



Anglesey Marine Energy

Sustainable Management of Natural Resources

HARNESSING THE POWER OF NATURE

Anglesey, which has over 220 square miles of unspoilt natural landscapes, is a haven for wildlife. With an abundance of bug life, nesting seabirds, wild flowers and many other species, the island boasts an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

Yet, Anglesey's enviable attributes extend far beyond dry land. The island also has a fantastic natural resource on its coastline - it has one of the strongest tidal resources in Europe.

Menter Môn, a social enterprise and Local Action Group (LAG), which delivers the LEADER rural development programme on Anglesey, has always strived to add value to the region's resources, whether it is the language, the heritage or agricultural produce.

Through LEADER, Menter Môn invites and encourages local people, businesses and communities to come forward with innovative ideas and sustainable solutions to address some of the economic, social and environmental challenges facing their rural communities.

In 2011, Menter Môn recognised the huge potential of harnessing the expanse of water off the island's coastline and, using the LEADER approach, began to explore opportunities for tidal energy. During this time, Menter Môn also established important relationships with key individuals, together with an understanding of the sector, creating a strong foundation for the project.

With Menter Môn's considerable experience of delivering LEADER in the region, together with a greater understanding of tidal energy, the concept of adding value to the tide was gaining momentum. The ambitious project would bring business and jobs to the island's rural communities, while providing the potential capacity to power over 180,000 homes with clean tidal energy.

BENEFITS OF THE FUNDING

The tidal stream energy project has taken a decade of planning and consultation work, bridging the past two rounds of the Rural Development Programme.

Under the Sustainable Management of Natural Resources theme, LEADER funding was instrumental in the initial stages of the project and was used to support a bid to the Crown Estates for the West Anglesey Demonstration Zone in 2013. Following the success of the bid, LEADER funding was also used to undertake initial studies to gauge the opportunities. In total, the project received approximately £100,000 of LEADER support.

By 2016, the project was known as 'Morlais' and gained Crown Estate approval of moving the zone further north, attracting interest from developers. Work began on the Environmental Impact Assessment consultation with statutory consultees and representative fishing organisations.

The location for the substation was agreed in 2017, and an application was made to Welsh Government for a capacity of 240MW, followed by the submission of Environmental Impact Assessment scoping in 2018.



Public information events followed in March and June, 2019, and in September that year, a consent application was submitted to Welsh Government (Transport and Works Act Order), as well as a Marine Licence Application to Natural Resources Wales.

In March 2020, Further Environmental Information was submitted and further consultation took place with Welsh Government, as well as Natural Resources Wales in July.

The Morlais zone received full planning consent in 2022, and developers from around the world have signed up to deploy their technology in the zone. The Morlais project is the largest community energy project in the world and is a project of global significance for the tidal energy industry.

THE FUTURE'S BRIGHT...

In 2022, the Morlais project received £31 million of Welsh Government / Wales European Funding Office (WEFO) support, which will enable the building of the infrastructure to be completed by the end of 2023. The initial LEADER approach has ensured that local communities and businesses will benefit from the project and as such, a contract worth £28 million has been awarded to a local Welsh company, Jones Bros Civil Engineering, to carry out the building work.

“Morlais owes everything to LEADER. The programme has always provided flexibility to explore and interrogate, which has been fundamental to the project’s inception.

“Without the shared vision and continued support from our partners, Morlais would simply be a pipe dream. We are very lucky to have such a committed partnership, drawing on expertise, advice and guidance to get that much closer to a greener, cleaner energy produced on our doorstep.

“And yet, we have another huge asset here – our local young people. An increasing number of young people are leaving their rural communities to seek better quality work in large towns and cities, so the project will not only offer long-term quality jobs on the island and the wider north Wales region, but also offer training opportunities.

“It is important to protect our local economy and we all need to play our part in working toward net zero. Morlais will provide a positive contribution to tackling climate change and creating quality employment opportunities. What we can do for our rural communities and the environment today will have a positive impact for future generations.”

Dafydd Gruffydd, managing director of Menter Môn

