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Renewable energy idea in hands of local utility firms

Thursday, July 20, 2006



Hon Arden McLean.
Minister of Communications,
Works and Infrastructure

In the face of ever rising oil cost the Government has been looking at alternative sources of energy, but for the Cayman Islands to adopt a new source of energy it will be down to the local utility firms to make the investment.

During a recent trip to the United States, government officials and delegates from the private sector took the opportunity to take a closer look at technology that uses saltwater to generate energy.

The group, which was led by Minister of Communications, Works and Infrastructure (CWI) the Hon. Arden McLean, JP, traveled to Baltimore, Maryland to meet with Sea Solar Power International (SSP).

The company has been working for the past few years on a proposed ocean thermal energy conversion (OTEC) facility and is funded by the Abell Foundation.

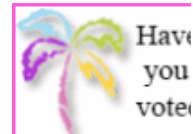
In addition to the minister, the delegation comprised of the ministry's Permanent Secretary Carson Ebanks, Department of Environmental Health Director Roydell Carter; and Assistant DEH Director Sean McGinn; Water Authority Resources Engineer Hendrick-Jan van Genderen; CUC's President Richard Hew and Vice President Andrew



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Small; Electricity Regulatory Authority, Managing Director, Phillip Thomas; and Members of the Legislative Assembly Lucille Seymour, Alfonso Wright, Rolston Anglin and Cline Glidden.

The group met with SSP President Robert Nicholson and chairmen and directors from the Abell Foundation.

A press release from Government Information Services, (GIS) said that the objectives of the meetings were to bring key players together to get a better understanding of the facility being proposed as well as to discuss the benefits, drawbacks and requirements of having an OTEC plant in the Cayman Islands.

OTEC technology is based on using the temperature differentials in deep ocean water (approximately 40 degrees F) and the surface water temperature (approximately 80 degrees F) to drive turbines.

This process produces steam, fresh water and electricity.

"A major benefit of this technology is that it provides a source of renewable energy," Mr McLean said.

"With the current price of oil, there is potential for big savings on energy costs. Additionally, as no fossil fuel will be used, the emission of greenhouse gases is eliminated."

Cayman's proposed plant is land-based. If built, it would be able to provide 10 megawatts of electricity and 3 million gallons of fresh water per day.

But in order for this technology to be put into place, Caribbean Utilities Company and the Water Authority and/or Cayman Water Company - being the lead electricity and water suppliers in the country - need to agree to purchase the power generated and the water produced.

Mr McLean said the trip was a very positive and productive fact-finding mission.

"I support this initiative, as it has the potential to be a more environmentally friendly and sustainable energy supply," he noted.

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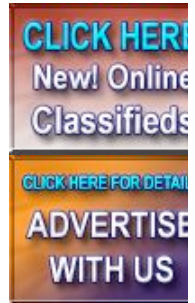
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