

Press Releases



PCJ Energy Seminar 2011

The Jamaica Observer: From left: James Robertson (left), Minister of Mining and Energy; Prime Minister Bruce Golding (centre); and Damian Lyn, Managing Director of Alternative Power Sources, looking at some energy-saving bulbs at the Petroleum Corporation of Jamaica (PCJ) 2011 Energy Seminar Series, 'Jamaica's Energy Future', held at the PCJ Auditorium, Trafalgar Road.

Richmond a Good Example of a Green Community

BY AINSWORTH MORRIS Environment Watch writer morrisa@jamaicaobserver.com
Wednesday, January 26, 2011

THE 500-acre housing development at Richmond in St Ann is a good example of what Jamaican homes of the future should look like, certainly when it comes to energy conservation. This is according to Damian Lyn, managing director of Alternative Power Sources, who has supplied the homes with solar water heaters and optional solar power.



Each house at the Richmond housing development in St Ann is landscaped with trees and plants, in keeping with the 'green' theme.



Managing director of Alternative Power Sources Damian Lyn explains the benefits of this 35-gallon galvanized water heater, supplied by his company to homes that form a part of the Richmond development in St Ann.

(Photos: Garfield Robinson)



The pathway leading to the Richmond housing development in St Ann is lined with solar street lights.

Each house at the Richmond housing development in St Ann is landscaped with trees and plants, in keeping with the 'green' theme. Managing director of Alternative Power Sources Damian Lyn explains the benefits of this 35-gallon galvanised water heater, supplied by his company to homes that form a part of the Richmond development in St Ann. (Photos: Garfield Robinson)

The pathway leading to the Richmond housing development in St Ann is lined with solar street lights. "At Richmond, the energy conservation project there is an excellent example of how developers should think, mainly when designing housing communities. All the street lights there have solar panels attached to them. All the houses have solar water heaters and solar panels. This is a community that is highly promoting energy conservation and how to go green," Lyn told Environment Watch during a recent tour of the community which is still under construction.

In recognition of those efforts, the development was last year nominated for the 2010 International Renewable Energy Project of the Year Award – an international accolade offered annually by the Association of Energy Engineers out of the United States. "The Jamaica Society of Energy Engineers recognised the difference the developers of Richmond were making – a difference in how communities in Jamaica are to be designed. So they decided to nominate the community for the award," noted Lyn, who also served as a consultant for the development. "Each house in Richmond has a well-galvanised and uniquely designed water heater that is not located on the roof of the house; it is on the ground at the back of the house."

He added that the placement of the water heaters on the ground, there was less pressure on the roof of the homes. Lyn has encouraged homeowners outside of the Richmond development – comprised of The Palms, (three bedroom, three bathroom houses); Fern



Court (two bedroom, two bathroom apartments); and Country Walk (two bedroom, two and half bathroom townhouses) — to follow their example. "What also makes this place a good example of how communities should be is the fact that not only is the community built and designed on the basis of solar energy conservation, but it (also) promotes a great green environment," Lyn said. "Along the community's border wall, where the community faces the highway, the 50 bulbs there are connected to a solar system."

The bulbs are supplied with power by six 140-watt solar panels. The development — which comes at a cost of between US\$165,000 (J\$14.6 million) and US\$360,000 (J\$32 million) to prospective homeowners — is also landscaped with the idea of a 'green' community in mind. At the same time, it boasts the benefit of eco-friendly sewage disposal and reliable water supply.

Residents are required to make a payment toward the maintenance of the grounds, solid waste collection and disposal, common area water, sewage, and common area electricity.

Some Jamaicans basking in solar energy

BY KIMONE THOMPSON Sunday observer staff reporter thompsonk@jamaicaobserver.com
Sunday, January 20, 2008

WHILE most Jamaicans were ruing missed television programmes, the loss of unsaved computer data and wilting under uncomfortable heat on account of the recent islandwide blackout, there were a handful of persons who didn't notice there was no electricity.

It was only when Michael Drakulich and Patricia Isaacs-Green, both of whom live in St Ann, and Kingstonians Dr Willard Pinnock and Paul Beswick saw that their neighbours' houses were in darkness that they realised there was a power outage. And had they not installed alternative sources of power in their homes and business places years earlier, they would've been in darkness too.



"I didn't even know there was a power cut," said Drakulich. "The only time I knew there was no power was when I walked out of my house and saw everything in darkness and heard a generator making noise down the beach," he boasted.

"We don't know when there's a power cut," said Beswick, speaking on behalf his family. "We didn't know there was one on Wednesday (January 9) and the last one we had [in July 2007], we found out about it six hours into the power cut," he added.

In addition to having light even when the Jamaica Public Service (JPS), the national provider, is unable to supply, and the obvious environmental benefits, the solar enthusiasts are agreed that the advantage of saving thousands of dollars each month in electricity bills is invaluable.



"When I first started, my light bills were like \$58,000 per month. I can't imagine what that would be now. I'm now saving all that money. In the beginning I had cut my bill in half, but I wasn't satisfied so I bought more batteries and inverters and put up the wind generator," said Drakulich, whose five-bedroom villa in Old Fort Bay is also fully solar powered.

Beswick, a lawyer like Drakulich, told a similar tale.

"In 2005 my bills were \$19,250. I can't imagine what they would be now...It's expensive, but when you buy this thing you start earning and saving money from it from the day you buy it...And it's not just the savings," he added. "Those are great, but the independence is priceless," he said, mimicking the Master Card credit card advertisement.

His brother-in-law, university professor Dr Willard Pinnock, also admitted that his use of solar energy had been saving him money.

"I'm saving on my bills. They are about half what they used to be but I haven't made back all the money spent yet," he said. In the meantime, however, he is enjoying other benefits.

"My house has never been out of light over the past two years. Even during the hurricane (Dean) I had light. And I tell you, I felt a bit embarrassed the other night (last Wednesday) when I drove up and saw that all the lights were on in my house and that nobody else had any," he chuckled.



The men's reasons for turning to solar and wind energy for power were varied, but they all agreed that after the initial commitment it became almost like an addiction, driving them to constantly upgrade and improve their systems.

"My initial investment was about J\$1.5 million, but I kept upgrading so I probably have \$3 million invested in the system," Drakulich told the Sunday Observer. "So, in the five years, I've more than paid back the investment and I'm free from here on. All I have to do is pay \$3,000 or \$4,000 per month for maintenance."

He started with a few panels back in 2003. Today, he has 32, plus a 1200 W wind tower. "And later this month I'm adding a 1600W tower ...I produce so much power I should be able to sell it back to the JPS," he added proudly.

Beswick, who got his first panels in 2005, did so out of anger at the JPS for having disconnected his service in an incident two years earlier. He now has 32 panels and a wind column that supply 90 per cent of his family's electricity needs.

"I did it not because I had any illusions about saving the world and going green, but I swore I would never again go with JPS. You pay a light and power company for 20 years and you make one mistake and they cut off yuh light?"

Dr Pinnock's step into the solar realm began after Hurricane Ivan hit in 2004. He decided to invest in an emergency power source with the purchase of a generator, but because of the excessive noise and heat it produced, as well as the fact that his wife and daughters couldn't get it started, he tossed it and got two solar panels instead.

Those only powered the lights and the fans. But today, several upgrades later, he has 14 panels, which generate roughly 1.5 KW of energy and powers most of his appliances.

"It meets about 1/2 or 2/3 of my energy needs. Even during the heavy rains last year I was able to get enough power.

Meanwhile, Patricia Isaacs-Green, proprietor of the five-year-old 88-acre Green Produce Farm in Green Park St Ann, said that although she still buys electricity from the JPS for her house and although she uses a back-up generator, her "environmentally-friendly" farm is fully powered by solar systems.

"This is the only farm in the Caribbean with a three-phase inverter system," she said. "It's working very nicely for me. We have four panels and they power all our security lights, the refrigeration system, the cool storage system, the pumps, everything.



"When I was starting the farm and asked JPS how much it would cost to run wires on the property, they said over \$1million so I decided against that," she told the Sunday Observer.

Her quest for an affordable, efficient source led her to Damian Lyn and Alternative Power Sources, and she has not looked back.

"I spend almost \$40,000 per month on fuel. Half goes into the generator and half into the tractor so imagine if I also had to be paying JPS for fuel costs! At home I pay more than \$20,000 a month so imagine how much the farm would cost," she added.

Solar Fully Powers Townhouse Complex

Patrick Foster, Business Observer writer

Wednesday, June 06, 2007

Source: Jamaica Observer



One of the units in the complex. (Photos: Bryan Cummings)

A townhouse complex, The Doric, under construction at Clieveden Avenue in Kingston, will be the first residential development in the island to be totally outfitted with electricity-generating photovoltaic panels.

"We have so far installed panels on five units," said Damian Lyn, whose company, Alternative Power Sources, has the contract to install the power units at the housing complex. When completed, the 12 townhouses will have the capacity to generate enough electricity to power regular household appliances without relying totally on the Jamaica Public Service (JPS) grid.

"It will alternate between the grid and the system, we are setting it up so it can alternate automatically, but homeowners can shut out the grid completely if they desire," Lyn told the Business Observer.

The system can run continuously for eight to 10 hours and also provide back-up in case of power outages.

The Doric is being developed by Conrad Graham, and townhouses in the scheme are priced at approximately \$25 million each.

Lyn, who was last week elected president of the Jamaica Solar Energy Association (JSEA), said that the system at The Doric is fairly modest with a 3.6 kilowatt capacity and 110 volt inverters.



LYN. "This was meant to be a project where the developer gives the home owner a touch of solar."

He explained that the project was designed to give homeowners an example of solar power but could be upgraded to 110/220v as required.

"This was meant to be a project where the developer gives the homeowner a touch of solar," said Lyn. "The system is modular and can be upgraded."

Photovoltaic cells convert sunlight into electrical energy, which is subsequently stored in a bank of batteries. An inverter then converts the DC battery power to AC for use in appliances.

A 400 watt, 110 volt system, able to work a full day powering regular household appliances such as television sets, a fridge and lights, would cost US\$7,500, Lyn said.

Overcast days would somewhat affect the system's ability to provide full power, but it would still accept charge because the energy is produced from light and not temperature, he added.

The technology, which is relatively new to the island, has not found popular favour, it is argued, primarily because of prohibitive set-up costs. But Lyn contended that the amortisation rate for a residential system is between eight and 10 years. For a commercial customer setting up the photovoltaic system, amortisation would be less than five years, he added.

"That is not considering possible increases in JPS rates. With the increases, the payback time would be drastically reduced," he said.

However, apart from saving on electricity charges, Lyn explained that the power supplied by the system is 'cleaner' than that from the JPS grid.

"Where the system is installed you would not need a UPS to run your computer as there would be no fluctuation in the current," he explained.



At the recent JSEA annual general meeting, guest speaker Dr Raymond Wright of the Petroleum Corporation of Jamaica, said that the use of photovoltaic panels should become more widespread as part of a collective effort to reduce the island's high fuel bill.

"I look forward to the time when buildings in Jamaica will be roofed with photovoltaic tiles being a part of the building and not an add-on," he said.

Wright said that there was too much dependency on government leadership, and the private sector should, instead, be involved in public awareness while incorporating the technology in their plans.

Architects should design using the panels, and building societies should consider special funding for the use of solar technology, Wright said.

He admitted, however, that photovoltaic panels would not become commonplace until the JPS adopted a net metering policy for people generating their own electricity.

In net metering, if a JPS customer using the photovoltaic panels, for example, produces excess electricity, it is fed back into the system and the amount deducted on the meter.

"With net metering you receive credit on the meter for what you produce. No money exchanges hands," said Lyn.

The JPS, he said, has argued against this method, opting instead for net billing, which would see the JPS pay between US five and nine cents per Kilowatt hour for electricity that is fed into its grid from customers.

"That is what the JPS would agree to at the time," said Lyn, adding that soon the company would be under new management and policies could change.

Though largely untested in the island, the photovoltaic system has Lyn's unwavering commitment; he said it is slowly gaining acceptance and even replacing JPS-supplied electricity.

"I have four locations that do not receive any power at all from the grid," he affirmed.

Off the grid - St Mary man turns to wind energy

Produces own power following back-billing saga

BY ALESIA EDWARDS Observer staff reporter alesiae@jamaicaobserver.com
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CHARLES TOWN, St Mary — Over the last five years, St Mary resident and retired businessman, Paul Chong has invested over \$5 million in an energy supply system for his residence.

He was prompted to invest in his own power system following the passage of Hurricane Dean that downed power lines and left him without electricity for several weeks.



Paul Chong looks at a letter he said he received from JPS informing him that his meter was faulty and that he had been back billed for three months. (Photo: Alesia Edwards)

"Where I live, all the major places had got back power and it took them (Jamaica Public Service) over two months to put back in our line. I decided I needed to do something about that, so I bought a solar system," Chong explained during a recent interview at his home in the parish.



But a bad experience with the Jamaica Public Service Company (JPS) has since prompted him to come off the public power supply grid altogether. Chong explained that over the years, he had no intention of becoming totally independent of JPS although he generates all the electricity he needs himself.

However, he changed his mind last month after the light and power company disconnected his electricity for non-payment of an amount for which he had been back-billed.

Chong said that the company back-billed him for the first three months of the year, citing a defective meter, which it claimed had not been recording his correct consumption.

Chong said he was informed of the faulty meter through a letter dated June 3, which also said that his bills for the months of January to March had been adjusted to reflect any inaccuracies.

"My meter read 71 kilowatts and they said they have amended it to read 222 kilowatts for that month (March), so the difference for that month was about \$5,000," Chong said.

He explained that it was a similar situation for February and January, where he was backed-billed for using 201 and 215 kilowatts respectively.

His previous bills had shown that he had used 102 and 166 kilowatts respectively for the period in question.

Chong said he contacted JPS, but was informed that the readings from the new meters were accurate and he had to pay the outstanding amount of \$9,890.79.

"It's not really a large figure, but it is the principle behind it. You can't just tell a customer that the old meter was faulty and then back-bill them like that," Chong said, adding that he was never given an opportunity to have the old meter investigated.

Chong said ever since he has invested in his own power supply system, JPS had become more of a backup and that his usage had always been low. He said he would continue to protest by remaining off JPS's line until the company does the right thing.

"I'm just leaving it for JPS to do what is right... I believe they should give me a credit on my account," Chong said as he questioned the methodology used by to back-bill customers.

"I didn't think anything was wrong with it (old meter), is only JPS come in and said they are changing out all the old meters," Chong added.

This is why, although he admits that an alternative power system can be costly, it is a good investment and something he wants other homeowners and business people to consider.



Three of the wind turbines at Chong's residence.

"When there is a power cut, I don't know about it, because everything is on the system and we don't have fluctuating power," Chong pointed out.

Managing director of Alternative Power Sources, Damian Lyn explained that Chong does not need to use the power supplied by JPS, not even as a backup.

The St Mary resident invested in a hybrid wind and solar power system, which when combined, generates approximately 12.7 kilowatt hours of electricity (KWH) daily.

Chong installed three Sky Scream wind turbines that produce a total capacity of approximately 7.5 KWH. Additionally, he has a smaller turbine called a Whisper that produces 1 kilowatt, and a 24-panel solar power system that has the capacity to produce approximately 4.2 kilowatts.

"He can and has been producing all the power he needs ever since he came off JPS's system," explained Lyn, whose company helped Chong to set up the system.

Lyn explained, too, that in addition to the wind and solar energy generators, Chong has installed a 32-400 Ah power battery backup system that helps him to store some of the energy he generates.

Meanwhile, Lyn explained that more Jamaicans are becoming aware of the importance of having alternative energy especially when so many are faced with huge electricity bills. He said there are many great benefits from having alternative power for homes or businesses and he pointed out that one of the greatest benefits is that it significantly reduces an individual's dependency of power from JPS.



Managing Director of Alternative Power Sources, Damian Lyn looks at the battery backup system at Chong's St Mary residence. (Photos: Alesia Edwards)

"The system can be designed, and is designed, to be modular, which means you could start with (something) very simple as just running two light bulbs in your house and grow the system overtime," Lyn explained.

"So, this is something that you don't have to worry to find a lot of money to invest in right away."

Lyn said his company offers affordable starter packages that can cost as low as \$150,000 and which can generate some 0.43 KWH daily.

"Once you install this system and you switch the breaker, you start to save on your electricity bill right away," Lyn said enough power can also be stored in a battery operated back-up system should there be any eventualities," said Lyn.