

Collaborating to increase community energy generation capacity in Somerset

Somerset Community Energy
Steering Group - plans and progress
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Wessex Community Energy Network meeting 24/10/'19

Somerset Community Energy (SCE)

Steering Group membership



SCE's combined assets

- 7 community energy organisations
- 1,500 members
- Capacity: 16 MW
- Value: £22m



Our drivers

- Despite the challenges, eg:
 - tight margins in the post-subsidy future
 - technical and regulatory complexities
- Inspired by the potential to work together – rather than in isolation
- Shared aspirations: to deliver large scale renewable energy projects in response to the climate emergency.
- Spurred on by:
 - IPCC report / Greta Thunberg / School Strikes / XR
 - Climate change declarations by five Somerset Councils

Our commitment to community energy

- Facilitates community involvement in increasing energy security
- Boosts local employment opportunities
- Strengthens community cohesion
- Cost savings - no price hikes
- All surplus to community benefit fund
- For schools:
 - a living educational resource
 - reducing student anxiety

Our ambition

- to optimise our combined contribution to Somerset's carbon-neutral goal
 - by increasing the scale and impact of community energy generation
 - through harnessing economies of scale

Our quest

To assess the feasibility of developing a pan-Somerset, not-for-profit organisation with the potential to:

- deliver large scale renewable energy projects
- rapidly grow net income to create paid roles and develop core capacities

Our twin-track strategy

1. To achieve a competitive edge by:

- Selecting from a wide range of potential projects
- Leveraging purchasing power and economies of scale
- Spreading business risks

2. Whilst remaining true to our values by:

- Being led by goals and ethos in line with local CEOs
- Underpinning local connectedness, knowledge and trust
- Not creating perverse incentives to impede the growth of local CEOs

Our progress

- Working well as a like-minded team
- Pooling expertise and sector wide intelligence
- Identified potential projects - across the range of renewable energy technologies
- Communicating with one voice, eg:
 - challenging Somerset CC's policy on schools rooftop solar pv
- Feasibility study - brief in development
- Beyond this - a business plan – and launch?
- Decision on legal form – deferred

Securing start-up funding

- Somerset's LAs approached
- Somerset Climate Action Network:
 - Catalysing action to reduce carbon emissions
 - Promoting cross sector collaboration
 - Providing LAs with technical and community engagement expertise
- Agreement to host SCE as an incubator project – aims to:
 - Share resources
 - Enhance mutual funding prospects
- MoU: governance / responsibilities / communications / duration



Somerset Community Energy

Thank you! Let's discuss.....

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