

Switching on to energy savings

By John MacLeod

AN Alness community could earn itself up to £10,000 if it gets into the habit of switching off lights and other appliances over a year-long trial, thanks to a deal local resident groups have struck with Scottish Hydro Electric.

West Alness in Ross-shire is to join an energy-saving initiative being piloted by Scottish Hydro Electric to give power to local communities to help them, help themselves, save energy.

The West Alness, Firhill, Kirkside, Coulpark and Westford residents groups have been working in partnership with the Alness Initiative and Highland Council's housing and

Alness project aims to help promote efficiency

property service to set up the West Alness SAVE (Save And Value Energy) Project which will see the group employing a full-time energy adviser to help the hundreds of households in the area reduce their electric bills and learn how they can use their electricity smarter.

Project chair Jennifer MacLeod said that it's an exciting opportunity for everyone living in the area.

"When we were first

approached by Scottish Hydro Electric to see if we wanted to join the pilot scheme, we thought of using the funding to provide households with energy-saving gadgets but then we got switched on to the possibilities and decided to use the opportunity to teach people about how they can save money for themselves in the longer term," she said.

The SAVE project will be launched in November once

an energy adviser has been recruited.

Russell Ogg, Scottish Hydro Electric's efficiency team manager, said he was really looking forward to seeing the results of a project where the community takes the lead on saving energy and on bringing their energy bills down.

"Scottish Hydro Electric has been helping individual customers look at how they use and save electricity for some time

now, but this initiative means a community is leading the way to help others save energy which is a new idea for us."

"And if the West Alness SAVE Project manages to reduce the community's energy use over a year, as well as funding the project itself, we will reward the group with a bonus payment of up to £10,000 to be spent in the community," he explained.

If you would like more information about the West Alness SAVE Project's energy adviser post, contact Helen Houston, Alness Initiative Project Officer on 01349 884224 or email helen.houston@btconnect.com before the post's closing date of August 24.