

Community Energy Network Information Pack

Welcome

Thank you for your interest in shaping community-owned renewable energy in your local area.

This information pack provides background on the project, what to expect from the registration process, and answers to common questions and concerns. It's here to help your community decide whether you would like to learn about these opportunities further.

The short [register your interest form](#) will be open from **Friday, 4 July until Friday, 1 August 2025, 5pm**. It's aimed at finding out if your community has interest or enthusiasm for exploring the potential for community-owned renewables in your area.

Community Energy Network

The [Community Energy Network](#) aims to empower local people and communities through two main projects:

- **Energy at Home** - Aims to support residents to lower their energy bills and improve home efficiency through providing specialist advice, connect residents to funds and information about retrofit and recruit Energy Champions.
- **Energy in Your Community** - Aims to bring residents, community groups, and local experts together to explore renewable energy projects that are owned and run locally.

The Community Energy Network will be delivered by trusted local partners:

- Bath and North East Somerset Council
- Bath and West Community Energy
- University of Bath
- Centre for Sustainable Energy
- Age UK B&NES and Citizens Advice B&NES (through the Community Wellbeing Hub)

This project runs from 2025 to 2028 and is funded by the [National Lottery Climate Action Fund](#).

Energy in your Community

“Energy in your Community” is part of the Community Energy Network and is a collaborative process where we listen to local priorities and work together to identify what could work in your area - only moving forward when you're ready. Through a two-stage process, community members can first register their interest and join workshops to discuss local energy needs and opportunities; then, if a project looks realistic, we provide support to assess renewable energy options, secure funding, and plan out the next steps.

Together, we can protect our environment and build a sustainable, community-led energy future.

What are community-owned renewable energy projects?

Community-owned renewable energy projects generate electricity or heat from natural sources - like the sun, wind, or water - and are owned and run by local people, with profits reinvested back into the community.

Examples of what this might look like include:

- Solar panels
- Wind turbines in suitable rural locations
- Hydro power using streams or rivers
- Batteries to store energy for use when demand is high or when generation is low.

To make the most of local resources, communities in close proximity may be grouped together for project activities. Also, this initiative is focused on community-scale renewable energy projects - not individual rooftop solar installations, which are covered under our "Energy at Home" project.

Watch this [short video](#) from [Power to Change](#) to learn more.

Success stories

Seeing real examples can be a powerful way to understand what's possible. In this section, we present successful local initiatives that demonstrates how community energy projects can make a tangible difference. These examples offer a clear picture of how residents can come together to shape their energy future, overcome practical challenges, and bring lasting benefits to their communities. We hope it inspires you to imagine what might be achieved in your area.

Ambition Community Energy

Ambition Community Energy is a local, community-led initiative based in Lawrence Weston. Driven by a group of determined residents, the project delivered England's largest community-owned onshore wind turbine. Generating enough electricity for around 3,000 homes, it demonstrates how communities can come together to take charge of their energy future and reinvest profits locally for wider community benefit.

Find out more on the [‘Centre for Sustainable Energy page’](#).

Wilmington Solar Farm: Powered by People, Rooted in Nature

Launched in March 2015, Wilmington Solar Farm is Bath and West Community Energy's largest community-owned array in Bath and North East Somerset at 2.34 MW. Funded by £2.2 million in community shares and a £500,000 council loan (now fully repaid), it's a powerful example of local investment making clean energy happen.

Despite cloudy skies in 2017-18, the farm hit its energy target, generating enough solar electricity to match the equivalent demand of over 750 homes and cutting 660 tonnes of CO₂. It's also a haven for wildlife, with wildflowers, hedgerows, and grasslands creating a flourishing ecosystem.

Community energy, environmental impact, and biodiversity - all thriving in one field.

Find out more on the Bath and West Community Energy [‘Wilmington Farm page’](#).

How the process works

We are supporting communities to explore what locally owned renewable energy might look like in their area.

The journey has two key stages:

Stage 1 - Starting the conversation (this stage)

We are inviting new communities to register their interest in taking part. If selected, we will hold workshops to enable you to:

- Explore your community's energy needs and opportunities.
- Learn about community energy and its benefits.
- Share ideas and opinions.
- Build understanding of what kinds of renewable energy might work in your area.

This stage is about listening and learning together - with no commitment required.

Stage 2 - Exploring opportunities

If your community chooses to continue the conversation, and a potential energy project looks possible, we will support you to:

- Understand renewable energy options that are technically and financially realistic.
- Explore local sites, funding possibilities and delivery models.
- Shape a community-led energy development in your area.

At this stage, a small amount of grant funding will be available to groups that want to advance their ideas.

Who can register their interest?

We invite community groups, parish councils, and local residents' groups to register their interest in exploring community-owned energy opportunities in their area.

If you're an individual not currently part of a group, you can still register your interest using the form - we may be able to connect you with others nearby. There are many ways to get involved, from joining workshops to becoming a local energy champion.

Who's already been involved?

In 2022, as part of a pilot, the Centre for Sustainable Energy ran community workshops with:

- Peasedown and Wellow
- Temple Cloud and Hinton Blewitt
- Stowey Sutton and East and West Harptree

These pilot areas have already started the conversation.

If your community was involved in these workshops, you don't need to fill out this form. We'll contact you separately about continuing the conversation in the next phase.

If you live in one of these areas, but didn't take part in the original workshops, we still welcome your interest. Simply complete the Community Energy Network Registration Form, and we'll connect you with the existing group.

Frequently asked questions

Participation and selection process

How will communities be selected?

We will select three communities based on:

- Local interest and enthusiasm (the main purpose of registering your interest)
- Geographical spread (neighbouring areas can be grouped)
- Suitability for renewable energy (such as having enough space and the right conditions)
- Technical factors, like whether there's a realistic chance of connecting to the local electricity network.

Our goal is to focus where the opportunity for success is highest.

What does the selection process involve?

Community members or local groups nominate themselves by registering their interest through the form. We will choose three new communities based on local interest, location, and whether renewables could realistically work in the area.

What if our community is not selected?

We will keep in touch and share other opportunities for involvement and support.

How do we know this is right for our community?

That is exactly what this process is for! We encourage communities to register their interest, ask questions, and explore possibilities without commitment. If, after discussion, it's not the right fit, that's completely fine.

Do I need to have a specific site in mind before registering interest?

No, not at all. During the initial phase, the focus is on exploring opportunities together through workshops and discussions. Site identification comes later, once we begin developing potential schemes. Everyone is welcome, regardless of whether they have a site in mind.

Do I need to own land or have landowner approval to take part?

No - that's not required at this stage. If the project progresses beyond the exploratory phase, land access will become important for feasibility studies and planning. At that point, support from a landowner or owning suitable land would help move the scheme forward, but it's not a barrier to getting involved now.

Community involvement and expectations

What role would the community play?

The [Centre for Sustainable Energy \(CSE\)](#) will facilitate workshops, providing expert insight and support, but it's up to the community to decide what (if anything) they want to explore further. Through the community network, local residents will be actively engaged in discussions, ensuring that their perspectives shape potential projects. If a project moves forward, it would be developed in partnership with expert organisations, with the community playing a central role in its design and benefits.

Will our community have a say in any decisions?

Yes! Our process is community-led and won't progress without local input. If an energy project is viable, the community will shape how it develops. We'll ensure that communities have access to clear information, independent advice, and the opportunity to pursue their own solutions.

While commercial developments may happen outside the Community Energy Network, we want to tilt the balance towards projects which are led by the local community and bring tangible community benefit.

What's expected from our community if we're selected?

Help spread the word, encourage people to take part in discussions, and share local knowledge. We will guide the process and provide expert support.

How much time or effort will our community need to commit?

A few hours to take part in discussions and support local events or meetings - we will keep it flexible.

Can we collaborate with neighbouring communities?

Yes! Nearby communities can work together where it makes sense. To make the most of local resources, communities in close proximity may be grouped together for project activities.

Project outcomes and viability

Are you saying our community will definitely get a renewable community energy project?

Not necessarily. This is an exploratory process. There's no guarantee of a community-owned renewable project - the aim is to start a conversation, share knowledge, and understand what might be possible.

What makes a project viable?

There are a few things required for a renewable energy project to get the go ahead, aspects such as agreeing on land use and ownership, space for renewable projects, enough capacity in the local power system, community enthusiasm and support, and funding.

Support and benefits

What kind of support will our community receive?

You'll get expert help to explore what local renewable energy might look like, with support for community events, advice, and next steps. In addition, at Stage 2, a small amount of grant funding will be available for groups who want to develop their ideas further - this could include guidance on organisational structures, and technical or financial feasibility.

What are the potential benefits of community energy?

- Community leadership - Your community controls local solutions.
- Local investment - Any profits from energy generation decided by the community.
- Climate action - Helps reduce carbon emissions.

Funding and commitments

Are there any costs or commitments involved?

No. Registering interest simply means starting a conversation. There is no cost, obligation, or expectation that your community must move forward with a project. To ensure everyone has the opportunity to participate, we also provide travel expenses and childcare costs for those attending a workshop.

Will there be funding available for projects?

Not at this stage, but we will support selected communities to explore future funding options.

Does this project fund the development of the full community renewable project?

No. But if selected communities decide to go ahead with their renewable project idea, we will fund the next stage of discussions and a detailed review to see if the project can really work. This funding would prepare selected communities to apply for bigger grants.

Project ownership and planning

Who owns the infrastructure once it's built?

It would be community-owned, ensuring benefits stay local.

How will planning permission be handled?

Any future projects would go through the normal planning process, with support provided by project partners.

Common Concerns

“We don’t want large infrastructure forced on us.”

This is not a top-down process. Any project developed through this project would be initiated by the community. We are focussed on small to medium-scale ideas that suit local needs. Large commercial-scale energy projects are not part of this work.

“Will a project ruin the landscape or character of our area?”

We understand that heritage and landscape matter. That’s why we begin by listening to your views - so any location ideas reflect what’s important to the community. We also ensure that projects are designed to protect our local environment and support the area’s long-term wellbeing. Sites will be designed with biodiversity in mind, supporting local wildlife and green spaces rather than disrupting them.

“Will this actually benefit local people?”

Community energy is different from commercial energy. If a project goes ahead, profits stay within the community - for example, supporting local facilities or whatever your community decides to spend the funds on to suit your local needs.

“Is this just about climate change, or are there real financial benefits?”

It is both. While tackling climate change is part of the goal, community energy also offers financial resilience - by keeping profits local.

“We’ve heard of projects failing before - why would this be different?”

This is a careful, step-by-step process. We are drawing on lessons from successful projects across the region and working in partnership with organisations that have expertise and experience in community-owned energy.

Next steps

If your community is interested in taking part, please register your interest using the form by **5pm on Friday, 1 August 2025**. We aim to review submissions and respond to each community by the end of August 2025.

Your participation in Stage 1 is the first step toward building a sustainable, community-led energy future. We look forward to working together with you to shape local energy solutions that bring tangible benefits to your community.

Project roadmap

This timeline outlines the key steps of the "Energy in your Community" project. Please note that the exact dates may vary, but this provides an overview of what to expect:

Step	Action	Date/Timeframe
1. Register Your Interest Submission	Complete the online form to register your interest	By 5pm on Friday, 1 August 2025
2. Review and Response	Project team reviews submissions and sends notifications to communities	By end of August
3. Stage 1 - Starting the Conversation	Attend local workshops to explore energy needs, discuss opportunities and share ideas	To be determined - for communities selected
4. Feedback and Decision Making	Communities decide whether to pursue further discussions	Shortly after workshops
5. Stage 2 - Exploring Opportunities	For those continuing the conversation: assess renewable energy options and plan next steps; grant funding available	To be determined - for communities moving forward

Need help or have questions?

We want this process to be inclusive and accessible. If you need:

- This information in a different format
- Help completing the form
- Support in understanding any part of the project.

Please contact us at: Community_Energy@bathnes.gov.uk or call 01225 477615.

Thank you for helping shape local energy solutions that truly work for your community. We look forward to hearing from you!

Useful resources with more information on renewables

Here are some great resources on community-owned renewable energy:

- [Community Energy England](#) - This organisation offers resources and information about community energy in England, including a national map of community energy projects.

- [Energy Saving Trust](#) - How community energy schemes can help the UK reach net zero.
- [Energy at Home](#) - Provides information about the latest funding and support available to help Bath and North East Somerset residents save money on their energy bills and improve the energy efficiency of their home.