

Energy event opens up opportunities for green business

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A LOCAL consultancy director has attended a smart energy event as part of an effort to revitalise links between marine energy developments in the Pentland Firth and the south-west.

The aim for Louise Smith, of Caithness Renewables, was also to gain information on electric and hydrogen green transport, energy storage and smart grids.

She travelled to Exeter last week to take part in the event run by Regen SW, a not-for-profit organisation originally set up by the South West Region Development Agency in England.

Its work includes consultancy for renewable heat, offshore renewables and the best use of the electricity grid.

Caithness Renewables is carrying out work in the analysis of tidal turbulence, one of the biggest risks to the potential success of commercial-scale tidal energy. Its work includes finding the precise location of turbulence in a tidal stream, which helps towards the micro-siting of turbines to avoid risk.

Ms Smith was delighted when commercial director of Regen SW Johnny Gowdy picked up a wheelchair and volunteered to wheel her round all day as well as juggling two speaker slots and communicating with business visitors.

The conference attracted an array of speakers including Maxine Frerk of Ofgem, who spoke about how the contribution solar photovoltaics would make to the grid had been severely underestimated, and Michael Rutter, of the Department of Energy and Climate Change,

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Louise Smith,
Caithness Renewables

who talked about the UK's 25 gigawatt (GW) of renewable energy generation.

From the floor, Ms Smith pointed out that 17GW of that was actually in Scotland. She also spoke about how much of the total was achieved through building onshore wind, something which Mr Rutter reiterated was not going to happen in England in line with UK Government policy. Ms Smith emphasised how the south-west could help increase the amount of renewable energy generated in England by its development of offshore renewables.

She pointed out after the event that many references had been made to how constrained the electricity grid is in the south-west, and that it is similar in the north of Scotland.

She said: "To tackle this, looking at the Devon and Cornwall area and parts of Wales, delegates were told about energy storage solutions involving megawatt-size batteries.

"At solar farms, for example, energy generated during sunny days can be stored then sold back to the grid at a higher tariff with typically only 10 to 15 per cent lost to air conditioning and lighting.

"The mark up on electricity price can be large, with one solar farm quoted as earning £160,000 per year from selling back to the grid at a higher rate more than compensating for these losses."

Laura Wilson, business centre manager of Snows Lexus Exeter, brought a GS 300h Executive Edition hybrid electric car for Ms Smith to test drive.

Ms Smith said: "Many people think of electric cars as small tinny boxes on wheels but this car certainly isn't. Designed for business users, the plush company car type design had a top-notch feel to it, fast and smooth, as I drove it up and down the M5.

"I was also taken out in an all-electric BMW i3 and Toyota's hybrid accompanied by another

important thing was making sure the lights continue and we're delighted to have been able to do that."



Johnny Gowdy, commercial director with Regen SW, and Louise Smith, of Caithness Renewables.

delegate from Scotland, Peter Crone from the Isle of Lewis, where an E-Car club operates nine Renault electric cars and one van using power from the Pentland Road Wind Farm."

Ms Smith has been project managing Caithness Voluntary Group's electric vehicle project Alternative Community Transport In Our Neighbourhood.

She said: "I have been worried about the slow response from car companies in Scotland who have failed to organise a test drive for me in Inverness. In Exeter this does not appear to be a problem.

"The excellent event shows how Regen SW has built upon its marine energy experience to become a thriving centre of excellence in the south."

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