

RECENT (Renewable Community Empowerment in Northern Territories) is a project part funded by the Northern Periphery and Arctic Programme (Interreg 2014 - 2020), which started on the 1st September 2015. The Lead Partner is International Resources and Recycling Institute (IRRI) www.irri.org.uk from Scotland, with partners from Sweden, Finland, Northern Ireland and Ireland. The activity in Scotland is restricted to the Highlands and Islands region with potential for some activity in Dumfries and Galloway.

The RECENT project aims to increase energy knowledge in rural communities, and help them to have more resilient and energy efficient public infrastructure capable of handling climate change related risks. The project will develop 24 pilot community energy and energy efficiency projects across 5 NPA partner countries, with focus on the innovative use of community-owned water assets.

A previous project, Water Asset Renewable Energy Solutions (WARES) www.waresnpp.eu demonstrated that small communities in the NPA region need help to identify and explore their hidden resources and build capacity. RECENT will meet this demand and leave a lasting legacy through tangible solutions and improved level of organisational knowledge. The target communities are small, remote, and face challenges to public infrastructure, such as competing uses for land and water, combined with climate change impacts. RECENT will support communities to become more energy-self-sufficient by developing small-scale solutions, building synergy between critical public infrastructure. Synergistic solutions will include energy recovery from waste water (waste heat and biogas), co-digestion of sewage and bio-waste, land-use of digestate as well as a range of additional technologies appropriate to each region. The innovation comes from exploring a range of new solutions in the water-land-energy nexus and applying the appropriate solution to the needs of the communities.

The objectives of the project are:

- To increase the capacity of communities to develop their own solutions for reliable, energy efficient public infrastructure;
- To maximise energy asset management, in water services;
- Knowledge exchange programme leading to increased awareness and a sustainable public policy;
- Robust, sustainable community projects that will be self sufficient post NPA funding.

The outputs of the project will be:

- 24 pilot energy projects (A minimum of 5 in Scotland) in 5 NPA countries with community benefits and tangible impacts;
- 6 of the pilots will demonstrate symbiotic solutions of energy use of by-products;
- Benchmarking pilot solutions to gain benefit from the transnational collaboration;
- A knowledge exchange programmes, with workshops best practice guidelines and templates to improve the stock of organisational knowledge and positive impact on public policy.
- Contribution to policy and debate on sustainable community energy at regional, national and European levels through the development of a multi-level stakeholder group, interacting nationally and trans-nationally, with the RECENT partners who will act as the secretariat.

To address these issues, a transnational partnership has been established which combines research expertise in renewable energy and resource efficiency, communities' Climate Strategies, business development and innovation as well as in the use and application of co-design and co-production methods.

Ewan Ramsay, Project Manager, said, "RECENT offers an exciting opportunity to really make a difference to a number of remote, rural communities who are situated in Northern Europe. Changing climate and the ongoing development of renewable energy solutions provides a platform for these communities to adapt their local economies and ensure that they can plan for a sustainable future. RECENT is delighted to receive support in Scotland from Scottish Government Energy and Climate Change Directorate, Highlands and Islands Enterprise Community Engagement team, Local Energy Scotland and Scottish Water; in Northern Ireland from Northern Irish Water; in Ireland from the National Federation of Group Water Schemes and in Sweden from the National Association of Swedish Eco-Municipalities and sees this project as a real opportunity to work closer than ever with all of the relevant stakeholders, by placing the needs of the communities at the heart of everything we do."

