

# Community Renewable Energy Project

## Frequently Asked Questions

### **Why do we think this project is worthwhile?**

Primarily because it uses renewable energy sources to generate electricity. We are facing a climate emergency and this project will assist in mitigating the effects of climate change. It will contribute to local and national carbon reduction targets. Through time the project should also provide an income for our community.

### **What experience do the consultant advisors to the project have in community energy projects?**

GreenCat Renewables were selected by NDT after a competitive tendering process overseen by the Rural Community Energy Fund. They have extensive experience in all forms of renewable energy projects including community energy projects. <https://www.greencatrenewables.co.uk/communities/>

### **Were other renewable energy schemes considered?**

The feasibility study carried out by GreenCat Renewables looked at a range of potential sources of renewable energy production. Using the River Tweed as a possible source of hydro-electric power was investigated, but for technical and access reasons, this was not considered feasible. It was recommended and decided that the most suitable system would be a hybrid of solar panels and a wind turbine.

### **Why was the location chosen for the project?**

Lying within Norham Civil Parish, this site is facing south west for the solar panels and in a good position for the wind turbine to catch the prevailing wind, whilst satisfying the need to be at a distance from any dwellings and other sensitive sites. The proximity to Norham sub-station is also a benefit.

### **Do we need a wind turbine?**

As discussed above the hybrid system of solar and wind maximises the use of the grid connection and therefore viability of the project.

### **Could we have a smaller turbine?**

The turbine as proposed, is the smallest available commercially. Multiple smaller turbines would be required to produce the same output, increasing the capital cost and are not practically available options.

### **Should we use good agricultural land for the project?**

The site meets the criteria mentioned before. There is very little poor agricultural land in our parish and none that would meet the criteria. The land to be used could still be used, largely, for grazing and/ or for wild flowers and biodiversity. Farmers are currently being encouraged and incentivised to put some land aside for non-productive purposes. The site area proposed is approximately 1.5% of the total area of Norham Parish.

### **What financial benefits will come from the project and how would the financial benefits be used by the community?**

Any benefits would be for the community and it is for the community to decide the most appropriate use for these benefits at that time. There are a range of options including, for example, a

contribution to household electricity bills, infrastructure improvements, and benefits to community organisations.

#### **What happens when the scheme has had its life?**

Decommissioning costs are built into the running costs of the project. The supporting structure for the solar panels can be removed easily and the concrete base for the wind turbine can be readily removed or buried. The land would then be available to be returned to agricultural use if wished.

#### **Is the project viable?**

Viability is fundamental to the project. There has been significant volatility in interest rates and electricity prices during the investigative period of this project which have meant that financial projections have had to be continuously updated. Locally, the grid is under pressure which creates uncertainties as to periods of restricted access for electricity export. Currently NDT advisors are in discussion with Scottish Power Energy Networks (SPEN) as to the costs and specifications of the grid connection.

The uncertainties arising will need to be considered as the project progresses. Grid capacity is a highly dynamic situation, and the political situation at any given time will affect the project. The effect on the cost of the project of these variables, and so also the benefits, cannot be predicted reliably at this stage. Needless to say, if the project turns out not to be viable then it simply cannot proceed.

#### **I have heard that the turbine can be damaging to birds and bats?**

It is true that wind turbines can result in the deaths of some birds and bats. As a farmland site, with no trees in the immediate surrounding area, and with a single turbine, the risk is extremely low. There are methods of mitigating this in the operation and control of the turbine. The deaths, however, are very small relative to deaths from other factors including collisions with cars, buildings and in particular the activity of domestic cats. We should also consider that the activities of fossil fuel production and the effects of climate change threaten the existence of whole species of bird and mammal life.

#### **Will the existing Public Rights of Way be affected?**

No Public Rights of Way will be restricted by the project.

#### **What consultation has NDT undertaken with the community?**

NDT held 4 public meetings to publicise the project and has received feedback from the community.

Date	Location	Session type
23/02/22	Norham Village Hall	Presentation & Q & A
12/04/23	Norham Village Hall	Drop in
7/06/23	Norham Village Hall	Presentation and discussion
3/04/24	Norham Village Hall	Drop in and questionnaire

#### **Do the directors of NDT have any financial interest in the project?**

NDT Ltd is a not- for profit company limited by guarantee. The directors of NDT provide their time and experience entirely voluntarily. They do not have any financial interest(s) in any of the service providers to the project.

**Why can't we be told how much the project will generate for the community and who will benefit?**

Uncertainties which have been outlined above indicate that it would be unwise to make specific statements as to benefits to the community at this stage. The Directors also consider it would be inappropriate at this stage to determine how and to whom those benefits would be distributed and that it is a matter for the community to debate and decide in the future.

Renewable projects undertaken by commercial interests would expect to deliver £5000 per MW per annum as community benefit. In this case a 'benchmark' figure of approx. £50,000 p.a. to the community would be indicated. It is the Trust's aim to keep control of the project on behalf of the community for the benefit of the community which would result in further commercial benefits achieved by the project being available to the benefit of the community. It is the case that in the early years that repayment of debt will be a priority but it is the goal of NDT to achieve distributions as early as funding constraints allow.

It must be emphasised that due to the previously discussed variables these figures are illustrative at this stage.

**When will final decisions be made?**

The immediate process is to gain further information on the grid connection specification and costs. That is underway and will become apparent over the next 5-6 months. Were a planning application to be submitted, possibly in the next few months, it will be lodged with the Northumberland County Council and there will follow a period of consultation with comments from a range of official bodies and institutions as well as the opportunity for individuals to offer their comments. Were the planning application to be granted and the grid conditions were to be acceptable and commercially viable, the next steps would be to seek funding for the capital cost of the project.

Funders would require to be convinced that the project is financially viable otherwise it will fail at that stage.

**Will there be any further public meetings or questionnaire**

Further public consultation will continue as before

Examples of community energy projects can be found:

[Case studies · Local Energy Scotland](#)  
[Case studies | Community Energy England](#)