

# Project VIA – Valuing Intellectual Assets in Renewables Companies in the Highlands and Islands

Company Profile



## Background to the Company

Chillwind Ltd was originally established in 1991 as Energy Unlimited Field Services, to provide a service monitoring wind as a resource for organisations seeking to develop wind based renewable energy power supplies. It was established as a limited company in 2001 when its name was changed to Chillwind. Based in the Northwest of Scotland an integral part of the company's ethos is the work-life balance, which takes advantage of its main office location in Glenelg. Company turnover was over £2M in 2008/09.

Initially the company's revenue resulted field data collection and validation services to its customers in the renewables sector based on installing meteorological (met) masts supplied by others. However, mast integrity and reliability issues led to the company developing and manufacturing its own met masts, commencing with a 50 metre (m) mast. The company has since refined and developed the design of this mast to produce up to 90m masts - the tallest tilt-up masts available in the UK. The company's design philosophy of rugged construction using high grade steel components coupled with flanged joints has given Chillwind's masts a reputation for reliability in extreme environments.

Chillwind also produces 10m monitoring systems for noise monitoring and other applications which are either rented or bought outright.

## The Engagement:

Over the years, Chillwind has built a blue chip client base and a reputation for quality and integrity. The company changed ownership in March 2008; the new management recognised that to consolidate and grow its position as the leading supplier & installer of met masts across Europe, the company needed to understand what it could do to secure and leverage more from its Intellectual Assets. The company had already won contracts for its products and services in Sweden, Portugal, France, the Netherlands and Argentina; with this growing market presence Chillwind developed a greater awareness of the potential opportunities for and threats to its growth.

[Maurice Alphandary of Collier IP Management](#) acting on behalf of the Intellectual Assets Centre (IA Centre) held initial discussions with Chillwind and carried out an extensive audit of the Intellectual Assets (IA) held by Chillwind. Maurice also identified how the assets could be enhanced to underpin the company's growth. Chillwind recognised that by engaging with Project VIA the company would benefit from independent expertise and an action plan to secure and realise more value from these assets.

## Outcome:

Chillwind's success to date is attributed to a combination of factors: the structural integrity and design of its met-masts, the associated installation

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procedures, Chillwind's assured data capture processes and key relationships with specifiers and users of its products and services. However, more was needed to capture the IA value in many areas associated with each of these critical success factors. Working closely with the IA Centre, using a combination of the IA Benchmark Tool and 1:1 discussions key actions critical to business success were identified from a wide range of actions and prioritised accordingly. These were as follows:

- Documenting of processes and procedures;
- Appropriate and relevant clauses for Intellectual Property (IP) protection in supplier and customer contracts;
- Productisation of services to align with market needs and new opportunities;
- Strengthening of the Chillwind brand through a range of activities;
- Redesign of web-site to build on the strengths of the company's IA.

Chillwind recognised that the priority was to focus on recording much of its processes and procedures associated with the supply and installation of met masts, thereby minimising risks associated with loss of knowledge due to staff changes, at the same time placing the company in a good position to achieve ISO9001 accreditation. New staff were recruited to support the above implementation and as a result of company growth Chillwind is moving into new premises in Inverness.

Focusing on IP protection in contracts has resulted in appointing new distributors for its technology and led to an enhanced relationship with a key customer. Chillwind is also considering potential future growth opportunities which may result from potential licensing or franchising of Chillwind's products and services.

While the company enjoys a good reputation, it became apparent that there are many opportunities for the company to build on its brand and brand values. Chillwind plans to build its brand further via its new premises in Inverness, through a range of activities that will include the launch of a new web-site, the registration of trade marks and building on the associated lessons learnt during the course of its involvement with Project VIA.

***“When Project VIA came along, its aims struck a chord. Although I didn't have the vocabulary or knowledge of IA, I instinctively felt that Chillwind was vulnerable and that we could be doing much more to protect & develop the skills & know-how we'd accumulated. Now we have the tools to do just that. It's been both an exciting and uncomfortable learning process; the more we know about Intellectual Asset Management (IAM), the more we realise what we need to do! However, we've made good progress in documenting and codifying procedures i.e. capturing the knowledge that can be written down. And we're learning how to nurture and promote the more nebulous stuff – the company ethos and absorbed experience of staff - to build on our reputation. In the past, branding and marketing were right at the bottom of our priority list, but these areas – along with other IAM activities like strengthening our IP – are going to be key to our future growth.” – Richard Tarves, Managing Director, Chillwind***