



CSEP is a public & private sector partnership working to achieve a sustainable energy future for Cornwall, its communities and businesses

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## PRESS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

### Inspirational European Energy Conference in Cornwall Highlights the Importance of Community Ownership

Cornwall was the arena of a trans-national conference that saw speakers from iconic European sustainable energy projects show how they are achieving a sustainable energy future for their regions.

***'Positive thinking, brave politicians and a local community to take on ownership and changes'*** was the final thought of Søren Hermansen, Director of Samsø Energy Academy and the lead in creating Denmark's 100% renewable energy island and summed up the action needed to make change.

Continuing Søren said, ***"All that we have achieved has been made possible by the Samsø Energy Agency, which is made up of the local trade, government and farming organisations. We made sure that the projects were something that all parties want before money is found and contractors are brought in to do any work. Community engagement, understanding and cooperation is essential to the drive behind the projects. Local ownership is key to success; people don't object to the sound generated by the turbines if they own it! After that there are no problems about where to locate it."***

The ***'Energy in Regional Development – Learning from European Best Practice'*** conference on 29<sup>th</sup> June showcased six major energy projects which are being very successful in supporting their regional and local economy and have been chosen by the European Commission as best practice. The conference was being sponsored and funded by EDF Energy.

The projects were:

- Navarra, Northern Spain: Navarra has 600,000 residents, 6,000 jobs in renewable energy and produces 65% of its own electricity through a variety of renewable sources.
- Güssing, South East Austria: Güssing was once regarded as one of the poorest cities in Austria. In 1991 an economic decision was made to resource its own energy and now is the European best example of a 'Sustainable Energy Community'.

- Samsø, Denmark: This small island of 4,500 residents is Denmark's '100% Renewable Energy Island' with small community owned wind-farms plus other renewable energy technologies.
- Apeldoorn, The Netherlands: Though a mixture of technologies the town of Apeldoorn is well on its way to achieving its aim of being a 100% sustainable energy town. Streets of housing have been turned into a power plant using photovoltaic arrays.
- Göteborg, Western Sweden: Göteborg leads the world in the use of 'green' vehicles and has more biogas and natural gas-powered vehicles than any other city.
- Linz, Austria: The Linz Solar City project is an integrated solar village that supports just over 1300 households, shops, schools and 7-km tram rail line into the city centre.

During open discussions, a delegate asked the speakers; 'from their experience, what was the most important factor in bringing about change?'

- Tim Evans – A fast track process by the Government to get plans off the ground
- Enrique Diaz – Change peoples' minds – energy has been a commodity that's easy to take, it's hard to imagine the cost to nature – The most important thing is to transmit the true carbon cost.
- Gerhard Utri– You must change people's attitudes and gain their trust by showing that it can work to gain community support
- Maria Hammar – Cooperation from top level to grass roots is essential, get everyone involved
- Gerard Brugman – People all want to change and have ideas and are willing to go for it, but there are barriers that need to be overcome with the help of government.
- Søren Hermansen – Positive thinking, brave politicians and a local community to take on ownership and changes.

Over 200 delegates from the UK and Europe were in attendance to debate the issues that seem to prevent these highly successful projects being replicable in other parts of Europe and, in particular, in the UK.

The event was organised by the Cornwall Sustainable Energy Partnership (CSEP), a partnership of 72 organisations including the local authorities of Cornwall, health and private sector representatives, to create a sustainable energy future for Cornwall's communities and businesses.

#### **Tim German – Director of CSEP**

"We have known for some time that the key solution to climate change is to move away from a fossil-fuel-based energy economy to one based on renewable sources of electricity and heat. It is, therefore, hard to comprehend why the UK has been so slow in delivery in both its energy efficiency and, in particular its renewable energy programme. The UK has been following in the shadow of Europe where appropriate and effective decisions have been made up to twenty years ago."

An account of the debate will form part of a wider report being produced by CSEP for DTI, CLG, DEFRA and DfT.

Other speakers included Professor Tim Jackson, Commissioner of Sustainable Development Commission UK and Director of RESOLVE, University of Surrey and Tim Smit, Co-founder and Chief Executive of The Eden Project.

**Tim Smit - CEO of the Eden Project**

“We are 20 years from the end of our energy source and now is the time to break the mould and really be brave and look at new ways to do this. We are lucky to have many people in this audience today that can actually show us ways that this can be done.”

“The future is a combination of Non Government Organisations on the social side with the enterprise and drive of the private sector to affect real social change. I think the next 30 years will be an exciting time as technical and social change will have to happen.”

**Tim Jackson – UK Sustainable Development Commissioner, Summing Up...**

“What actually stimulated the change; the infrastructure, business, social commitment that made these projects work? Each of the projects had a different motivation for change, Søren mentioned survival, and Enrique said it was self reliance. But, all people have the same motivation as human beings to get through the day; make money, happiness, family, society and some meaning of purpose, and it is these motivations that affect change and in turn reduce CO2 emissions.”

**Closing the conference, Carol Wells Chair of Cornwall Sustainable Energy Partnership said,** “It’s our opportunity to do more than talk about making change with Convergence Funding and other opportunities available. There’s no need to re-invent the wheel, other people have done it so let’s learn from what the speakers here to day have shared with us.”

“We ask you to challenge your politician with Tim Smit’s question; ‘Are WE able to rise to the challenge?’”

“This is a war, a war against climate change. We are all soldiers, politicians, victims and negotiators in this war and it’s a war that we can not afford to lose.”

**- ENDS**

## Notes to editors

- All the **speakers' presentations** are available on the Europe page on [www.csep.co.uk](http://www.csep.co.uk)
- The **conference report** will follow shortly.
- **Community Energy Plus (CEP)** is a registered charity (Number 1068990) and profit-recycling company. Established in 1998 with financial support from Carrick District Council, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly Health Authority and the Energy Saving Trust. CEP manages the international award-winning\* Home Health project which was developed by the 72 members of the Cornwall Sustainable Energy Partnership.
- The **Cornwall Sustainable Energy Partnership** (founded in 2001) and managed by CEP, is a consortium of 72 organisations from the public, private and health sectors that are committed to a multi sector approach to a sustainable energy and low carbon competitive future for Cornwall. It is the first partnership of its kind in the UK and is providing a model for other parts of the UK. [www.csep.co.uk](http://www.csep.co.uk)
- CEP manages the **Cornwall Energy Efficiency Advice Centre** supported by the Energy Saving Trust (EST) and the County and District Authorities of Cornwall. It is one of 52 independent centres across the UK, providing free, impartial and locally relevant advice to households. Please call free on **0800 512012**.

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