

**TRANSITION BLACK ISLE
ENERGY GROUP REPORT
13TH MAY 2010**

Smart Meter project

We now have 16 households interested in the next round of the Smart meter project, although a couple are unconfirmed. We'll get moving on distributing the meters to them, but still need a few more.

The additional new meters have been ordered.

Fortrose Academy are planning to start using the meters in class next term, and we're considering lending the meters to teachers in the meantime.

We've gone around the houses again trying to select suitable books for the Fortrose Library, and Allan Mackenzie has now picked up that particular ball and is running with it. If anyone has more suggestions, contact him direct (details on the membership list).

Getting completed questionnaires from the folk who were in the pilot project is taking ages.

Greening Homes and Gardens

We're working on 11th September for this year's event. The venue is still under discussion – Fortrose Academy is looking expensive.

Community Wind Farm

The Councillors have taken the view that it would be better to work directly with a wind-farm developer, tapping into their expertise in finding a site. They are planning on involving a revitalised Black Isle Partnership as the community body to develop the scheme and control the income (eventually). They anticipate BIP leasing a suitable plot from the Forestry Commission, and then letting it on to the developer, thereby getting some rental income in addition to the normal community contribution.

It's difficult to see how this model would work:

- if the developer already has done the research, then presumably they would deal direct with the Forestry Commission,
- and if they haven't, how is BIP going to identify the site?
- Why would the Forestry Commission lease the land at below market rate, when they are obliged to only sell or lease land at independent valuation?
- For a community purchase or lease, the Forestry Commission require a ballot of the community, where more than half vote and there's a majority in favour. The councillors see the community as the Black Isle, so getting that level of support will be an enormous task.

Even if it does work, it'll take some time to re-vitalise BIP, and it's unlikely a deal direct with a developer will give the best result for the community.

So, we have agreed with the Councillors that TBI will carry out research into more appropriate models of community ownership. Also, Anne, through her involvement in the Moy windfarm scheme has received an offer from the developer there to give us access to their research on possible sites on the Black Isle. It seems there is a site at Black Stand which already has planning permission for a windfarm, which we are investigating.

Martin Sherring
13th May 2010