



Press release – Ærø EnergyLab, June 24th, 2021

Ærø most responsible island - awarded 500.000 Euro by the EU-Commission

Over decades, Ærø has made big leaps in replacing its fossil fuel based energy use with local renewable energy alternatives. The EU has now rewarded Ærø's dedicated and innovative approach to the energy transition. The EU Commission deems Ærø Europe's most energy responsible island, and rewards the Municipality of Ærø with 500.000 Euro through the RESponsible Island Prize 2020.

The prize is awarded to islands with innovative and sustainable, locally founded energy installations RESponsible Island Prize is awarded to islands with innovative and sustainable local renewable energy production for use in electricity, heating, cooling and transport. Another criteria for RESponsible Island, is that energy projects are rooted in the local community and happen with the participation of local citizens. Both the broad-spectrum implementation of projects, and local support and citizen involvement, are aspects which are very much part of Ærø's energy transition.

Ærø's energy transition is citizen driven

When Ærø's first wind park was built in 1985, it was established and funded through the sale of shares to local citizens. The same approach was in use, when the cooperative group Ærø Vind (Ærø Wind) raised the current six 2 MW wind turbines. Several hundreds of local residents own the turbines, which produce more electricity than the island uses for itself (125 - 140 % annually), and part of the earnings from the electricity production goes to Ærøfonden (The Ærø Fund), which invests the earnings in new local energy projects. Similarly, local citizens have a say in regards to Ærø's district heating plants, which to a large degree use the rays of the sun to heat houses on Ærø. When households connect to the district heating, they also buy a mandatory share, and thereby they can influence how the heat is produced.

An important lesson from Ærø is that when locals own their own energy facilities, they in general become positively minded towards having, for instance, wind turbines and solar installations in the landscape.

The Municipality of Ærø works systematically and with dedication towards its goal of zero-emission

The Municipality of Ærø has systematically cut its emissions from the municipality's buildings and daily operation, and in 2019 the municipality put the innovative E-ferry 'Ellen' into operation. The E-ferry is a game changing solution to greenhouse gas emissions from ferries, which are typically major obstacles for islands. As a function of the E-ferry's long range, Ærø has demonstrated a solution that can be replicated on more than 900 ferry routes, in Europe alone, and reduce CO₂ emissions to a significant degree. When the ferry is charged with electricity from local wind turbines, true emission free sailing is achieved. The ferry project came to be through the support of the EU's Horizon 2020 programme, and through a pan-European partnership with several European partners, but the ferry is an Ærø project, conceived, designed, built, and

operated locally.

Ærø EnergyLab and the Committee of Renewable Energy

Ærø EnergyLab, the municipality's energy office, is responsible for driving the municipality's energy projects, and for mediating and communicating projects, results and partnerships, and it was Ærø EnergyLab who wrote the successful application to RESponsible Island. The prize goes to the island's administrative center, the municipality, but the prize is naturally a reward for the achievements of the whole island, and the prize is planned to go to new climate projects, which benefit Ærø. The municipal council will decide the eventual implementation politically.

The picture below, illustrates the broadly founded achievements of the island. Together with Ærø EnergyLab and the municipality's climate coordinator, is the Committee of Renewable Energy (UBE), which consists of local representatives from various professions, and also energy producers and politicians, who collaborate in spawning new ideas and recommendations for new renewable energy projects on Ærø.



UBE, Ærø EnergyLab and Ærø's climate coordinator with trophy and cheque from RESponsible Island.

Links:

RESponsible Island Prize: <https://euislands.eu/responsible-island-prize>

RESponsible Island Prize, Twitter: <https://twitter.com/hashtag/islandrenewablesprize>

Ærø EnergyLab, Facebook: www.facebook.com/aeroe

Ærø EnergyLab, Youtube: www.youtube.com/channel/UClybyg4YXhbrJ007_nEHxSQ

Ærø EnergyLab, Twitter: <https://twitter.com/energylabr>

Ærø EnergyLab, LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/aeroe-energylab/>

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