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## ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

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Church of Scotland makes stand against coal power station

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20 Aug 2010

The Church of [Scotland](#) claims a new [coal](#)-fired power station planned in Ayrshire could [seriously jeopardise attempts to combat climate change](#), despite its claims to use the latest clean-coal technology.

The church has joined a coalition of environment groups opposing plans to construct the 1852MW station at [Hunterston on the west coast of Scotland](#), which has seen about 14,000 [objections submitted](#) from across the UK and beyond.

The [Ayrshire Power](#) plan, which would replace the nearby nuclear power station if it goes ahead, is the only active proposal for a coal-fuelled plant in Britain since the UK and Scottish governments legislated to make deep cuts in CO2 emissions of at least 34% by 2020.

The firm promises to fit carbon-capture and storage (CCS) technology from the outset to capture about 22% of its emissions, as a pilot project. It promises to capture 90% of its emissions within five years of the technique being proven, and the plan has so far been supported by Alex Salmond, the first minister, and the Scottish TUC.

His Scottish National party government opposes nuclear power, and is blocking any attempts to build new plant in Scotland. While agreeing to a 42% cut in CO2 emissions by 2020, it supports the coal industry, pressing for "clean coal" technology, and has authorised a [sharp increase in opencast coal mining](#).

Public consultation on the Hunterston plans closed today, and in a rare move one of the church's most influential committees, the church and society council, has written formally to oppose the plan with the approval of the church's elected head, moderator the Right Rev John Christie.

It has joined forces with the Scottish Wildlife Trust, Christian Aid, the World Development Movement, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, WWF and Friends of the Earth Scotland in objecting.

The church council's convenor, Rev Ian Galloway, said: "The [carbon emissions](#) from this proposal could wipe out all the savings achieved by eco-congregations and other community groups across Scotland and jeopardise any attempt to inspire community engagement in [climate change](#)."

Ayrshire Power, which is wholly owned by the Manchester-based airports and property company Peel Holdings after the Danish [energy](#) giant [Dong pulled out last year](#), said the protesters were actually undermining efforts to cut carbon emissions by opposing the scheme.

Muir Miller, the project director, said: "The irony is that these groups are opposing, however sincerely, the very technology that can do most to tackle global warming. Since coal will continue to be the dominant global fossil fuel for power generation for the medium to long term, we must find ways to generate low-carbon electricity from it."

ScottishPower's existing power station, Longannet, is on a short list of power stations around the UK to test retro-fitted CCS (carbon capture and storage) technology on part of its emissions. Both the UK and Scottish governments have pledged to force any new coal-fired station to fit the technology from the start of operations.

The development came as climate camp protesters gathered near the Royal Bank of Scotland headquarters in Edinburgh for a weekend of action. Climate activists are threatening a day of disruption and direct action against the bank and Edinburgh festival events sponsored by RBS on Monday.

Tomorrow, activists are expected to join a protest march against plans by Scottish Coal to dig 2m tonnes of coal from a 154-hectare open cast site at Airfield Farm in Midlothian, east of Edinburgh and close to former deep mines once operated by British Coal.

*Source: The Guardian*

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## New eco website to grow green business

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17 Aug 2010

An eco website to help people start environmentally-friendly businesses has been launched in Ireland.

The Low Carbon Entrepreneurs website is the brainchild of the Challenge Europe Project - a British Council climate change programme.

Andrea Carroll, one of the five founders of the new website launched last Friday (August 13), said: "This is an information portal that helps entrepreneurs explore the commercial possibilities of low

carbon technologies.

"It provides an overview of the sector and provides links to more detailed information on funding and networking opportunities.

"Our goal is for the website to be a 'one-stop-shop' of information for would-be and existing entrepreneurs."

The website provides information for entrepreneurs starting new businesses in the emerging green economy.

Its launch was marked with a networking event in The Greenhouse, Dublin, which featured speakers from the British Council, Scandinavian and Irish business.

Along with Ms Carroll, founder of Arc Sustainability, the founders include chartered engineer Joe Borza, Laura Duggan, and environmental executive for a Belfast-based company, Mark Bennett, green business officer at Dublin City Council and Tracy Godfrey, Green Agenda programme manager for Vodafone Ireland.

Ms Carroll says the website will make information more accessible to people about the opportunities in the green economy.

"We wanted to create a website that was specifically for people who were looking to develop businesses focused on green issues and low-carbon technologies," said Ms Carroll.

She added: "Also, if someone has a business and they want to create another sideline to it that has a green element, the website is appropriate for them as well."

The Challenge Europe Project is a three-year programme started by the British Council to encourage enterprising people from across Europe to create a project that makes a real difference to climate change.

To view the new website go to the following link: [www.lowcarbonentrepreneurs.com](http://www.lowcarbonentrepreneurs.com)

*Source: Edie*

# POWER PLANTS & CLEAN ENERGY

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British Gas launches solar panels scheme with '£1k a year profit' claim

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25 Aug 2010

More than 12 million homeowners would be in line to save up to £1,000 a year, should they install solar panels, says British Gas.

The utility firm is the latest in a host of companies offering to install electricity-generating systems on homes to take advantage of a government scheme that pays the owners of solar panels for the 'renewable' electricity they generate.

The sudden allure of [solar power](#) is less to do with planet-saving and more to do with companies or individuals banking the lucrative [feed-in-tariffs](#) (Fits) for every unit of electricity generated – currently 41.3p per KWh, irrespective of whether you consume the power at the time or not.

British Gas says the Fits payments can be worth £1,000 per annum, though with export tariffs (for power not used) added, [they can be worth even more](#). They are guaranteed by the government for 25 years, are payable via the utility company, and will rise in line with inflation.

British Gas has entered the market with the launch of two schemes. If you opt for its "rent-a-roof" scheme, it will install solar panels on your roof for free and you will benefit from the electricity you generate during the day. The installation is free but you will not own the panels and so British Gas will pocket the Fits cash for the length of the scheme – 25 years. The rent-a-roof deal is limited to the first 1,500 British Gas customers who apply.

Alternatively, you can install your own solar panels and British Gas will offer you a two-year interest-free loan, supplied by Hitachi Capital, with which to borrow the upfront costs. You will receive the feed-in-tariffs as well as benefit from the generation of cheaper power. BG says the upfront cost generally ranges from £10,000 to £15,000 depending on the size of the roof.

With the latter deal, consumers should be aware that they will need to ensure they keep up with repayments, which could be as much as £625 per month on a £15,000 across 24 months.

Cathy Debenham, who runs [YouGen.co.uk](#), a website devoted to helping people thinking of installing this, and other similar technology says the rent a roof scheme, "does not sound any different from anyone else's scheme. The savings they make will depend on their electricity usage and their supplier."

In short, different suppliers treat exported [energy](#) differently so some customers will find they save more than others.

Debenham adds that the Fits scheme is "great, but only if you can afford the capital. There is no government-supported scheme for those without the money."

Jon Kimber, the managing director of British Gas New Energy, said: "Solar power will revolutionise the way British homes generate and use energy. Customers [will] reap the benefits of this technology to cut their electricity bills, reduce their carbon footprint and earn a yearly income."

A recent [Guardian Money investigation](#) found that it makes financial sense to install the panels yourself. Current remortgaging rates are no more than around 5%-6%, and often lower, but even if you end up paying 12% interest you will still make a huge profit. Most calculations suggest buyers will be able to pay off the costs after nine to 10 years, depending on how much they pay for finance. Most households will make a risk-free profit of £20,000 over the 25 years while enjoying lower electricity bills.

If you are buying the panels upfront, check they come with a warranty. And if you do opt for free solar panels, make sure you get them from a reputable company as you will likely enter into a long-term contract.

Debenham says that, while savings are clearly the incentive with the Fits solar schemes, if consumers install the panels themselves, they will begin to see the green benefits. "It changes forever your relationship with electricity and energy because you can see the impact it has on your bills and how much electricity different things consume. It can teach you to conserve energy."

*Source: The Guardian*

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## Offshore wind farms could power economy and create 50,000 jobs

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25 Aug 2010

Almost 50,000 people could be employed in jobs related to wind farms off the Scottish coast within a decade, but it could be as low as 1600 without proper investment, a new report claims.

The first comprehensive study of the potential impact of offshore wind on the Scottish economy examines the prospects for offshore sites, largely earmarked for the east coast in two blocks – one off Fife in the firths of Forth and Tay, the other in the Moray Firth.

The report – published yesterday and commissioned by the industry body Scottish Renewables and Scottish Enterprise – offers a range of scenarios for Scottish offshore wind industry development up to 2020. The most positive, which assumes proper investment in the grid, ports and training, sees this new industry creating as many as 48,000 jobs – 28,000 directly and a further 20,000 through related industries – by 2020. This would contribute £7.1 billion of investment to the economy.

However, in the most pessimistic scenario, there is a lack of investment and benefits are limited – the offshore wind industry generates a cumulative value of £224 million in Scotland over the decade, with indirect and induced effects worth about £200m. This would create 900 full-time equivalent jobs directly in the industry in 2020 with indirect and induced effects accounting for 730 jobs.

The Scottish Offshore Wind: Creating an Industry report says Scotland already has major strengths in the supply chain to this new industry, in areas such as cable laying and subsea structures, with a number of Scottish-based businesses already generating significant revenues from offshore wind development.

Jenny Hogan, director of policy at Scottish Renewables, said: "Renewable energy is Scotland's biggest economic opportunity in a generation, and the development of offshore wind will drive much of the expansion of the sector.

"We already have significant employment in the sector through companies such as BiFab (Burntisland) and Subocean (Aberdeen), but this report confirms that the industry could become one of the country's major employers over the next decade.

"However, it is also clear that none of this can be taken for granted. Other parts of the UK and ports all over Europe are all fighting tooth and nail to secure investment and the economic benefits that offshore manufacturing and associated activity will bring. With construction of the next generation of offshore wind expected to begin in the middle of the decade, we do not have time to waste."

She said that just as Scotland's oil and gas industry had turned into a major global player, so could offshore wind.

Adrian Gillespie, senior director of energy and low-carbon technologies at Scottish Enterprise, said: "This report sets out the scale of the opportunity that the rapidly evolving offshore wind sector offers Scotland's economy.

"It also highlights how all of these resources we have and the combined efforts across industry, government and academia need to be aligned in such a way that the most ambitious scenario is achieved."

Mr Gillespie added: "We have already seen substantial new employment in Scotland as a result of offshore wind in areas such as design and project management, subsea services and offshore wind substructures and plant.

"This report shows us that this is just the beginning however, and that if we can build on this momentum we will have a very substantial new industry firmly grounded in Scotland."

*Source: The Herald*

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## Offshore wind farms reject 'seal-killer' allegations

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24 Aug 2010

Offshore wind farm developers implicated in a mysterious spate of seal deaths have vigorously denied allegations their construction vessels could be to blame.

Scientists investigating the killings believe the deaths were caused by a vessel with a ducted propeller that has caused "corkscrew-style" mutilations on the seals' bodies.

Callan Duck, a senior research scientist at St Andrews University Seal Mammal Research Unit, told BusinessGreen.com that vessels operating between Statoil's Sheringham Shoal wind farm and Wells Harbour in North Norfolk might be the cause.

"Wind farms per se are not to blame," he said. "It's possible that some of the vessels involved in wind farm construction might be responsible, but we do not know that for sure."

At least 33 mutilated seals have been found washed ashore recently in Norfolk, St Andrews Bay and the Firth of Forth in Scotland. Similar unsolved seal deaths have also been reported off the Atlantic coast of Canada in the past decade.

However, engineering firm Scira, Sheringham Shoal's main contractor, denied the allegations.

"Both Scira and the police have checked all equipment on vessels operating at the site and found no connection," said Scira in a statement yesterday.

Meanwhile, harbour operator Wells Harbour Commissioners (WHC) issued a statement arguing that the boats accused of causing the injuries could not have been responsible.

"These seals began to be found in December 2009 but the fast supply boats using Wells to service the wind farm did not start operating from Wells until April 2010," the company said. "It is therefore entirely wrong to assume that the works to create the new Outer Harbour in Wells are coincident with these seal deaths."

WHC went on to explain that the vessel carrying out dredging work for the wind farm is operating seven miles away from the seal colony at Blakeney where the animals seem to have been killed.

Finally, the harbour said it had been operating boats with ducted propellers "for many years with no such problems reported".

A spokesman for Scottish Environment secretary Richard Lochhead, who commissioned the investigation into the seal deaths, refused to comment on specific theories of death until the studies are concluded.

"I'm hopeful the team at St Andrews can get to the root cause of these disturbing seal mortalities," said Lochhead in a statement. "A number of possible explanations are being considered and I look forward to the investigation being successfully concluded."

Wind farm operators are increasingly frustrated that the industry has been repeatedly linked to incidents of wildlife mortalities with turbines having been accused of killing birds and bats as well as seals.

Advocates of the industry maintain there is little evidence to suggest wind farms are responsible for high [wildlife](#) death rates, while insiders are also quick to point out that traffic and household pets pose a far greater threat to British wildlife.

*Source: The Guardian*

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## Residents of North Uist lose green energy funding

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23 Aug 2010

Residents of Sollas in North Uist must return to the drawing board after being told that their renewable energy project cannot be taken forward for funding.

The community has fallen foul of Scottish Government spending cuts which will see many other small-scale renewable energy proposals across the Outer Hebrides also left high and dry.

The Community and Renewable Energy Scheme (Cares), administered by Community Energy Scotland (CES), was due to run until 2011, but has been abruptly closed to new applicants.

A statement by Finance Minister Jim Mather said it is facing financial pressures.

This effectively ends two years of work by the committee of Taigh Sgìre Sollas, who were in the process of applying for a 90% grant towards a renewable energy scheme and insulation for the former Dunskeellar School, now run by residents as a community centre.

The news is a blow to the 120-strong community which has worked to raise the funds to restore the old school.

Funds from Cares would have contributed about half of the £100,000 restoration. In addition, residents have already raised £16,000 to reslate the roof, and have used volunteer local skills and labour to rewire the building and improve the floor.

Mr Mathers said the cuts only impact on new applications, with "all projects currently going through the system and supported by development officers to be funded".

However, despite working with a CES officer for a year, Sollas residents have been told their project cannot be funded.

Retired architect Douglas Hutton, of Malaglate, who drew up the restoration plans for the school, branded Mr Mather's statement "disingenuous." He said: "The fact that we have been told there is no funding for our project suggests that projects like ours are not 'going through the system'.

"Maybe he has been poorly briefed, but he has a responsibility to be accurate.

*Source: The Press and Journal*

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### Nick Clegg Announces plan for "new green deal"

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20 Aug 2010

Deputy prime minister Nick Clegg has announced plans a new Green Deal which he says is part of the coalition's 'quiet green revolution' to create jobs and protect the environment.

Mr Clegg, speaking in South Tyneside yesterday (August 19), said the Green Deal will combine growth in the economy with a greener and more efficient way of using energy.

He wants to reduce energy demand and carbon emissions while making homes warmer, saving consumers money and stimulating green recovery in jobs.

He said: "I want to focus on plans for a Green Deal to combine growth in the economy with a greener and more efficient way of using energy.

"Green Deal Finance will allow householders to make their homes more energy efficient, saving on their bills, without the need for them to provide up-front finance.

"Homes account for a quarter of all emissions in the UK, and this is no longer a problem we can ignore. With some of the oldest housing stock in Europe we also face a huge challenge."

According to Mr Clegg up to 14 million homes could benefit from the Green Deal through insulation.

Payments will be collected through energy bills and the most energy inefficient homes could save, on average, around £550 a year.

The Government will begin legislating for these proposals in the Autumn and they are expected to take effect in 2012.

RenewableUK, one of the country's leading renewable energy trade association welcomed the plan as an 'important step' in maximising employment and business benefits in the renewable energy sector.

RenewableUK small systems manager, Indre Vaizgelaite, said: "It is encouraging to see Government taking action on renewables and the environment.

As an industry we look forward to next phase of the Green Deal which is expected to focus on the microgeneration sector.

"The UK small wind sector currently has more than 14,000 small systems installed but the Green Deal will be a great catalyst for further growth which in conjunction with more energy-efficient homes, will be vital in driving down our carbon emissions."

RenewableUK's 2010 small systems market report revealed that the UK market stands at £17.2 million and the figure for UK manufacturing export revenue from this sector is £7.59 million.

*Source: Edie*

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### Vestas shares plummet following huge second-quarter losses

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18 Aug 2010

[Vestas](#), the world's biggest wind turbine manufacturer, has spread a dark cloud over the [renewable energy](#) sector by turning a sizeable second-quarter profit last year into a €120m (£99m) loss over the past three months.

Shares in the company plunged more than 20% on the Copenhagen stock market as analysts took fright, despite claims by Vestas that the financial turnaround was just a delayed reaction to the credit crunch, which had led to delayed orders.

Vestas, which [closed down its Isle of Wight manufacturing facility last summer](#), said it was going to chop 600 more jobs – half of them short-term contracts – in [Denmark](#), its home base.

The unexpectedly poor financial results come amid recent warnings from the American Wind Energy Association (AWEA) that the previously buoyant US wind market was in precipitous decline and desperately needed positive new policies from the White House.

The global renewable energy sector has become increasingly fearful that governments are now more concerned about cutting public spending than keeping the green energy revolution on track.

Ditlev Engel, the Vestas chief executive, said it would still proceed with expansion plans that would create 3,000 new positions in north America and elsewhere, saying the future for Vestas was still bright.

"The deficit in the first half of this year is not unexpected as the impact of the credit crunch has meant delayed deliveries to Spain, Germany and the US have not fed into the latest results. But we have now seen a major turnaround in orders and the €270m loss in the first half will be more than made up for by a €500m to €600m profit in the second half," he explained.

But Engel admitted the bounce-back in new orders was still not as strong as originally expected, so full-year earnings before interest and taxes (ebit) margin of 10%-11% had been downgraded to 5%-6% and revenues of €7bn had been downgraded to €6bn.

However, Vestas has kept its long-term goals of producing ebit margins of 15% by 2015 and points out orders reached 3,031MW in the second quarter of this year, its largest in a three-month period.

Since the half year, the company has clocked up major new contracts, including its biggest single order for 570MW in America, a deal for the largest wind-power scheme in Australia, and an increasing amount of business in China.

But analysts were still shocked by a 17% fall in second-quarter revenues, and nervousness spread into the wider renewable energy sector with shares in wind turbine gearbox maker Hansen Transmissions losing 7% of their value in early trading.

Håkon Levy, a clean tech analyst at Fondsfinans in Stockholm who has a "buy" rating on the Vestas stock, described the results as very weak, adding: "The guidance reduction was far worse than expected."

The AWEA has recently warned the US government that the number of new projects being sanctioned has slumped this year under the impact of competition from lower gas prices and a lack of new subsidies. Wind projects worldwide continue to need public sector support to make them commercial, although the gap with traditional power sources is narrowing.

But the association is also concerned that Barack Obama's inability to push through a new energy and climate change bill is also sapping confidence among investors.

The recent lack of progress in wider global climate change talks in Bonn has led to a lowering of expectations that the next summit at Cancun in Mexico can make progress after the failures in Copenhagen last December. Recent opinion polls suggest the public in many countries have become more, rather than less, sceptical about global warming in recent months.

*Source: The Guardian*

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## Islay first island in world to be tidal powered

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18 Aug 2010

It is a move that means Scotland is on course to have the first island in the world to be powered by tidal energy – and secures the future of a crisis-hit firm.

Norwegian energy giant Hammerfest Strom, which is part-owned by ScottishPower Renewables (SPR), announced yesterday that it is to develop its first HS1000 tidal turbine in Scottish waters.

The energy harnessed by the 1MW machine from the ebb and flow of the tide in the Sound of Islay, which can move at up to three metres per second, is enough to power 1000 homes.

It is hoped that by 2013, 10 of the turbines will be placed near Islay to make it the first island in the world to be powered by tidal energy. A planning application is currently under consideration.

By 2017, almost 100 of the turbines could be fitted in Ness of Duncansby in the Pentland Firth, a move that would help Scotland meet its potential to generate six times the electricity consumed by its domestic market to sell into Europe.

The Sound of Islay plan would provide electricity for the island's 3500 inhabitants 23 hours a day and the surplus electricity would be sold.

ScottishPower Renewables has already signed a deal with drinks giant Diageo to supply electricity to eight distilleries on Islay where Laphroaig and Lagavulin whiskies are produced.

Keith Andersen, SPR managing director, said: "We are committed to leading the development of new renewable energy technologies in the UK, and we already have major projects planned utilising wave and tidal power.

**"We are delighted that Hammerfest Strom will be constructing the first HS1000 turbine in Scotland" *Stein Andersen, Hammerfest***

"Following the deployment of the initial HS1000 machine in Orkney, SPR is planning to install 10 of the machines in the Sound of Islay, which will be the first tidal power array of its kind in the world. Following on from this, we are also planning to install up to 95 tidal turbines in the Pentland Firth."

The Pentland Firth project will be entered in the Scottish Government's £10 million Saltire prize which rewards marine energy innovation.

First Minister Alex Salmond announced the development yesterday in Oslo. He said: "With unrivalled energy resources off our coast and a range of wave, tidal and offshore wind development already under way, Scotland leads the way in generating power offshore. We have an estimated 25% of Europe's offshore wind and tidal resource and 10% of its wave potential, a renewable energy resource which is unrivalled in Europe."

Hammerfest has awarded BiFab (Burntisland Fabrications), which is based in Methil, Fife, a £2m contract to build the sub-sea components of the structure.

The deal means that more than 40 jobs have been saved at the BiFab yard in Arnish, Stornoway.

John Robertson, managing director of BiFab, who last week shed 20 workers from Arnish because of a lack of business, said: "We have been trying for a long time to put some work up in Arnish and here we have this great product to build there.

"The fact that we can now develop this prototype there means that we can secure the future of Arnish."

Mr Robertson hopes to re-employ the workers forced out of work as new contracts come on stream.

If the firm is awarded the tender to build the 10 turbines at Islay, Mr Robertson anticipates that more than 100 people could be employed at the Arnish yard by 2014.

Hammerfest said Scotland was a natural home for the development of the turbine, given its tidal flows and emerging renewables culture.

Stein Andersen, of Hammerfest, said: "The kettle is boiling there (in Scotland) and we want to be part of that.

"All of our competitors are there and there has been a fairly strong build-up in renewables. We want to be the leaders in the field, and to achieve that we have to be challenged by our rivals."

Mr Andersen, of SPR, added: "We are delighted that Hammerfest Strom has announced that it will be constructing the first HS1000 turbine in Scotland."

*Source: The Guardian*

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## Scottish scientists develop whisky biofuel

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17 Aug 2010

It gives a whole new meaning to the phrase "one for the road". Whisky, the spirit that powers the Scottish economy, is being used to develop a new biofuel which could be available at petrol pumps in a few years.

Using samples from the Glenkinchie Distillery in East Lothian, [researchers at Edinburgh Napier University](#) have developed a method of producing biofuel from two main by-products of the whisky distilling process – "pot ale", the liquid from the copper stills, and "draff", the spent grains.

Copious quantities of both [waste](#) products are produced by the £4bn whisky industry each year, and the scientists say there is real potential for the biofuel, to be available at local garage forecourts alongside traditional fuels. It can be used in conventional cars without adapting their engines. The team also said it could be used to fuel planes and as the basis for chemicals such as acetone, an important solvent.

The new method developed by the team produces [butanol, which gives 30% more power output than the traditional biofuel ethanol](#). It is based on a 100-year-old process that was originally developed to produce butanol and acetone by fermenting sugar. The team has adapted this to use whiskey by-products as a starting point and has filed for a patent to cover the new method. It plans to create a spin-out company to commercialise the invention.

Professor Martin Tangney, who directed the project said that using waste products was more environmentally sustainable than growing crops specifically to generate biofuel. He added that it could contribute significantly to targets set by the EU for [biofuels](#) to account for 10% of total fuel sales by 2020.

"What people need to do is stop thinking 'either or'; people need to stop thinking like for like substitution for oil. That's not going to happen. Different things will be needed in different countries. Electric cars will play some role in the market, taking cars off the road could be one of the most important things we ever do."

Dr Richard Dixon, of WWF Scotland, welcomed the project. "The production of some biofuels can cause massive environmental damage to forests and wildlife," he said. "So whisky powered-cars could help Scotland avoid having to use those forest-trashing biofuels."

*Source: The Guardian*

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## Scotland bids to host world's first floating windfarm

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17 Aug 2010

The Scottish government yesterday revealed it is in talks with Norwegian energy giant Statoil about hosting the world's first floating windfarm at two potential sites off the Scottish coast.

Statoil is currently testing a prototype version of its Hywind floating turbine 10km offshore at Karmøy in Norway and, after a successful wave of tests, is now assessing potential sites for a full-scale floating windfarm.

The company is planning to deploy between three and five floating wind turbines to demonstrate the commercial viability of the technology and senior executives at the firm met yesterday with Scottish First Minister Alex Salmond to discuss the viability of two prospective sites – one off the coast of Lewis and one off Aberdeenshire.

The talks are at a fairly advanced stage with Scottish Development International and Marine [Scotland](#) having already worked with Statoil to undertake feasibility studies at the proposed sites.

Speaking following the meeting in Norway, Salmond said that the talks had been "very positive", adding that the project had the potential to revolutionise the offshore energy industry.

"The Hywind II windfarm project would see a Scotland-Norway collaboration push the boundaries of deepwater offshore wind beyond the 100m mark and open up vast areas of the world's oceans to the development of wind energy for the first time," he said.

A spokesman for Statoil told BusinessGreen.com that the latest talks had gone well, although he added that the company was also looking at potential demonstration sites in Norway and the US. "We are considering different countries and hope to be able to make a final decision in 2011," he said.

Offshore wind turbine foundations typically account for a sizable chunk of deployment costs and supporters of floating wind turbines are hopeful that the emergence of floating structures will allow developers to slash the overall cost of windfarms.

"The tests we have undertaken look good so far," said the Statoil spokesman. "Now we are looking to improve the efficiency and reduce the costs through the demonstration project."

*Source: The Guardian*

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*Source: The Guardian*

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## Demand forces closure of Scottish renewables fund

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17 Aug 2010

Scotland's community and renewable energy scheme (CARES) is closing to new applications due to unprecedented demand, it was announced today.

The CARES scheme, delivered by Community Energy Scotland, has helped more than 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: "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."

The Scottish Government has commissioned a feasibility study into early stage financing for renewables projects which will be carried out by the Scottish Agricultural College with Community Energy Scotland.

This will report back in September and with future funding options to be considered in the autumn.

CARES funds a network of development officers across Scotland who offer free advice as well as grant support of up to £150,000 for technical studies and installation of renewable equipment.

*Source: Planning Resource*

# PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT CONTROL

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## Bovis warns on planning changes

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23 Aug 2010

Bovis Homes has warned that the government's 'localist' planning agenda could slow the delivery of new homes.

The house builder warned that government planning policy changes raised the risk of future delays gaining planning consent as local authorities adjusted to the new focus on localism.

The company's interim trading results released today warn that: "There is now a risk that certain areas of the country will see limited positive decisions for planning consent for new homes until new planning legislation is released in 2011.

"Many of the Group's long term interests in strategic land remain strong contenders for planning consent, although the timing of such consents may be delayed by virtue of the current planning system changes."

Bovis spent £107m adding 1,874 plots to its 13,113 consented land bank since the start of the year. It estimates future revenue from these sites will more than treble the return.

Around 80% of the new land is in the south east where the housing market recovery is strongest.

*Source: Planning Resource*

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## Frome regeneration gets go-ahead

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20 Aug 2010

Mendip District Council has given outline planning approval for a regeneration scheme to transform the town centre of Frome in Somerset.

The plans, for Saxonvale and Garsdale, include 300 to 350 homes, 5,000 sq m of retail space, offices, car parks and changes to roads.

The scheme will regenerate a largely derelict site currently occupied by and factory mills and an old abattoir.

The plans were submitted by developer Terramond and include new buildings and renovating existing buildings.

Frome planning committee chairman Damon Hooton said: "At the moment it is an old factory site, and this project is a complete regeneration of the area.

"This is going to be the biggest regeneration scheme in Frome probably for the next 20 years - that's how significant it is."

*Source: Planning Resource*

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Call for review of planning procedure

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19 Aug 2010

The Scottish Government has been accused of “tinkering” with the way planning applications for windfarms are decided.

Mid Scotland and Fife Tory MSP Murdo Fraser called for a review of the planning process for windfarms yesterday because of the way several developments in Perthshire were, or are, being handled.

Mr Fraser asked the Scottish Government what changes had been introduced to speed up the decision-making process for onshore windfarm applications since the SNP came to power in May 2007.

Climate Change Minister Stewart Stevenson answered that the “pre-application process for developers” had been revised.

This “fresh approach” re-emphasised the need to concentrate on “early engagement” and efforts to help developers identify key environmental issues, he said.

Mr Fraser said: “It is extremely disappointing that the SNP government has done so little in the last three years since they came to power to improve the decision-making process for onshore windfarm applications.

“After the decisions to allow Drumderg, Griffin and Calliacher windfarms to go ahead, it is clear that Scotland’s planning system for windfarm applications and the decision-making process is in a complete mess.

“It is clear that real changes need to be made to the decision-making process for windfarm developments, instead of just tinkering at the edges, like the SNP have been doing.”

Mr Fraser asked his question after a government spokesman told the Press and Journal in June, regarding the 27-turbine Calliacher windfarm on 1,500 acres south of Aberfeldy: “We are working to deliver an increasingly effective and efficient planning system and have introduced simplified policies and procedures to speed up the decision-making process.”

In his parliamentary answer, Mr Stevenson referred to a government circular published in July 2009 covering procedures to improve the efficiency and speed by which applications are determined.

He said: “Most of the changes to the planning system came into force on August 3, 2009 and, for the most part, apply only to planning applications or appeals made on or after that date.”

*Source: The Press and Journal*

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## Construction outlook worsens as spending cuts bite

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18 Aug 2010

The outlook for the construction industry worsened in the second quarter of this year amid as fears over the scale of public spending cuts and ongoing uncertainty about prospects for the economy.

The latest Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors construction market survey, published today found that despite some encouraging signs at the beginning of the year, seven per cent more surveyors reported a fall than rise in total construction workloads.

This is in comparison to the previous quarter where five per cent more surveyors reported rising, rather than falling workloads.

Most sectors of the construction industry experienced a drop in workloads, although private commercial and residential were both broadly unchanged. Public housing and other public works were the worst affected sectors, with the net balances sliding from three to -26 and 0 to -33 respectively.

The large fall in the public works sector is attributed to the suspension of the Building Schools for the Future programme (BSF).

Across the UK, the only regions which escaped falling workloads were the South East and London, however even here workloads only stabilised, rather than increased.

Elsewhere, workloads fell, with Northern Ireland recording the worst reading; 75 per cent more surveyors reported falling than rising workloads there, compared with a -59 per cent reading in the first three months of the year.

*Source: Planning Resource*

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## South West heralds rise in green jobs

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18 Aug 2010

A survey launched today in the south west of England indicates that 'green energy' jobs could be the key to leading the West Country out of the economic downturn.

The survey of more than 200 businesses shows that over the past two year the number of people employed in the renewable energy sector increased by 78 per cent despite the recession.

The survey, commissioned by Regen SW, found that there were now 5,100 people working directly in renewable energy.

It also found that the value of the industry to the south west economy had risen by 17 per cent from £215 million to £251 million.

"This survey demonstrates the huge opportunity for renewable energy to be at the heart of our future prosperity. The 5,000 plus people already employed should be just the start" said Regen SW's chief executive Merlin Hyman.

"We will see massive investment in the next decade in meeting our climate change targets. That investment could go to overseas energy and technology companies – or we could equip local companies to win the business and generate thousands of skilled long-term jobs."

*Source: Planning Resource*

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## South West councils scrap plans for homes

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17 Aug 2010

Plans for 59,750 homes in the South West have been scrapped by councils in response to the government's abolition of house building targets.

The Chartered Institute of Housing in the South West (CIH SW), which revealed the figures, described the move as a "real set back".

The South West's population of five million is expected to rise by 24 per cent by 2031.

CIH SW said it is currently working to produce a pact offering support to local authorities in the region in return for their commitment to housing.

*Source: Planning Resource*