



**Interreg
Europe**



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DOSSIER

6th Interregional Event
Devon, England
11th & 12th May 2022





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Introduction

Development of successful projects relies upon the sharing of knowledge and experiences. The interregional learning that is facilitated through the process of AgroRES is of key importance to ensuring best practice, enabling cooperation, and reaching the desired objectives.

This sixth Interregional Event was held in Exeter, England in May 2022 and hosted by Devon County Council. The previous events have been held in Spain, Ireland and Finland. Through the constant process of collective learning and experience sharing, done through talks, workshops, seminars, site visits and stakeholder interaction, a greater shared knowledge is developed that increases cooperation and project development.

“The main objective is to develop measures that encourage the production and use of renewable energy in the agricultural and rural sector. AgroREs will support this sector by solving its energy needs in a sustainable, economic viable and socially responsible way.”





Summary: 6th Interregional Event in Exeter, England (11th – 12th May 2020)

On the 11th and 12th of May 2022 the AgroRES interregional conference put renewable community energy at the forefront of the agenda for this event. FIRESPOL seeks to boost regionally specialized and decentralized Renewable Energy Private Investment and find new solutions for the move towards a low carbon economy.

The event was hosted in the historic city of Exeter by Devon County Council. Bringing together close to 30 participants from 7 countries around Europe to exchange knowledge, experiences and passions surrounding renewable energy production and its uses within the agricultural sector. Devon County Council hosted the event, with attendees from Poland, Romania, Spain, Finland, Italy, Ireland and the United Kingdom coming from diverse backgrounds

The first day presentations were made from local organisations, TRESOC and the Dartmoor Wood-fuel Co-operative as well as national organisation Regen. The presentations provided insight into the desire and availability to produce and consume renewable energy within Devon, through solar and hydro power as well as through the use of biomass. The community-based element provides empowerment and autonomy to local people, helping to protect against fuel insecurity whilst keeping economic benefits within the area.

These talks focused on policy choices that had helped and hindered their success as well as the different financial channels that were used. This information informed further discussions between delegates and stakeholders.

Within the second half of the first day this information was used alongside FINERPOL-AgroRES knowledge to conduct a workshop where a SWOT analysis was performed by groups to evaluate action plans. Ideas were also shared that constructively critiqued plans and projects helping to transfer best practices and improve future action plans.

Additional visits were made to sites that had diversified in order to maintain profits and improve environmental sustainability. One site uses anaerobic digestion to create methane that can then be used for fuel on the farm as well as sold to create extra income. Alongside this a visit to Drakes Farm, where youth education surrounding farming is prioritised, was made to show the group the other possibilities within agricultural diversification as well as the importance of education within food systems and sustainability.



Day 1 Agenda

6th Interregional Event of the FIRESPOL Project
11-12th May 2022

11th May AgroRES x FINERPOL Conference

TIME	ACTIVITY
10:30	Arrive at Dartington
10:30-11:00	Morning tea and coffee
11:00	Introduction Presentations
11:10	REGEN presentation on the community energy sector in Devon (Ky Hoare)
11:35	TRESOC presentation on Totnes Renewable Energy Society (Ian Bright)
12:00	Presentation on Dartmoor Wood Fuel (Andy Bradford)
12:30	Lunch Break
14:00	FINERPOL presentation and AgroRES workshop
16:00	Depart from Dartington to Exeter (South Street)
18:00	Meet outside Exeter Cathedral for a historic tour of Exeter (Exeter Red Coats)
19:30	Dinner at Rockfish Restaurant



Study Visit 1 – Dartington Hall Presentations



1 Ky Hoare: Regen providing an overview of key policies programmes and initiatives that shaped the sector

Ky Hoare, project manager of Regen – an independent centre of energy expertise and market insights within the UK – provided insight into key policies, programmes and initiatives that have shaped the sector.

Regen's mission is to transform the energy sector, accelerating the move to a zero-carbon energy system through advocating for policies and funding that provide long-term support for energy projects.

The sector is resilient and adaptable.

Important lessons include:

- Policies must focus on urban and rural energy funds that focus on building capacity
- Local communities and public bodies must be involved in community-based energy, with local and shared ownership and commitments to buying community-owned energy
- Local authorities can support community energy through:
 - Grants
 - Training
 - Supporting meetings and networking





Totnes Renewable Energy Society (TRESOC) managing director Ian Bright provided a specific example of a local renewable society, tracing actions that have helped and hindered the movement to successfully incorporate community energy within society. Most recently, TRESOC was recently awarded a £25,000 grant from Team Devon's Covid 19 Economic Recovery & Business Prospectus Fund to develop a Totnes Energy Local Club which would allow the consumer to pay less whilst the generator receives more. These projects support local communities in building resilience within the transition to net-zero and creating a just transition.

2 Ian Bright: TRESOC (Totnes Renewable Energy Society) financial and policy implications of renewable energy explored

Andy Bradford, farmer of a 700 acre farm that has heavily diversified, discussed how one of these strategies is founding the Dartmoor Wood-fuel Co-operative, formed in 2009 through a grant awarded by the Bio Energy Infrastructure Scheme. In 2014, Rural Development Programme England funding secured storage of biomass chips, with funding in 2019 increasing capacity to 3000m³. Funding was key to the success of the co-operative which now supplies their membership's 35 wood chip boilers. Members facilitate the growth of locally sustainable fuel sources and benefit from well-priced quality goods. The production of this biomass form also encourages environmental improvement through better forest management.



3 Andy Bradford: Dartmoor wood-fuel co-operative - the benefits of using biomass in certain places for energy production, increasing biodiversity and forest management



Study Visit 2 – FINERPOL Workshop





12th May AgroRES Conference

TIME	ACTIVITY
08:35	Meet outside Exeter cathedral entrance (see above map)
08:45	Depart on coach from South Street to Bennamanns
10:30	Arrive at Bennamanns
10:45	Tour of Bennamanns
11:30	Depart on Coach to Higher Fingle Farm
12:30	Arrive at Higher Fingle Farm for lunch
13:15	Short talk from Devon County Councils farm estates manager (Dan Meek)
13:45	Depart on coach to Parish Farm
14:15	Arrive at Parish Farm
14:20	Tour of Parish Farm
15:00	Short talk about anaerobic digestion (Angela Bywater)
15:15	Depart on coach to Exeter
15:45	Arrive at Exeter St David's Station



Site Visit 1 – Bennamanns Farm Visit

Trennance farm in Tideford was the first place to be visited. The farm uses a biomethane slurry lagoon which captures fugitive methane from slurry and converts it into compressed gas to use as fuel.

The county owned farm went into partnership with Bennamann, a developer of these types of projects as part of their initial plot schemes that are running across the county of Cornwall. By capturing the methane before it is released it can be captured and extracted.

The farm has invested in a tractor that runs on this methane. A tour of the farm showed how the methane was captured alongside the different instruments that are involved in extraction. Bennamanns is using this in a mobile sense, allowing them to move between sites with the equipment needed whilst saving money for those using it, making it more financially viable.



4 Slurry Pit Gas Collector





6 Cow Shed - Slurry Flows downwards and is collected straight into the slurry pit



5 Methane Tractor



Site Visit 2 – Drake Farm and Café

Our second visit took us to Drakes farm and Café, another county owned farm. The visit here allowed all the delegates to connect more with Devon as well as exchange knowledge about farming practices and diversification within the agriculture sector.

Unfortunately, due to time constraints we could not visit the last location planned, Parish Farm. Instead, we extended the time spent at Drakes Farm and had longer talks from Dan Meek and Angela Bywater.

Dan discussed the County Farms estates, the work that is being done to make these economically viable whilst ensuring sustainability and the adaption and diversification that is being conducted throughout Devon.

Angela Bywater further discussed anaerobic digestion. This knowledge was extremely helpful to the delegates and stakeholders and tied in well with the morning farm visit.

