

Tyrone discovers the power of wind as Airtricity opens Slieve Divena Wind Farm

Northern Ireland's Cheapest Home Electricity Supplier hosts family fun day for Global Wind Week

Local Ballygawley man has got the power after winning a year's free electricity from Airtricity at family event

The community of Co. Tyrone came out in its droves last weekend (Saturday 19 June) to discover the power of wind as Airtricity – Northern Ireland's newest and cheapest home electricity supplier – hosted a Family Fun Day at Slieve Divena Wind Farm.

Visitors from across the county and beyond attended the fun family event for an opportunity to experience the benefits of wind energy up close at the 12-turbine Slieve Divena Wind Farm. The energy generated by Airtricity at Slieve Divena is helping to ensure that Northern Ireland meets its targets of 12% renewables by 2012 and the EU's mandatory 20% reduction in carbon emissions by 2020.

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The Slieve Divena Family Fun Day was hosted by Airtricity and its parent company SSE (Scottish and Southern Energy plc), Northern Ireland's largest generator and developer of renewable energy. The event was part of Wind Week 2010, the annual UK-wide celebration of wind energy which promotes wind energy as a clean, infinite, non-fossil fuel energy source.

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The entertaining and informative Airtricity event provided members of the local community of all ages with an opportunity to experience the wind farm up close. Visitors embarked on escorted site tours of Slieve Divena where they experienced energy made better by SSE at close range, and explored how a wind turbine works from inside the base of a turbine. Young visitors to the wind farm were invited to 'touch a turbine' and leave a painted handprint on the base of a turbine to mark the occasion.

Elsewhere at the nearby Kelly's Inn at Ballygawley, young and old visitors alike enjoyed a gala community party co-hosted by Airtricity and SSE which included a free barbecue and refreshments, face painters and balloon modellers, and bouncy castles. A highlight of the event was an exciting, fun and interactive science show for children designed to spark imaginative learning and awareness of energy.

One lucky visitor, Eamonn McCaffrey from Ballygawley, discovered he had the power when he won a year's free home electricity from Airtricity – Northern Ireland's newest and cheapest home electricity supplier. Eamonn was one of hundreds of visitors to the event to make the better switch to Airtricity for home electricity – each new customer will now save up to 14% on their electricity costs, equivalent to 7 weeks free home electricity or a typical annual saving of £95 on their NIE Energy bills*. Airtricity, which already supplies electricity to Northern Ireland businesses, is the first energy supplier to enter the market since Northern Ireland's domestic electricity market was 'opened' to competition in 2007.

The Slieve Divena Wind Farm is located just off the Omagh Road in Garvaghy, Co. Tyrone. The 30MW wind farm, which comprises 12 Nordex 2.5MW turbines, was completed in March 2009. The wind farm produces enough electricity to power over 16,000 homes and will prevent the release of

between 27,000 and 65,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide each year. Each of the wind farm's 12 turbines is fully automated and can be operated remotely. They are variable pitch, variable speed machines which makes them more efficient and quieter. The turbines produce power in winds from 5mph to 50mph.

In excess of £215 million will be invested by Airtricity into Northern Ireland's rural economy over the next 25 years through the development of wind generation projects in the area, including an investment of over £65 million into the provision of local services, projects and jobs in the community. This investment makes Airtricity the largest net contributor of any renewable energy company to the Tyrone and Fermanagh region. The company also makes significant investments annually into the local community under the Airtricity Community Fund. Over £1 million is expected to be paid over 25 years, the expected life of the wind farms, to community projects in Tyrone and Fermanagh from these wind farms alone. The first applications under the new Slieve Divena Community Fund will be invited later this year.

Editor's Notes:

1. *Households in Northern Ireland can now save £95 annually with Airtricity on their electricity bills. Customers with an annual electricity bill of £676 (inclusive of 5% VAT, based on typical annual consumption of 4,500 kWh) who switches to Airtricity's SmartSaver Online 14% electricity discount (eBill and Direct Debit) will pay just £581 – saving £95 annually.
2. Airtricity's up to 14% discounted electricity rates are based on comparison to regulated NIE Energy standard Quarterly-billed Home Energy rates (Domestic 24hr), valid to 30th September 2011. Up to 6% discounted SmartSaver Standard rates apply after introductory rate expires. No Standing Charges apply to Domestic 24hr rates. A cooling off period of 10 days applies before registration is finalised.

About Airtricity & SSE:

Airtricity is a wholly-owned division of the Top-30 FTSE 100-listed company SSE (Scottish and Southern Energy plc) Group, the broadest-based energy utility in Great Britain and Ireland, supplying electricity and gas to 9.35 million homes and businesses.

Airtricity is the first energy utility to enter the Northern Ireland domestic electricity supply market offering the most competitive discounts of up to 14% on NIE Energy electricity rates. Airtricity has been supplying over 10,000 business customers in Northern Ireland since 2002. In the Republic of Ireland, Airtricity supplies 200,000 customers with cheaper electricity. The company was named the Republic of Ireland's most reputable energy company in the recent Ireland RepTrak 2010 study.

SSE operates 6 wind farms powering Airtricity in Northern Ireland and is the No.1 renewable energy generator and developer in the region with 182MW in operation, in construction or with consent for development. The company operates a further 18 wind farms across the rest of the island, with an all-island total of over 700MW of renewable generation in operation, in construction or with consent for development.

SSE Renewables is responsible for the development and construction of SSE Group's portfolio of renewable energy projects in Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland, Great Britain and Europe, including onshore and offshore wind, hydro, marine, biomass, and solar. SSE is the leading generator of renewable energy in the UK and Ireland, with over 2,200MW of renewable electricity generation capacity and a portfolio of over 15,000MW of renewable energy projects in construction, with consent or in development.