

Report To: Environment and Regeneration Committee Date: 5 March 2015

**Report By: Corporate Director - Environment,
Regeneration and Resources**

**Report No: E&R/15/03/07
SJ**

**Contact Officer: Head of Regeneration and
Planning**

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Subject: Renewable Opportunities

1.0 PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide the Committee with details on renewable opportunities in Inverclyde following a remit from the Council in December 2014.

2.0 SUMMARY

- 2.1 The Scottish Government's 2020 Routemap for Renewable Energy in Scotland, published in 2011, established a target for the equivalent of 100% of Scotland's electricity demand to be supplied from renewable sources by 2020.
- 2.2 The six types of renewable energy are solar, wind, biomass, hydro power, geothermal and biofuels. Each of these renewable energy sources provides an alternative to traditional energy generation and can be reproduced, reducing our footprint on the environment.
- 2.3 Since its introduction, this target has presented both opportunities and challenges for local authorities. In land use planning terms consideration is given to the impacts of siting the equipment required to generate the electricity whilst from an economic development perspective, investment and job opportunities exist for both from host sites; and from manufacturing and maintenance operations. Inverclyde is identified as a potential distributed manufacturing and operational maintenance location in the National Renewables Infrastructure Plan.
- 2.4 Scottish Planning Policy requires Development Plans to provide a Spatial Framework identifying areas where wind farms will not be acceptable, where there will be significant protection and where there is potential for development – subject to meeting the relevant policy criteria.
- 2.5 Land use policy in Inverclyde was regulated through the 2006 Local Plan and is now regulated through the adopted 2014 Local Development Plan. Inverclyde demonstrates a positive approach to renewable energy applications with an approval rate of approximately 70%, above the national average. Each application is considered under its own merits and early engagement with planning officers is encouraged. Applications have been approved for projects consisting solar, wind, biomass and hydro power.
- 2.6 As well as adopting a positive approach to renewable projects from a planning perspective, in 2009 colleagues in Riverside Inverclyde established the Inverclyde Renewables Alliance Group (IRAG) with the objective "to best place the West of Scotland to maximise marine energy potential". IRAG was comprised of private and public sector, local and national organisations and companies.

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 That Committee note the content of the report.
- 3.2 That Committee note that a further report on supplementary planning guidance in respect of renewables will be submitted to the April Committee.
- 3.3 That Committee note the ongoing work of Riverside Inverclyde regarding renewables.
- 3.4 That Committee note that a further report on Hydro Power schemes will be presented to the next Policy and Resources Committee.

**Aubrey Fawcett, Corporate Director
Environment, Regeneration and Resources**

4.0 BACKGROUND

- 4.1 The Scottish Government's 2020 Routemap for Renewable Energy in Scotland, published in 2011, established a target for the equivalent of 100% of Scotland's electricity demand to be supplied from renewable sources by 2020.
- 4.2 The six types of renewable energy are solar, wind, biomass, hydro power, geothermal and biofuels. Each of these renewable energy sources provides an alternative to traditional energy generation and can be reproduced, reducing our footprint on the environment.
- 4.3 Land use policy in Scotland is established through the National Planning Framework 3 along with Scottish Planning Policy 2. Regionally, policy is set by the Strategic Development Plan and at a local level policy was set by the 2006 Local Plan and more recently, is set by the 2014 Local Development Plan.
- 4.4 The approved Glasgow and the Clyde Valley Strategic Development Plan (SDP) outlines Broad Areas of Search for biomass wood fuel production and wind energy for the City region's Local Development Plans (LDP) to take forward and refine through their policies (refer to SSM9), having regard for the protection of existing areas of sensitivity, including environmental resources.
- 4.5 Scottish Planning Policy requires Development Plans to provide a Spatial Framework identifying areas where wind farms will not be acceptable, where there will be significant protection and where there is potential for development – subject to meeting the relevant policy criteria. The scale of development that will be acceptable should also be identified. To assist in this process, Inverclyde, in association with the local authorities in the GCVSDPA, commissioned a study to assess the landscape capacity for all sizes of wind energy developments.
- 4.6 Policy INF1 of the Local Development Plan states that the Council will support development required for the generation of energy from renewable sources, unless any economic, environmental and social benefits of the proposal are outweighed by significant adverse effects upon:
 - (a) natural heritage designations (international and national designations should not be compromised);
 - (b) the landscape and wider environment;
 - (c) neighbouring settlements;
 - (d) tourism, recreation and conservation matters;
 - (e) the built heritage;
 - (f) biodiversity and the water environment;
 - (g) air quality;
 - (h) road safety and service infrastructure; and
 - (i) the cumulative effect of such proposals.
- 4.7 Whilst the Council has adopted supplementary guidance on renewable energy, in line with the Reporter's findings on the Local Development Plan, officers are currently undertaking a consultative exercise with the public which will result in the provision of additional information to assist in submitting proposals on Renewable Energy. This will be reported to the April 2015 Committee.
- 4.8 Planning applications for solar, wind, hydro and biomass have been received by the Council in recent years. The approval rate for renewable energy applications is approximately 70%, this approval rate exceeds the Scottish average.
- 4.9 Whilst the landscape study commissioned by the GCVSDPA on wind energy did not identify any suitable locations for large scale wind farms, pre-application engagement with planners is always encouraged for smaller scale developments.

- 4.10 In 2009, colleagues in Riverside Inverclyde (ri) set up the Inverclyde Renewables Alliance Group (IRAG) with the objective “to best place the West of Scotland to maximise marine energy potential”. IRAG was comprised of private and public sector, local and national organisations and companies.
- 4.11 ri’s focus from October 2009 was therefore on positioning Inverclyde to the market and providing visibility of the Inverclyde proposition, supported by IRAG. A parallel focus was on developing IRAG members by inviting influential sector leaders to address the group, giving access to sector insights, facilitating the potential for business growth and diversification and adding to Inverclyde’s credibility and profile.
- 4.12 During this period Riverside Inverclyde embarked on a series of promotional initiatives to bring Inverclyde’s offer to the market, including promotional material, attending exhibitions and conferences, and a series of specific meetings with influencers. Although ri recognises that there has been a reduction in the opportunities for companies in the renewable sector, ri continues to market the Inchgreen site (City Deal) project. In this regard ri has had direct contact with SDI and SE to jointly promote the site.

5.0 PROPOSALS

- 5.1 It is proposed that the exercise on supplementary guidance continue in respect of renewable energy and be presented to Committee in April 2015.
- 5.2 That applicants be encouraged to engage with planners in respect of renewable energy projects at an early stage.
- 5.3 That colleagues in Riverside Inverclyde continue to position Inverclyde favourably to attract inward investment in the renewables, manufacturing and operation and maintenance sectors.
- 5.4 The Council has entered into a high level partnership with Scottish Water in order to bring forward proposals for further hydro development within Inverclyde. Additionally the Council will investigate any options with other interested parties to develop individual schemes.
- 5.5 The Council and Scottish Water have jointly committed to partnership development of a hydro scheme at Hole Burn, on Greenock Cut and a hydrology study and energy generation capability study are ongoing.
- 5.6 A further report on the water flow study and the timescales for development will be brought to the Policy and Resources Committee.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 **Legal:** none.
- 6.2 **Finance:** none.

Financial implications – one-off costs

Cost Centre	Budget Heading	Budget Year	Proposed Spend this Report	Virement From	Other Comments
n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

Financial implications – annually recurring costs/(savings)

Cost Centre	Budget Heading	Budget Year	Proposed Spend this Report	Virement From	Other Comments
n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

6.3 **Personnel:** none.

6.4 **Equalities and diversity:** none.

6.5 **Repopulation:** there are no direct implications.

7.0 CONSULTATION

7.1 **Chief Financial Officer:** no requirement to comment.

7.2 **Head of Legal and Property Services:** commented on the report.

7.3 **Head of Organisational Development, Human Resources and Communications:** no requirement to comment.