

PEOPLEPOWER

CHARSFIELD COMMUNITY ENERGY



What is Community Energy

Community Energy is what happens when people come together to create their own solutions to the problems of our energy system.

Motivated by climate change or a desire to tackle pollution or fuel poverty, communities are installing their own renewable energy systems, supplying clean power and bringing the benefits back to their neighbourhoods.

Working together achieves far more than we can as individuals. Not every household in Charsfield has a good roof for solar panels and few have space for a wind turbine but ...

When people of all generations get together they can decide for themselves what the best solution might be for the area they know and love. Community Energy projects are hugely popular and can put communities at the very heart of the renewables revolution.

Power is shifting

Our power grid was built to distribute electricity from huge coal-fired power stations. But things are changing. Old centralised systems are losing their grip, citizens like us are demanding better.

Together we are rapidly moving out of the fossil fuel age, with coal providing less than 1% of our electricity in 2023 - which is far less than renewable sources.

Landowners are installing turbines and millions have installed solar panels. We are no longer just passive consumers – households, schools and businesses are changing the system.

Much of the drive is coming from young people who have the biggest stake in the future and are keen to play their part in exploring the options.

The possibility exists for Charsfield to access **significant government funding** (up to £40,000) for a professional feasibility study, and up to a further £100,000 to support commissioning a local Community Energy scheme, should we decide to go ahead.

Our relationship with energy

Faced with the threat of climate breakdown, we need to radically change our approach to energy. We have to reduce the amount we consume and ultimately cut out fossil fuels entirely. Community energy is the ideal way to start bringing these abstract challenges into every neighbourhood, providing cheaper energy but using the income to make our communities more resilient.

The renewable revolution is impressive but it is not proceeding fast enough to meet the challenge of climate change and our commitments under the Net Zero agreements. Community Energy offers us all a way to play a part in the great transition to sustainable energy, and to inspire and engage people of all ages and backgrounds.

Bringing it all back home

Community energy projects are normally member-controlled and democratic, and set up to provide funding to the local community from money made selling energy. Projects surveyed in 2016 brought an average of £12,000 into their community over the year. This money is often used to help tackle fuel poverty or deliver local environmental improvements like community woodlands or play equipment, or simply to support other community groups.

In Charsfield, a group has been convened by the parish council to look into the potential pros and cons of setting up our own community energy scheme, specifically for the benefit of our own community here in Charsfield.

Nothing will go ahead without full local consultation.



The aims of the fund

1. Increase the level of community and locally owned renewable and low carbon energy assets to make progress towards the Government's net-zero carbon emissions targets
2. Support communities by helping them to reduce energy costs or generate income through community owned energy assets, reinvesting income locally, or services to reduce energy demand.

3. Promote growth through the creation of jobs and volunteering opportunities in the communities where projects are located.

The fund will achieve its aims by removing barriers to investment that are currently preventing the development of community-scale projects.

Funding stages

Stage 1 (we are here)

We are right at the beginning of the process, where we will apply for a **Stage 1 grant** of up to £40,000 to pay for professional support to scope project feasibility:

- Basic technical feasibility assessment, including grid connection
- Landowner agreement (Heads of Terms)
- Community engagement
- Public body stakeholder engagement
- Scoping planning issues
- Scoping need for permits, licences and consents
- Finance and business model development
- Project management
- Sharing learning with other community applicants

Stage 2

Stage 2 grants are available for projects that have been found to be feasible, with a good chance of securing planning permission and being implemented, to cover activities such as:

- more detailed investigation of the relevant technology
- planning applications and associated surveys.
- advanced landowner agreements
- development of a robust business case to attract sufficient investment.

There is no guarantee of success in applications for grants and the overall process could take years rather than months but the benefits to our environment, the planet and our community's prosperity could be huge.

The future is fast approaching; let's make it one we want.

More information

Lots of information about Community Energy communityenergyengland.org

Local information will build on the Charsfield village website at: charsfield.org/energy

The initial stage of drawing up the application for stage 1 funding is being led in Charsfield by a core team comprising John Collins, Steve Aylward, Peter Clitheroe and Martin Lyne.

This team will grow as the process continues. Already over 30 people have actively engaged which bodes well.

For the latest information, on the project's progress or to get involved yourself, please get in touch and check the Charsfield Community Energy page at:

charsfield.org.uk/energy



Scan with your phone camera to go straight to the Charsfield Community Energy page.

Some flavours of community energy

Solar PV



- in the UK, the most common form of Community Energy project involves solar photovoltaic (PV) panels generating electricity from sunlight, typically on community buildings.

Solar stars: Brighton Community Energy, Westmill Solar Co-op, Edinburgh Community Solar Co-op

Wind



- PV may be the most popular, but in a windy country like the UK this is what does the heavy lifting. Onshore wind gives the most clean energy per pound of any power source, if you've got a good (& supportive!) spot. *Top breeze riders:* Westmill Wind Farm Co-op, Baywind Energy Co-op, Findhorn Eco-village

Hydro



- if you've got access to a good river for it, it's one of the most steady and reliable forms of renewable energy. It doesn't come cheap but it's energy from rain! *In full spate:* Whalley Community Hydro, Halton Lune Hydro, Howsham Mill Renewable Heritage Trust

Energy Efficiency



- the "fifth fuel". Whether bulk-buying LEDs or fitting insulation, many community energy groups are tackling fuel poverty and helping to reduce energy usage. *Wrapped up warm:* BHESCo (Brighton & Hove), MOZES (Nottingham)

Storage



- this is the new kid on the block. As prices fall it becomes cost-effective to help people use renewables or load up on cheap energy when supply outstrips demand. *Charged up:* MOZES (Nottingham), REPOWERBalcombe