



‘Community Energy: Power, People, Policy’

Virtual Weekend 2021
12 – 13 June 2021

For the 13th Andrew Raven Trust Weekend we came together as a virtual community to explore community energy; the ways which communities can benefit from the natural resources around them; the barriers to participation; the global and national agenda for energy; and, the need for us all to renew and refresh our own personal energy.

The Trustees invited two early career professionals, Mhairi Tordoff and Flora Robertson to curate the content of the Weekend. Mhairi and Flora brought an immense depth of knowledge to the task, along with flair and imagination. The creation of the [virtual Ardtornish House](#) was their vision and inspiration, and enabled the Trust to continue to root the virtual weekend at Ardtornish, even though in 2021 we were unable to visit in person.

Participants met virtually over two days in June 2021 and heard live presentation from four leading practitioners and thinkers in the field of community energy:

Rachel McEwan, Chief Sustainability Officer, SSE
Steve Shaw, Director, Power for People
David Green, Chair, Warmworks
Mark Hull, Head of Innovation, Community Energy Scotland

The virtual Ardtornish House complemented the live content of the weekend by offering a wealth of resources related to the topic, including direct contributions from community energy projects across Scotland, further reading, contributions of music and poetry and a virtual opportunity to explore and engage with Ardtornish gardens and wider environments. The virtual Ardtornish House now forms an exciting legacy from the Weekend which is very different to the usual written report! All the live presentations and introductory talks are also available to view in the House which can be accessed [here](#). Please take the time to explore the virtual house and engage further with this important topic.

As usual during Trust Weekend there was plenty of opportunity for discussion and debate. Over the two days of live content three clear themes emerged:

Global and local action

The COP26 and many months of extreme weather events across the globe meant that climate change was rightly at the forefront of our minds. Energy generation and consumption are key aspects of action to tackle climate change. The role of communities in local generation and distribution was explored as a key component of

a just transition to net zero. One of the key questions to consider in a just transition is 'Who pays and who benefits?' In terms of energy generation, there has been a tendency for the two sides of that question not to be in balance. Communities are now working hard to redress that balance with local generation and empowerment.

Technology also has a significant role to play. Smart energy systems enable the matching of supply and demand, and offer the potential for greater integration of energy, heat and transport at a community level.

The need for regulatory change

We heard at first-hand about campaigning for regulatory change to enable those communities who generate local energy to sell direct to local people. The [Local Electricity Bill](#) will enable electricity generators to become local suppliers. This change in regulation would help to build climate and energy resilience for communities, and would also have much wider reaching impacts by enabling the revenues from local generation to be invested locally. The discussion was summed up by the conclusion that we need a greater democratisation of energy systems.

The need for support for communities

Supporting communities, both as generators and as consumers also referred to the need for a just transition. Fuel poverty remains a live and troubling aspect of our society, and there is a risk that the cost of transitioning to net zero will fall disproportionately on those with low incomes. Challenging targets have been set to reduce fuel poverty, but this will require investment beyond a reduction in generation costs and must encompass increasing energy efficiency in buildings.

There is also a need to support communities who are exploring energy generation. This support includes building community capacity and financial support. Equally important is the need to invest in infrastructure so that communities can get grid connections.

A full record of the Weekend including recordings of the live talks, information about community energy projects across Scotland, further reading resources and learning from all disciplines is available in the virtual [Ardtornish House](#).