OWNERSHIP OF RENEWABLE ENERGY SOURCES TO GAIN PUBLIC SUPPORT

WHAT IS THE PROBLEM ?

Energy supply in its current form is limited, therefore renewable sources of energy are required to ensure continued supply into the future. However there is often a lack of drive and knowledge to initiate projects that can generate energy.

By incorporating issues and methods of encouraging public ownership of schemes, opposition to the development of renewable energy schemes could be turned around when benefits are highlighted. In Denmark where a long history of public involvement and shared ownership of renewable energy schemes exists, widespread public support for potential renewable energy schemes is strong as benefits are clearly illustrated.

Figure 5.3 Energy supply from solar panels and wind turbines for street lighting in car park and photovoltaic panels on a doctors surgery

There is a need to encourage the uptake of renewable energy sources particularly to the public. Urban developers need to be aware that community ownership, consultation and support is extremely important if renewable energy sources are to be successful incorporated into projects. This Europe wide issue will become increasingly urgent as the need for alternative sources of energy increases. Case studies and tools to improve and help with consultation methods will be extremely valuable for developers and communities who wish to develop energy sources.

GEOGRAPHICAL AND TIM E SCALE IMPACTS

Ownership of renewable energy systems can occur at the individual building, neighbourhood (community ownership) or larger scale.

Ownership is generally initiated at the inception of project idea stage by the public However an organisation could have the inception of a project idea which could then be transferred to the public, if the concept is appropriate for the community and the benefits can be seen. Ownership should be agreed on by the design stage to enable the community to be involved in positioning, construction, maintenance and removal phases.

Stage of project related to key problem	⟷

Please mark arrow/s for time period when tool can be used	inception of project idea	Design	Design assessment	Construction	operation	demolition

Scale of project related to key problem	Component	Building	Neighbourhood	City	Region
	X	X	X	X	X

CONFLICTING PROBLEMS

A major problem associated with the ownership of renewable energy sources is finding available funds to finance the development of community owned renewables when there are other community programmes/requirements such as schools, hospitals that are required.

A further problem is the availability of expertise/individual driver to motivate the development of a project which can be very time consuming, taking place over a number of years.

CASE STUDIE(S) LINKED TO THIS ISSUE

There are three PETUS case studies relevant to this key problem –

- Graz Municipal Energy Strategy, Austria;
- Awel Aman Tawe Community Energy Project, UK;
- North Hoyle Offshore Wind farm, UK.

WHAT WILL IMPROVE SUSTAINABILITY?

The provision of information in an understandable form and the inclusion of public participation from the beginning of a project could encourage development especially if the benefits are presented clearly. For example if some of the profits made from energy produced are provided to the community by the developer for local schemes.

Renewable energy alternatives are an innovative concept, where guidance and experiences of other projects provide useful information especially at a community level. Policy is required to provide guidance on the processes/steps involved in such projects, together with clear and simple to follow methods used for assessing impacts. Monitoring data from all stages of projects would provide confidence to similar projects.

Government accepted information and support for community schemes for the production of energy from renewable energy sources, could increase the number of self-sufficient communities especially by providing information about where energy comes from, how much is consumed and what the financial and environmental costs are.

In summary, the following would assist in gaining public support for renewable energy:

- wider public awareness of the need for alternative energy supplies,
- tools to help developers of renewable energy sources with public participation and consultation,
- publicly available and easy to understand information about different renewable energy sources available to a community for own use and development,
- national policy and financial incentives are needed to encourage communities to investigate, develop and produce community owned energy.

ANY OTHER INFORMATION

Energy References

European Environment Agency (2003) *Europe's environment: the third assessment report number 10* Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference, EEA, Kiev, Ukraine

European Union (2000) Green Paper of 29 November 2000 "Towards a European strategy for the security of energy supply" [COM(2000) 769 - Not published in the Official Journal].

European Union (2002) Directive 2002/91/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16th December 2002 on the energy performance of buildings.