



Working Together to Accelerate
Community Energy

22nd October 2024



Notes from Syndicate Services workshops

Workshop 1

Cara Naden a volunteer member of Wessex Community Energy Network from Avalon Community Energy introduced the workshop and its intention for discussing what community energy groups need to on their journey and whether can collaborate on various aspects from setting up to running installations. Quick intros around the group.

Philip Morris ([Ashden](#)) mentioned that a partnership including Community Energy England, Community Energy Scotland, Community Energy Wales, Northern Ireland's Action Renewables, Centre for Sustainable Energy and Ashden have secured a total of **£1.5m grant funding** from the National Lottery Community Fund over 4 years **to develop and publicise resources useful for existing and new community energy groups anywhere in the UK**. For more information see [Energy Learning Network](#).

Rob Jones ([Big Solar Co-op](#)) explained that they were able to **support community energy groups install and manage solar PV installations**. They work across the UK and are happy to be flexible regarding how much local projects are managed locally and how much of the project is managed by the Big Solar Co-op.

[Bright Renewables](#) mentioned they **currently manage 30 community renewable energy projects** as external consultants working closely with their client groups.

Paul Phare mentioned **[Energy4All](#)** was first launched in 1998 and since then have offered **professional consultancy for services required by community energy groups**. This includes if a local group identifies viable sites for community renewable energy projects Energy4All will consider developing the projects on behalf of the local group.

Alex Lockton from **[RenewEV Limited](#)** explained they are a **consultancy offering project development services to community energy groups and to landowners and businesses considering larger- scale renewable energy projects**. Alex mentioned RenewEV is also willing to provide consultancy services for specific parts of a project. Alex prepared a **presentation on steps and actions/services required to develop and manage a community energy project**, a copy of which is attached.

Highlighted the support to community groups at all stages to include:

- What type of entity should it be and for how long eg CIC, BenCom, Co-op 20 years, indefinitely?
- Who can help us for each element from starting to running and managing projects?
- Help to find suitable and realistic locations for renewable energy schemes – grid, planning, time scale
- What scale of project and can it be collaboratively delivered?
- Support to know how and where to raise funds, types of funding and managing debt, shares
- How do we sell the energy?
- What type of insurance do we need and who can provide?



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Workshop 2

Vince Adams, a volunteer **member of the Wessex Community Energy Network steering group**, introduced the workshop with a description of the various resources and skills needed to set up and manage a community energy group. This was followed by a short discussion on the Wessex Hydro Group. **Keith Wheaton-Green (Energise Stur Valley IPS)** is a member of the group and mentioned a project they are developing involving the installation and monitoring of a new design of vortex hydro which reduces the need for cleaning the hydro inflow grill. The learning would be made available to other community energy groups.

There was a discussion on to what extent skills and experience could be supplied voluntarily by other community energy groups and how much usually needs to be supplied by paid experts or external consultants.

Alex Lockton mentioned **RenewEV** aimed to supply lower cost services to community energy groups, partly subsidised by income from consultancy services to private sector companies.

Ania Vercellotti from **Community Owned Asset Management Limited (Bright Renewables)** explained their organisation is a not-for-profit Community Benefit Society which provides professional services to community energy groups.

Vince Adams suggested that the **Wessex Community Energy Network should investigate setting up a Loomio online information exchange group**, which would be similar to the Community Energy England Loomio group, but focused on information exchange between WCEN members. It was agreed to discuss this at the next WCEN steering group meeting.

David Saunders from the Bristol-based **Resilience Network** mentioned, that after several years of development, they are **on the point of launching a major project involving loan and grant funded solar PV on roofs of households where the owners cannot afford to finance their own PV installation**. It may also include innovative energy sharing between households and battery installations, including possibly communal batteries. David believes this model could be rolled out across the UK. It was suggested to discuss at the next WCEN steering group meeting the Resilience Network giving a presentation on the project at a future WCEN online meeting.

Next steps

- Engage with Philip at Ashden to find out what resources they want to collate and share request to the WCEN
- Share Renew EV presentation plus BEN and any others from the event to all
- Create directory of support organisations that can help WCEN groups on the website
- Set up an online forum or investigate if possible to add a section to the CEE Loomio
- Ask all who attended to send in their brief intro to add to the website
- Add contact info to the above & share with attendees