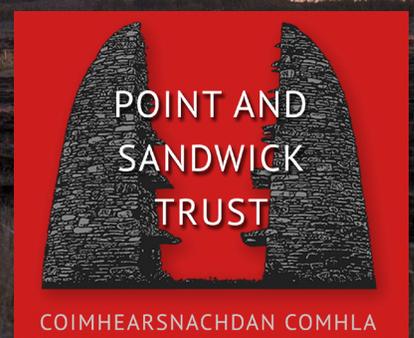




Point & Sandwick Trust

Power purchase partnership optimises windfarm profits to support local community initiatives.



Requirement

Point and Sandwick Trust is a charitable organisation that promotes and funds community projects on the Isle of Lewis and the wider Western Isles.

The Trust operates the UK's biggest community windfarm, Beinn Ghrideag, the profits of which are invested directly into the community for the express benefit of local people.

When the windfarm was in the planning stages, the Trust needed to find an energy company to purchase all of the renewable electricity produced by its three turbines.

Solution

The Trust chose a power purchase agreement (PPA) with ENGIE, partly because of the company's strong reputation as a reliable partner in the power purchasing arena, but also because of its commitment to supporting the Trust's mission of promoting the social, educational, cultural and environmental wellbeing of the community.

At the planning stage, the contract with ENGIE gave the project's funders the assurances they needed about the windfarm's long-term viability and the return on investment they could expect.



Working with ENGIE

Under the power purchase agreement, ENGIE buys all of the electricity generated by the Beinn Ghrideag windfarm, which can amount to 30GWh per year.

By paying market-linked prices, the contract gives Point and Sandwick Trust the assurance that it is always earning current market rates for every unit of electricity it produces.

The windfarm became operational in 2015 and since then ENGIE has become a valuable partner for the Trust.

It provides advice on trends in the electricity market, on the operation of the contract and on regulatory matters, as well as helping to optimise revenues from the windfarm.

“ENGIE have been an excellent partner in the Beinn Ghrideag community windfarm. We talk regularly with our ENGIE contacts and they are hugely supportive, and interested in the project and in its wider impact in the Western Isles. As a community enterprise, it makes all the difference for us to have their market knowledge and straight-talking approach and we are very grateful for it.”

**Calum Macdonald, Project Developer,
Point and Sandwick Trust**



ENGIE's presence within the Trust

ENGIE regularly attends Trust board meetings and recommends schemes to help increase the windfarm's profits. The proposed initiatives include working with the local Distribution Network Operator (DNO) to channel windfarm output to the local grid, rather than the national network, to reduce charges and minimise electricity losses.

ENGIE's expertise helps the Trust to operate the windfarm in the most commercially viable manner, which ultimately enables it to support more community projects.



Positive impact from funding

The initiatives funded by the windfarm to date range from one-off donations through to long-term investments and annual grants which benefit not only the local area but have positive impact across the Western Isles.

The Trust recently donated £20,000 to the local college, part of the University of the Highlands and Islands, to fund a new innovation centre for hi-tech testing and research. They also provide annual grants for a range of initiatives, from respite care services to croft woodland creation and the building of a 40km coastal path on the island, supporting local schools and sports clubs, arts and entertainment and friendship groups to combat social isolation.

One of the key funding commitments, which will remain active throughout the lifetime of the wind farm project is the annual provision of £55,000 funding for Bethesda, the only hospice on the island. The Trust is also funding research into the viability of operating hydrogen-powered ferries between the remote islands and working with ENGIE to identify practical solutions for hydrogen distribution and storage.

The profit from the windfarm is making a huge difference to the lives of people in this remote community, and the support and expertise of ENGIE is helping the Trust to maximise those benefits.



Photos by Sandie Maciver

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