

Pwyllgor Newid Hinsawdd, yr Amgylchedd a Seilwaith /
Climate Change, Environment and Infrastructure Committee
Cynhyrchu ynni adnewyddadwy yng Nghymru / Renewable energy generation in
Wales
RE04
Ymateb gan / Evidence from Awel Aman Tawe

Summary

Awel Aman Tawe (AAT) is a community energy charity which has been operating for 21 years. Our prime drivers are tackling climate change, job creation, retaining wealth in the Welsh economy and engaging people in energy. We have a strong reputation for delivery of education, arts and engagement. We have set up two coops:

- Awel Co-op, is a 4.7MW community wind farm which was commissioned in Jan 2017. It was funded by a £5.25m loan from Triodos Bank and a £3m community share offer. The annual turnover is £1.2m. www.awel.coop
- Egni Co-op develops rooftop solar on schools, businesses and community buildings. It has installed 4.4MWp on 88 sites in Wales. Egni has raised £4m from a community share offer and £2.12m from the Development Bank of Wales to fund the installs which are ongoing. The turnover is £460k. We save our sites more than £100k in electricity costs/year and 1,000 tonnes in carbon emissions. All surplus goes into energy education projects in schools working in partnership with EnergySparks www.egni.coop
- Y Bryn windfarm Shared Ownership: we are working in partnership with NPTCVS and BAVO to secure upto a 20% stake in Y Bryn windfarm near Port Talbot. We are developing a co-op model to deliver both community benefit funds and shared ownership.
- Hwb y Gors: We are also developing Hwb y Gors, a low carbon social enterprise, arts and education venue in the Cwmgors, north of Swansea. Hwb y Gors is in the former primary school and work is being funded by £1.3m of funding from the Lottery, Welsh Government, Moondance Foundation, Transforming Towns, Garfield Weston, Morel Trust, the Landfill Tax and Awel Aman Tawe itself.

Over 80 local community organisations and schools are members of Awel and Egni Coops, owning more than £100k of shares, gaining a sustainable income stream from the projects. This includes a range of groups such as Merched y Wawr, schools, sports clubs and community centres.

We have over 1,500 members of our two renewable energy co-ops. In 2019, Awel Aman Tawe was recognised as [Environmental Organisation of the Year](#) in the Social Enterprise UK Awards and Egni won [Outstanding Renewable Energy Project](#) in an award sponsored by Welsh Government

History

Our community energy charity, Awel Aman Tawe, was started by local people 21 years ago and is in the Upper Amman and Swansea Valleys, a former coal mining area 20 miles north of Swansea. We have an award-winning track record in consultation, developing large scale and domestic renewable energy projects, and engaging local people through an innovative programme of community arts activities. Our community now has the asset base to respond to our community consultation, creating and match funding a sustainable future – these include the income streams from the two largest coops in Wales:

Surplus from the Awel Coop wind farm enables the charity to create 5 jobs, undertake a range of local community projects and has underpinned the recent development of Egni Coop

Previous and ongoing areas of work

a. Policy level community energy engagement:

- AAT has a commitment to policy engagement, and sharing learning. From our initial DTI funding in 1999 for which we wrote a handbook on windfarm consultation, AAT has actively engaged at a policy level. For example, AAT was a case study at the 2004 Sustainable Development Conference in Johannesburg, and from 2012, was a member of the Advisory Group working with the UK Government's DECC Community Energy Strategy. This was published in 2016, led to the development of hundreds of schemes across the UK and was the most downloaded document of the Coalition govt period. Dan McCallum, AAT's co-founder, was awarded an MBE for services to community energy in Wales in 2018. A list of our awards is [here](#).
- AAT has been contracted to the Welsh Government's community energy advice service since 2010 through its various incarnations (currently the Welsh Government Energy Service). AAT is also one of the founders and is a contractor under Renew Wales and Sustainable Communities Wales programmes. Through its involvement, AAT has undertaken renewable energy and energy efficiency assessments on over 100 community projects.

Community arts and behaviour change

- Most recently, we completed our lottery-funded [Moon Mission](#) at Pontardawe Arts Centre which aimed to raise awareness of climate change and celebrate the lunar landings – this directly engaged over 800 people who helped to build the spaceship 'Greta' and create the exhibition "Message to the Universe". 12 schools took part and 'Greta' has just been used in the National Theatre Wales production '[Mission Control](#)' and will be going to Ysgol Pontardawe as a permanent exhibit.
- We have just published 'Green Routines/Arferion Gwyrdd' – this is an illustrated bilingual book based on consultation with over 200 people in Wales to identify ways that ordinary people reduce their carbon emissions. The book has been self-funded and published by AAT. We have distributed over 1000 in our local area and Newport Council have distributed 2 copies to every school in the county.

- Community theatre: we have developed three [plays](#) at Pontardawe Arts Centre with local writers and actors on the theme of climate change (“ We’re Oil in this Together”; “Nine Meals to Anarchy” and “Flood”). All have attracted audiences of over 100 people.
 - Poetry: we have published two anthologies of Welsh and English climate change poetry with readings at Pontardawe Arts Centre. Judges have included Carol Ann Duffy, former Poet Laureate, Menna Elfyn, Elin ap Hywel and Gillian Clarke, former national poet of Wales.
- b. **Domestic energy projects:** we have secured funding for a range of renewable heating installations including ground source heat pumps, air source heat pumps and biomass heating. From 2002-12, we did over 3000 energy efficiency surveys for loft and cavity wall installations for the main government schemes.
- c. **Research and sharing:** we have published, and have been featured in many reports, PhD and MA dissertations, documentaries and films over the past 21 years. Five examples are:
- DTI Toolkit: we have a record of sharing lessons learnt and did so from the start in writing up the various consultation methods we used to undertake our wind farm consultation. This was published by the UK Government and our capacity building approach was widely recognised – we trained 12 unemployed local people in consultation methods – several of those people continued in their employment with AAT and/or went on to work for Communities First or similar programmes. Our Toolkit was widely used by the UK wind industry which at that time, was very new to any form of consultation. And by many community energy projects, especially in Scotland.
 - PhD, Eleri Davies, 2014-16. This documented AAT’s community arts project and impact on people’s behaviour.
 - Environmental Change Institute and Oxford Brookes University: 2014-16 ESRC-funded Low Carbon Communities Programme. This research sought to measure the carbon footprint and learn lessons from some of the leading community energy projects across the UK.
 - [Triodos Bank film about Awel Coop](#): this was produced in order to show how Triodos is using its customers’ funds to invest in community energy
 - [AAT film](#): this was shot by Welsh BAFTA winner, Mike Harrison of the erection of the Awel turbines after 20 years of struggle. Mike lives locally and worked on the film as a volunteer – it has had over 1,100 views on YouTube

Egni

As a Coop with a legally binding ‘not for profit’ structure, our Share Offer for Egni commits that all surpluses will go into education projects in schools

- We have resources (teaching pack and monitoring equipment) to enable schools to integrate data from the solar panels in different lessons which we offer free of charge to all member schools.
- We donate £500 of free shares in Egni Co-op to all member schools. This gives them a cash return on the solar panels on their roofs and our aim is to increase understanding of how coops and solar energy works. This builds on an existing project through our community windfarm, Awel Coop, where we donated free shares three years ago to 36

schools in NPT and Newport to develop co-ops and entrepreneurship understanding in Wales.

- We will offer a free visit (including coach hire) to our wind farm near Pontardawe for all schools annually for 20 years.
- As we are a coop and a not for profit structure, we can be completely open book regarding our costs, income and generation data. This can increase learning opportunities from Egni which can be particularly useful in encouraging entrepreneurship amongst young people which is a key area of the new curriculum.
- We're published an illustrated bilingual book called Green Routines/Arferion Gwyrdd which highlights ways to reduce a person's carbon footprint. We have worked with Newport's Energy Dept to distribute two free copies of the book to every school in Newport. All 60 children who visited the Moon Mission/Wind farm from Newport also received a copy.

Policy Context

- Local authorities and the public sector are facing ambitious carbon targets and Egni is well placed to deliver projects now - the new Welsh Government consultation [Low Carbon Pathway](#) is proposing a 45% reduction in CO₂ by 2030
- Links between [community energy and local authorities](#) are specifically encouraged by the Future Generations Act. See p.3 and 10 where AAT/Egni is noted as an exemplar.
- Through Egni, we offer sites a 10-15% reduction on the cost per kWh that schools and other sites pay their existing electricity supplier