

The co-operative wind turbine

A new innovative approach to windfarms could, at last, make them more popular and community friendly. Bringing the benefits and the profits home to local communities. Daniël Dubbelhuis, Account Manager Netherlands at Lagerwey tells us how.



Daniël Dubbelhuis

Large multi megawatt parks in concentrated areas developed by anonymous big developers - ensure further anonymization of wind turbines. Local residents feel that they get saddled with a problem that they have not asked for, resulting in a growing resistance to on land wind turbines.

The last 10-20 years have shown how not to develop wind projects. The parties ultimately end up in court, each trying to get their own way. In the meantime sustainable energy becomes a conflict between developers and local residents.

Why do we develop both large and small wind farms in this way? Why with each project achieved do we create more resistance to wind power? Shouldn't the sustainability aspect also be reflected in the relationship between all the actors in a project?

From these thoughts a new concept is being designed by us at Lagerwey. It is the co-operative wind turbine, where the manufacturer not only ensures a perfectly working wind turbine, but also takes a role in strengthening relationships and involvement in the development area. Additionally, the intention is to help the people in the vicinity, both as a client and as the ultimate owner of its own wind turbines.

The future is in locally rooted wind farms. Of course it is still necessary to explore a municipality or region fully, to find the best place, but in my view we have to develop wind turbines with and in local communities, who consequently will receive the benefits. Wind development has an often forgotten social aspect and historically that is nothing new. Centuries ago, there was the community mill. The mill in a village or town ground the flour for the community, sawed wood and kept our land dry by pumping water. Everyone benefited from this mill. This aspect should return and the wind turbine becoming a connecting element within the community. Not something that divides it.

We see more and more local initiatives. People are enthusiastic and motivated to take energy production into their own hands and they understand the benefits of being a turbine owner. All citizens, including farmers and locally based companies, pick up the gauntlet, often in close co-operation with each other. But with that enthusiasm alone, no wind project will get off the ground. A wind project development has several phases. Especially in the early stages, even now, many projects do not make it. There will be serious legal, financial and technical issues in the process. Smaller initiatives are not always able or willing to do this alone.

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At Lagerwey, as a turbine manufacturer, we have ourselves struggled for some time over how we can contribute to this movement from the bottom up. We do not own parks. But we are involved in all projects, throughout the entire process. There's a lot of experience and more importantly, a rich network. We want to focus on supporting local initiatives - that's a win-win situation for all parties. We believe more local projects will come off the ground. We hope to be the supplier of these projects and the communities will benefit, not only from producing its own renewable energy, but also gain an economic advantage.

We also want to bring wind turbines literally closer to the people. For example we do this through guided tours in our factory in Barneveld, making wind turbines less detached and anonymous.

How does it work exactly? Lagerwey brings so-called ‘kitchen table developers’ and local stakeholders together and gives advice during the first phases of the wind project. Kitchen table developers, meaning wind professionals, who have years of experience in the implementation of smaller wind projects and often locally supported. They also believe in the power of the projects supported by the bottom up drive, including finance and managing. They work

as a guide, without taking over the project. The ownership and benefits have to remain with the co-operation or local initiative.

The financing of wind projects deserves special attention. The needed financials run quickly in to the millions and as the cost mounts, a smart and reliable construction is needed to deliver the benefits. Lagerwey has contacts with parties that develop and offer innovative solutions for this, such as crowdfunding, participation projects and low interest loan schemes. In addition, there are private investors (including wind mill owners) who want to invest their money in green, sustainable, new wind projects.

So Lagerwey itself remains involved in setting up a project, providing advice and expertise. We cannot develop the project, but will advise and bring the necessary expertise needed to create a socially and economically successful project.

For now the concept will be tested in the Netherlands and strengthened further, tailored to fit the needs that exist within co-operations and local initiatives. After that the concept will be examined and be rolled out in other countries where Lagerwey operates.

Lagerwey will launch the initiative this spring. More information will soon be available on www.lagerwey.com