



PRESS RELEASE
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Groundbreaking scheme to support local authorities in accelerating the growth of the community energy sector across England

An innovative green energy scheme bringing local authorities and communities together to support the delivery of Net Zero targets is being rolled out across the country.

The Community Energy Pathways programme has already helped communities across the South East to establish community energy groups, set up community solar initiatives, innovative heat projects and electric vehicle charging at the same time as offering vital energy efficiency advice schemes and support for the vulnerable, resulting in lower energy bills. All local authorities are now being invited to join the programme, to establish a thriving community energy sector in their areas contributing to the successful delivery of Net Zero ambitions in line with their energy and climate change strategies.

The scheme is the brainchild of Community Energy South, an organisation set up in 2013 to support local energy groups in the South East of England with training, expert advice and project management experience. The Pathways programme is also supported by Community Energy England and the BEIS Net Zero Department.

Philip Coventry, Acting Co-Chief Executive at Community Energy England said, “We are really excited about what Community Energy Pathways can do for this sector. Pathways has arrived at the perfect time to support communities wanting to transition to Net Zero. Over the last year since COP26 we have seen an increase in interest from communities and the need to work together with local authorities to deliver the UK’s Net Zero targets. Community Energy England look forward to working with the Pathways team and the community energy sector to support the growth required to deliver these trusted services so vital in helping communities to be resilient in the current energy crisis.”

Through the Pathways programme, in partnership with three councils already – Essex, Hampshire and Surrey and South Downs National Park - Community Energy South is mentoring 15 community energy businesses to help deliver each of the Councils’ Climate Change Strategies and supporting their race to Net Zero. Each Council now has an established Community Energy Network working together with the Councils and starting to deliver both community owned renewable energy projects and much needed energy advice projects.

The success has prompted other councils to sit up and take notice, and Community Energy South has already received requests from other local authorities to set up Community Energy Pathways to accelerate the development of community energy groups across England.

With the support of Kwasi Kwarteng, Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS), the [Pathways programme](#) is now being scaled up to target hundreds of local authorities across England. Around 300 local authorities have declared a Climate Emergency and have presented climate change strategies to reach Net Zero by 2050 which must be delivered.

Many Local Authorities are now applying for funding for renewable energy projects through the Government's £2.6 billion UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF), with millions of pounds already secured to take forward Net Zero schemes. The UKSPF is well aligned to support these community led energy initiatives. **Local authorities have until August to apply for the current round of funding.**

The Community Energy Pathways rollout, announced on Tuesday 28 June at a launch event at the LGA Conference in Harrogate, comes at the end of Community Energy Fortnight (CEF), an annual event to inspire more people to get involved in projects and to engage MPs in becoming champions for community energy and policy change in parliament.

Ollie Pendered, Chief Executive of Community Energy South, said: "For almost ten years, we have been working in partnership with councils and community groups to help them launch their own energy schemes and help create resilient communities. We are now ready to move to the next stage by rolling out our mentoring programme to connect more local authorities across the country with community energy groups in their area.

"Community energy works by connecting people from all walks of life to deliver community-owned green energy, reduce energy use and help make it affordable for all. We are empowering people to set up community solar and heat projects, car sharing and EV charging schemes, as well as supporting energy efficiency initiatives and delivering trusted local energy awareness services for communities and vulnerable neighbours.

"By working with local authorities, we are providing the expertise on the ground to allow community groups to not only help tackle soaring energy costs, tackle the climate emergency and support the drive towards Net Zero. We are excited to be offering Community Energy Pathways to all local authorities in England as the next step in accelerating the growth of the community energy sector."

There are now 495 community energy groups across the UK. Community energy projects have generated 331 MW renewable electricity capacity, generating 506 GWh of electricity, enough electricity for over ¼ million homes. This has saved £3.35m on energy bills and 143,000 tCO₂e annually, the equivalent of 1.1m flights from London to Paris. (source: [Community Energy State of the Sector | Community Energy England](#), [Compensate your carbon footprint – with CO₂ calculator from myclimate – myclimate](#)).

The support from BEIS through the Greater South East Energy Hub, who work with the public sector and their stakeholders for the development and financing of local Net Zero projects, will see all local authorities in England offered the opportunity to sign up to the CEP programme.

Community Energy South's ambition is that every District or Borough authority should benefit from a community energy group and each Unitary, Metropolitan Authority and County Council should include a Community Energy Network (Steering Group) to empower energy communities and support the region to achieve Net Zero.

Ends

NOTES TO EDITORS

You can access the new Community Energy Pathways here: www.communityenergypathways.com

Community Energy South was set up in 2013 to support the network of community energy groups in the South East of England. They act as a catalyst and capacity building Hub supporting Community Energy groups to become resilient and to work effectively to support their communities. As part of this they provide training, advice, project management and a best practice, skills sharing network to enable community energy groups to develop green energy projects and ground level carbon reduction, and to offer energy efficiency advice and support for the vulnerable to make energy affordable for all. CES is currently supporting 42 community energy groups across the South East.

Community Energy Pathways case studies:

Essex

[Saffron Walden Community Energy \(swce.co.uk\)](http://swce.co.uk)



SAFFRON WALDEN COMMUNITY ENERGY

- Supported them to become an incorporated company, develop project ideas, create a business plan and secure funding.
- Initial projects include work on local fuel poverty and partnering with the Town Council.
- Secured £20k from Essex Climate Action Challenge Fund
- Enabled the group to work with a nearby Parish to investigate whole-village heat decarbonisation using findings from the celebrated CommuniHeat project.

Community Energy Colchester

[Home | Community Energy Colchester \(colchestercommunityenergy.com\)](http://colchestercommunityenergy.com)



- Advised this group on becoming incorporated and developing a business plan
- Supported them to network with other emerging groups and participate in an energy saving advice network, training volunteers and reaching hundreds of homes.
- Supporting a micro-hydro feasibility study and development of their project pipeline.

The [Shared Prosperity Fund \(SPF\)](#) provides £2.6 billion of new funding for local investment by March 2025, with all areas of the UK receiving an allocation from the Fund (rather than it being via competition). The Fund's interventions will be planned and delivered by councils and mayoral authorities across England, working closely with local partners.

Local authorities are being encouraged to bid for funds to support Net Zero project "interventions" in their area. **They have until August to apply for the current round of funding.**