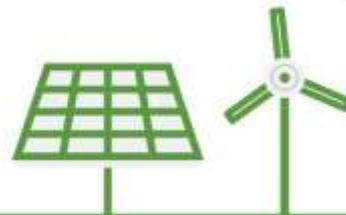




GREBE

Generating Renewable Energy
Business Enterprise



EES Pilot in Northern Ireland

May 2018



www.grebeproject.eu

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The GREBE Project

What is GREBE?

GREBE (Generating Renewable Energy Business Enterprise) is a €1.77m, 3-year (2015-2018) transnational project to support the renewable energy sector. It is co-funded by the EU's Northern Periphery & Arctic (NPA) Programme. It focuses on the challenges of peripheral and arctic regions as places for doing business, and helps develop renewable energy business opportunities in areas with extreme conditions.

The project partnership includes the eight partners from six countries, Western Development Commission (Ireland), Action Renewables (Northern Ireland), Fermanagh & Omagh District Council (Northern Ireland), Environmental Research Institute (Scotland), LUKE (Finland), Karelia University of Applied Sciences (Finland), Narvik Science Park (Norway) and Innovation Iceland (Iceland).

Why is GREBE happening?

Renewable Energy entrepreneurs working in the NPA area face challenges including a lack of critical mass, dispersed settlements, poor accessibility, vulnerability to climate change effects and limited networking opportunities.

GREBE will equip SMEs and start-ups with the skills and confidence to overcome these challenges and use place based natural assets for RE to best sustainable effect. The renewable energy sector contributes to sustainable regional and rural development and has potential for growth.

What does GREBE do?

GREBE supports renewable energy start-ups and SMEs:

- To grow their business, to provide local jobs, and meet energy demands of local communities.
- By supporting diversification of the technological capacity of SMEs and start-ups so that they can exploit the natural conditions of their locations.
- By providing RE tailored, expert guidance and mentoring to give SMEs and start-ups the knowledge and expertise to grow and expand their businesses.
- By providing a platform for transnational sharing of knowledge to demonstrate the full potential of the RE sector by showcasing innovations on RE technology and strengthening accessibility to expertise and business support available locally and in other NPA regions.
- To connect with other renewable energy businesses to develop new opportunities locally, regionally and transnationally through the Virtual Energy Ideas Hub.
- By conducting research on the processes operating in the sector to improve understanding of the sector's needs and make the case for public policy to support the sector.

For more information, visit our website:

<http://grebeproject.eu/>

Follow our Blog:

<https://greberenewableenergyblog.wordpress.com/>

Like us on Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/GREBEProject/>

Follow us on Twitter:

https://twitter.com/GREBE_NPA



The Entrepreneur Enabler Scheme

Fermanagh and Omagh District Council have the role within the GREBE project of rolling out the Entrepreneur Enabler Scheme. The mechanics of this part of the project are dealt with in another report – the Generic Mentoring Support Report. This report will focus on the 12 businesses that were selected for the project and together with the Individual Mentoring Support Packs form the complete report on the mentoring provided through the GREBE project.

The individual support packs contain a complete record of the mentoring carried out with the businesses and as they may contain commercially sensitive material relating to each of the businesses these will be held within the project and shared with each business, but will not be made public. The information contained within this report, has been approved for publication by each of the client companies and summarises the interventions that were made with each client company.

The basic premise of involvement in the GREBE EES was that businesses were involved or wishing to become involved in the Renewable Energy sector. The Council published notices in the newspapers that covered our region – across Fermanagh and Omagh District. This sought applications from these businesses to apply to become involved, setting out that the help available would be of free of charge, targeted at the needs of the business and indicating that the project was being supported by the EU through the NPA.

There were applications received from 15 business enterprises, with support being available from within the project to 12 participants. Selection was based on the needs of the business, what could be delivered through the project and the appropriate match that could be made. The 3 businesses which were not selected for involvement were directed to other support mechanisms from within the Council provision should they be interested in accessing this help.

GREBE Pilot Scheme open for Applications from SME's in the Renewable Energy Sector

The Generating Renewable Energy Business Enterprises (GREBE) project is part funded through the European Union's Northern Periphery and Arctic Programme 2014-2020 and focuses on the challenges of peripheral and arctic regions as places for doing business. The project aims to help develop renewable energy (RE) business opportunities for new and existing SME's across the partner region.

Fermanagh and Omagh District Council is one of 8 European partners involved in delivering the project. Our role is to deliver an 'Entrepreneur Enabler Scheme' pilot in the Fermanagh and Omagh area. The pilot scheme will engage with 12 SMEs in the renewable energy sector and offer them 6 days **free** mentoring support tailored specifically to their business needs. Examples of support available include:

- Financing your business
- Business planning
- HR issues
- Sales & Marketing
- Technical Support

SME's interested in participating in the pilot scheme are asked to complete an expression of interest form and return it to Una Porteous by **Friday 15th April 2016**. Please note the process is competitive due to the limited spaces available. To request an expression of interest form and for further information, please call Una Porteous on 0770511779 or email una.porteous@fermanaghomagh.com.



Within this report, we are presenting a summary of these businesses and what information was available to us at the start of the process. Clearly as a result of their involvement in the project we aimed to deliver improvements to move their businesses towards improvement – improvements identified by the businesses, to take them in a direction that they wanted to go.

Mentors

The delivery of the mentoring support to the businesses involved in GREBE clearly rested firmly on the solid foundation of a network of mentors. The procurement of the mentors was of critical importance in ensuring that the support required by the businesses was available to them as and when required. The mechanics of the procurement is covered in another report. Whilst a range of mentors were selected for the project, the ones who were actively involved in the delivery of the project are included below.

Aaron Black

Aaron has a background in Biological and Agricultural Science and has upwards of 10 years' experience in in the Renewable Energy sector. Based in the CREST Centre attached to South West College, he brings a wide ranging knowledge and depth of understanding of research and development in the sector and has utilised his skills very effectively in the businesses he has supported.

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E-mail: aaron.black@swc.ac.uk

Denzil Cluff

Denzil, a qualified Chartered Mechanical Engineer, founded his own company offering a range of services within the renewable energy sector. Bringing his 18 years of industrial experience to bear on his mentoring work, Denzil adds a range of qualifications to this skills set and has utilised this combination very effectively for a number of clients with positive outcomes. His knowledge of the renewable energy sector was of critical importance to some of the businesses involved in this project.

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Eilish Devlin

Eilish is the proprietor of a marketing and business development consultancy practice called Ardean. Based in Magherafelt, she has 15 years' experience in working with businesses, both established and start-ups. Her areas of expertise include Marketing, Business Planning, Marketing Communications and Funding.

Eilish has worked with a wide range of clients and has been involved in Mentoring support programmes across a number of agencies.

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Stephen Friel

Based in Donegal, Stephen is the proprietor of Friel Consulting, and with a long career in sales, he specialises in mentoring and supporting businesses with this as their focus for improvement or change. His experience within the renewable energy sector was also key to his involvement and he brought significant knowledge and understanding to bear on the assignments he undertook within GREBE. His track record on mentoring has been gained through involvement with a number of mentoring programmes across a range of provisions.

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John Gormley

John brought significant industry experience to his mentoring activities, citing anaerobic digestion, solar and photovoltaic, biomass, wind turbines and hydro as areas in which he specialised. With qualifications in Environmental Biology and Ecology, John has a wealth of experience in the agricultural sector and support farm diversification activities, bringing much practical advice and guidance to the businesses he has been assigned.

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Thomas M Martin

Tom Martin brings a long list of previous experience gained in industrial settings, specialising in leadership and management development. Having worked with a range of quality standards, including ILM, EFQM and Investors in People and coupled with his operations management experience, Tom brings a very credible level of experience that he has successfully applied to a wide range of clients in a variety of settings through a number of interventions.

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Michael McElroy

Michael brings a wealth of experience in the area of sales and marketing. With a background in Agricultural Science, he has worked since 2001 in Rural Development settings, acting as a mentor in a wide range of settings and across a number of agencies. Amongst his areas of specialisms, Michael includes sales and marketing, market research, business planning, farm diversification, funding. These have been applied to a wide range of sectors including renewables, engineering, construction, food and tourism.

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Martin O'Hare

Martin includes Strategic Business planning and company structuring, sales and marketing and contracts and business agreements as his areas of specialism. He has achieved experience in an extensive range of settings and brings a wealth of personal experience to those clients he works with. Martin's capacity to find solutions to problems that utilise his creativity is a constant hallmark of his work across those clients with whom he has worked. He also has an extensive knowledge of funding sources and uses this to inform clients around raising capital and financial restructuring to deliver the most economic solutions available to them.

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Matching Process

The process of matching the businesses with the mentors requires a bit of preparation work insofar as it is of critical importance to understand what the business hopes to achieve from their engagement in the process and what their business needs are. This can be achieved by gathering some baseline information from the business and conducting an interview with the business owner to gather the necessary details.

Within the procurement process, the mentors were ranked in relation to how they were scored, leading to a ranking position. They were also required to indicate the areas in which their expertise lay. Combining these two aspects of the mentor information, the matching process then happens quite naturally. However, it is also important to factor into the decision making process, the nature of the business and the characteristics of the mentor. Success depends on a suitable level of compatibility of the two.

Whilst it is ideal to get it right the first time, one cannot preclude the possibility of having to reassess a match and perhaps change. It is also a distinct possibility that a business may need the assistance of more than one expert. They may have single or multiple needs. This can be facilitated through reviewing progress and amending arrangements as required. In fact, on-going intermittent review is a key factor in the success of the process.

Alternative Energy Ltd



Originally involved as an electrical installation company, this business Alternative Energy changed direction to become involved as a supplier of Solar PV panels, LED lighting solutions and Biomass. They employed 3 people and had recently become a limited company. Their involvement in GREBE was predicated upon the need to concentrate their efforts in their chosen markets on the ROI in response to the contracting opportunities presenting in their traditional client base, as a consequence of the reduction in ROCs. The business requested assistance to make a planned marketing campaign to extend the amount of work they were achieving in ROI and a specialist marketing mentor was appointed to them.

The business had been successfully operating in these markets in Northern Ireland but due to the changes in policy within Northern Ireland this aspect of work was reducing. Furthermore, the building code in the Republic of Ireland requires builders to ensure that energy efficiency is maximised, so the business opportunity was identified and the business felt that a mentor would be able to help them in formulating a plan to take advantage of this potential market.

It was agreed that the key target for the activity was builders and contractors in the Republic of Ireland. The business was offering a full set of panels and the fixtures required to install a full solar PV system on a new build project. Alternative Energy were to provide full training to the builders on the installation of the systems. The mentor worked with the business to formulate a marketing and sales plan to identify how the markets were to be won over.

The outcome was a geographically focused Mailchimp campaign which enabled the initial work to be followed-up by the sales staff. Early indicators in the process which had been on-going from July 2016 indicated that they had achieved an opening rate of 27%. Such was their success on this campaign that they subsequently planned two further campaigns – one for TAMS II – a grant aid scheme for farm businesses, and a second campaign aimed at plumbers and householders to encourage sales of their Evoworld Biomass Boilers.

Devine Associates

DEVINE AND ASSOCIATES

CONSULTING ENGINEERS

This small business, based in Enniskillen, is currently engaged in Biogas Renewable Energy through its work with Fermanagh and Omagh District Council and was keen to examine how they could extend their involvement. They identified two possible routes that they were keen to explore further and felt that bringing in some technical expertise would enable them to examine their options more fully and make an informed decision. From a strong engineering background, the business owners had identified

- The use of anaerobic digestion to generate renewable energy from the waste arising's
- Becoming involved in sustainable housing development

Internally the company believed they had a range of skills that would be useful in this area, but required additional external expertise to focus them on reaching a decision about their future direction. After initial consultation, a mentor was appointed with a view to assisting the company to make some choices based on sound business information and judgement.

The first mentor appointed to this business undertook some research on behalf of the company with a view to identifying the likely prospects initially in the Passive Housing market. Based on his initial findings and having supplied all of this to the business, it was agreed that a mentor with more technical background would be required for the next steps for the company. A joint meeting was held with the business and the two mentors to discuss their options for moving forward. They identified the AD as a more viable route for their development and the new mentor undertook the project. The second mentor then undertook work on their behalf around their options for feedstock to maximise the outputs.

Following this intervention, the business required access to a mentor who could advise on aspects of compliance in regard to Ofgem, specifically around the production of ITARs – Independent Technical Assurance Reports. This work was something that the client company was required to do, but missing the technical know-how to perform in-house.

Easyglow Ltd



This business was established in 2012 and they have developed a biomass ovoid nugget which burns as a smokeless fuel. The plant has been developed to the point where they have a 4000 tonne production capacity per annum. Having made a high level of investment in the plant and in research and development, the business now seeks to take advantage of new legislation pending in ROI banning the use of smoke producing fuels which comes into force in January 2017. As a small business, their efforts have been focussed on the development of the product and they came to GREBE to get help with the next stage of the business development which will centre on identifying a customer base for the wholesale market.

The owner had been in communication with one potential customer and was initially nervous of signing away too much of his new product and his right to deal with other customers. The external expertise he sought was to help him to navigate the negotiation stages of his involvement with potential customers. Following initial discussions between the client and the mentor, it became clear that there was a need to focus on providing the client with an on-line presence to support their entry into wholesale markets, something to provide a hook to potential wholesale clients. On one front the business was advised to re-engage with the services of a design consultant. The mentor covered a range of areas with this business, looking at possible funding opportunities, statutory agencies, angel investors and financial institutions.

In addition, the mentor worked with the company to identify new potential customers and developed a sales and marketing approach. He also helped them to develop a pricing strategy and produce content for the website. The mentor work with the business to develop a range of sales leads. Outputs included a fully functional e-commerce enabled website and social media accounts were established. Finally the business was enabled to approach Intertrade Ireland for assistance through the Elevate programme.

ECOHOG



This family based engineering business based in Carrickmore, Co Tyrone specialises in large scale equipment to the waste and recycling sectors. Their mobile and static installations are custom built to meet the needs of the client in terms of location and processes. They came to the GREBE project with the stated aim of trying to identify what possibilities existed for their product in the Renewable Energy sector. They felt certain that there were applications within the RE sector that could be met by their engineering solutions but needed assistance to identify the possible market opportunities.

The company had already established a strong brand name and client base across a global market. However, they felt that they were missing a potential client base closer to home in the Renewables sector, through their production capacity to build machines which exactly met the client's requirements. Their ability to produce machinery which is mobile is a strength which they wished to bring to the RE sector, recognising the potential market that existing in non-virgin wood as a fuel source. The mentor undertook research on behalf of the business into potential markets on wood waste processing and glass waste.

One significant outcome was the company's entry into the Moybuoy competition. Additional work was undertaken around the use of B2B social networks – LinkedIn. The key to this piece was connecting the use of LinkedIn to the research work undertaken on potential customers so that connections could pay dividends. Use of website analytics demonstrated the efficacy of this approach. Significant work was undertaken on the website and research to support development of new business ideas. Mentoring support also introduced the idea of Intertrade Ireland support to the business.

Future Renewables



This company specialised in the provision of advice, installation and servicing of Biomass Boilers and were aware of the potentially devastating effect of the removal of the Renewable Heat Incentive (RHI) on their business model. They expressed an interest in the GREBE project with their stated aim of trying to ensure the survival of the business faced with this change in policy direction. It was evident even at the start of GREBE that the implications of the changes in RHI were about to have a major impact on the sector, and Future Renewables were a prime example of a company that was about to be negatively impacted by these effects. Their very survival was threatened and they required external expertise to assist them to identify a way to maintain a level of commercial activity to sustain their business moving forward.

This business decided that they needed to focus initially on audit work for the MCS work, addressing some issues of non-conformance which had been identified. This led them to establish a new Quality Management System which would stand to them as they began work in future markets. Their next focus was their website and gearing it to the new future market opportunities. Recognising the possible obstacles around pursuit of public tenders, they sought additional certification as evidence of their quality provision and what their approach would be in meeting tender requisites. Additional work done around possible issues regarding maintenance works, given the possible need to rely on this as a future income stream. The business had downsized as a result of the work streams having contracted, and may require to increase staff numbers moving forward.

Hawkes Transport



Hawkes Transport had developed an idea of utilising paper mill ash to manufacture a product. The business were already in possession of a waste brokering licence for a range of waste codes, and his work activity includes transporting waste and other materials as well as operation of a ready-mix batching plant. The concept proposed is the development of large 'Lego-style' blocks for use in retaining walls and temporary structural dividers – a clever concept to bring all aspects of the business together. The business owner had undertaken initial research activity to suggest that this was a viable proposition and had approached Invest NI for support. His requirement within GREBE was to access support to work through the complicated NIEA (Northern Ireland Environmental Agency) processes to attain licences for the reprocessing of the material.

Within this assignment the mentor supported engagement with NIEA, identifying key contacts and mapping out the requirements to satisfy the authority. The mentor also supported engagement with Invest NI, assisting in putting together a business plan including financial projections. Presentations were prepped for Invest NI in a bid to secure Research and Development funding support and also to prepare for funding applications under Rural Development Programme. The business was also introduced to South West Regional College who can assist with Research and Development testing on materials. Other aspects addressed through mentoring included planning an approach to undertaking risk assessments and other requirements for potential funders. A road map was developed and the business plan prepared leaving the project in a state of readiness for the next developments to come to fruition.

ITEC



Based in Irvinestown, Co Fermanagh, Irvinestown Trustee Enterprise Company Ltd (ITEC) and founded as a non-profit company in 1992, this social economy business was established to increased economic development and employment opportunities for its catchment area. It has established a range of community led regeneration initiatives which have led to some 200 jobs being created across 25 businesses ranging through manufacturing, retail and service activities. ITEC has relied heavily on a voluntary board of directors, representing a pool of 'voluntary expertise' and whilst they have leveraged significant external funding, they remain strongly rooted in the need to be sustainable beyond the limitations of the funding.

Prior to engaging with GREBE, they had been investigating the possibility of delivering a project designed to bring Biogas to the area for the benefit of the neighbourhood in which they operate. The company had already had a feasibility study undertaken and were preparing to take the process to funders. They expressed an interest in accessing assistance to move the project forward.

As a social economy business, ITEC had developed a strong track record in delivering a range of projects designed to engage and assist their local economy. The Biogas project was a good example of forward thinking. With the assistance of the mentor, they were well prepped for meetings with funders and despite the difficulties presented by the leave vote for Brexit, they remain hopeful that the project will move forward.

KES Energi



ENERGI

Describing themselves as ‘Northern Ireland’s premier Renewable Energy installation Specialists, KES Energi became involved with the GREBE project to specifically drive forward the production of their Biomass Energi Cabins. This involved the establishment of a production facility in Omagh, to produce these purpose built cabins were a solution to house energy-efficient biomass wood-burning boilers in bespoke surroundings. The offering is of two separate types of Biomass Energi Cabins, the i-Line Energi cabin (metal) and the K-Line (wood), which would house ETA biomass boilers. The cabins would be purpose built and site specific, allowing the maximum benefit to be extracted for the customer needs in relation to heating and space requirements.

Moffitt and Robinson



This business developed out of a traditional joiner making the decision to work on timber frame houses and then deciding to focus on energy efficient house building. The business involved a team of two – husband and wife and growth of the business was limited by this parameter. They wanted to develop the business and in order to do this they needed to develop the office capacity of the office based team, so that the owners were freed up to undertake more promotional activity on the energy efficiency side of things. Initially a mentor was appointed to undertake some business planning with them including working on cash-flow management.

A further number of sessions were facilitated by a different mentor who looked at issues around Health and Safety compliance and identified a suitable IT package which would assist the business to manage this in a more efficient manner. In addition this mentor assisted the business to look at a couple of different sources for funding assistance – through Invest NI and Intertrade Ireland.

MSL



Established with more than 20 years' experience in the Construction Industry, MSL has provided expert Electrical Services and Solar Panel Installations for hundreds of delighted customers throughout Northern Ireland and the UK. Their Electrical Services cover a wide spectrum of Installations i.e. Residential, Commercial, Industrial and Agricultural. They aim to provide a high quality of service whilst maintaining high customer standards.

Aware that electricity produced by fossil fuels is not unlimited, one other option is Solar Power. They specialise in the installation of high quality solar panels which offer great benefits to homeowners. Amongst other things, they can dramatically reduce your electricity bills. All their products and services come with full warranties and assurances. MSL are an MCS accredited company. They utilise the most up to date technologies coupled together with the highest standards. We strive to ensure all our customers receive the best value for money.

The company were interested in the potential of new markets in the Republic of Ireland, and they accessed assistance from GREBE to develop a suitable approach for this market.

Rowe Energy

This business was based in a family farm setting with the basis of the proposed business being farm diversification. Traditionally involved in milk production, the farm had decided to undertake the building of a 200kW AD plant in 2015. The business had been working on an agreement with funders to finance the project which had almost been finalised when the GREBE project began. However the funders needed some clarification on some aspects of the planning permission in order to release the funding. A planning Consultant was identified by the mentor, briefed on the project and a letter of comfort was drawn up to address the funder's issues with the planning permission.

In addition to this the mentor was to work with the business in how to maximise potential income from the project over the short and medium term. This was likely to cover areas such as feedstock efficiency/cost and required technical expertise. Further areas for consideration included identification on other potential business uses for the potential heat from the biomass production facility.

Winters Renewables



Winters Renewables was founded in 2010 when willow was planted throughout the family farm. Initially the business was growing and supplying willow wood chip to local businesses and local government facilities. Since 2010 Winters Renewables has evolved into one of the leading suppliers of Woodchip, Biomass boiler systems and maintenance of these systems throughout the Island of Ireland marketing their products as integrated 'Biomass heating solutions'. Winters Renewables has developed a comprehensive range of in house services and facilities in the Biomass sector. These include the Ny Vraa willow harvesting system, a woodchip drying system, a woodchip screening system and woodchip storage facilities.

These facilities ensure a top quality wood chip product in compliance with g30 specification and consistent moisture content between 15 – 20%. Winters Renewables now provides a Tree Clearance service for Farms, building sites and plantations. Over the last 5 years Winters Renewables has also diversified into the production of Renewable Electricity by installing both a wind turbine (250kw) and an Anaerobic Digestion Plant (500kw) on site. Winters Renewables sought the assistance of the GREBE programme to achieve a number of objectives as follows:

- To carry out a detailed analysis of operational procedures, production cost and sustainability of the main feedstocks for the plant in the west Tyrone climate concentrating on grass silage and whole crop silage crops.
- To optimise the feedstock blend in terms of Biogas production and cost per cubic metre of Biogas for the AD plant dependent on the seasonal availability, price and 'digestibility' of a range of local ingredients.
- Co-ordination of Waste licence application to allow additional waste types from outside the farm to be accepted at the AD plant.
- To devise a new marketing strategy for the business relative to demand for Biomass products and potential new tariffs in ROI for Biomass Energy.
- To upgrade the website content imagery and layout to reflect the new marketing strategy for the business and to focus on the new products in the Biomass sector such as Plantation Clearance, Organic Animal bedding and fire kindling.



GREBE

Generating Renewable Energy Business Enterprise

 @ GREBE_NPA

 GREBEProject

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Project Partners

GREBE will be operated by eight partner organisations across six regions:



About GREBE

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