

Renewable energy has been a Kilfinan Community Forest objective from the early days of consultation to the present time. This newsletter is an update of our progress to date with solar, wind and hydro renewable sources of energy.



Wind

KCFC has invested £53,000 in the investigation of wind energy, using a loan under the Scottish Government Community and Renewable Energy Scheme (CARES) to install a mast within the forest to collect meteorological data. Analysis of the data in late 2013 suggested insufficient wind to make the scheme viable and the government has now written off this loan. However, there remains a question as to whether the 2012-13 period was typical, and an application has been made for a further period of data collection and analysis. In the meantime, Argyll & Bute Council has extended planning permission for the meteorological mast for 5 years. KCFC will need significant investment to take forward development of wind power and there will be full community consultation prior to taking wind energy forward.



The Met Mast

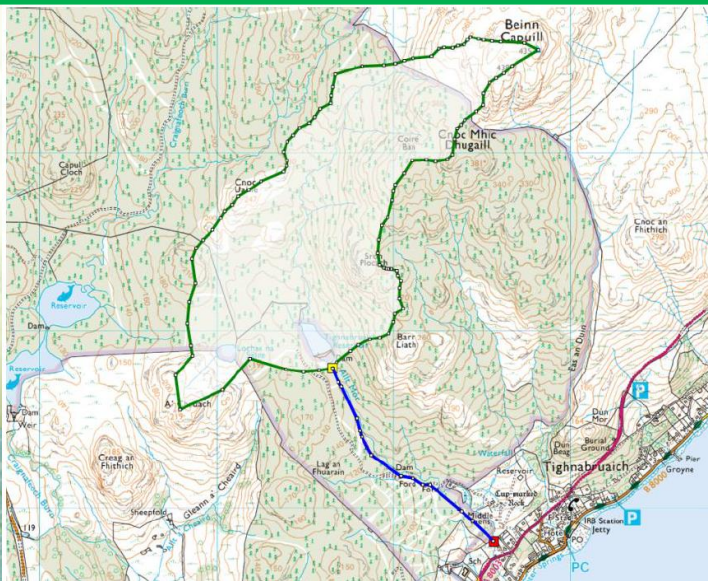
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Solar

Despite Argyll's wet and stormy weather, local experience indicates that solar panels can be a cost effective source of renewable energy. We considered installing solar panels on the roof of the new sawmill shed but this would require strengthening of the roof and a building redesign. It may be possible in the future to site panels on the forest's south-facing land. Solar remains a long term plan because of the cost of installation and the relatively low returns compared with wind and hydro.

Hydro

The Allt Mor burn runs through the forest, and a comprehensive feasibility study was carried out in 2012 to determine the viability of a hydro system. Capacity was estimated at 66 kilowatts, which would generate an annual gross income of approx. £52,000 calculated at the current government feed-in tariff. This is guaranteed for 25 years and index linked. We have achieved the required environmental and planning permissions and received preliminary accreditation from Ofgem. SEPA has issued the abstraction license, and the export agreement has been granted by the District Network Operator (SSE). The planning application to Argyll & Bute Council has been granted subject to a satisfactory archaeological survey of the pipeline route; the survey is planned to take place in May/June 2014. The construction costs are estimated at £160,000 and a loan will be required. The hydro pipe will be buried so there will be minimal visual impact and a noise impact survey has confirmed that it will be virtually silent in use. Currently we are in negotiation with a potential contractor to have the scheme installed and generating electricity by the end of 2014. Approximately 50% of the income will be required to service the debt with the balance being used to invest in forest infrastructure and secure the jobs currently provided. In the meantime, we are grateful to the volunteers who are working to clear the pipeline route of fallen trees and rhododendron.



Hydro pipeline route (blue line)