

Community-owned wind projects are the way forward

by **DAVID HARTLEY**

THE team which delivered a first for Scotland with the Burray wind turbine is convinced the success of the venture will serve as a blueprint for similar developments in Orkney.

Orkney Renewable Energy Ltd, the company that turned the Burray concept into an energy generating reality, was determined from the outset that this locally-owned project would deliver maximum benefits for the county.

Now with a major debate underway on how the islands should embrace the renewables revolution, the firm's directors are inviting local landowners and investors to consider becoming involved in replicating the Burray model elsewhere in Orkney.

"The Burray turbine is solely owned by people living in Orkney - and was funded by local investors without the need for bank loans or any other kind of financial support," said ORE director Richard Gauld.

"That ensures that all the profits from the electricity generated remain within the county.

"It means that a single wind turbine can bring the same economic benefits for Orkney as 30 machines on a conventional wind farm.

"With conventional projects, the land owner gets a percentage of the revenue - typically between 2 and 5 per cent of the income each machine earns in generating electricity from the wind.

"That is often the only benefit to the local community. It means that up to 98 per cent of the production profits can disappear out of the local economy if a wind project in Orkney is owned by a company from outside the islands.

"But with the Burray turbine we've shown that there can be a high return from a relatively small project.

"That's what makes this initiative so interesting. We're convinced this has to be the best option for wind energy in Orkney - because there's far less impact on the environment."

The islands council has just published its long-awaited Renewable Energy - Planning Framework for Orkney.

The document provides guidance for developers on the most suitable sites across the county for renewables projects.

Mr Gauld said: "The document makes it clear that there is limited land available for wind projects - that unlike Shetland or the Western Isles, we aren't going to see large wind farms built in Orkney.

"There might be a few clusters of two or three machines - the rest of the sites would be suitable for single machines like the Burray turbine."

Mr Gauld is hoping landowners with suitable sites will talk to ORE about the benefits of becoming involved in future Burray-scale projects.

"We are also keen for landowners to become part owners of the projects if they wish," he said. "As a consequence, we can offer an extremely good return for having a wind turbine on their land."

When the 850kW Burray turbine started producing power in February, it became



the first community-owned, grid-connected wind generator in Scotland.

Founder director Albert Spence brought together a team of experts to kick start the project.

His fellow ORE directors are Mr Gauld, who has almost 20 years' experience in wind energy and is the site manager and responsible for future planning; Bryan Rendall, who specialises in the commissioning, operation and maintenance of wind

turbines; civil engineer Micky Austin; building contractor Ian Heddle, who was responsible for roads and foundations; and financial adviser Alastair Macleod.

The skills and knowledge they brought to the project enabled it to be designed, financed, constructed and connected to the grid without the need to bring in specialists from outside Orkney.

"The Burray turbine has been working extremely efficiently

since February," said Mr Gauld. "The next stage of the project is to establish direct benefits for the people of South Ronaldsay and Burray.

"The project itself has allowed us to develop a model well suited to Orkney's requirements which we feel can be replicated elsewhere in the county.

"The Burray concept means that the minimum number of machines could bring the maximum benefits for the people of the islands."

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Congratulations to ORE on the successful startup of the Burray turbine

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We're pleased to have been appointed by Orkney Renewable Energy Ltd to carry out all electrical design, supply, installation & commissioning works for Scotland's first community owned commercial scale wind turbine at Northfield, including 11 kV cabling, transformer and switchgear.

BJRE also operate and maintain the V52 turbine on behalf of Vestas Celtic Wind Technology under contract to Orkney Renewable Energy Ltd.

Projects include wind farms up to 160 MW, substations and transmission systems up to 220 kV and offshore wind turbines to 3.6 MW

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