

Tiree Community Development Trust

A private limited company registered in Scotland, Company No:292902 with charitable status, Scottish Charity Number SC 037018

Tiree Community Development
Trust
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Dear Mr. Ewing and Mr. Lochhead,

28th April 2014

I have been asked to write to you both on behalf of the Tiree Community to highlight issues relating to the local electricity grid network and consequently our community wind turbine project.

Since the beginning of 2011 the Tiree - Coll section of the sub-sea cable which connects us to the mainland, has failed or broken 3 times. This has resulted in Tiree being cut off from the mainland grid network for a total of 8 months during this period alone. Most recently, the cable was damaged and therefor disconnected from 31st December 2013 until 25th April 2014. During the time that we are cut off from the mainland, the local power station has to be powered by diesel generators, with the diesel transported from the mainland via ferry, which has a knock on effect on capacity of our lifeline ferry service as well as other fuels and goods being transported e.g. Diesel, Petrol, Gas and Hay cannot be mixed.

Our main issue however is that during this time our 900kW community wind turbine cannot export electricity to the mainland grid and has to be restricted to a mere 50kW. This clearly has a huge financial impact on our project and after making three insurance claims during this period our insurance policy now has a 90 day excess period. This has cost our community project approximately £150,000 in lost revenue from 1st January - 31st March this year alone. We have been warned by our insurance broker that, due to the level of claims we have made, we are now perilously close to being declared uninsurable with only our current provider willing to offer us terms for now.

The Scottish Government has encouraged fragile rural communities like Tiree to go down the renewable energy route to make us more sustainable which Tiree has achieved, however, this is being compromised by inadequate grid connections and the knock on effect, as outlined above, is very serious for our community.

Fault for this loss of community income does not lie with the Community itself or the Turbine Manufacturers but with the power company, SSE, not maintaining the network adequately. In October 2013 SSE's Statcom (a device which regulates the network, and which the Tiree community was forced to pay £371,554 for, but doesn't own, when our turbine was built) broke down which cost the community another £33,000 in lost revenue.

We feel very strongly that the Scottish Government should be aware of these issues and the energy companies responsible for these failings should pay some form of compensation to the affected communities.

Yours sincerely,

Isabella Mackinnon
Chair, Tiree Community Development Trust

Bruce Kemp
Chair, Tiree Renewable Energy Ltd

