



RENEWABLES TO RENEW BRITISH COMMUNITIES? £115 MILLION POTENTIAL TO BOOST LOCAL LIFE

Renewable energy has the power to revitalise neighbourhoods across Britain, with community buildings such as village halls, churches and pubs sitting on a potential £115 million pot of energy cash.

Research released today by British Gas Green Streets and the institute for public policy research (ippr) calculates that these community buildings could raise millions of pounds by installing microgeneration technologies like solar panels. With many of these buildings at the heart of communities struggling to raise funds and threatened with closure, this energy windfall has the potential to boost their stretched finances and aid their survival.

The ippr report, *Green Streets: Exploring the Potential of Community Energy Projects* and British Gas data reveals some startling statistics about this green energy potential:

Solar panels on village halls and community centres could generate around £18 million a year through the Feed-In Tariff, a government scheme which pays households and organisations for generating their own electricity.

Pubs could earn £15million per year, while schools could earn £41million, enough to pay for over 2000 newly qualified teachers.

The money earned through the Feed-In Tariff is index linked and guaranteed for 25 years.

Community buildings also have the potential to save both cash and carbon dioxide by fully embracing renewable technology:

Schools, pubs, religious buildings, village and community halls and swimming pools across the UK could collectively provide the equivalent generating capacity as a medium sized standard gas power station (around 310MW).

This would also save around 145,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide a year – the equivalent of taking around 57,000 cars off the road.

Generating their own energy could also collectively save these community buildings over £17 million a year on their energy bills.

With many community facilities struggling to make ends meet, installing renewable technologies is both a way of becoming more sustainable and generating new income.

Beccles Lido is an outdoor community pool in Suffolk that was under threat of closure but has secured its future by embracing energy generating and saving technologies. It is one of 14 projects across the country taking part in British Gas Green Streets – a unique social experiment that is generating important lessons about the role that

community energy projects can play in generating and saving energy and galvanising communities.

The pool has just reopened after closing over 18 months ago due to disrepair and high running costs. A group of local supporters, the Friends of Beccles Open Air Pool, have been fundraising locally, raising over £40,000 in 2009 alone. But in order to ensure a sustainable future for the pool, it needs to be cheaper to run.

British Gas expertise and funding has enabled Beccles to replace its ageing boilers with new energy efficient models. The remainder of the scheme's £140,000 Green Streets grant has funded the installation of pool liner insulation and will fund solar panels for the pool's boiler house, pending planning approval. If approved, the panels would give the pool an annual windfall of around £3,000 via the Feed-in Tariff.

As part of the wider Green Streets community project at Beccles, British Gas will also be installing smart meters, insulation, central heating upgrades and solar panels for local residents.

Gearoid Lane, Managing Director of Communities and New Energy, British Gas said:

"The findings of this research are great news for British communities. As well as helping to keep local facilities open and serving their community, installing microgeneration on community buildings can have a great impact on helping to familiarise people with renewable technologies and make them more accessible.

At British Gas we know that one of the biggest barriers to the uptake of renewable technologies is concern about the upfront investment required to buy kit, such as solar panels. That's why we're running the Green Streets challenge and it's also why we're investing £15m to give free solar panels to schools, the community hub that stands to benefit most from microgeneration."

Matthew Lockwood, Associate Director and Head of Climate Change, ippr said:

'Micro-renewable technologies offer a fantastic opportunity for communities to show local commitment to global change. They can also help the Coalition Government kill two policy birds with one stone, since it wants both to be the 'greenest government ever' and to create a 'Big Society' where community organisations and volunteers play a much more important role in our lives.

"But this will not happen without the right enabling framework, and the Coalition Government should maintain the Feed-In Tariff for renewable electricity and commit to introducing similar support for renewable heat through the Renewable Heat Incentive in April 2011. It is then for communities, working in partnership with support providers and delivery companies, to grab a piece of the opportunity that is on offer.'

-ENDS-

Notes to editors:

The data in the release is based upon research from the British Gas Green Streets programme. Using these real life examples in the Green Streets programme (i.e. the potential energy savings and FIT payments of the community buildings involved in the 14 projects) we extrapolated the findings to take account of the number of each

type of facility in the UK and their average size. For more information on Green Streets please go to www.greenstreets.co.uk.

The table below shows the estimated number of each community building in the UK:

| Building Type | UK total | Source |
|---------------------------|-----------------|--|
| Pubs | 56,875 | <i>BBPA website 2010</i> |
| Village Halls | 6,270 | <i>Number of Village Halls identified by Joseph Rountree Foundation Research - "The Role of Community Buildings", 1997</i> |
| Community Centres | 4,702 | <i>Number of Community Centres identified by Joseph Rountree Foundation Research - "The Role of Community Buildings", 1997</i> |
| Churches | 16,247 | <i>Church Census 2005 - the number of Church of England Churches in UK</i> |
| Other Religious Buildings | 1,845 | <i>Mosque numbers from MCB. Others are derived from calculations based on UK population statistics</i> |
| Schools | 29,831 | <i>DCSF, Scotland.gov.uk, Wales.gov.uk</i> |
| Pools | 1,762 | <i>Based on the ASA facilities strategy document - "Community Pools" only (i.e. those provided by Local Authorities)</i> |

The table below reveals the savings for the community hubs examined:

| Building Type | Total kW | Total GWh | Tonnes CO2 per year | £ Savings per year | FIT income per year | Total financial benefit per year |
|---------------------------|-----------------|------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------|---|
| Pubs | 42,656 | 36 | 19,688 | £2,356,758 | £14,974,477 | £17,331,234 |
| Village Halls | 34,234 | 29 | 15,801 | £1,891,440 | £10,504,764 | £12,396,204 |
| Community Centres | 25,673 | 22 | 11,849 | £1,418,429 | £7,877,736 | £9,296,164 |
| Churches | 54,021 | 46 | 24,934 | £2,984,675 | £16,576,428 | £19,561,104 |
| Other Religious Buildings | 33,099 | 28 | 15,277 | £1,828,736 | £8,834,203 | £10,662,939 |
| Schools | 113,358 | 96 | 52,320 | £6,263,018 | £34,783,841 | £41,046,859 |
| Pools | 10,546 | 9 | 4,867 | £582,643 | £3,235,908 | £3,818,551 |
| Total | 313,587 | 267 | 144,736 | £17,325,699 | £96,787,357 | £114,113,056 |

2. PlayDay 2010 Research on adults and loss of community spirit sourced from National Children's Bureau / ICM, August 2010.

3. An explanation of FIT and how it works:

The Feed-In Tariff is a Government incentive scheme encouraging people to install renewable energy systems such as solar panels.

The scheme promises to reward investors in solar panels in three ways:

- a) Firstly, you are paid the "generation tariff", which is a direct payment from your energy supplier for each unit of electricity you generate. This starts at 41.3p per kilowatt/hour (kWh), and is fixed by statute to increase in line with the retail price index for the next 25 years.
- b) The second saving is under the "export tariff", which is a payment made for energy you export back into the electricity grid rather than use on site. This pays an extra 3p per kWh.
- c) Finally, you also make savings on your electricity bills as you no longer need to buy all your electricity from an external supplier.

4. Further details on the British Gas £15million investment in British schools can be found here - <http://www.centrica.com/index.asp?pageid=39&newsid=2029>

About British Gas Green Streets

The publication of the IPPR report *Green Streets: Exploring the potential of community energy projects* tracks the progress of British Gas' Green Streets - a unique social experiment that is generating important lessons about the role community energy projects can play in generating and saving energy and energising communities. British Gas has awarded 12 projects across the country a share of £2 million and technical support to run projects that save energy, generate energy and engage their wider communities to follow their example. The most successful community will be awarded a prize of £100,000.

About the institute for public policy research

The Institute for Public Policy Research (ippr) is the UK's leading progressive think tank, producing cutting-edge research and innovative policy ideas for a just, democratic and sustainable world. Since 1988, we have been at the forefront of progressive debate and policymaking in the UK. Through our independent research and analysis we define new agendas for change and provide practical solutions to challenges across the full range of public policy issues, which includes a strong focus on climate change and energy policy.

With offices in both London and Newcastle, we ensure our outlook is as broad-based as possible, while our Global Change programme extends our partnerships and influence beyond the UK, giving us a truly world-class reputation for high quality research.

Media contacts

Elliott Grady in the British Gas press office on 0845 072 8002 or by emailing Elliott.Grady@centrica.com

Claire Scott, Richard Appleton or Gwilym Hookway-Morgan at Blue Rubicon on 0207 260 2700 or by emailing greenstreets@bluerubicon.com