European Network for Rural Development

Setting up a renewable energy visitor centre in Feldheim – Germany

EAFRD-funded projects

GERMANY

Implementing Local Development Strategies

Location
Feldheim

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Axis / Priority
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Private 495 901

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Project promoter
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RDP funding helped convert a disused building into an inspiring renewable energy visitor centre in Feldheim – Germany's first village to be supplied with 100 % renewable energy.

Summary

Feldheim is an energy self-sufficient village in Brandenburg, Germany. Households and companies are supplied with electricity and heat from their own wind energy and photovoltaic plants. Meanwhile, biogas plants are linked to a local heat and power grid.

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RDP funding helped convert a disused building into a new centre to cater for the village's many visitors from around the world and provide information and training about innovative renewable energy.

Results

Feldheim has attracted hundreds of visitors from Germany, Europe, Japan, South Africa and New Zealand who are inspired by the new renewable energy technologies.

Approximately 3 500 visitors per year use the different information experiences on offer at the visitor's centre.

The "New Energy Forum" contributes to establish Feldheim as a recognised educational location on renewable energy.

One new job was created.

Lessons & Recommendations

- ❑ Investing in renewable energies in a city or municipality creates a positive image of the area and sparks public interest in finding innovative energy solutions.
- ❑ Environmentally friendly energy offers a vast range of solutions from which rural areas can benefit. Feldheim now aims to expanded beyond renewable energy to focus on energy efficiency and transport solutions.

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Context

Feldheim is a village dominated by agriculture in Treuenbrietzen, Brandenburg and at the same time it is the first energy-self-sustaining site in Germany. Since 2010, the 130-inhabitant village has become an internationally recognised place of renewable energies. Households and companies are supplied with electricity and heat from their own wind energy and photovoltaic plants.

Biogas plants are linked to a separate local heating and power grid. All inhabitants are independently supplied with stable, reliable and cost-effective energy, so that costs and dependencies on the networks of the traditional energy suppliers are avoided.

Feldheim has received several awards for its commitment to renewable energies. For example, it was awarded a “Bioenergiedorf” in 2010. In 2014, the village received the German Solar Prize for building an autonomous energy supply based on renewable energies.

Feldheim attracts a growing number of visitors - especially politicians and media as well as those interested in the energy sector. So the residents wanted to give a focus to the constant stream of visitors and share their own experiences.

Furthermore, it is important to raise awareness of renewable energies as much as possible, and to showcase new technologies that bring innovative energy generation closer to citizens.

Objectives

The aim of the project was to preserve the typical village structure in Feldheim, while at the same time provide information and knowledge transfer on renewable energies.

This is to be achieved by the promotion, development and expansion of educational programs for children, young people and adults.

Networking and exchanges are further objectives, as is the pooling of competences on the economical and efficient use of energy.

Activities

To provide comprehensive information to the many visitors to Feldheim, and to cope with the crowds, the “New Energy Forum Feldheim e.V.” was founded. The main task of the association was to renovate a former inn and rebuild it into a visitor and information centre - the so-called "New Energy Forum Feldheim” (NEF).

The NEF information and advisory centre was housed in a four-sided courtyard dating from the turn of the century, which for a long time was the village restaurant and was then empty. With the help of the European Agricultural Fund (EAFRD), the courtyard was converted into an information and advisory centre.

The inner courtyard offers areas for exhibitions, such as a walk-in wind energy construction and a place to experiment. The NEF offers information events and consultations on renewable energies and energy efficiency, school projects and visits as well as the "Experience Renewable Energies“ exhibition.

In addition, the information and advisory centre focuses on youth work. The NEF offers pupils a four to five hour project day. The students learn about Feldheim, and gain profound knowledge on energy generation, energy storage and energy transport. School classes are divided into groups of up to 15 pupils in order to create a more individual learning atmosphere. When visiting the wind farm, pupils learn how a modern wind turbine works. Current wind and performance data can be read and aerodynamic characteristics can be illustrated.

The function of a biogas plant can be explained as well as the microbiological processes in the fermenter. The acquired knowledge is applied in an experiment, in which each pupil can produce biogas. Participants can learn how heat and electricity are generated in the combined heat and power plant from the biogas.

In addition, measurements are made on photovoltaic modules in the practice section, which can be used to determine the appropriate location and the effect of shading or contamination of the modules.

A meeting room with flexible spaces is integrated into the exhibition area. Lectures and panel discussions on current topics relating to renewable energies are also offered in the New Energy Forum

Furthermore the “New Energy Forum Feldheim e.V. website offers information on Feldheim, the projects, the guided tours, and how the energy supply works.

Main Results

With its various approaches and numerous possibilities for sustainable energy, Feldheim sets an example. Hundreds of visitors, whether from the region, from Europe or Japan, South Africa or New Zealand, testify to being inspired by the new technologies.

Interest in innovative, environmentally sound and regenerative energy generation is strengthened so that the use of renewable energies can be expanded in the future.

Approximately 3 500 visitors per year use the different information experiences on offer.

The "New Energy Forum" is contributing to establish Feldheim as a recognised educational location.

One new job could be created.

"The trip to Feldheim was a complete success. The guided tour was excellent. We can warmly recommend it to everyone. It was a lot of fun and we hope that it will delight many more classes. Our tip: in sunny weather the atmosphere is best."

Andreas Buchwald, secondary school Berlin-Steglitz

Key lessons

Feldheim's numerous awards prove that investments in renewable energies lead to a positive image for cities and municipalities. Municipalities that can demonstrate they help solve global energy problems on the ground spark public interest.

After the successful supply of Feldheim with electricity and heat from renewable energy sources, moves on energy efficiency and mobility are planned. Visitors can now reach the village using electromobiles. A bus line from Treuenbrietzen train station to Feldheim will be established. For bike riders, there are bicycles in Treuenbrietzen available for rent, as well as two free electric bikes close to the train station.

Additional sources of information

www.eler.brandenburg.de/sixcms/detail.php/699176