

UK company brings affordable home windmill to the masses

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Had asteroid Tautotis hit us last week , it would be equal to the energy release of one Hiroshima every second for 13 years !!!

How can we capture the energy of these fast moving demons? Could we attach a metal parachute to the back of T and convert the mechanical energy of the strain to electricity and beam it down to earth ? Eventually T will stop – what does stop mean in space ? We could supply all earth needs for hundreds of years from just one asteroid .

Are my articles used in school rooms across the USA and if not why not ?

Mini-turbine brings 'green power for all'

Company claims its domestic wind unit can provide 15% of average household's electricity needs

John Vidal, environment editor
Monday November 24, 2003
The Guardian

The winds of change will blow a little stronger this morning when a small Scottish company launches Britain's first wind power system designed to be fitted on almost any roof or wall to supplement electricity from the grid.

Just two days after Britain's biggest offshore wind farm started generating electricity off the north Wales coast, the designers of the tiny domestic unit believe they can provide up to 15% of the annual electricity needs of an average house for a one-off cost of £750 – bringing green electricity into the price range of most families.

The machine, a 3ft by 2ft sealed box with three blades which face into the prevailing wind, is backed by the energy minister, Brian Wilson, who is a paid consultant for Windsave, the company behind it.

Unlike old-style domestic wind generators, which needed a lot of land, sat on top of poles and drove pumps and a few bulbs for farmers and

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backwoodsmen, the machine does not need batteries to store the electricity. Instead, it tops up the existing mains supply.

Unlike bigger systems, it cannot sell excess power back into the grid. But the company believes it has cracked the holy grail of renewable energy – getting government subsidies and making the machines silent.

In theory, there are handouts both for installation and for "Rocs" – renewable obligation charges – which currently pay green electricity providers about 6p per kilowatt-hour generated.

The system, says the Scottish inventor David Gordon, who has pumped £1m into the idea, can generate up to 750 watts – enough to power lights but not high-energy items such as kettles or heaters.

"Nobody has been able to take raw wind power and put it straight into the domestic electrical system at 240 volts," he said. "We will be able to bring green energy to the masses."

Mr Wilson, who has declared his interest in the company on the House of Commons register and has no financial share in it, was enthusiastic. "I have looked at it upside down and sideways for a catch and I don't think there is one. The amazing thing is its affordability.

"It will be a few hundred quid, you do your bit for the environment, and you get a cheque back once a year. What more can you want? It's been though all the standard checks and everyone who's seen it is of the same opinion."

Mr Gordon admits that his invention is not as technically efficient as turbines sited on high poles to collect the optimum wind, but says that it is the annual supplementing of household electricity which makes it suitable for buildings. The machine starts working at a wind speed of 3mph and is said to be most efficient in a 20mph breeze – common for much of the year across large parts of Britain.

Using the remote metering technology which made Mr Gordon's fortune after he sold his company to BT, each unit installed will be automatically phoned every quarter to see how much electricity it has generated.

The company will then collect the subsidy from the government and distribute it back to owners according to how much they have generated. "We believe the payback period could be as little as 30 months," said Mr Gordon.

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The British Wind Energy Association, which represents large-scale windpower generators, professed itself amazed at the development. "If it works, it's fantastic," said spokeswoman Alison Hill.

Yesterday it was provisionally backed by Country Guardian, the lobby group which has opposed almost every planning application submitted for windpower development in Britain in the past decade.

"I think they are a good idea. I don't think they'll look very beautiful, but we always feel that it's the people in cities who use the power and that we in the country have to pay the price," said Ann Evans, a vice-president.

Local planners may be divided about whether the innovations need planning permission. Technically, they do not, says Mr Gordon, if they are sited below the highest point of houses. But many local authorities and heritage groups objected strongly at first to satellite dishes, and may not want to see large boxes with spinning blades put up.

The machines are to be made outside Edinburgh. Local authorities, government offices and light industry will be targeted first, followed by householders in about three months.

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Special report

Renewable energy

The issue explained

14.12.2001: Renewable energy