

Renewables in the Caribbean

ITPenergised part of the rise of clean technologies looking to tackle the region's energy challenge

ITPenergised are developing strong links in the Caribbean renewable energy industry with new and emerging opportunities across the sector. It is clear that the prospects are abundant across the region not only due to excellent, year-round solar resources but much more across technologies including onshore and offshore wind, marine energy, bioenergy and waste. As well as generation, given the number of island communities, there are also major opportunities to re-think and re-work grids to make them smarter, more resilient and ready for an influx of new renewables generation.

Unfortunately, the scale of the challenge is just as diverse as the opportunity; from the need for basic energy access to be provided in some regions such as Haiti, where less than half of people are connected to a power supply; to a complex and costly picture for oil and gas with only one major producer in the region, Trinidad and Tobago, and increasingly unstable imports from markets such as Venezuela.

Other challenges include the need to upskill a new generation of renewable energy practitioners, the lack of a proven route to market for developers and financiers, and the need for stable and secure energy supplies to protect against disruption from major storms and hurricanes.

Although the challenges are complex, it is clear that renewables are the only option for creating a self-sustaining, reliable and of course environmentally friendly energy sector which can increase economic growth and improve social standards.

ITPenergised has been analysing the threats and opportunities as part of our work to develop a Strategic Plan for the Caribbean Centre for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency (the CCREEE). The CCREEE's work will focus on making donor-supported programmes more effective, utilising local knowledge and contacts to make international assistance work for those most in need in the region, as well as supporting the development of the Caribbean private sector, making use of local research and development capabilities, and helping to build capacity and skills.

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We are also working with other new partners and projects in different parts of the region, including in Jamaica and Barbados. Our work ranges from feasibility studies for offshore wind projects to providing technical support to design new solar developments. Although for some of these projects, there is still a clear reliance on donor-funding, we're encouraged by the enthusiasm and expertise that developers and Governments in region show, as the real potential for the industry becomes clear. We're also seeing more signs that politicians in the region are serious about making renewables work, underlined by the recent announcements by the Prime Minister of Jamaica, Andrew Holness,

who has committed to transitioning to 50 percent renewable electricity by 2030, and the even more ambitious 100% target for 2030 announced by Barbados.

We're looking to meet as many contacts interested in the market as possible to outline how we might be able to assist as our experience grows across the region. Part of these efforts included attending events in Manchester and Bristol this July, where we were invited by the UK Government's Department for International Trade to meet with the Caribbean Development Bank and other businesses in the sector to explore how our expertise can further support the successful growth of renewable energy projects, with the ultimate aim of realising the huge potential and numerous benefits on offer to the region.