



Innovate
UK



How to support community energy in your local authority area:

PROCESS GUIDANCE



1. [Introduction](#)
2. [Developing a community energy support programme](#)
3. [Define community energy in your area](#)
4. [Map out potential stakeholders](#)
5. [Engage with stakeholders](#)
6. [Undertake a needs and opportunity assessment](#)
7. [Start shaping your support programme](#)
8. [Further work](#)
9. [Appendix](#)

Introduction

Who are we?

The Carbon Trust's mission: To accelerate the move to a decarbonised future.

How? We advise companies, financial institutions, and public sector organisations on their Net Zero transition, supporting them on each step of their journey – from footprinting and risk analysis through to target setting, strategy, financing and implementation.

This guidance information on “How to support community energy in your local authority area” has been developed through the Net Zero Living Programme. The Net Zero Living programme is funded by Innovate UK and aims to help regional authorities and businesses accelerate the transition to Net Zero, across the UK and internationally.

This document

This document aims to help local authorities design a package of support to accelerate and scale-up community energy activities within their local authority area, by providing practical guidance and examples of actions that local authorities can take.

The document provides a pathway for developing a community energy support programme by completing a series of steps. The document is not intended to be fully prescriptive but provide ideas to initiate action. It is provided alongside a “How to support community energy in your local authority area: Background information pack” document, and we recommend that this document is read in advance of completing the steps set out within this guidance.



Innovate
UK



Developing a community energy support programme

Process

1. Define “community energy” for your area

2. Map out potential stakeholders who are/may be interested in community energy

3. Engage with stakeholders to identify needs, available resources, and opportunities

4. Undertake a needs and opportunity assessment to identify potential support areas

5. Start shaping your support programme and identifying actions

Define community energy in your area

- There are many definitions of “community energy”. You could choose to adopt the definition of your country’s community energy membership body or develop your own definition. You can use the template in the box to the right to support this.
- Definitions often identify a community’s relationship with a project, who a “community” is, and what types of projects are included within the definition.

Build your own community energy definition

Community energy in [area covered] refers to **energy projects**, which are [explain how the projects must interact with the local community, e.g. “owned by”, “governed by”, “led by”, “developed with involvement from”] the **local community** and result in [list the outcomes that you hope to achieve from community energy in your area].

A **local community** is [detail the type of entities that will be covered by the definition, e.g. social enterprises, local individuals, certain business groups, etc.].

Energy projects include any project, which [detail the types of project that will be covered, e.g. produce energy, reduce energy, purchase energy, use energy, manage energy, etc.].

Map out potential stakeholders

Consider the “key ingredients” for community energy success, set out in the background information pack, and map out where they might be sourced.

Start by considering overarching groups, then individual stakeholders within those groups, and consider which of the “key ingredients” they **may** be able to provide.

Try to cover all of the “ingredients”.

The next pages provide examples of overarching groups and considers which typical organisations may fall into those groups.

The “key ingredients” for community energy success

- **Appetite:** Does community energy relate to the stakeholder’s core aims?
- **Project management:** Does the stakeholder have experience from a previous project, or other role?
- **Delivery resource:** Does the stakeholder have existing networks, volunteers, or employed resource in place to support delivery? Could the stakeholder provide resource?
- **Community engagement:** Is the stakeholder embedded in the community? Does the stakeholder know how to undertake successful community engagement?
- **An opportunity:** Is the stakeholder already developing an opportunity? Can the stakeholder provide an opportunity?
- **Governance:** Are governance arrangements likely to already be established and in place? Does the stakeholder have experience in setting up governance arrangements?
- **Funding:** Does the stakeholder have access to funding? Could the stakeholder provide funding?
- **Expert advice:** Does the stakeholder have relevant skills/experience to support delivery of a community energy project?

Map out potential stakeholders

Internal council stakeholders

A local authority community energy programme requires support from across the local authority to inform the shape of the support and enable its delivery. The views of key decision makers and the officer resource made available to the programme will inform the roles that the support programme can deliver.

Map out the individual stakeholders:

- Which council members are most likely to be interested and support a community energy support programme? Which council member is responsible for climate/the environment? Which council member is responsible for community well-being?
- Which senior decision-making officers are relevant to the support programme? Who is responsible for action on climate change? Community well-being? Planning? Communications? The council's estate?
- At a delivery level, which officers would be beneficial to the programme? Consider the planning team, communication team, environment team, estates team, finance team, etc.



Map out potential stakeholders

Local community energy sector

Existing community energy organisations may already have relevant skills, experience, resources and governance arrangements in place, and could be actively developing an opportunity. Some community energy organisations have established successful business models through previous projects, which provide funding for future projects.

Map out the individual organisations:

- Which existing “community energy” organisations are established in your local area?
- Are there any already established local networks?
- Consult [Community Energy England](#) and [Community Energy Scotland’s](#) membership directories or reach out to [Community Energy Wales](#) and [Community Energy Northern Ireland](#) to see if they can help.
- Reach out to local councillors to see if they have any insights.
- Consider community organisations who may have completed a one-off installation on an individual building, e.g. solar panels on a village hall, as well as more formal “community energy organisations”.



Map out potential stakeholders

Wider local community sector

Whilst not engaged in the topic of energy, other existing organisations operating to support and improve their communities, might be well-placed to develop a community energy project, e.g. through being already embedded in the community. If they are informed of the benefits that can arise from community energy projects, and provided with support, they may develop the appetite to progress a project.

Map out the individual organisations:

- Consider parish and town councils with existing resource and governance arrangements in place, and potential assets which could be the site of an initial project (e.g. energy efficiency measures in a village hall).
- Are there local religious groups, who may be interested in developing a community energy project, and similarly have assets which could provide a site for an initial project (e.g. rooftop PV on a church hall)?
- Are there active environmental/sustainability groups in the area? (e.g. Transition groups).
- Use local and national third sector networks, and membership organisations, to help identify potential bodies, e.g. [NICVA member directory \(Northern Ireland\)](#), [NAVCA member directory \(England\)](#), [SCVO member directory \(Scotland\)](#), [WCVA member directory \(Wales\)](#).



Map out potential stakeholders

Wider local public sector

In addition to the core local authority teams identified, within the “internal council stakeholders” mapping exercise, consider which wider local public sector organisations might be interested in being involved in a community energy project. They might be interested in providing funding, a development opportunity, delivery resource, expert insights, etc.

Map out the individual organisations:

- Are there local schools, which might be interested in providing a site for a renewable energy generation project and purchasing the electricity? Would the Parents and Teachers Association (PTA) be able to support with raising the funding and undertaking community engagement? Perhaps members of the PTA and board of governors, would be interested in joining a community energy project?
- Are there any universities in your local authority area? Do they have any research areas which might indicate potential collaboration opportunities with community energy organisations?
- Which health boards and trusts operate in your local authority area? Do they have any sites which might offer a community energy project opportunity?
- Which other public sector sites and offtakers, e.g. police stations, fire stations, waste management sites are located within your local authority area?



Map out potential stakeholders

National public sector

At a national level, identify the public sector initiatives which may support community energy, including community energy support schemes, funding sources, expert guides, etc.

Map out the individual initiatives:

- Familiarise yourself with any national government community energy support schemes operating in your country, e.g. [Welsh Government Energy Service](#), Local Energy Scotland's [Community and Renewable Energy Scheme](#). Establish the details of the support provided, with respect to consultancy support, funding, tools/templates, case studies, etc.
- Familiarise yourself with any national government community energy support schemes that are operating regionally, e.g. the [Net Zero Hubs](#) in England. Again, establish the details of the support provided, with respect to consultancy support, funding, tools/templates, case studies, etc.
- Identify additional national funding sources that could be relevant to community energy. Government search tools can support this: [UK Government: Find a grant tool](#), [Welsh Government Business Wales: Finance locator](#), [Scottish Government: Business funding or advice search](#), [Northern Irish Government: Grant finder](#).
- Consider wider support mechanisms which are not fully targeted at community energy but could be used by community energy organisations.



Map out potential stakeholders

National community third sector support

There is a wide range of organisations operating locally and nationally that provide support to third sector community organisations in the form of expert guidance and advice, and funding.

Map out the individual organisations:

- Familiarise yourself with the support provided by the national community energy industry organisations: [Community Energy England](#), [Community Energy Scotland](#), [Community Energy Wales](#), [Community Energy Northern Ireland](#).
- Identify relevant third sector national network/membership organisations and familiarise yourself with their services, including [NCVO](#), [NAVCA](#), [WCVA](#), [Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations](#), [NICVA](#), [Third Sector Support Wales](#).
- Consider other stand-alone national charities providing support and guidance on energy topics, e.g., [Centre for Sustainable Energy](#), [National Energy Action \(NEA\)](#), [Severn Wye Energy Agency](#).
(Government provided charity search registers can help to generate a fully comprehensive list but may take time to filter through!: [Charities register \(England and Wales\)](#), [Charities register \(Scotland\)](#), [Charities register \(Northern Ireland\)](#))).



Map out potential stakeholders

Private sector

Private sector organisations, often provide the expert advice required by community energy projects. Their support is often paid for but can also be provided freely, via national public sector support schemes or as part of the organisation's environmental, social and governance (ESG) commitments. Employees of relevant organisations may also be interested in joining a community energy group in their free time. Robust governance procedures will be required to ensure potential conflicts of interest are managed but many successful community energy organisations have benefitted from private sector expertise in this manner.

Private sector organisations operating within the energy sector also support community energy, by providing free-to-use guidance and tools, or by providing funding, e.g. via community benefit funds. When mapping out private sector organisations, consider those that operate both locally and nationally.

Map out the individual organisations:

- Reach out to internal council colleagues to identify if they know of any relevant organisations operating locally.
- The microgeneration scheme "[find a contractor](#)" tool may help identify local firms.
- National consultants can be identified from relevant frameworks, e.g., [Crown Commercial Services' Demand Management & Renewables Agreement](#).



Map out potential stakeholders

Residents and citizens

Other overarching groups will include local residents and citizens as organisation members/employees. It will be beneficial to try to reach beyond these formal groups to engage with other potentially interested local individuals.

Map out communication channels:

- Rather than mapping out individual organisations, for this group you will need to consider potential engagement channels. This might include making use of the communications channels held by organisations engaged with through the other overarching groups, e.g. parish council newsletters and social media pages, school newsletters and social media pages, and your authority's own communications channels.

Are there any others?

Review your lists and consider if there are any relevant local or national organisations and initiatives which are missing.

Map out the individual organisations:

- Consider additional funding sources that may have been missed but are listed on the websites of the national community third sector support organisations previously identified.

Engage with stakeholders

- Following the stakeholder mapping exercise, reach out to the identified stakeholders to gather further information to help inform the development of a support programme. Consider the engagement route to take as well as the purpose of the engagement.
- **Engagement routes** are likely to vary depending on the stakeholder. For some stakeholders, it may be sufficient to just engage with a stakeholder's website, and other publicly available information. Engagement with other stakeholders may benefit from 1-to-1 interviews, focus groups/workshops, email correspondence, and/or surveys.
- When engaging with third sector organisations, consider whether you are able to cover the cost of their time, and be prepared to be flexible with respect to your engagement approach and time of engagement.
- When engaging directly with stakeholders explain why you are engaging with them and what you are looking to achieve through the engagement.
- The **purpose** of engaging with **internal stakeholders** is to:
 - Establish the council's appetite to develop the programme, desired outcomes, and level of resource expected to be available;
 - Identify potential "advocates" and "champions" who can build support within the authority; and
 - Consider the potential local authority roles (set out in the background information pack) and determine which roles are likely to be most suitable.
- The **purpose** of engaging with **external stakeholders** is to:
 - Identify the needs of local organisations (consider the "key ingredients" set out in the background information pack); and
 - Understand the potential of other third-party stakeholders to provide support and meet those needs.
- For those not already working in community energy, introduce the topic, including the benefits (our background information pack can support this) and the definition that you have established.
- Initial points to consider when engaging with the various groups are provided on the following pages. These are provided to help structure your engagement activities but should be tailored to the context of your organisation and area.

Engage with stakeholders

Considerations for internal stakeholder engagement

What is the authority looking to achieve from the programme in terms of outcomes?

What level and type of officer resource could be dedicated to the programme (e.g. across multiple teams, including communications, environment, planning, estates, finance, etc.)?

What skills and experience is available within the organisation regarding community energy?

What timescales should the programme be delivered over?

What are the internal sign-off requirements for the programme? Are there key deadlines or constraints on sign-off?

Role specific considerations are provided in the Appendix.

Considerations for community energy sector

What is the group's purpose and goals?

Does the group face any specific challenges with respect to developing a community energy project?

Would the group be interested in hearing from the council in the future about community energy?

"Key ingredients" specific considerations are provided in the Appendix.

Engage with stakeholders

Considerations for wider community sector

What is the organisation's purpose and goals and how would involvement in a community energy project be beneficial to it?

Does the group face any specific challenges with respect to developing a community energy project?

Would the group be interested in hearing from the council in the future about community energy?

"Key ingredients" specific considerations are provided in the Appendix.

Considerations for local public sector

What is the organisation's purpose and goals and how would involvement in a community energy project be beneficial to it?

Does the organisation face any specific challenges with respect to developing a community energy project?

Would the group be interested in hearing from the council in the future about community energy?

"Key ingredients" specific considerations are provided in the Appendix.

Considerations for national public sector

What is the organisation/initiative's purpose and goals?

How long is the initiative intended to run for? Is there potential for an extension or future phase?

Does the initiative have any eligibility criteria associated with it? What is this criteria?

What practical support does the initiative provide?

"Key ingredients" specific considerations are provided in the Appendix.

Engage with stakeholders

Considerations for national community third sector support

What is the organisation's purpose and goals?

What practical support does the organisation provide? Is it provided free of charge or is payment required (e.g. membership fee, consultancy fee, etc.)? Do charges depend on the support provided (e.g. guidance documents and templates may be provided free of charge, but one-to-one consultancy may require payment)?

"Key ingredients" specific considerations are provided in the Appendix.

Considerations for private sector

What is the organisation's purpose and goals and how would involvement in a community energy project be beneficial to it?

Is there any potential for support to be provided free of charge? How might this be provided (e.g. tools and templates provided on websites, community benefit funds, involvement in projects as part of ESG commitments)?

"Key ingredients" specific considerations are provided in the Appendix.

Considerations for residents

Identify communications channels which can be used to try and reach a wide range of residents.

Consider using a survey to gather views with options to request/collect and submit paper surveys as well as online versions.

Would the individual be interested in hearing from the council in the future about community energy?

"Key ingredients" specific considerations are provided in the Appendix.

Undertake a needs and opportunity assessment

Analyse the information gathered through the internal stakeholder engagement activities to identify:

- What does the authority want to achieve from the programme?
- How much resource can it dedicate to it (over what areas)?
- Which roles are most suited to the authority?

Consider the potential local authority roles? From the information gathered which roles could be embraced?

Promotion and knowledge sharing?	✓ / ✗
Supportive policies and targets?	✓ / ✗
Coordination and advocacy?	✓ / ✗
Opportunity provision?	✓ / ✗
Funding provision/investment?	✓ / ✗
Project establishment and leadership?	✓ / ✗
Ongoing partnership working?	✓ / ✗

Undertake a needs and opportunity assessment

Analyse the information gathered through the external stakeholder engagement activities to identify:

- Needs;
- Support availability;
- Opportunities; and
- Gaps.

Consider the key ingredients again. Where is support needed/available?

- From the information gathered, how prevalent are the key ingredients across the local community?
(community energy groups, community groups, local individuals involved in other organisations)
- Which of the key ingredients could benefit from targeted support?
- Is there third-party support already available which targets these specific ingredients?

Start shaping your support programme

From the needs and opportunities assessment undertaken:

- What are the gaps between the needs of the community and the skills and resources required to successfully deliver community energy projects?
- Have you identified existing skills and resources available that could fill these gaps?
- How could the local authority use its role to complement existing skills and support provision? How could it help ensure existing needs are filled with existing skills and resources available?
- Are there gaps that the local authority could fill directly?

Consider the local authority roles set out in the background information pack and how they can be adapted to account for your authority's ambitions and resource and your area's needs and opportunities.

Begin to shape your programme by developing a list of specific actions that you would like to deliver through it, within the context of your local authority's resource availability and overall ambitions.

To support this, refer back to the role descriptions and case studies provided in the background information pack.

Additionally, the following pages provide some example actions that you could consider within each of the local authority roles. These are provided as examples to get you started.

Start shaping your support programme

Example actions that fall within the role of “Promotion and knowledge sharing facilitation”	Key ingredients targeted
<p>Promote community energy activities through wider council communications:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Regularly reach out to organisations active in community energy to remain up-to-date with their activities. 2. Share relevant information through existing authority “news” channels. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Appetite ✓ Community engagement ✓ Funding ✓ Opportunity ✓ Delivery resource
<p>Dedicate a section of your website to information that supports community energy:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Establish what information would be worth sharing, e.g. funding sources, tools and guidance, case studies, benefits, etc. 2. Identify information leads responsible for researching/gathering relevant information. 3. Research the information. 4. Upload the information and publicise it. 5. Information leads continue managing information and providing updates. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Appetite ✓ Project management ✓ Expert advice ✓ Governance ✓ Funding ✓ An opportunity ✓ Delivery resource
<p>Establish a peer-to-peer learning network:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Reach out to those who were identified as interested in hearing from the council regarding community energy through the stakeholder engagement exercise to see if they would like to be involved in a peer-to-peer learning network. 2. Communicate with the network to decide on the format(s) for it, based on options available to you, e.g. e-newsletter, online forum, facilitated online meetings, face-to-face networking, etc. 3. Manage and facilitate knowledge sharing through the chosen formats. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Appetite ✓ Project management ✓ Expert advice ✓ Governance ✓ Funding ✓ An opportunity ✓ Delivery resource

Start shaping your support programme

Example actions that fall within the role of “Promotion and knowledge sharing facilitation”

Key ingredients targeted

Facilitate community energy learning events:

1. Identify those who were identified as interested in hearing from the council regarding community energy through the stakeholder engagement exercise.
2. Reach out to local and/or national organisations active in community energy to arrange a community energy learning event.
3. Advertise widely, through existing authority communications channels and directly reaching out to those identified as interested in receiving information from the council on community energy.
4. Use feedback from the event to inform further events.

- ✓ Appetite
- ✓ Project management
- ✓ Expert advice
- ✓ Governance
- ✓ Funding
- ✓ An opportunity
- ✓ Delivery resource

Set up a community energy newsletter

1. Reach out to those who were identified as interested in hearing from the council regarding community energy through the stakeholder engagement exercise, to see if they would like to receive the newsletter.
2. Establish what information would be worth sharing, e.g. funding sources, tools and guidance, case studies, benefits, etc.
3. Identify information leads responsible for researching/gathering information relating to the established topic areas.
4. Research the information topic areas established.
5. Issue the newsletter and include a request for stories/information to be submitted for future newsletters.
6. Market the newsletter more widely through existing authority media channels.

- ✓ Appetite
- ✓ Project management
- ✓ Community engagement
- ✓ Expert advice
- ✓ Governance
- ✓ Funding
- ✓ An opportunity
- ✓ Delivery resource

Start shaping your support programme

Example actions that fall within the role of “Supportive policies and targets”	Key ingredients targeted
<p>Establish a political statement of support for community energy*</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Draft a statement considering the definition of community energy for your local area. Identify the opportunities and benefits presented by community energy and what form your support might take, considering the other roles and actions you are looking to deliver. 2. Obtain relevant non-political sign-off. 3. Present the statement to political members for sign-off. 4. If the statement is not signed-off, reflect on any feedback, update the details, and represent. 5. If the statement is signed-off, publicise through the authority’s existing communications channels and any newly established community energy channels. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Appetite ✓ Community engagement ✓ Funding ✓ An opportunity ✓ Delivery resource
<p>Include consideration of community energy within any wider authority policy documentation on energy and decarbonisation</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify any relevant teams and personnel involved in drafting energy/decarbonisation documentation. 2. Reach out to these individuals and let them know about the authority's intended activities. 3. Follow-up and engage with individuals as necessary to ensure a consistent message on community energy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Appetite ✓ Community engagement ✓ Funding ✓ An opportunity ✓ Delivery resource

*This action is also identified under the “Coordination and advocacy” role

Start shaping your support programme

Example actions that fall within the role of “Supportive policies and targets”

Key ingredients targeted

Establish a community energy planning policy, recognising the benefits of community energy ownership

1. Identify relevant example planning policies from other authorities, e.g. Cornwall Council’s Local Plan supports community energy projects “... led by or meeting the needs of local communities”. Reach out to these organisations to understand how successful the policy has been to implement.
2. Reach out to your own planning team to discuss the introduction of a policy within your local area. (This is likely to depend on wider policy document timescales).
3. Work with the policy team to draft potential policy wording and supportive text, which includes details as to how community energy will be demonstrated (e.g. through ownership), ensured, and considered within the consenting process.
4. Gain relevant internal and external sign-off.

- ✓ Appetite
- ✓ An opportunity

Set a MW target for community energy

1. Research targets and deployment in other areas.
2. Determine an approach to establishing a target for your area.
3. Develop a target.
4. Gain relevant internal sign-off, publicise through the authority’s existing news channels and any newly established community energy channels.

- ✓ Appetite
- ✓ Community engagement
- ✓ Funding
- ✓ An opportunity
- ✓ Delivery resource

Start shaping your support programme

Example actions that fall within the role of “Coordination & advocacy”

Key ingredients targeted

Establish a political statement of support for community energy*

1. Draft a statement considering the definition of community energy for your local area. Identify the opportunities and benefits presented by community energy and what form your support might take, considering the other roles and actions you are looking to deliver.
2. Obtain relevant non-political sign-off.
3. Present the statement to political members for sign-off.
4. If the statement is not signed-off, reflect on any feedback and update the details.
5. If the statement is signed-off, publicise through the authority’s existing news channels and any newly established community energy channels.

- ✓ Appetite
- ✓ Community engagement
- ✓ Funding
- ✓ An opportunity
- ✓ Delivery resource

Call on central government(s) to support community energy

1. Respond to central government consultations regarding community energy
2. Proactively advocate for community energy where needs are identified, e.g. through the peer-to-peer learning network/events.

- ✓ Funding
- ✓ An opportunity

*This action is also identified under the “Supportive policies & targets” role

Start shaping your support programme

Example actions that fall within the role of “Coordination & advocacy”

Key ingredients targeted

Establish relationships with community organisations in the local area to support coordination of activities

1. Reach out to community organisations to build relationships and understand their purpose, skills and activities.
2. Use your relationship and knowledge of the organisations to coordinate activities with other organisations/initiatives.

✓ Depending on the coordination activity this has the potential to target all/any of the key ingredients.

Bring together organisations, resources, and opportunities to support project development

1. Proactively stay alert to opportunities to support community energy and act upon them e.g. put commercial renewable energy developers who want to pursue shared ownership in touch with a relevant community energy organisation, reach out to community organisations providing energy efficiency advice regarding access to relevant funding marketed by the local authority or provide procurement opportunities, e.g. through schemes like Solar Together.

✓ Depending on the coordination activity this has the potential to target all/any of the key ingredients.

*This action is also identified under the “Supportive policies & targets” role

Start shaping your support programme

Example actions that fall within the role of “Opportunity provision”	Key ingredients targeted
Identify development opportunities and engage communities in energy planning <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Use council data to map and identify potential opportunity areas for community energy via Local Area Energy Planning processes and similar, including on public and commercial buildings. 2. Engage community organisations in this mapping process to identify opportunities that support their ambitions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Appetite ✓ An opportunity
Identify funding opportunities <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Review council financing and funding opportunities to identify potential opportunities to ring-fence or apply for funding for community energy projects. 2. Reach out to specific organisations, and explain the opportunity identified to see if they are interested in pursuing it. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Appetite ✓ Funding ✓ An opportunity
Investigate opportunities to purchase community generated electricity via sleeving arrangements <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Discuss options for sleeving electricity with the council’s energy procurement body to understand the potential for this option alongside existing energy purchasing arrangements 2. Reach out to specific organisations, and explain the opportunity identified to see if they are interested in pursuing it. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Appetite ✓ Funding ✓ An opportunity
Develop an opportunity prospectus <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop a prospectus of opportunities identified, set out an application process, and eligibility criteria (including governance requirements). 2. Market the opportunity and manage the scheme. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Appetite ✓ Governance ✓ An opportunity

Start shaping your support programme

Example actions that fall within the role of “Funding provision/investment”

Key ingredients targeted

Identify and deploy internal funding

1. Review council financing to identify potential opportunities to ring-fence funding for a community energy project.
2. Determine if funding is most suited to start-up funding, at-risk development funding, or capital investment.
3. Determine how funding will be allocated, e.g. will it be used for a new group, will it be targeted for a certain area, will it be targeted at an existing project, will it be used for development or capital.
4. Obtain relevant internal sign-off.
5. Deploy funding.

✓ Appetite
 ✓ Funding
 ✓ An opportunity
 Potentially other ingredients depending on how funding is used, e.g. it could be used to pay for expert advice, or project management resource.

Apply for external funding opportunities

1. Review potential local authority funding opportunities to understand whether they could be used for community energy projects.
2. If an opportunity is identified reach out to community energy organisations to identify a project partner.
3. Agree a Memorandum of Understanding for the project/funding.
4. Obtain relevant internal sign-off.
5. Apply for the funding.

✓ Appetite
 ✓ Funding
 ✓ An opportunity
 Potentially other ingredients depending on how funding is used, e.g. it could be used to pay for expert advice, or project management resource.

Start shaping your support programme

Example actions that fall within the role of “Funding provision/investment”

Investigate potential for municipal bonds

1. Reach out to third-party organisations that arrange municipal bonds, to understand how they could be used to fund third-party projects.
2. If considered feasible reach out to community energy organisations regarding use of this funding.
3. Develop a project plan.
4. Obtain relevant internal sign-off.
5. Launch municipal bond offer.

Key ingredients targeted

✓ Appetite
✓ Community engagement
✓ Funding
✓ An opportunity
Potentially other ingredients depending on how funding is used, e.g. it could be used to pay for expert advice, or project management resource.

Start shaping your support programme

Example actions that fall within the role of “Project establishment and leadership”

Key ingredients targeted

Develop a project idea

1. Identify a need or opportunity.
2. Identify the specific project requirements for it to be successful and potential source of these requirements.

- ✓ Appetite
- ✓ Project management
- ✓ An opportunity

Establish an organisation, develop the project and hand it over

1. Determine relevant legal organisation status, based on what you would like to achieve and register the entity, considering the desired nature of the ongoing relationship with the council.
2. Recruit board members, considering the key ingredients for community energy and the specific key project requirements identified in a separate action. Proactively target relevant organisations/community members identified through the stakeholder engagement activities to apply for a position.
3. Put in place relevant governance arrangements, e.g. conflicts of interest policy. (Guides and templates are available online).
4. Work with new board to develop project to operation.
5. Once project is operational, step-back from the project.

- ✓ Appetite
- ✓ Project management
- ✓ Governance
- ✓ Funding
- ✓ An opportunity
- ✓ Delivery resource

Start shaping your support programme

Example actions that fall within the role of “Ongoing partnership working”

Key ingredients targeted

Develop a list of project ideas

1. Identify needs and opportunities
2. Identify the specific project requirements for them to be successful and potential source of these requirements.

- ✓ Appetite
- ✓ Project management
- ✓ An opportunity

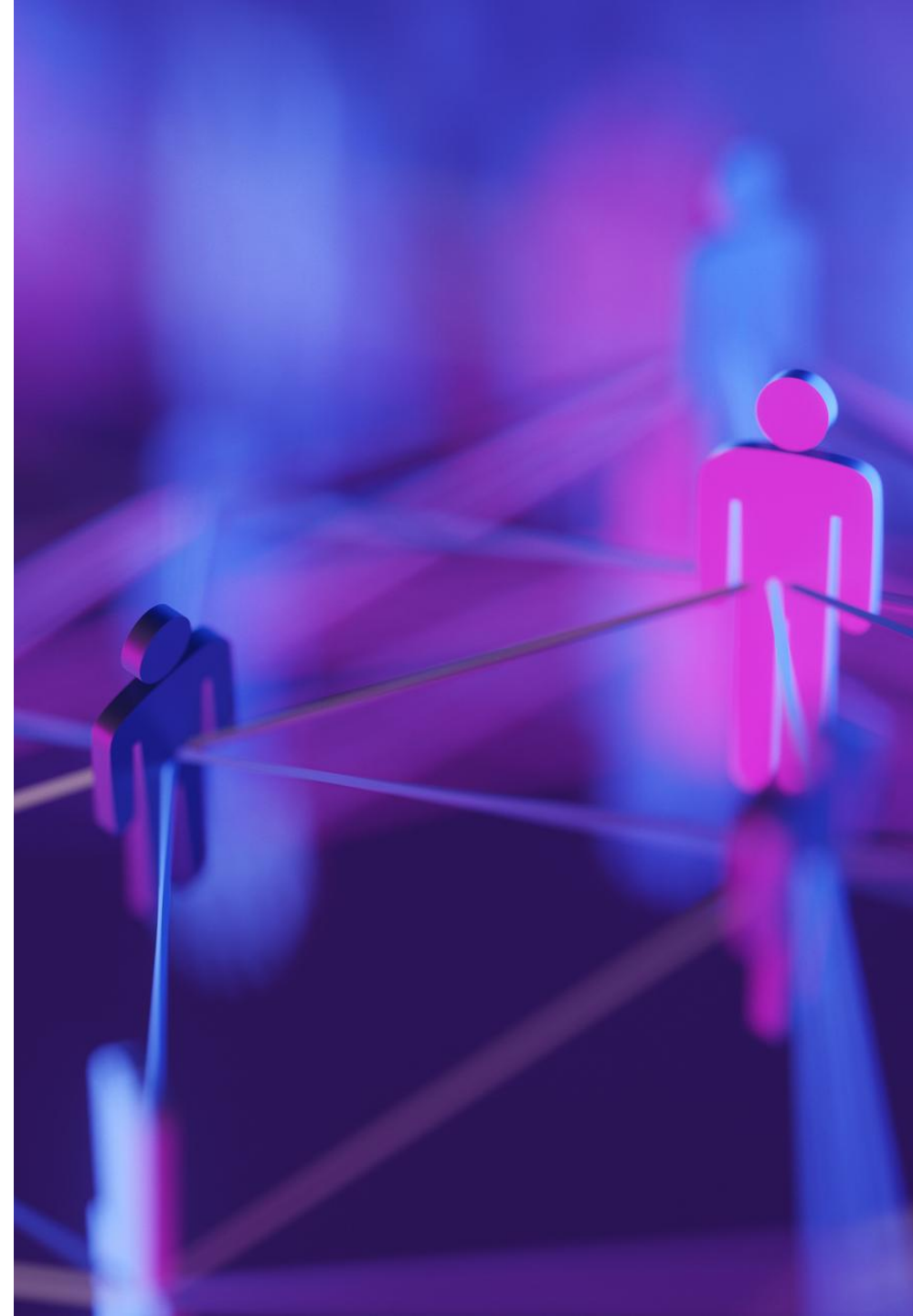
Establish an organisation, develop a project, move on to more projects

1. Determine relevant legal organisation status, based on what you would like to achieve and register the entity, considering the desired nature of the ongoing relationship with the council.
2. Recruit board members, considering the key ingredients for community energy and the specific key project requirements identified in a separate action. Proactively target relevant organisations/community members identified through the stakeholder engagement activities to apply for a position.
3. Put in place relevant governance arrangements, e.g. conflicts of interest policy. (Guides and templates are available online).
4. Work with new board to develop project prioritisation.
5. Develop one project initially.
6. Build on the success of the initial project to deliver further projects.

- ✓ Appetite
- ✓ Project management
- ✓ Governance
- ✓ Funding
- ✓ An opportunity
- ✓ Delivery resource

Further work

- Now that you have identified roles and actions to initiate your community energy support programme, formalise it internally, and obtain the relevant sign-off established through the internal stakeholder engagement.
- This document is designed to initiate actions relating to supporting community energy in your area. The programme developed should change as opportunities arise and be tailored to the evolving needs and wishes of your community and local authority. Listening to the intended support recipients and working within your authority's individual resourcing capacity will help to maximise the success of your support programme.
- Be sure to monitor the impact of your support programme (via engagement with supported organisations/communities), and of the community energy projects which it supports, to build the case for its continued operation.



Appendix



Engage with stakeholders

Considerations for internal stakeholder engagement – with respect to potential local authority roles

Promotion and knowledge-sharing

- What established communication is already in place that could be used (e.g. forums, newsletters, council website.)?
- Would resource from the authority's communications team be made available to the programme?
- Could council resources be used to facilitate networking events?
- Are there existing partnerships in place with organisations/networks who could help to facilitate information sharing?

Supportive policies and targets

- What level of political and senior decision-maker ambition and support is there for the programme?
- Is there appetite to publish a community energy support statement, action plan, or target?
- What are the key policy documents which could be relevant to the programme?
- Does the planning team consider there is scope to develop supportive policy/guidance regarding community energy?

Coordination & advocacy

- Could the authority coordinate groups and resources to work together, connecting community groups with other organisations or sources of support?
- Could the authority provide a stronger voice for community energy and call on central government to implement support?
- What existing relationships with relevant stakeholders (identified through the mapping exercise) are already in place?

Opportunity provision

- Would the authority be willing to provide sites for energy generation (e.g. roof spaces, car parks, or other available land)?
- Does the authority have social housing assets? Is there interest in working with a community group to provide tenants with more sustainable energy provision and energy management advice?
- Would the authority be willing to purchase electricity from a community energy project?

Engage with stakeholders

Considerations for internal stakeholder engagement – with respect to potential local authority roles

Funding provision/investment

- Could the authority make funding available for a community energy project (low-value start-up funding, at risk development funding, capital funding)?
- Could this be provided as a grant, loan or equity investment?
- Would the authority be willing to apply for third-party funding targeted at local authorities, that could be used to fund community energy projects?
- Would the authority be willing to investigate the use of municipal bonds to support community energy projects?

Project establishment and leadership

- Does the authority have a specific community energy project idea that they would like to see delivered?
- Does the authority have initial start-up funding available for the project and is it supportive of applying for additional funding?
- Is the authority able to dedicate a reasonable level of resource (suggest a minimum of 0.5 FTE) for a fixed period of approximately one year to establish a community energy project?

Ongoing partnership working

- Does the authority have several specific community energy project ideas which it would like to see delivered?
- Does the authority have initial development funding available for the projects and is it prepared to apply for further funding?
- Is the authority able to dedicate a reasonable level of resource (suggest a minimum of 1 FTE) on an ongoing basis to develop and deliver community energy projects?

Engage with stakeholders

Considerations for community energy sector – with respect to the “key ingredients”

- What is the group’s appetite to develop a project (and the type of project)?
- What are the group’s past and current activities? (What skills and knowledge have they developed?)
- What engagement/relationship does the group have with the wider community?
- Does the group have formal governance arrangements in place, facilitating their operation?
- Has any funding been secured to support a group’s operation/project development (e.g. through a previous operational project)?
- Has the group already identified and started developing a project?
- What human resource is available to the group to deliver a project, in terms of time available and skills/experience?

Considerations for wider community sector – with respect to the “key ingredients”

- What is the organisation’s appetite to develop a community energy project (and the type of project)? Could a community energy project help to realise the organisation’s wider purpose/goals, or help to support its longer-term sustainability?
- What are the group’s past and current activities? What skills and knowledge have they developed?
- What engagement/relationship does the group have with the wider community?
- Does the group have formal governance arrangements in place, facilitating their operation?
- Does the group have access to funding which supports its operation, and could support a community energy project to develop?
- Has the group already identified and started developing a project? Does the group’s current operations mean that it has access to a development opportunity (e.g. through ownership of a community building asset)?
- What human resource is available to the group to deliver a project, (e.g. time available, skills/experience)? If the wider group does not have appetite to be involved in a community energy project, are there individuals within the group who are interested?

Engage with stakeholders

Considerations for local public sector – with respect to the “key ingredients”

- What is the organisation’s appetite to develop a community energy project (and the type of project)? Could a community energy project help to realise the organisation’s wider purpose/goals, or help to support its longer-term sustainability (e.g. would a community energy project provide a relevant research opportunity for a local university, or educational opportunity for a local school)?
- What are the organisation’s past and current activities? What skills and knowledge have they developed?
- What engagement/relationship does the organisation have with the wider community?
- Does the organisation have formal governance arrangements in place, facilitating their operation?
- Does the organisation have access to funding which supports the organisation’s operation, and could support the development of a community energy project? Does the organisation have access to specific third-party funding sources that could be accessed? (e.g. funding targeted at health or education providers).
- Has the organisation already identified and started developing a project?
- Does the organisation’s current operations mean that it has access to a development opportunity (e.g. through ownership of a building asset, or through a high operational energy demand)?
- What human resource is available to the organisation to deliver a project, in terms of time available and skills/experience? If the wider group does not have appetite to be involved in a community energy project, are there individuals within the organisation who are interested?

Engage with stakeholders

Considerations for national public sector – with respect to the “key ingredients”

- Is the initiative specifically focused on community energy?
- Does the initiative provide direct project management resource, or funding for project management resource?
- Does the initiative provide expert advice or support with community engagement activities, including documented guidance, tools and templates, funding, or delivery support via expert consultants?
- Does the initiative provide support with establishing and managing ongoing governance arrangements, including documented guidance, template policies, funding, or direct one-to-one expert advice?
- Does the initiative provide funding that could be used for a community energy project? What type of funding (e.g., development or capital), what are the lending terms (e.g. grant or loan), and what are the eligibility criteria?
- Does the initiative support opportunity identification, including directly identifying projects and sites, or by undertaking feasibility assessments of identified opportunities?
- Does the initiative help to secure delivery resource, including via funding, direct delivery resource, guidance on recruiting and supporting volunteers, or via training opportunities for volunteers?

Engage with stakeholders

Considerations for national community third sector support – with respect to the “key ingredients”

- Is the organisation running any specific initiatives that could support community energy groups and projects? How long is any specific support initiative intended to run for? Is there potential for an extension or future phase? Do any specific support initiatives have any eligibility criteria associated with them? What is this criteria?
- Does the organisation provide direct project management resource, or funding for project management resource?
- Does the organisation provide expert advice or support with community engagement activities, including documented guidance, tools and templates, funding, or delivery support via expert consultants?
- Does the organisation provide support with establishing and managing ongoing governance arrangements, including documented guidance, template policies, funding, or direct one-to-one expert advice?
- Does the organisation provide funding that could be used for a community energy project? What type of funding (e.g. development or capital), what are the lending terms (e.g. grant or loan), and what are the eligibility criteria?
- Does the organisation support opportunity identification (e.g. directly identifying projects and sites, or by undertaking feasibility assessments of identified opportunities)?
- Does the organisation help to secure delivery resource, including via funding, direct delivery resource, guidance on recruiting and supporting volunteers, or via training opportunities for volunteers?

Engage with stakeholders

Considerations for private sector support – with respect to the “key ingredients”

- What might the organisation’s interest in community energy be?
- What is the organisation’s area of expertise? How might that be useful to a community energy project, and what is the likely cost of accessing that expertise?
- What engagement/relationship does the organisation have with the local community?
- Could the organisation provide funding to support a community energy group’s operation/project development (e.g. via a community benefit fund)?
- Could the organisation provide a community energy project development opportunity (e.g. are they a high energy consumer, does the organisation have a site that could be used for an energy generation project)?
- Would the organisation or the organisation’s employees be interested in being involved in the delivery of a community energy project, noting the need for good governance to manage any potential conflicts of interest?

Considerations for residents – with respect to the “key ingredients”

- What is a resident’s knowledge of and appetite for community energy activities?
- Are they aware of any existing projects? Do they know what benefits can arise?
- Would they like to be involved in a community energy project? What skills might they be able to bring?
- Are they aware of the concept of community share offers? Have they previously invested in a community share offer? Is this something that they might be interested in investing in in the future?
- Have they got any project ideas or identified a project need?
- Have they previously volunteered before? What did this involve?



Whilst reasonable steps have been taken to ensure that the information contained within this publication is correct, the authors, the Carbon Trust, its agents, contractors and sub-contractors give no warranty and make no representation as to its accuracy and accept no liability for any errors or omissions. All trademarks, service marks and logos in this publication, and copyright in it, are the property of the Carbon Trust (or its licensors). Nothing in this publication shall be construed as granting any licence or right to use or reproduce any of the trademarks, services marks, logos, copyright or any proprietary information in any way without the Carbon Trust's prior written permission. The Carbon Trust enforces infringements of its intellectual property rights to the full extent permitted by law.

The Carbon Trust is a company limited by guarantee and registered in England and Wales under company number 4190230 with its registered office at Level 5, Arbor, 255 Blackfriars Road, London SE1 9AX, UK.

© The Carbon Trust 2025. All rights reserved.