

# South East Renewable Energy Conference

## 11<sup>th</sup> -12<sup>th</sup> December 2003

More than 200 delegates attended each day of the SE Renewable Energy Conference 2003, held in Reading in mid-December. This conference was supported by the SE Renewable Energy Partnership (GOSE, SEEDA, SE Regional Assembly, TV Energy and Local Authorities). The conference was supported by an exhibition of some 30 stands.



On Day One the conference reviewed strategy and policy on renewable energy relating to the local and regional all the way through to the European and international levels. Alison Parker, Director of GOSE, chaired the meeting in the morning and set out the challenge for the days ahead. Policy is becoming increasingly 'joined up', helping to focus minds on the key issues to address. Top of the list is the inevitability of continued climate change bringing with it the certainty of disruption and change to our local environment. Other issues include security of energy supply and how local renewable resources can help mitigate such problems.

A series of excellent speakers gave the keynote technical and political addresses, including David Still of UK Renewables; Bill Giles, Director of the Weather Index, ex BBC weatherman and expert on global warming; Valerie Ellis, Commissioner from the UK Sustainable Development Commission, Dr Bill Gillett from the European Commission and Caroline Lucas, Green MEP for SE England.



**Caroline Lucas, MEP**



**Alison Parker (GOSE)**



**Bill Gillett (EC)**



**Left to right: Bill Giles, Annette Deveson (TVE), Keith Richards (TVE), Alison Parker (GOSE), Caroline Lucas (MEP), Bill Gillett (European Commission)**

The conference emphasised the need to react with urgency to get regional projects in place otherwise the SE would fail to 'do its bit' in helping to achieve national targets of 10% of electricity generated from renewable sources by 2010. Likewise projects generating heat or producing green transport fuels were also very necessary.

Targets were reviewed by Mike Gwilliam of the Regional Assembly, who reiterated the region's vision of achieving 5.5% of our electricity being supplied by renewables by 2010 and growing rapidly beyond that to catch up eventually with other regions.



**Mike Gwilliam (SE Assembly) with Cllr Dr Royce Longton (Chairman pm)**

A presentation by Dr Keith Richards of TV Energy reviewed progress since the last conference (November 2002). The reality is that little progress has been made with respect to new projects, although existing power stations are using more renewables which is helping with the statistics! In particular, two wind energy projects have been refused planning permission (West Berkshire and Oxfordshire) even though they are in line with regional strategic guidance. Local planners and Councillors are struggling with the need to bring forward renewable energy projects – an issue which needs to be addressed. The CPRE have also been noticeably aggressive in their resistance to

renewables and have effectively lobbied against renewables. The fear is of a programme of 'demonisation'.

Keith announced the launch of TV Bioenergy (Coppice) Ltd, the UK's third coppice producer group. DEFRA have recently agreed funding for this initiative covering the Thames Valley, Surrey and northern Hampshire. Finally, Keith set out an '8 Point Plan' to boost the chances of renewables reaching their targets in the Thames Valley and the SE. Progress with the plan will be reviewed at the next regional conference (likely November 2004).



#### **TV BIOENERGY COPPICE PRODUCER GROUP**

**From left to right: Paul Dorling (DEFRA), Sue Finlay (DEFRA), Clive Willamson (RMC Aggregates), John Willmer, Charlotte Bruton (TVE), Jeremy Bolas (SEEDA), Mark Paulson (CRL), Keith Richards (TVE)**

Day Two focused on individual project initiatives ranging from UK exemplars (a presentation by Hayley Myles of Dulas on a community in Wales) through to developments in far away New Zealand (Professor Ralph Sims, Massey University, New Zealand). Many local projects were also reviewed including the Bracknell Regeneration prospect (Victor Nicholls), the Betteshanger wood fuel project (Jeremy Bolas and Peter Garratt), the Shortenills environmental education centre project (Ian Duckworth), and a new office complex for the Environment Agency based in Wallingford (paper by Brian Hughes) which is to incorporate substantial solar power.

A lively debate on wind energy followed a series of presentations reviewing the current position of on-shore wind energy. Presentations were given by Dr Martin Marais (Developer – National Wind Power), Dr Elizabeth Wilson (Leading Planning School/ Oxford Brookes University), Bryony Worthington (Friends of the Earth) and Edward Dawson (CPRE).

Edward Dawson was challenged by a number of delegates to defend the position that CPRE has adopted with respect to wind energy. Answering one question, Edward admitted that CPRE to his knowledge had never supported a single wind energy proposal in the UK, although there had been one occasion when it has not objected! Many felt that their position as being a 'renewables friendly' organisation was hard to justify given their current record.



### **WIND ENERGY DEBATE**

**Back row: Dr Martin Marais (NWP), Edward Dawson (CPRE), Bryony Worthington (FoE), Nick Brown (Future Wind). Front row: Cllr Terry Mills (Chairman), Elizabeth Wilson (Oxford Brookes), David Payne (SE Regional Assembly)**

At the end of Day 1, Alison Parker (a Director of GOSE) made a series of awards to organisations showing particular leadership or achievement in the area of renewables in the region. Three glass trophies were presented as follows:

Local Authority Commitment and Initiative :	WINNER - Bracknell Forest Borough Council
Best Community Initiative :	WINNER - East Meon Sustainability Centre
Best Business Initiative :	WINNER - Slough Heat and Power

The Bracknell Forest Borough Council award was received by Terry Mills, Deputy Leader of the Council (also a Director of SEEDA). This award was given in recognition for showing strong and consistent political leadership with planning vision in the South East in seeking to make the £800 million Re-Generation of Bracknell centre 100% renewable energy self-sufficient.



### **Presentations of Trophies to Terena Plowright (East Meon) and Cllr Terry Mills (Bracknell Forest BC)**

The East Meon Sustainability Centre award was received by Terena Plowright, Centre Manager. This award was made in recognition of a pioneering renewable energy heating project which serves both to educate the community about the importance of using sustainable biomass products for

heating, such as wood, and to have a significant impact on the local environment. Formally ignited on 29<sup>th</sup> October 2003, the biomass boiler was fitted by Econergy. It is carbon-neutral, which means as it burns the timber, it only produces the same amount of CO<sub>2</sub> as the same quantity of trees consume as they grow. The boiler will act as a demonstration project so that schools and other visitors can learn more about the difference between fossil fuels and biomass heating.

The Slough Heat and Power award was received by Mark Candlish, Business Development Manager. This award was made for making the greatest renewable energy contribution to energy supplies in the South East, through burning wood fuel and replacing fossil fuels at its 90MWe power station in Slough. In addition it was for supporting local initiatives to establish a wood fuel supply infrastructure to benefit local suppliers and users alike.



**Exhibition plus Edward Dawson (CPRE) with 'I love wind energy' badge**



**Front Desk: Patrick Cogswell (TVE), Sue Element (GOSE) and Deborah Stoer (TVE)**