obstacle.
- Mandating Shared Ownership: Essential for community energy projects.
- Regulatory Barriers: DESNZ has charged OFGEM to address regulatory barriers, potentially including community energy designation.
- Future Project Prioritization: While 'Clean Power 2030' does not prioritize UK energy, DESNZ can issue documents to prioritize future projects.
- Public Sector Involvement: Opening the public sector to community energy is crucial.

Community Energy Scotland Actions at Policy Level:

- Addressing Planning Blocks: Community Energy Scotland will feedback that planning is a major obstacle.
- Short-Life Working Group: Community Energy Scotland will advocate for Scottish Government to establish a working group on repowering to address barriers and explore opportunities.
- Community Ownership Definition: Community Energy Scotland will push for a clear category and target for 100% community-owned energy.
- Public Interest Case: Community Energy Scotland will argue for favorable treatment of community-owned energy in grid connections and pricing mechanisms that ensure long-term income guarantees.
- Code Modification Proposal: Community Energy Scotland will advocate for reducing securities and liabilities in certain circumstances.



KEY POINTS & TAKEAWAYS CONTINUED

Challenges:

- Reduced Income & Higher Costs: Repowering projects face lower income after ROCs and FITs end, and higher costs due to increased equity requirements for loans, insurance, grid reinforcements, and ferry transportations.
- Community Resilience: Communities have become dependent on wind revenue and may struggle or even collapse without it. There's also a risk of reduced engagement due to forgotten efforts and work required.

Opportunities:

- Community Benefits: Potential for communities to benefit from recycling or refurbishing facilities, avoiding corporation tax on saved sums for repowering, and utilizing money held for future projects.
- Viability Enhancements: Small changes can make projects viable again. Identifying key innovations, such as storage solutions, can help move projects forward.

Top tips for those embarking on new renewable generation projects:

- Be ready to take your time – will take longer than expected.
- Make sure you have a good board behind you, access to good advice.
- Need a good support network.
- Capacity building is key
- Building up trust with the community is crucial.
- Choose your battles carefully.
- Contact CARES as first point of call – CARES funding is vital!



WHAT'S NEXT?

Join our next online Repowering Forum
on the 19th of May!

If you are a Member and not yet part of the Forum, please contact
eibhlin.norquoy@communityenergy.scot



Save the date!

**Next year's Community Power event is on
February 4 2026 in Glasgow**

What topics would you like to be covered at future Repowering events?

36 responses



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