

Green Energy network thanks local communities for their feedback

Green GEN Cymru, part of the Bute Energy group, is thanking local communities for having their say and providing feedback in an initial round of consultation on the proposed Green GEN Vyrnwy Frankton renewable energy network.

The consultation, which ran from 6 September to 18 October, saw six well attended consultation events and two online webinars where people commented on the route identified for the overhead line through Powys and Shropshire, and the proposed location for a substation. Local people also had their say on projects and initiatives that they felt could benefit from investment from Bute Energy's Community Benefit Fund that will be associated with the project.

Following this round of public consultation, all feedback received will be carefully considered, along with assessments from environmental and technical surveys, ahead of the next round of public consultation – expected in the second half of 2024.

Green GEN Vyrnwy Frankton is a renewable energy network which will link Bute Energy's proposed Llyn Lort Energy Park, which could generate up to 165MW of clean, green energy in the Llanerfyl area, and other Energy Parks in the early assessment and feasibility stage, to the National Grid at a point near Lower Frankton in Shropshire.

The Welsh and UK Governments have set clear targets for more renewable energy, helping to stop the climate change that is threatening our livelihoods, landscapes, and wildlife. In Mid Wales, the existing electricity network does not have the capacity to connect new renewables to homes and businesses. To end the use of fossil fuels, we need new infrastructure and quickly.

Green GEN Vyrnwy Frankton has been launched to meet this need, with an aim to contribute to a more resilient and reliable network for the region. It could reduce pressure on the existing electricity grid, supporting green businesses and enabling green heating, and the roll out of electric vehicles across rural areas.

The project could also allow direct connection of community projects and support energy resilience. It has the potential to support technologies like 5G that could help farmers, schools and businesses to be at the cutting edge of technology while being based in a rural area. It will tackle both the energy crisis and the climate crisis, and empower rural communities through investment, jobs and skills, enabling communities across Wales and Shropshire to live modern electric lives, while supporting UK and Welsh Government Net Zero targets.

Gareth Williams, Grid Director at Bute Energy said:

“It has been good to speak to local people about our plans – and there's broad agreement that renewable energy has an important role to play in responding to the Climate Emergency.

“But we know that people have differing views on new infrastructure, and we are focused on causing the least disturbance to the environment and those who live, work and enjoy recreation close to our proposals.

“Over the next few months we will be reviewing feedback from local people, along with reports from environmental and technical surveys and use it to evolve the design and routing of the project, responding to the issues that have been raised. We anticipate that our next round of consultation will be in mid-2024, ahead of submitting an application for a Development Consent Order to the UK Government in 2025.

“We really appreciate local people taking the time to come and have their say on our initial proposals to connect clean, green energy to the National Grid.”

A Community Benefit Fund of £7500 per MW of installed capacity a year for each Bute Energy Park that connects to the Green GEN Vyrnwy Frankton project will be set up. This will be accessible for communities near the Energy Parks and communities along the route of Green GEN Vyrnwy Frankton, which could mean a pot of approx. £6m a year that local organisations, charities, and community groups can access.

The company is also working with local education, training, and employability providers to create inclusive employment pathways to enter the renewable energy industry. This includes work with local colleges to enhance the provision of green skill development programmes available locally, creating green skills centres of excellence across Wales, enabling a pipeline of talent for the renewable energy industry.