

Goats' dung could give farm renewable power

A green project to power Dartington with dung has been given a £18,000 grant to fund a feasibility study.

The study will look at how to set up a 100kW anaerobic digester producing energy from farmyard manure at Old Parsonage Farm on the Dartington Hall estate.

Totnes Renewable Energy Society has won the grant funding for the feasibility study from the Rural Community Energy Fund.

If the study proves the renewable energy scheme is commercially viable, the Totnes energy group would be looking at raising cash for its construction through a community share offer, so that the plant is owned by the local community – ensuring the economic benefits from the project are shared locally.

Jo Talling, Dartington Hall Trust's property director, said: "We welcome this research into whether an anaerobic digester would work on the estate, as there are currently large quantities of farmyard and food waste produced here that are unharvested."

"We would be very keen to add to the existing renewable systems we've been installing on the estate since 2016: the two biomass boilers heating the Green Table Cafe, listed Dartington Hall courtyard buildings, the granary and Space studios, as well as a solar array. We look forward to hearing the news."

The plant would process farmyard manure with other green materials and, potentially, food wastes from cafes and restaurants on the estate.

The dung and foodwaste would be processed by anaerobic bacteria in an on-farm digestion tank to produce methane gas, which would be used to generate electricity and heat.

The spent digestate, with



Contributed

Farmer Jon Perkin and his herd of goats whose dung could help produce renewable energy, above. Right, pupils from St Christopher's School with Tresoc, making a basic Archimedes screw with pipes and elastic bands as part of the renewable energy group's education programme



valuable plant nutrients, could be used as a clean organic fertiliser on the farm.

Roger Papworth, Rural Community Energy Fund programme manager, said: "The fund was pleased to award a grant to Totnes Renewable Energy Society, as this is a great example of a community group investigating renewable energy options that the fund aims to support."

"We look forward to hearing of a positive outcome once this work has been completed."

The feasibility work will

be carried out in partnership with tenant farmer Jon Perkin at Old Parsonage Farm and Dr Phil Hobbs of Anaerobic Analytics, a leading international expert in biogas research, specialising in optimising bioenergy productivity.

Careful monitoring of the energy demand of Parsonage Farm and the wider Dartington Hall estate will be completed with Totnes-based Argand Solutions.

The grant will also be used for engaging with the local community, with the

extension of Tresoc's successful Renewable Energy Experiential Learning programme to include two more local schools.

The local community will be invited to several meetings to discuss the project, which are planned to take place early next year.

Interested parties will be invited to take part in a 'walk and talk' session, to visit the site and to ask questions about the project in an informal setting.

Tresoc's Renewable Energy Experiential Learning Project, co-deliv-

ered by the Bio-regional Learning Centre, is a four-day module for Key Stage 2 students within the Totnes area. It includes practical, hands-on making, site visits, critical thinking and presentations.

Tresoc ran the pilot project at St Christopher's Prep School, Staverton, in June this year.

Thanks to a donation from an anonymous Tresoc supporter, it was able to make a short film during the pilot to show potential sponsors and schools what the project is all about.