

Notes of Collaborative Conversation after AGM 5th June 2018

Trews Weir Hydro

Patrick asked: How long before Trews Weir will be operational?

Hertha: We have licences to arrange by March 2019, planning, leases, pre-accreditation of feed-in tariffs (FIT) to be in place by then. The aim is that it will be constructed by March 2021, we have 2 years from pre-accreditation.

Andy asked: What type of funding will it use and how much will be required?

Gill: It will be a mix of share offer and loans with a special purpose vehicle being created.

Hertha: £800k will be required, which is double the previous share offer. People could cash in Solar PV shares and reinvest in hydro. A Special Purpose Vehicle would be created.

Simon asked: Will there be any tax incentives for the project?

Gill: No. When FiT is involved the incentives aren't available. We need the FIT to be financially viable.

Paul asked: What percent interest are you considering?

Hertha: Currently 5% and that works. It's early days, but that is what we are hoping for. We'd like to match what we are offering for our solar project.

Jeff asked: What's the project payback time?

Gill/Peter: The installation will operate for 40 years plus. The project achieves payback in 20 years.

Question: What happens when the river is in flood?

Hertha: The screw would stop - because it would be submerged.

Gill: There will be a Community event in July or September open to all of Exeter to answer questions. Our hydro consultant Phil Maher will be present.

Andy asked: What's the deal with the fish pass?

Hertha: Fish are already provided for as a new fish pass was constructed at Trews Weir a few years ago. We may add some extras as part of the project, like a fish counter, which anglers are interested in. The screw is meant to be fish friendly. The turbine will be sited in the redundant gate that's no longer needed since flood defences have a new out flow .

Question: Could you fit storage at the hydro site?

Hertha/Alastair: It's not in the current model but as storage feasibility becomes easier to model it's definitely something we would look at.

Healthy Homes for Wellbeing

Question: Do you just give advice or are you providing real solutions?

Tara: The types of people we are helping, many of which are in vulnerable situations, either low income, poor health or mental health issues. Tara explained how we assess their needs to determine best solutions which range from general bills and tariff advice through to helping find solutions for hard-to-heat homes. On home visits we install energy saving measures too, like LEDS, draft excluders, radiator reflectors

Gill: Our Home Energy Advisers are under utilised at present, and we are working hard to find ways to promote the service and build new referral pathways. [Gill explained a little about referral pathways]. Despite efforts on our side we get very few referrals from council housing teams and community connectors. We are in regular contact with all our referrers, and have done frontline worker training to all relevant council teams, but it is not yet translating into high levels of referrals.

Hertha asked: Where do you cover?

Gill: Exeter, Mid Devon, East Devon, Teignbridge and Torbay.

Events

There will be 2 events later this year, one for energy advice and social prescribing, the other for the Trews Weir project. Further details as and when arranged.

Tidal

Jeff Ridley asked: There was a tidal energy talk previously from someone from Plymouth - can we build partnerships with other groups doing tidal?

ECOE: If funded we can take part in other projects but admin costs are high.

Comment from audience: The danger is priorities become driven by funding.

Andy asked: I know someone who works for the European Interreg funding agency and have discussed tidal power funding with them. This is the second time that they have worked for Interreg and in between they worked for a regional group based in Falmouth that worked together to secure funding for local companies. One point that I want to make is that collaboration is a useful approach to securing funding. The other is that Interreg may have funding available for tidal power.

Alastair: Interreg does like SMEs, but with Brexit proceeding I feel it's unlikely that we would be able to get funding that way.

Paul: Tidal is not ideal for Exeter.

Jeff asked: How about the Devon Community Network (DCN)? There could be potential at Starcross as it has the biggest tidal range in the Exe estuary. Exmouth probably has too much leisure activity

Gill: Yes, there is a problem with so many leisure activities in the Exe Estuary. She'll mention it to the DCN. It's just the sort of large project that could be right for DCN, although there's too much risk for ECOE alone

Storage

Jeff asked: When consumers need to buy electric at spot prices, and therefore storage becomes an option, how can ECOE be ahead of the game?

Alastair: 'Peak' time is being smoothed out, so pricing models are changing, and there's lots of uncertainty and volatility. Battery prices in theory will come down and there's lots of debate around storage methods. In 2 years' time when Trews Weir is done, we would know more and would of course add storage in if it's viable and beneficial to do so.

Thanks

Simon James: After reading the annual report, I felt the ECOE team should be very proud of all that has been and is being achieved. The results are a true reflection of the hard work and dedication by everyone involved.