

Success of Community Renewables Fund – les jeux sont fait

To access public money is always a bit of a lottery but the success of the Community and Renewable Energy Scheme (CARES) means that it is closing to new applications following unprecedented demand, it was announced today.

The CARES scheme, delivered by Community Energy Scotland, has already helped over 300 community groups invest in renewable technologies like solar panels, biomass and wind turbines since opening in May 2009, with a further 300 expected to benefit by April next year.

Energy Minister Jim Mather said:

“The Community and Renewable Energy grant scheme has been extremely successful in helping communities generate their own green energy, cut carbon and stimulate the market for renewable technologies.

“Since CARES was launched last year the demand from community groups wishing to invest in renewables funding has been unprecedented with over 600 groups set to benefit from £13.5 million of funding. The scheme, part of this Government’s move to treble the budget for community renewables and microgeneration has boosted our growing low carbon industries. As a result, the scheme is now facing financial pressures.

“We remain committed to driving local ownership of energy and in doing so, securing wider community benefits. Building on this success of CARES, we have commissioned a feasibility study to look into early stage financing for renewables projects which will be carried out by the Scottish Agricultural College in conjunction with Community Energy

Scotland. That will report back in September and we will look at future options for funding as part of the budget process this autumn.”

The Scottish Government established CARES in April 2009, with a total budget of £13.5 million over financial years 2009/10 and 2010/11, with the aim of maximising community benefits from renewables and increasing local ownership of energy. This reflected a manifesto commitment to treble funding for community and microgeneration. CARES has two elements: a network of development officers, located across Scotland, offering free advice, and grant support of up to £150,000 for technical studies and installation of renewable equipment.

This announcement only impacts on new applications. Subject to normal checks on eligibility, all projects currently going through the system and supported by development officers will be funded.