

Empowering Communities with Community-Led Energy: Opportunities for Parish and Town Councils

Energy and Low Carbon Team
Essex County Council



Most residents are concerned about climate change...



of Essex residents say they are extremely, very or somewhat worried about climate change

Source: Essex Resident Survey 2022

“Mission Zero” by Rt Hon Chris Skidmore MP highlighted the role of community leadership and the need to **“turbocharge community energy and action”** and the benefits of a **place based, place sensitive locally led approach** to net zero as one of its six key pillars for action on net zero

Climate Change Committee: “it will not be possible to get close to meeting a net zero target **without engaging with people**...people need to be brought into the decision-making process and derive a sense of ownership of the Net Zero project”

ECC's strategic plan for Everyone's Essex:

Land use/Green Infrastructure,

Built Environment

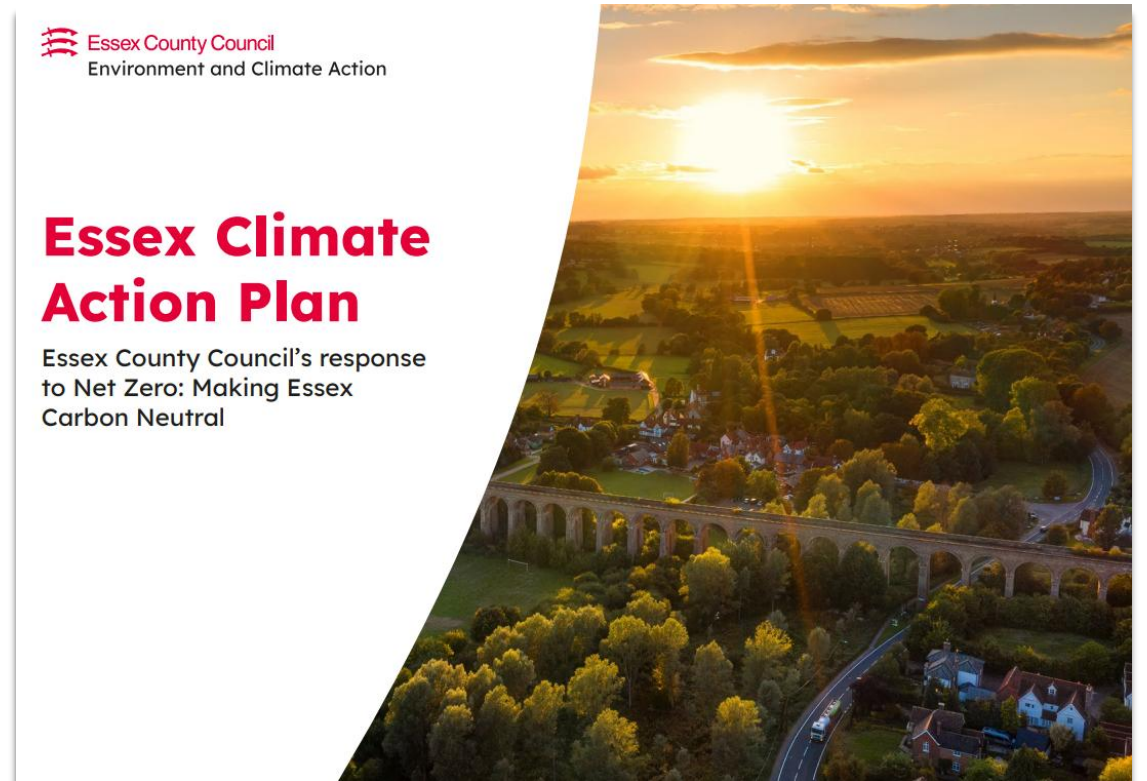
Transport

Waste

Energy



- Community-Led Energy **Generation** and **Energy Efficiency/Retrofit**
- Stakeholder engagement for NSIPs, advocating for impactful **Community Benefit Funds** and **Shared Ownership** agreements
- Delivery of **Community-Led Energy Planning** and **Local Area Energy Plans**



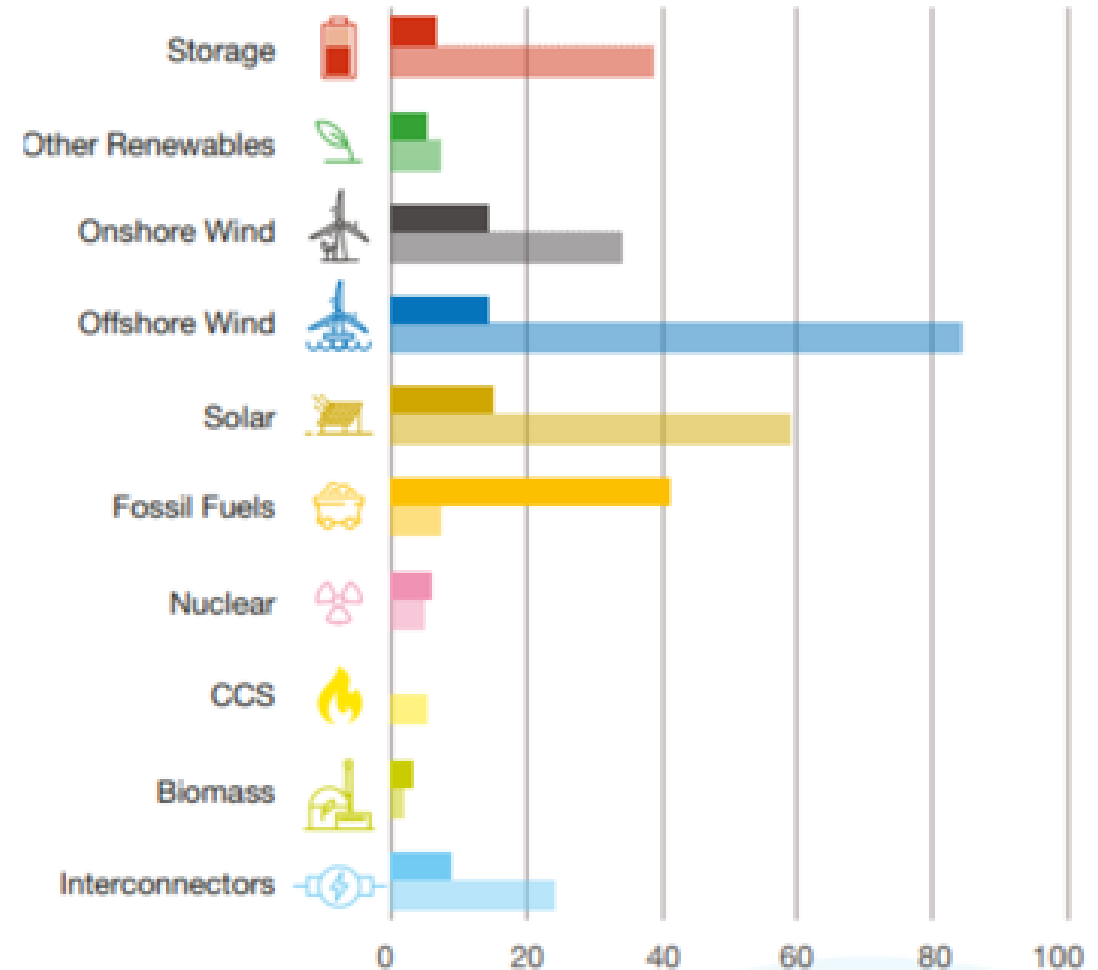
Essex Climate Action Commission
Powering positive change



Key spending and policy announcements to date

- **Great British Energy £8.3bn capitalisation tasked with scaling renewable investment; co-invest with private companies**
- **A Government partnership with the Crown Estate which aims to lever £60bn private investment into renewable energy – focus on offshore wind**
- **National Grid: £30bn 2025 – 2029 Great Grid Upgrade to increase grid capacity – incl. power network reinforcements Bramford to Twinstead; Norwich to Tilbury**
- **£6.6bn in home energy efficiency – national Warm Homes Plan (est. 391,000 homes E of England) - greater role for Local Government**

Generation mix as at 2023 and future forecast mix by 2035
(pending update for new 2030 target):



New role for Local Government: Local Power Plan

- Initial forecasts are that this would mean some **1,000 public sector / community owned renewables projects** the East of England (by 2030).
- GBE to partner with and provide funding and support to Local Authorities and Community Energy Groups to roll out **small and medium-scale renewable energy projects**.
- Stronger role **for local government and communities** in the energy system and delivery of its energy ambitions



What is Community Energy?

Locally driven energy projects that are created, owned, and managed by the community.



Goals:

- Enhance local energy resilience and sustainability
- Generate economic benefits for the community
- Reduce greenhouse gas emissions by shifting to renewables



Powering Up

Community Owned Generation



Powering Down

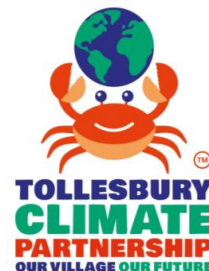


Energy Awareness & Education



Energy efficiency

Low Carbon transport



Money for Community Energy £ £ £

Government Grants

- There are often many funding opportunities available and ECC and Community Energy South can support with applications
- **Greater South East Net Zero Hub** offers the Community Energy Fund (CEF)

Community Share Offers and Crowdfunding

- Start a community share offer and have residents invest in a local project with a ROI

Shared Ownership and Community Benefit Funds

- Explore shared ownership with larger scale private-public projects
- Negotiate agreeable terms from private projects and unlock long lasting financial revenue year on year

Financing Partnerships

- Work with social enterprises and CICs to gain capital for projects with longer term benefits for the community (e.x. Communities for Renewables)

Generate Long-Term Revenue

- **Electricity Sales to the Grid**
- **Direct Sales to Local Customers**
- **Net Metering and Virtual Net Metering**
- **Value Added Community Services**
 - Energy Efficiency Advice
 - EV Charging Stations
 - Community Programs/Education

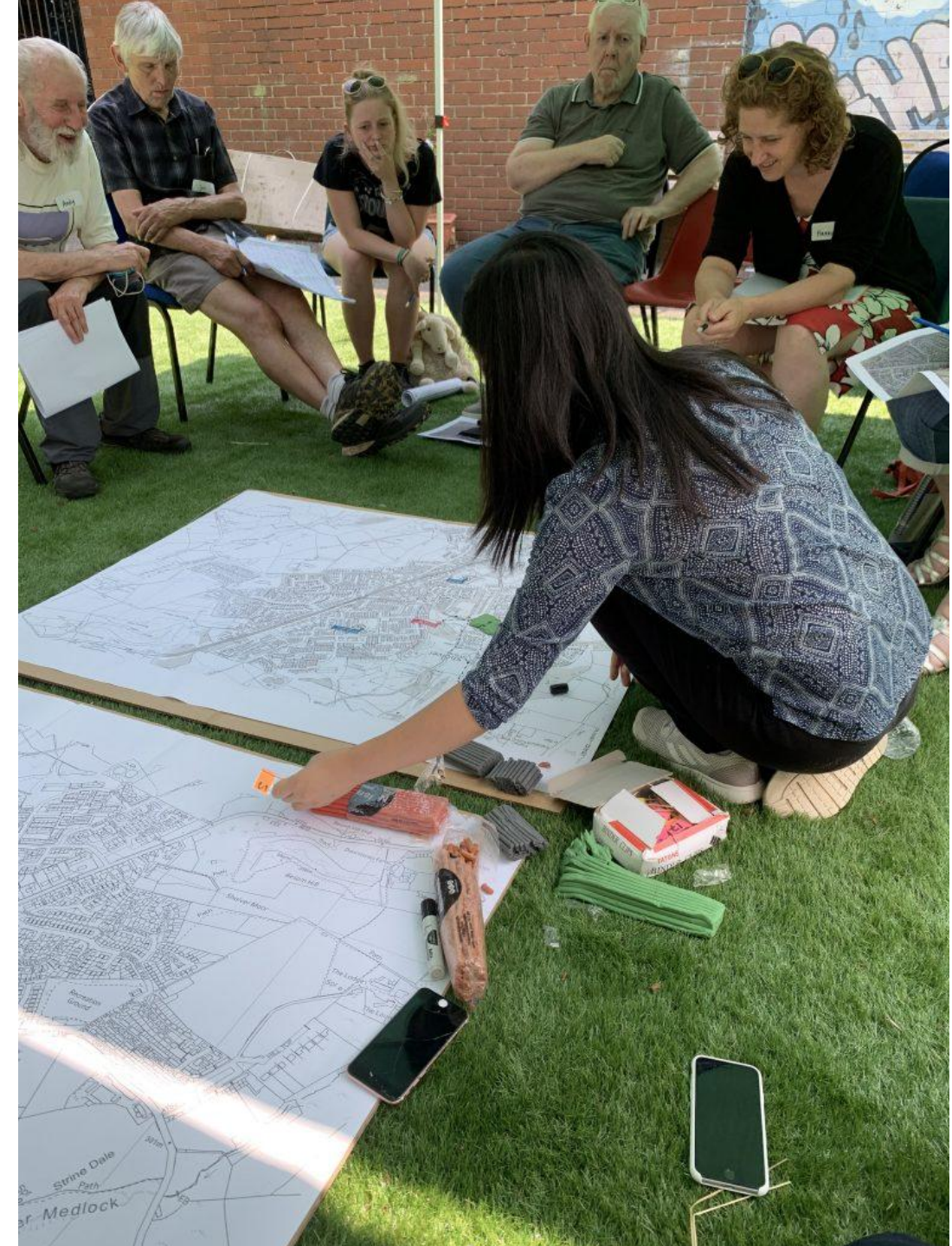


How can ECC help?

Pathways Programme - Mentoring and Start up support to community energy groups – Community of practice to share ideas and best practices, support to find funding and apply for grants

Business Development Support- Along with our delivery partner Community Energy South, we can give free business support, signposting to grant funding, training opportunities and more

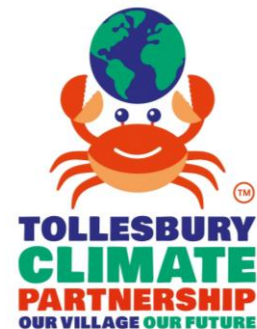
Community-led energy planning – enabling communities to shape and benefit from the energy transition in a way that best suits the size/scale relevant to the specific area



Case study – Powering Up

Tollesbury Climate Partnership

- First **community energy share offer** in Essex - raised **£250,000** from the local community
- Secured a grant of **£400,000** from the Public Sector Decarbonisation Fund
- Measures to be installed in the school include solar panels, ground source heat pump, insulation, LEDs
- **92% reduction in CO2**
- Upwards of **£40k in savings/year**



Case study – Powering Down

Community Energy Colchester

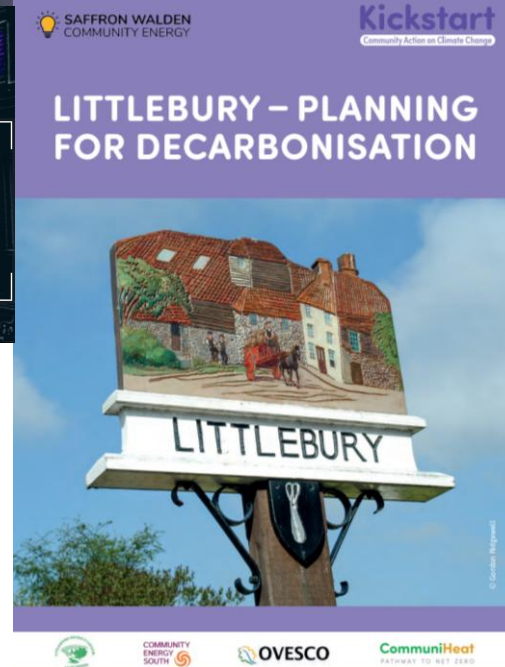
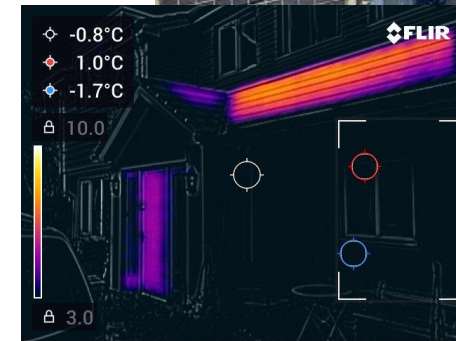
- **Energy advice** - over 140 households in Colchester and Clacton helped so far,
 - Over 30 home visits - **Free energy saving measures** installed such as draft proofing and radiator reflectors
- Supporting schools with energy saving and educational activities (Colchester and Tendring)
- Coordinating **EV charge points** for Parish Councils
- Working with other communities such as **Jaywick** to start new Community Energy groups



Case study – Inspiring new groups

Saffron Walden Community Energy

- Created several **employment opportunities** and training up volunteers to do retrofit assessments
- Created a free **thermal imaging** camera loan service
- Organising small scale **group purchases**, e.g. insulation
- Supported the local pub with the **installation of Solar Panels**
- Inspired and supported **Littlebury Energy** project and several others
 - Feasibility study underway to decarbonise the entire community



Other possibilities

Solar Projects: From small installations to larger, shared ownership solar farms.

Wind Turbines: Onshore projects tailored for community use.

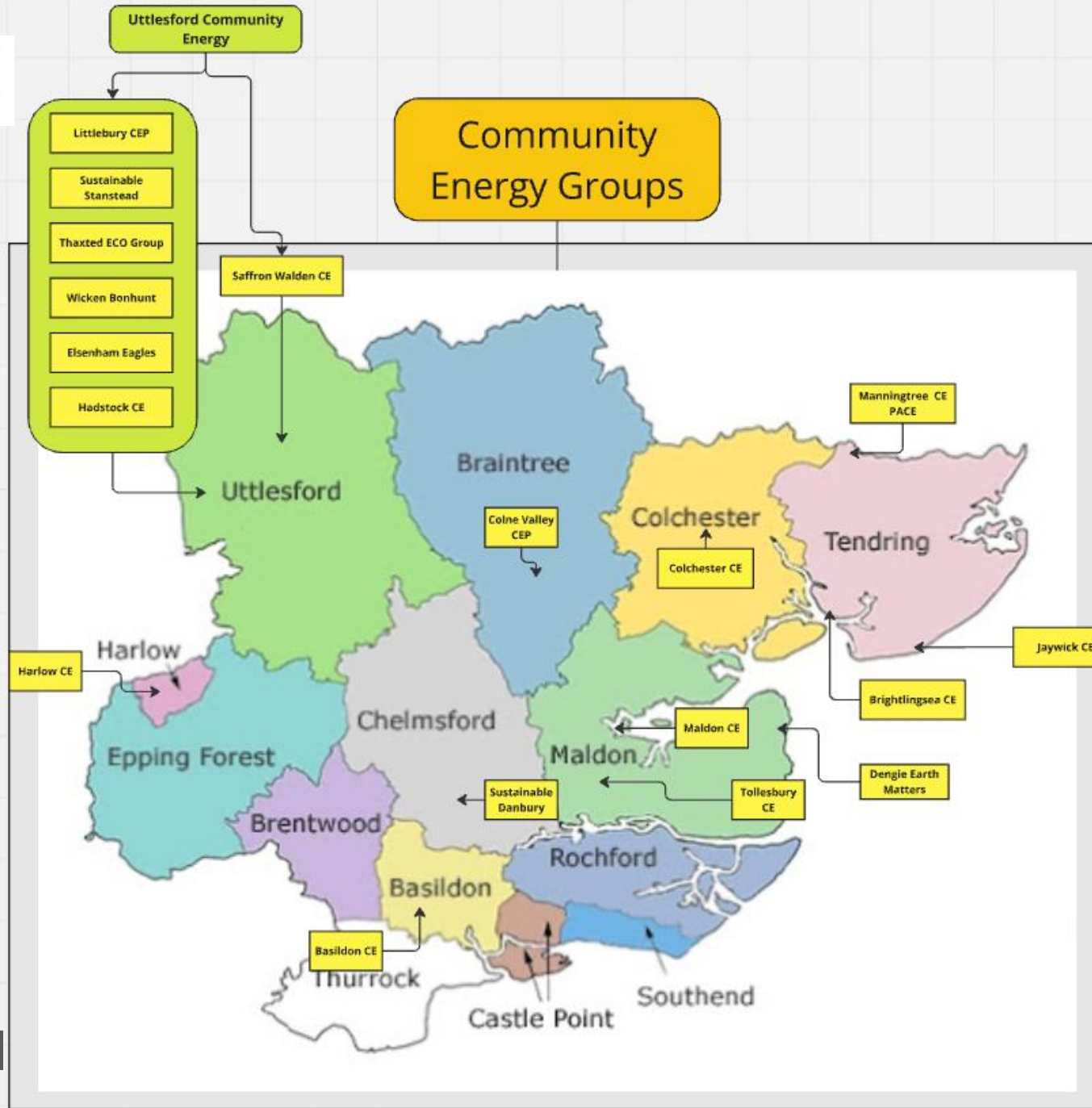
Community Heat Networks: For areas with high energy demand, such as town centres.

Battery Storage: Local storage to enhance resilience and provide backup power.

Future Growth: Technology advancements could make projects like community-scale battery storage and microgrids more viable and affordable.

Examples:

- **Westmill Solar Co-op**
- **Lawrence-Weston Wind Turbine Project**
- **Swaffam Prior Heat Network**



New Groups All Over Essex!

Elsenham Eagles

ECO Thaxted

Wicken Bonhunt

**Brightlingsea
Community
Energy**

Jaywick CE

Harlow

**Sustainable
Stansted**

Maldon CE

**Basildon
(Youth-led)**

**Colne Valley
Community
Energy Project**

Hadstock

What is community-led energy planning?

Place-based approach to building knowledge, understanding and confidence in communities to enable them to shape and benefit from the energy transition.



Using this approach:

- Allows **local people** to engage in energy transition planning and action
- Generates valuable **neighbourhood-level data** to inform the approach to and delivery of the local energy transition
- Enables the activation of community-led and -owned initiatives which can **build community wealth** as part of the energy transition.

Integrating Community-Led Energy in Neighbourhood Plans

- **Completing a “CLEP” can help to create a Vision Statement and collate important data that can provide evidence to local authorities on Neighbourhood Plans**
- **Gauge the interest within the community**
- **May help to identify stakeholders and form a core team (possibly even a community Energy group)**
- **Gives a clearer picture of local policies and regulatory requirements**
- **Plan renewable energy infrastructure placement**

What next?

- New groups continue to form and get incorporated – along with **district-wide groups** to support smaller groups and develop **communities of practice**
- Develop capacity, create jobs in the sector and transition to a **long term financially self-sustaining** basis – example: Ovesco CBS in Lewes
- **Broaden the scope** – more **parish councils, advocacy groups, community leaders, churches and places of worship, NHS, schools, farmers, commercial sector** – to expand the pipeline of community energy opportunities and lead on Local Area Energy Plans
- More community-led energy planning workshops for 2025!



Thank you!

Please get in touch if you are interested in exploring community energy.

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