

Green Energy Awards 2007

By Iain Todd, Aberdeen Renewable Champion



L-R BBC Presenter Sally Magnusson, Steve McDonald of Sgurr Energy, Jeremy Cresswell, Chairman of AREG

Once again, the National Museum in Edinburgh provided an impressive setting for almost 800 guests to celebrate a year of progress and success on the Scottish renewables scene. When the Green Energy Awards started in 2002, around 11% of Scotland's electricity needs were met by renewables – this year the figure is pushing 20%.

And in his speech to the dinner, Scottish Energy minister Jim Mather emphasised the Scottish Government's recent increase of the 2020 renewable electricity target from 40% to an ambitious 50%. He acknowledged that wind farm applications had to be dealt with more speedily by Government, mentioning a possible commitment to a decision within 9 months (which had delegates making rapid notes). He also stressed the Government's commitment to renewable heat, as well as electricity.

Moving to the awards, these traditionally open with the award for the Best Politician, and it was no surprise when the winner was announced as Jim Mather's boss – First Minister Alex Salmond. The award recognised his strong understanding of the energy industry as a former economist, and in

particular his campaign over the past two years against the transmission charging scheme for the national electricity grid, which is acting against the development of renewables in more remote areas.

The Best New Business Award was scooped by another with north-east connections – the UK arm of German turbine manufacturer RePower. Their staffing in Edinburgh has increased to 40 over 4 years, and they are currently the number three supplier in the UK market, with 120MW generating and a further 200MW to be installed by the end of 2008. Their connection to the north-east is of course that they have supplied the turbines for the Beatrice wind demonstrator project in the Moray Firth.

It was pleasing to see the Best Renewables Project Award go to a biomass project this year – the opening of the Steven's Croft Biomass power station near Lockerbie. This is Scotland's largest biomass energy plant, which will deliver 44MW to power 70,000 homes. It will also create 340 direct and indirect local jobs, and uses only sustainable and locally produced wood, waste timber, and coppice. This success helps to support the growing number of biomass projects coming forward in the north-east too.

The Best Community Award – which last year was won by Aberdeenshire's Boynzie Wind Farm Co-operative – stays on the east coast with a win for the Angus Village Halls Renewable Energy Group. This is a network of communities in rural Tayside who have come together supported by SCARF's Tayside Development Officer, to develop renewable energy projects. They have gained experience of installing eight different renewable energy technologies, in the village halls of Menmuir, Lethnot, Letham, Kingsmuir and Kilry.

The AREG-sponsored Best Business Achievement Award went to Sgurr Energy – an independent engineering consultancy specialising in renewable energy. Their turnover has grown by 30% year on year since formation in 2002, and employee numbers grown 400% over the period. They have worked on major Scottish projects such as Whitelee wind farm (322MW), and are now diversifying into overseas work in 20 countries in Europe, Asia and North America, and into wave/tidal power.

For the Best Renewable Innovation Award, we were all rooting for short-listed local company Stuart Milne Group, who earlier this year exhibited their Sigma home at the BRE Innovation park in Watford. This was the first house in the UK to meet the requirements of the 5-star rating under the Code for Sustainable Homes. But it was not to be their evening and the award went to the EMEC Tidal Test Facility in Orkney. This is the world's first such facility, providing the opportunity for both domestic and foreign technology developers to trial their devices.

Finally the Award for Outstanding Contribution went to wind turbine developer Gordon Proven of Proven Energy, who has been developing small scale devices for 30 years.

All in all, it was a spectacular display of success across the whole range of renewable technologies. And very enjoyable too, with vocal entertainment from Karen Matheson of Capercaillie. We hear that next year's event cannot be held in the National Museum – which is due to be refurbished.

But I'm sure that wherever it is, we'll see at the end of 2008 another great year for Scottish renewables. ■