



## **Community Landowner launches Phase 2 of their wind energy development**

Galson Energy Ltd is making good headway with Phase 2 of the wind energy project at Baile an Truseil, which is set to see the delivery and installation of the next two turbines in 2015. A formal loan offer has been received from an ethical bank and the formalities of due diligence work are now set to proceed over the winter months. A turbine contract has been signed with Enercon GmbH and a Community Benefit Company, "Urras Energy Society" has been established to issue Community Shares in the development.

At a recent press event held in Urras Oighreachd Ghabhsain's offices in Galson, former UK energy minister and long-time supporter of land reform, Brian Wilson, urged support for the share issue. He said: "Community land ownership and renewable energy schemes are natural bedfellows and a proven route to creating revenue which can be used for further investments and the benefits it brings."

He went on to say, "It's important that this share offer is about investment and not donations. The community land ownership movement is too important to be sustained either by public sector grants or private philanthropy, though both will remain welcome. This is a commercial proposition with a community interest. There is no contradiction. People who invest in this will get a double benefit - a decent rate of return plus the satisfaction of supporting the principle of community land ownership."

"Wearing my Harris Tweed Hebrides hat, I know Urras Ghabhsainn is looking at the possibility of funding the purchase of looms and training of weavers, as the Horshader Trust has already decided. This is the perfect virtuous circle. Ownership of the land allows money to be generated from natural resources. The money is then used to perpetuate the industry and skills that are indigenous to the place and create work which allows people to stay here. What could be better?"

Founding Director of Urras Energy Society, Carola Bell, commented "This Share Offer is a commercial proposition which will result in community benefit. Over £200k has been raised to date, which is an excellent achievement, but we have not reached half way to our minimum yet. We want to avoid using other loans and if other top up finance is required it means more returns leak out to external corporate lenders through loan charges/repayments instead of to community investors and community returns."

For any enquiries on the Share offer, email [info@urrasenergy.org.uk](mailto:info@urrasenergy.org.uk) or the Share Offer brochure can be downloaded from the Urras Energy website [www.urrasenergy.org.uk](http://www.urrasenergy.org.uk) or Telephone: 01851850393.

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*Accompanying photo: Pictured, Brian Wilson; Agnes Rennie, Carola Bell, Norman Thomson (Urras Energy Society Founding Members)*

**Supporting Information:**

Galson Estate was subject to a community buy-out that was completed in January 2007. The wind turbine investment was part of the proposals for the buy-out which received 85% support in a 2005 community ballot.

The wind turbines will be built, owned and operated by Galson Energy as a subsidiary of Urras Energy. Urras Oighreachd Ghabhsainn as community landowner will receive net profits to invest locally.

The second phase of two turbines on Galson Estate will cost £2.8m+VAT. A commercial bank loan will be required to supplement the funds raised through the community share offer. As one turbine has been installed, the main permissions, including grid agreements, are in place. For the next phase, just the specific construction details for the two turbines have to be approved by the local authority.

Urras Energy hopes to start construction in spring 2015 and complete turbine commissioning before the autumn.