'I was fascinated by the renewable energy industry and I wanted to be a part of it'

EILIDH Gunn is relishing the opportunity to play her part in the north of Scotland's rapidly growing renewable energy sector.

She has just completed a hectic first month as one of two new recruits to the Thurso-based consultancy Caithness Renewables Ltd.

Eilidh is committed to helping communities in the north Highlands access suitable micro-renewable energy systems and reduce their electricity bills. Under a new partnership with the leading small turbine manufacturer Evance Wind Turbines, she is visiting homes, farms and businesses to carry out site surveys for a 5kW small wind device manufactured in the UK.

Eilidh, who lives in Dunnet, previously worked for the Highland Council. In 2007 she was selected for a secondment to Highlands and Islands Enterprise, and this brought her first experience in the renewable energy industry when she worked on the Pentland Firth Marine Energy Project – the ground-breaking initiative which resulted in the first commercial seabed leasing round for wave and tidal devices from the Crown Estate.

"For some time I had been hoping that an opportunity would open up for me to return to renewable energy," Eilidh told *Energy North*. "I was fascinated by the power of the renewables industry and the vibrancy of the people who were going to make it work and I wanted to be a part of it."

Eilidh already knew of Caithness Renewables through working with its director, Louise Smith, so when she saw that the consultancy was recruiting she wasted no time in sending in an application.

Eilidh's new job as renewable energy consultant began with a trip to Glasgow for a Scottish Renewables event on the onshore wind and grid industry, allowing her to meet some old business acquaintances and catch up with industry news. "This is an important part of my training and development which initially will be focused on onshore and offshore wind," she explained.

Eilidh is soon to be inducted as a STEM ambassador, becoming part of the educational initiative that encourages young people across the Highlands and Islands to pursue careers in science and engineering.

The Caithness Renewables team – (from left) Jean Mackay, renewables administrator; Eilidh Gunn, renewable energy consultant; Louise Smith, director; and Juvénal Dufaur, marine energy consultant.

Marine engineer Juvénal Dufaur, who joined Caithness Renewables at the same time, is already a STEM ambassador from his time at the Environmental Research Institute in Thurso where he is in the final stages of writing up his PhD looking at tidal effects in the Inner Sound of the Pentland Firth.

As well as using his specialist knowledge in oceanography, Juvénal is working with Louise Smith on offshore wind port logistics commissions.

A recently announced success for Caithness Renewables in this field is the production of a marketing plan for Eyemouth Harbour Trust, located in the Scottish Borders close to the Firth of Forth/Tay offshore wind sites. These include Mainstream Renewable Power site, Neart na Gaoithe, which last month gained planning consent for onshore grid connection works, as well as the Seagreen Wind Energy Firth of Forth scheme and the Repsol/EDPR site at Inch Cape.

This recent commission was undertaken by establishing a new partnership with McGregor Transport and Strategy Solutions (MTSS) Ltd, of Eday, Orkney. Together the two Pentland Firth businesses have identified the need to provide supply-chain support to harbours in close proximity to planned marine energy developments and east coast port facilities looking out over the North Sea to the Round 3 offshore wind sites.

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>
> **Eilidh Gunn**

As well as becoming a STEM ambassador and speaking to young people about how rewarding it is to work in renewable energy, Eilidh is keen to communicate her enthusiasm for renewables to others.

"It's great to get out of the office and meet the people who are looking at their future sustainability and considering the benefits of renewable energy developments," she said.

"I would urge anybody who is concerned about the rising cost of energy to consider a household micro-renewables system. The Evance turbine is a good fit with Caithness Renewables' sustainability ethos in that it is designed and made in the UK and has a track record of working efficiently and reliably in all wind conditions."

Caithness Renewables Ltd was set up in 2010 by local engineer Louise Smith to support the growth of renewable energy in the region and beyond.

Louise said: "Eilidh and Juvénal are great additions to my business, bringing in a combination of complementary skills and experience. With their support, and that of Orkney's MTSS, I am hoping that Scotland's renewable energy industry will come to fully appreciate how much specialist expertise there is in the Highlands and Islands."

Trudy Morris, chief executive of Caithness Chamber of Commerce, welcomed the latest expansion at Caithness Renewables. She said: "Renewables is one of the growth sectors and it is great to see a local business capture the opportunities and create employment. It is a testament to the skills Caithness has to offer."

Eann Sinclair, programme manager for the Caithness and North Sutherland Regeneration Partnership, said: "It is very encouraging to see further growth at Caithness Renewables and particularly good to see further skilled marine energy capacity being added to Louise Smith's team."

The business has already seen one significant expansion, in September 2012, when it set up a new office in Thurso town centre. The hot-desk facility Renewables@No.10 was opened by John Swinney, the Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Employment and Sustainable Growth.

Speaking at the time, Mr Swinney said: "Businesses in Caithness have decades of experience and knowledge in oil, gas and nuclear power and this makes them ideally placed to meet the needs of Scotland's growing renewable energy sector."

Turbine scheme brings energy savings at Stronsay waterworks

THE commissioning of three small wind turbines at an Orkney water treatment works will bring about a huge saving in its energy costs.

The Evance R9000 turbines have been introduced at Scottish Water's facility on Stronsay.

Owing to the grid connection limitation, Evance has installed the R9000 Grid+ system – enabling the maximum energy from each 5kW turbine to be captured and used, while allowing only 3.68kW to be connected to the grid.

This means it complies with the requirements known as G83, applying to the connection of small-scale electrical generators to the public electricity network.

Tim Sammon, director of Evance Wind Turbines, said: "Stronsay has a great natural wind resource so, by installing our Grid+ system, Scottish Water is able to harness this renewable energy for use at the water treatment works. The three turbines will be able to generate around 55MWh of electricity a year, which will mean nearly an 80 per cent reduction in the energy costs of running the works.

"We have a few hundred turbines installed in Orkney. These customers have turned to Evance as the R9000 has proved its reliable and continuous operation in all the wind conditions experienced on the islands."

Eddie Johnstone, project manager with Scottish Water's energy team, said: "We continue to pursue opportunities to deliver best value by developing renewable energy.

"Our Stronsay wind project is another example of just that. It will mean a dramatic reduction in the need for purchasing electricity – so reducing the overall cost of running the works."

As reported in the previous edition of *Energy North*, the installation of 10 Evance R9000 turbines on the Isle of Lewis will help Scottish Water cut the cost of supplying waste-water services to the local community. The turbines will be able to generate around 500kWh of electricity each day to help power a water treatment plant near Stornoway, allowing it to operate more cost-effectively.

The Evance R9000 Grid+ system has been installed at Scottish Power's Stronsay water treatment facility. Photo: Evance Wind Turbines