

Arde fully depends on solar power now - 17.04.2013

The generator has been switched off on Arde island and the nature reserve is now using electricity made from the sun by solar panels.



A press release from the reserve – whose details we hope to publish on Saturday – says the island is now functioning on solar power from a newly installed renewable energy system comprising a series of panels, a 5 kilowatt inverter and 20 batteries.

One of the eight permanent workers on the island told us they are depending on the new form of electricity for all purposes “including powering refrigerators, lights and computers”.

“The direct current generated is converted to the same kind of alternating current used in any house,” he said.

“The new installation is in line with the goal of the Island Conservation Society (ICS) – which owns and manages the island – to promote ‘green’ and sustainable eco-tourism on it,” said the communiqué.

“The project is being divided into two phases and is primarily aimed at reducing the island’s demand for fossil fuels.

“Phase one is being funded by the Australian High Commission Direct Aid Programme and WHL Energy Ltd with a contribution of R415,500, while phase II – which is set to start in October 2013 with R630,000 funding from the United Nations Development Programme/GEF Small Grants Programme – will help to boost this system by reducing reliance on diesel.

The ICS says the programme will also serve as a model for other small scale renewable energy and nature conservation projects on remote islands, as well as serve as a tool to educate younger generation and make them aware of the threat of climate change on human-wellbeing, ecosystem services and functioning.



The island's managers described the photovoltaic system they are using as "a form of clean and quiet electrical energy generation technology which poses no adverse effect to the environment such as air pollution, noise pollution or oil spillage".

"The process involves simply the collection and conversion of sunlight energy by photovoltaic cells into electrical energy which can be used directly or stored in a battery.

"Maintenance associated with this technology is normally simple and can be performed by the users themselves and includes no battery maintenance except for periodic checks, panel cleaning, cleaning and greasing of battery poles. This therefore makes the associated maintenance cost relatively low."