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## Wind power to the people as locals back plan

**By Staff Copy**

PUBLIC support for a study into community-run wind turbines on Common Good land have been welcomed by Community Council chairman Dr Lindsay Neil.

Last Thursday's meeting at Victoria Hall was aimed at presenting the results of early studies and gauging public support for the scheme.

It included a review of an initial survey by environmental and engineering consultants Entec and a presentation on community wind farm projects by the Highlands & Islands Community Energy Company (HICEC) which, along with the Energy Savings Trust (EST), would offer assistance in implementing the scheme should the proposals for Selkirk be taken forward.

Kevin Dickson, HICEC's development officer for the south of Scotland, highlighted the success of a similar project on Gigha, in the Inner Hebrides, and presented estimates on the expected revenue to Selkirk.

Dr Neil – who has steered the Selkirk plans – highlighted the need to embrace renewable energy and, after discussions, of around 100 people at the meeting, 45 voted in favour of a feasibility study, while 27 voted against.

“There was a clear majority in favour, but a significant number present favoured no further action, despite the advantages to Selkirk that could be gained,” Dr Neil said.

Concerns raised included the visual impact of the 100m turbines, the reliability of early financial predictions and possible interference with Selkirk Common Riding.

“What was clearly apparent was that many questions could only be answered by going to a detailed feasibility study and by extensive community consultation and participation,” said Dr Neil.

“It was particularly helpful that organisations and individuals opposing wind farm developments were well represented at the meeting. This allowed the identification of their objections, all of which will need to be addressed.”

Speaking this week, Dr Neil said funding for the £10,000 study would now be sought.

“Particular attention will be paid to the feasibility of the South Common as a site and also to a computer-generated presentation of the degree of visual impact for various turbine locations and sizes.

“There is a lot of commercial interest which could freeze us out, so the sooner we get on with it the better chance we'll have of being successful.”

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