

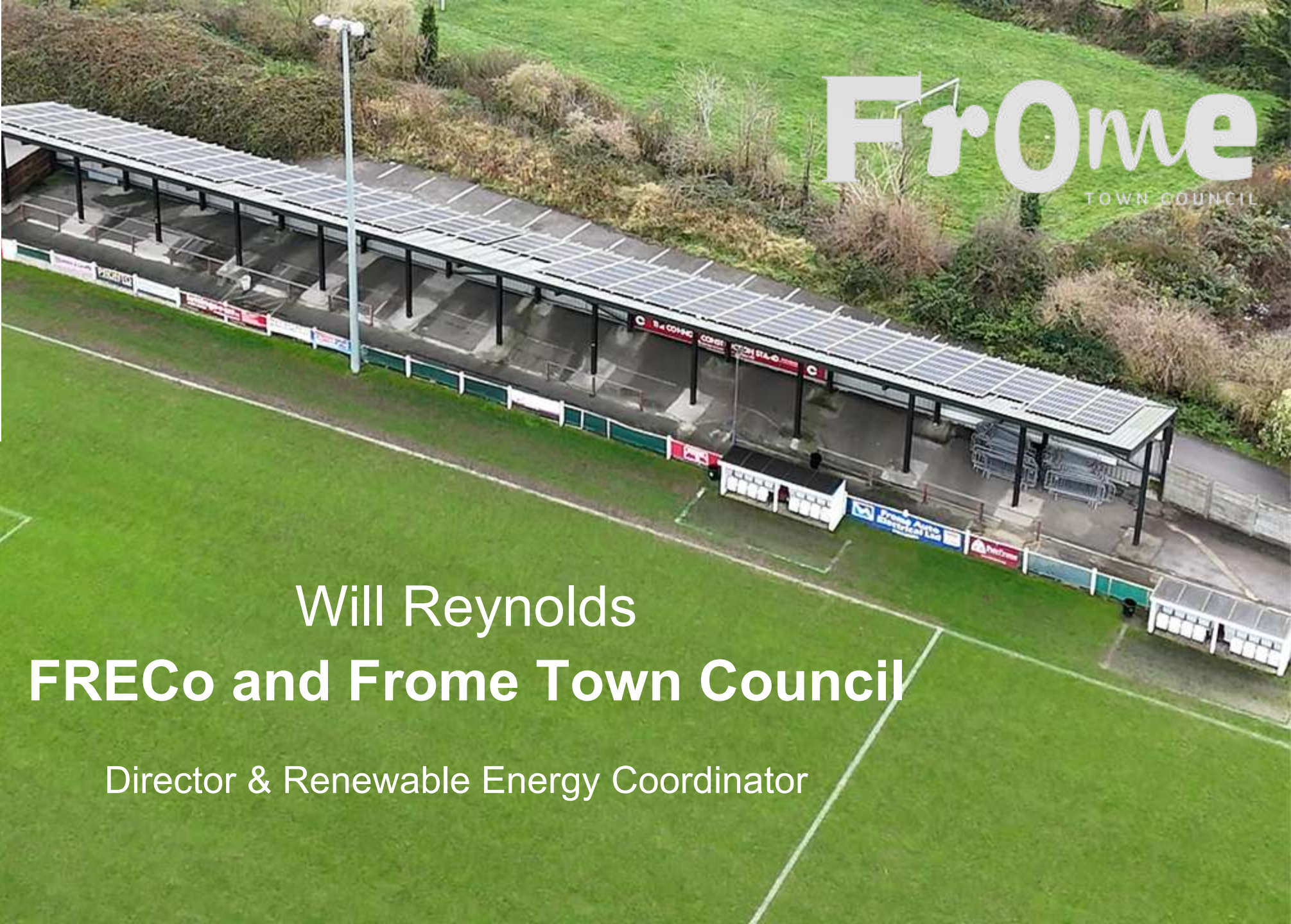


Community Energy Partnerships

Tuesday 2nd June 2026

Local Authority Collaboration Presentations





Will Reynolds
FRECo and Frome Town Council

Director & Renewable Energy Coordinator



- Population 30k
- Slightly younger demographic than UK average
- Slightly higher percentage of residents in social housing or receiving benefits than Somerset & UK average
- Slightly fewer charities than Somerset average (3.1 per 1000 vs 4 in Somerset)
- More parks than UK average (4 within 1km vs 2)
- Lower energy demand and more energy efficient dwellings than Somerset average

From Renewable Energy Community

- CBS
- 9 Directors, including previous councillors
- Founded 2015 through Sustainable Frome, supported by BWCE
- Supportive environment

- 2 rooftop arrays installed in 2016
 - Medical Practice 150kWp, Football Club 50 kWp
 - Behind the meter, with FiT
 - Community Share Offer in under a week, 70 shareholders
- Community Fund £14k

- Several feasibility studies, but struggled to get projects built:
 - Microgrid, Solar Farm, Hospital
 - Schools, Wind





Parish council

- Consultee & lobbying to County Council
 - Statutory duty: Allotments
- 17 Councillors, led by IFF since 2011
- 40 staff
- Town Hall
- Green spaces devolved from Somerset Council
- *Frome Town Council Plan 2025-27 & Work Programme*
- Resilience team of 5
Energy & Retrofit advice, Reuse, Renewables
- Maintain Green Spaces & help keep Frome clean
- **Promote renewable energy**, sustainable transport and recycling
- Support community orgs and initiatives, including grants
- Planning consultee
- Work towards making Frome an independent and environmentally-sustainable town



Informal Collaboration

- Shared values & aims
- Individuals & relationships
- Staff crossover

Collaboration Agreement

- BWCE & BANES

What do you BOTH want?

Remember to look at both sides

How does *everyone* benefit?

- CE aligns with council's agenda
 - Bill savings
 - Local wealth building
 - Environment
- Cheaper way to achieve installations
- Staff work
- New Projects
 - Access to council property/land
 - Offtaker
- Credibility
- Introductions & Connections
 - Local businesses

Overcoming Blockers

Community Energy Pathways
Guide to Community Solar on Council Assets

Delays often signal blockers

- Resources
 - Staff time/knowledge
 - Funds
 - Conflicting (political) priorities
 - Hands tied (eg planning)
- Resources
 - Time
 - Knowledge/Skills
 - Funds
 - Access to sites
 - Connections with offtakers



Informal Collaboration

- Shared values & aims
- Individuals & relationships
- No Collaboration Agreement

Staff crossover

- FRECo 'present' in FTC knowledge, esp. in climate team
- Report on FRECo activity alongside FTC workstreams at all levels

Two way relationship

- Both know about barriers and opportunities

Be mindful of conflicts of interest

Concrete examples:

- Small amount of staff time:
 - Admin (eg meeting organisation)
 - frees up volunteer time (eg project development)
 - Maximises volunteer engagement
 - Some project development (where not otherwise possible)
 - eg schools modelling
 - Duplicate duties
 - eg policy landscape,
- Meeting space (esp AGM), Registered address
- Council first shareholder
- Connections & Introductions
 - Access to council staff
 - Unlocked external support
eg CE Go (discussed with CSE in FTC meeting), ELN, Wessex/Somerset networks
 - New projects (eg schools)

Council Benefits:

- More renewables, off balance-sheet
 - Stronger community networks
 - FRECo very networked with other groups
 - Community fund supports other community groups
 - Community fund supported council energy/retrofit advice service
-
- Community energy provides 12-13 times more local value than 100% commercial models (*Capener, 2014*)
 - Community wind farms return 34x more per MW locally than commercial ones (*Aquatera, 2021*)
 - Buying local community-generated electricity can deliver 3x the local economic value to buying non-local, commercially generated electricity (*Devon Community Energy: Socio Economic Assessment, 2021*)



LOCAL AUTHORITY & COMMUNITY ENERGY:

RETROFIT

Since 2010, raised £25 million to build out 14.6MW, matching annual demand from 5,200 homes



Longstanding Cooperation Agreement with B&NES Council. Grown from a voluntary organisation to £4 million turnover, 30+ people, strong project pipeline

- **Renewables:** 6 ground mount & 37 rooftop solar systems, mainly schools
- **Local Supply:** Energy Local & innovation pilots
- **Home Energy:** Paid services for Self-Funding households. Grant funded projects partnership with B&NES & Retrofit West CIC
- **Community Fund:** Donated £470k to support action on carbon reduction & fuel poverty



Home Energy Partnership Working

Non-grant-eligible (Self Funding) Households

- Produce vast majority of residential emissions. Wide range of incomes. Little government support = hard for Councils to address.
- Knowledge second biggest barrier after cost
- Trusted peer or non-profit information is powerful



Home Energy Partnership Working

Joint grant projects: Inspiration and support

Green Open Homes 2023 & 2024:

Led by BWCE, homeowners in Bath, and also North East Somerset villages, opened homes to residents. 600+ visits each year

Green Heritage Homes 1:

BWCE, B&NES Council, Bath Preservation Trust, B&NES Council, Centre for Sustainable Energy

Retrofit and conservation professionals

Innovative 'Level 0' pre-application advice service for retrofit of listed buildings. Joint visit by BWCE and Conservation Officer. 40 Listed Building Energy Champions

Green Heritage Homes 2:

Led by B&NES. Includes listed Social Housing



Home Energy Partnership Working

Grant-Eligible Households

- Service Level Agreement to promote HUG grants through community networks
- Future - Warm Homes Plan? Early-stage exploration of multi-tenure Area Based Retrofit opportunities
- Also – working together to harness the power of community with the Community Energy Network...





Community Energy Network

Bath and North East Somerset

- £1.5m award from National Lottery's Climate Action Fund for 2024-2027
- 5MW new community owned generation projects
- 50 Energy Champions trained in communities
- Cross-referral for home energy advice between 30+ frontline services via Community Wellbeing Hub

The Community Energy Network is a partnership involving:



Funded by:





What does Energy at Home offer?

- Energy advice through the Community Wellbeing Hub
- Energy cafés and events for in person information and support
- Signposting to Retrofit West's services, including free home visits and discounted retrofit assessments
- Online resources signposting to energy saving advice, retrofit support, funding/ grants, how to reduce mould and damp etc.
- Support from Energy Champions



Energy in Your Community

Community Energy Network

- Working with the Centre for Sustainable Energy (CSE) and Bath and West Community Energy
- Delivering a series of workshops and activities that explore the potential for community-owned renewables, including the local benefits.
- 3 areas are being continued from a pilot in 2022
- 3 new areas selected by grouping together organisations that responded to a call out for interest in the project



ANY QUESTIONS?

Future Energy Landscapes

Wessex Community Energy Network

June 2026



Future Energy Landscapes

Deliberative Engagement



- FEL is an example of a deliberative *engagement* process. This is different from traditional *consultation*.
- Deliberative engagement is a structured process that aims to bring together diverse, representative groups of people to learn about, discuss, and weigh issues in depth before forming informed recommendations or decisions. It aims to foster understanding, trust, and consensus-based solutions.

Learning: People learn from each other, hearing different perspectives.

People also hear from experts and learn from evidence, facts and different viewpoints.

Deliberation: People start to tackle issues together.

They try and understand the positions of others and collectively consider trade-offs that must be weighed up.

Decision-making: People move towards collective conclusions.

Reaching a consensus is explored but is not necessarily the goal. People are encouraged to make decisions which can be prioritised or voted on.

Consent, not consensus!



Future Energy Landscapes

Aim: Explore how you feel about a community energy project in your area, and how it could benefit your community.

How do we do this?

- **FEL is a process**, comprising of a workshop and follow up engagement with a local community.
- We ask local communities if their area can play a role in the national delivery of renewable energy projects – **focusing on community owned projects, including wind turbines and solar farms.**
- Participants consider how they **value their landscape** (positively and negatively).
- Participants will consider and deliberate potential locations for projects through **engaging materials.**
- Participants are asked how they think they, as a **local community should benefit**
- We discuss **what needs to happen to enable them to support renewable energy projects** in their area.



Why?

- National need to generate more energy from renewable sources.
- Energy costs for consumers are soaring, and many people can't afford to heat their homes.
- Public support for renewables is high but often disappears when projects are proposed in the vicinity of where people live.
- Better public engagement processes are vital in order to roll out renewable energy projects at scale.
- **FEL looks at opportunities to tackle both climate change and fuel poverty through the delivery of community renewable energy projects, by working directly with local communities.**



Our Current Projects

- CSE is running FEL in partnership with local authorities and community energy organisations funded by the Energy Industry Voluntary Redress Scheme and the National Lottery.
- This includes 5 local authorities in the West of England, where we aim to **identify around 15 community energy projects for further feasibility development that have public support.**
- You can find out more about what FEL, current projects, and how to run FEL in your area, through

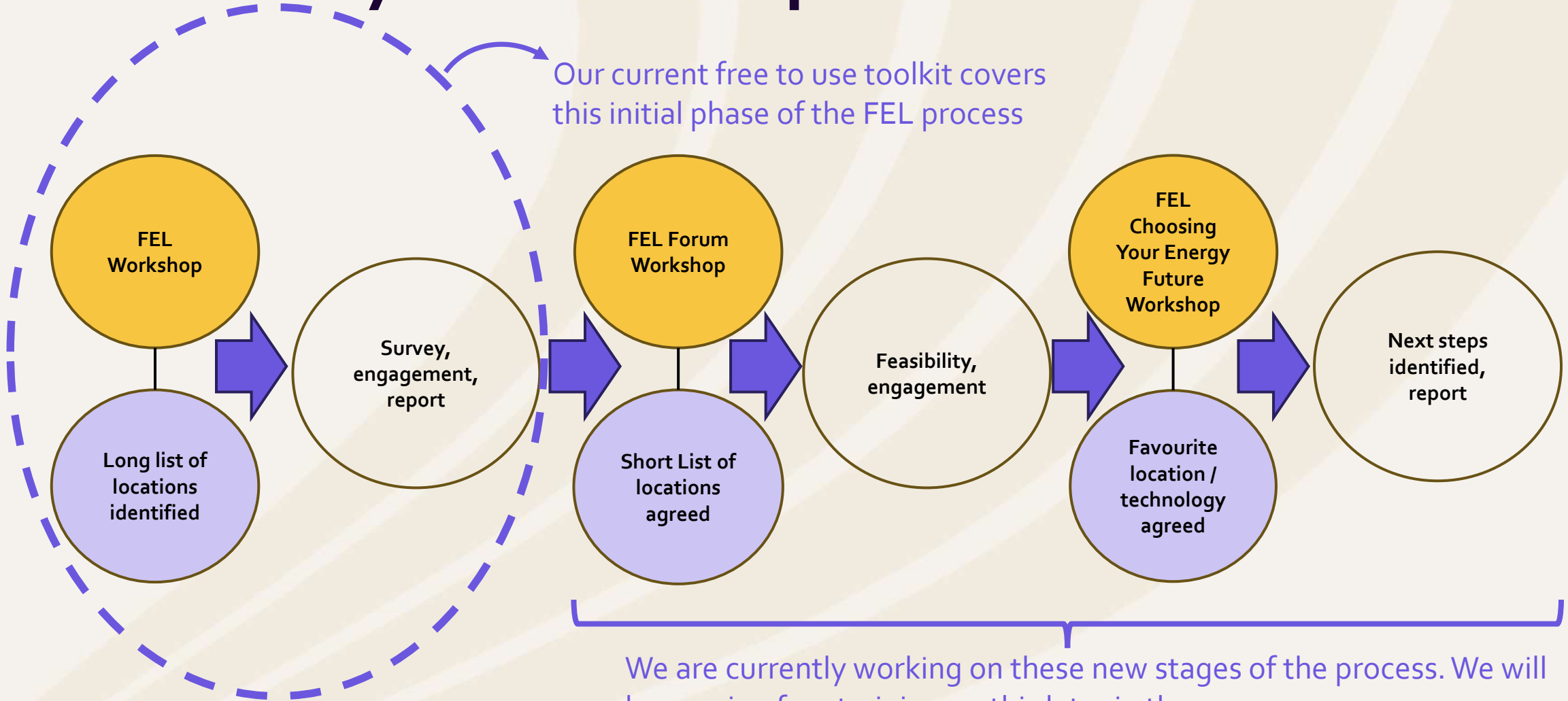
www.fel.org.uk





A summary of the FEL process

Our current free to use toolkit covers this initial phase of the FEL process



We are currently working on these new stages of the process. We will be running free training on this later in the year.

12 Month Process (ish)



What CSE has done so far in the West of England, working with our partners

- 27 in-person workshops
- 76 other engagement sessions
- 4 dissemination events
- 1 Lego Wind Turbine
- **Over 2,600 people engaged with so far.**

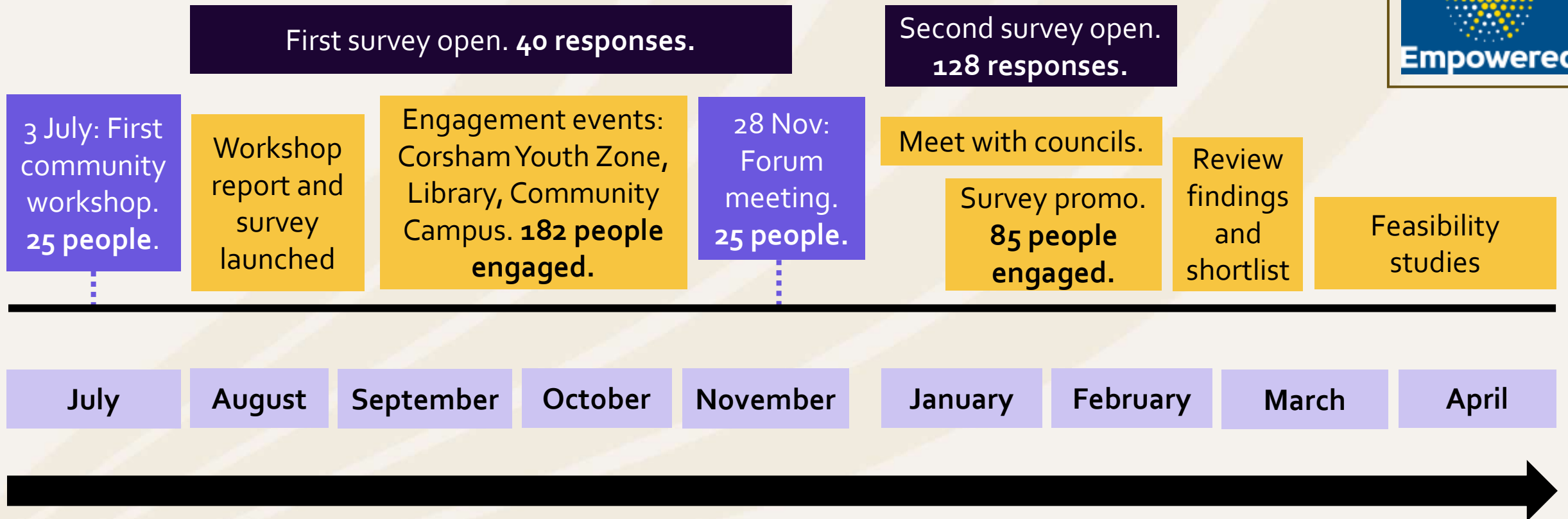




Case Study



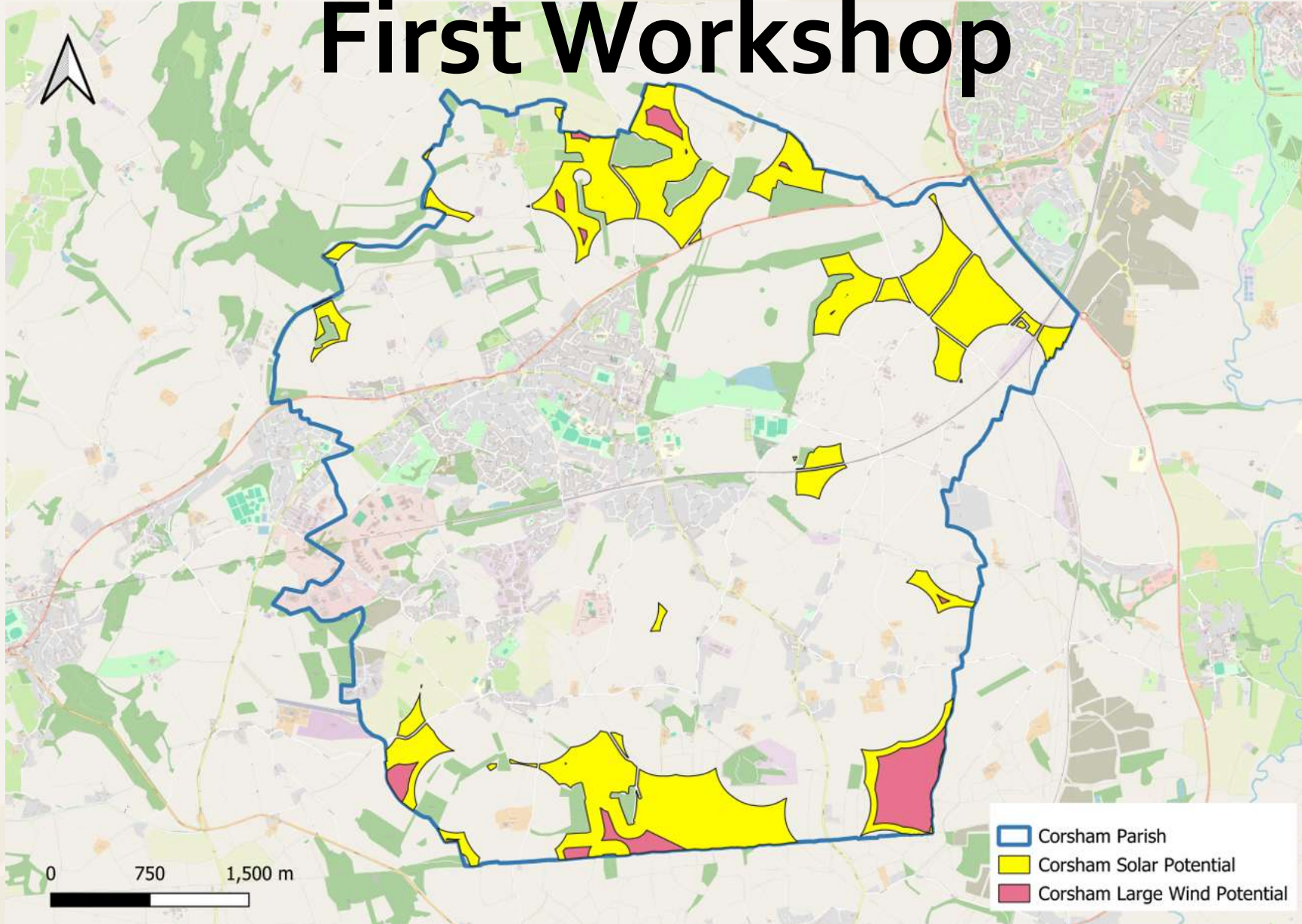
Case Study: Corsham, Wiltshire



Narrowing down the areas of search, based on community feedback, as the process goes along.



First Workshop





First Workshop Outputs

Suggested locations - wind turbines



Suggested locations - solar farms





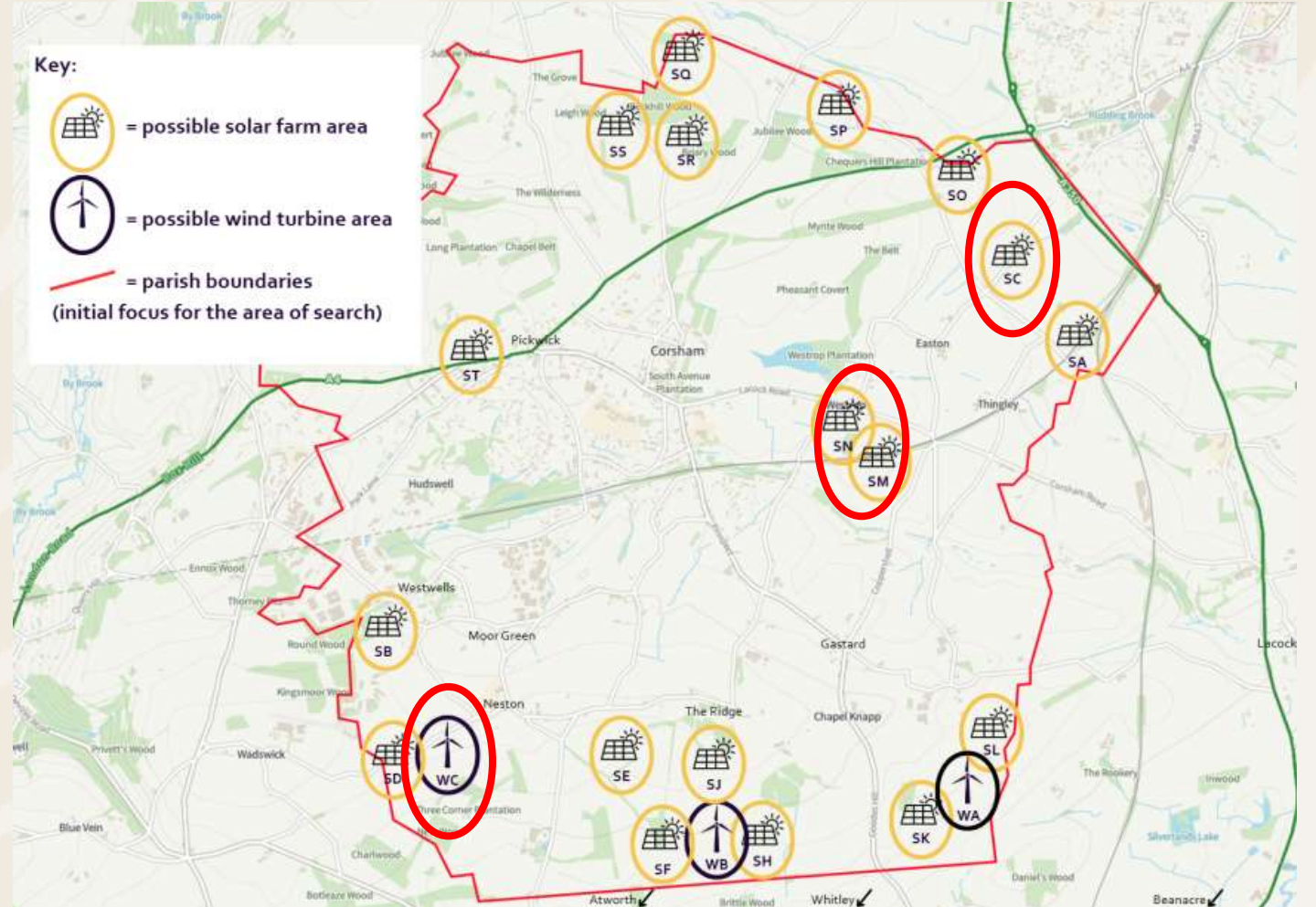
Corsham Youth Zone

- Understood the importance of young people having their voices heard
- A lot of enthusiasm for renewable energy
- Generally, didn't want things near houses, were worried about impact on views, and their ability to access green spaces once built
- Great ideas around a community benefit scheme:
 - BMX park / skate Park upgrades
 - Reinvesting in more renewables
 - Spread it equally in the community
 - Use it to reduce peoples' heating bills
 - Funding for local schools





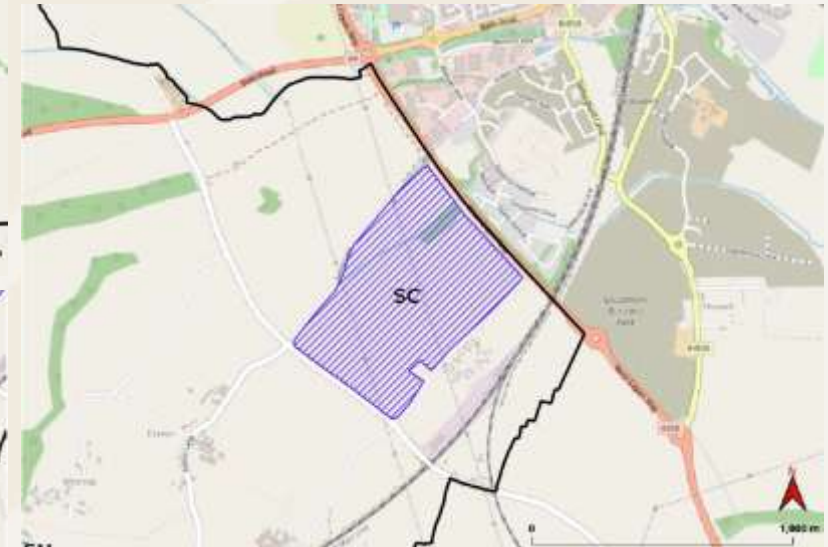
Second Workshop Outputs





Pre-Feasibility Reports

- Wind turbine was considered to be very challenging with significant barriers
- Solar locations all offer potential for development; some have less planning constraints, some have more grid potential





Final Workshop



Three areas of focus:

1. Discussing if there are any areas the community is interested in doing further development work
2. Views on models of community ownership, if a project was to go ahead
3. How a working group could be established to co-ordinate future stages

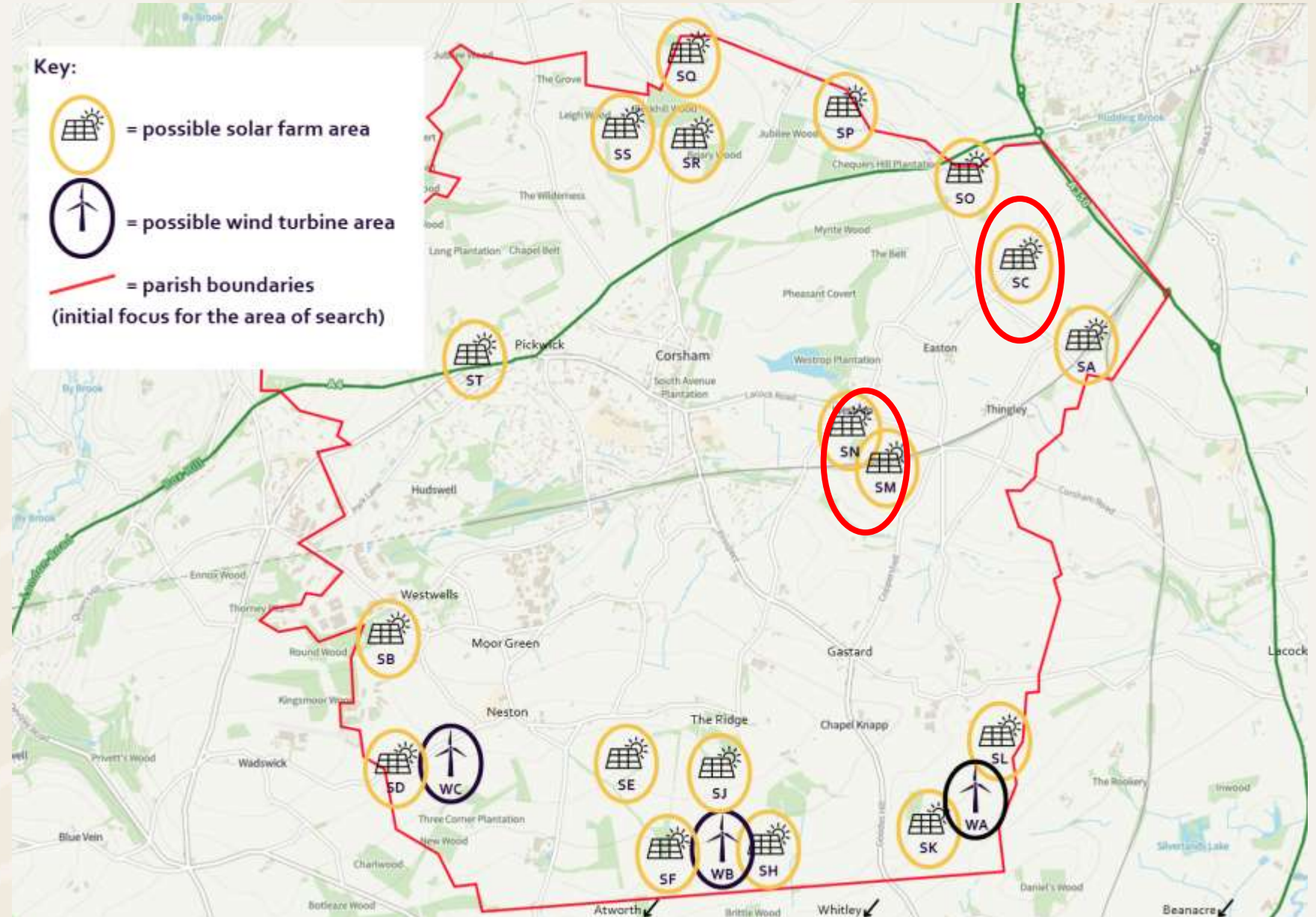




There was deemed to be **sufficient interest** from the local community in finding out more about possible options, whilst also addressing concerns about potential locations.

There is a clear group of people who would like to be involved in driving a community energy project forward and bring benefits to the local area (**37 people interested in being part of a working group**).

2 locations were agreed upon to be prioritised for future investigation, leaving the door open for other opportunities.





What we have learned

There is local enthusiasm for a community energy project, but also real concerns that would need to be considered and addressed. Residents are capable of weighing up pros and cons and can identify potential community energy projects, if given the time and space to do so, with the right level of support.

Residents want to embrace renewables but feel left out of the decision making.

We want to keep solar as less visible as possible for those who live nearby and avoid good agricultural land.

I fully support local, green energy projects.

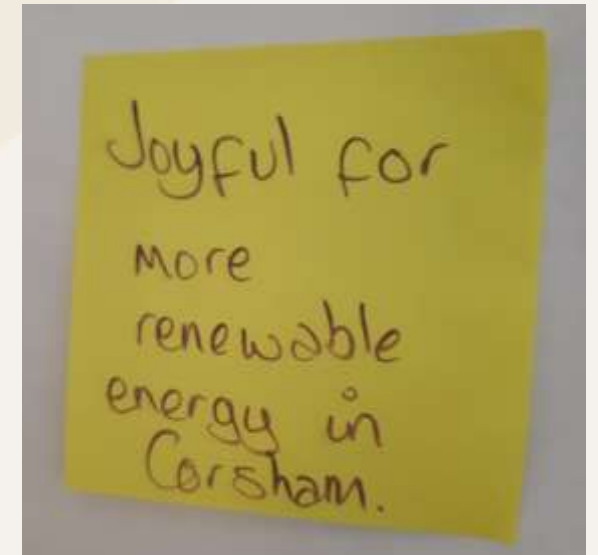
We need to stop ruining the countryside, losing farmland, losing wildlife. These schemes do not benefit us, nor save us money off our bills. There are far too many in this area already.

Much care needs to be taken in ensuring any development is done sympathetically taking into account those most affected by it.



What's next for Corsham?

- A working group of local residents will continue to work with Bath and West Community Energy to take forward a community energy project.
- The group will need to agree on certain things, such as:
 - It's objectives
 - It's membership structure
 - How it will work (Terms of Reference)
- Together, they will focus on areas such as:
 - Further discussions on **preferred site selection and discussing with landowners**
 - **Developing funding applications** for further feasibility work (e.g. GB Energy Community Fund)
 - **More community engagement**
 - **Community ownership options** and how to **maximise benefits** to the local community





What we have learnt





Current learnings

1. Local knowledge is critical.
2. The response locally is completely dependent on the area.
3. How to communicate and frame what you're doing is vital.
4. Pre and post workshop engagement is just as important, if not more so, than the workshop itself.
5. Don't rush, go at the pace that the community needs.
6. The process is good at generating potential project ideas, and getting communities interested in them.





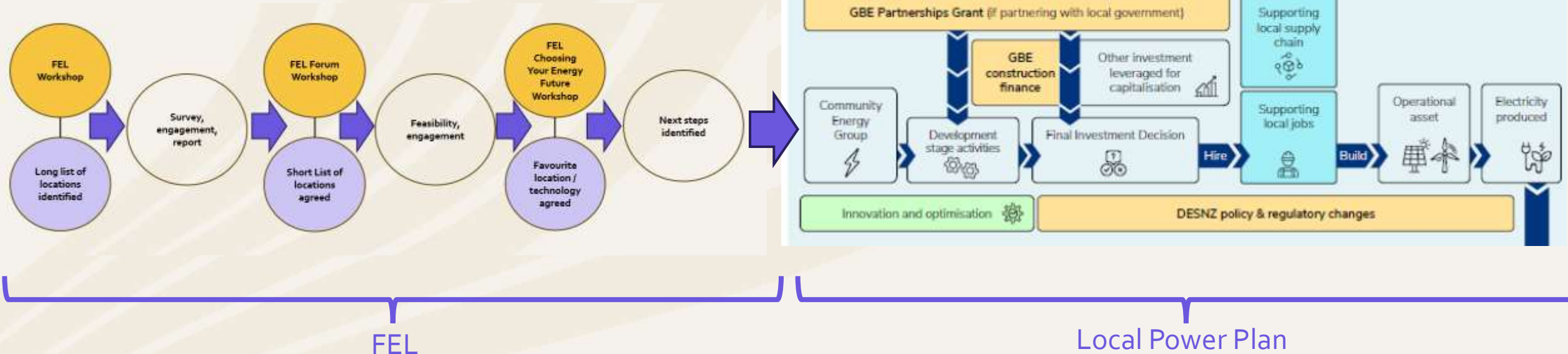
What's next





Creating a project pipeline

- We would like to see FEL outputs informing future GBE CEF applications.
- FEL illustrates the work required to even get to CEF Stage 1 – but the process has the potential to create a pipeline of project ideas.





We would like to see more groups independently running their own FEL projects

- Undertook training by CSE
- Completed 20+ workshops independently, with funding from Local Authorities and South Downs national Park Authority
- Engaged over 700 people so far





Getting feedback from you

- Is FEL something that could benefit you or your community?
- Do you have any future project ideas that we could collaborate on?
- We will be putting on free FEL webinars later in the year – are you interested in joining?
- We can provide bespoke, in person, training sessions , as a paid for service – would this be helpful?
- **If the answer to any of this is yes, then please contact me: neil.best@cse.org.uk**
- You can find out more about what FEL, current projects, and how to run FEL in your area, through www.fel.org.uk