


**Powering our
Communities Fund
2021**

**electricity
north west**
Bringing energy to your door



**Progress
report
and case
studies**

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Purpose of this document

The purpose of this document is to provide a progress report on the projects awarded a Powering our Communities Fund grant in 2021. It provides an overview of the fund, key themes and lessons learnt and a case study for each grant recipient.

It is one of a series of progress reports and case studies we are publishing to provide an update on the projects funded through the Powering our Communities Fund.

Introduction to Electricity North West

Electricity North West (ENWL) is the regional distribution network operator (DNO) for the North West of England. We operate £13bn of critical infrastructure including 13,000km of overhead lines and 44,000km of underground cables. Our network supports the economic powerhouse of the North West of England covering Cumbria, Lancashire, Greater Manchester and parts of Cheshire and Derbyshire.

We support the 2.4m properties connected to our network, which is the most reliable in the UK. We are also one of the most efficient networks, with our charges coming in at around 30p a day. Our customer service scores are consistently over 90% and we invest in tailored support programmes to help customers in fuel poverty, who need extra care or who want to develop community energy projects. We're the most innovative network operator and are investing £2bn from 2023-2028 to ensure sustainable growth for the region. We are also the most digital DNO enabled by our network management system (NMS).

Electricity North West was the first DNO to publish a stakeholder-led community and local energy strategy in 2018. In April 2024 we published our most recent community and local energy strategy for ED21 which has been produced after a period of in-depth stakeholder engagement. A key part of our strategy has been to support communities with seed funding through our Powering our Communities Fund.

The Powering our Communities Fund

The aim of the fund is to ensure a just energy transition by enabling communities to take part in the development and delivery of community energy projects.

The *Powering our Communities Fund* has been developed in consultation with stakeholders who told us that there is a need to support community level action on net-zero. They also told us that it is very important to them that the transition to net-zero is a “Just Transition” which means they want everyone to benefit and no-one to be “left behind” or miss out on the benefits net-zero will bring.

The fund aims to support activity that either directly deliver carbon savings and/or widespread community engagement or “seeds” activity that will deliver these outcomes. Seeding activity may involve overcoming a barrier, laying the foundations for a project, or initiating a piece of work that continues beyond this funding.

In 2021 up to £75,000 was available to support projects up to the value of £15,000. The funding is awarded via a competition held for applications. The applications are judged against the fund’s priorities and the projects that best meet the criteria and deliver the most impact are awarded funding.

Our fund is open to anyone in our community, and we particularly welcome applications from minority ethnic groups or other groups that are often “seldom heard” or at risk of being left behind in the energy systems transition.

In 2021 we asked for projects that could demonstrate how they met one or more of the following criteria as their way of ensuring a just transition:

- Investigating new ways of working or developing a new business model.
- Addressing a specific barrier that is holding back the development of community or local energy.
- Scaling up the delivering of a community or local energy project.

Grant Funding Recipients

Six projects were awarded a Powering our Communities grant in Autumn 2021

Organisation	Project Name	Amount awarded
Cumbria Action for Sustainability	Farming Futures - Agrivoltaics	£10,000
This project investigated the demand for, and viability of, on farm renewables in Fell foot. Cumbria to unlock barriers to implementation.		
Organisation	Project Name	Amount awarded
Cumbria Action for Sustainability	Accelerating Community Solar	£15,000
This project worked with communities across Cumbria to overcome barriers faced by individuals to invest in solar PV, specifically a lack of confidence about where to start or who to approach. It is also seeking sites to develop as community owned PV.		
Organisation	Project Name	Amount awarded
Leigh Preservation Trust	Greening our Mill	£8,500
This project was run by Leigh Preservation Trust who look after Leigh Spinners Mill which is a Grade 2 listed building. It is used as a hub for local businesses, community, arts, sports and organisations. This project looked into how to renovate the building with energy efficiency and renewable energy to reduce its carbon footprint and running costs.		
Organisation	Project Name	Amount awarded
Middleton Cooperating	Establishing Middleton Community Power	£15,000
The aim of the project is to establish a local solar PV co-operative in Middleton including identifying opportunities for the deployment of community owned solar PV projects on land and buildings in the town.		
Organisation	Project Name	Amount awarded
Salford Diocese Trust	Solar for GM Faiths	£15,000
This project is led by the Salford Diocesan Trust and is working with an interfaith group in Greater Manchester to overcome the barriers to the installation of low carbon energy in religious buildings.		
Organisation	Project Name	Amount awarded
Carbon Coop	Energise Westwood	£14,975
The aim of this project was to research the barriers faced by the community of the Millenium Centre, in Westwood, Oldham to accessing energy efficiency advice.		

Key themes and lessons learnt from the projects

The six projects funded through the 2021 Powering our communities award focused on a range of different ways of delivering the overall aim of the fund which is to ensure a just energy transition by delivering against the fund criteria. The following table shows which projects contributed to each criteria.

Funding criteria	Successful projects
Investigating new ways of working or developing a new business model	No projects delivered against this criteria
Addressing a specific barrier that is holding back the development of community or local energy	<p>Farming Future, Cumbria Action for Sustainability aimed to unlock the barriers to the implementation of on farm renewables</p> <p>Energise Westwood, Carbon Coop researched the barriers the Westwood community is facing with accessing energy efficiency advice and measures with a view to improving their access</p> <p>Solar for GM Faiths, Salford Diocese Trust delivered research and support for faith organisations across GM to overcome their barriers to the implementation of solar PV with a focus using the community energy model to deliver.</p>
Scaling up the delivering of a community or local energy project	<p>Accelerating Community Solar, Cumbria Action For Sustainability built on a previous Powering our Communities funded project to continue to develop the Solar Made Easy community energy model for supporting households and communities to install solar PV.</p> <p>Middleton Community Power, Middleton Cooperating used the funded to establish this new group and identify projects for it to take forward.</p> <p>Greening our Mill, Leigh Preservation Trust looked at the feasibility of renewable and energy efficiency measures for a large grade 2 listed mill building which is a community of small businesses. It was also</p>

This round of projects delivered many successful outcomes and lessons for future projects to learn from. Some of the lessons are also useful to Electricity North West as funders as well as being useful for project delivery organisations. One of the key lessons learnt is about how to deliver community level projects.

Lesson 1: Project delivery needs to be agile and respond to community feedback.

Three of the projects have varied from the initial project briefs due to feedback received during the early stages of the projects. In conversations with the funding team at Electricity North West all projects were all able to agree a different approach.

- The Farming Futures project changed from aiming to develop a decision-making tree that all farmers could use to delivering bespoke advice to 5 farms when it became clear that all farms require individual information.
- The Solar for GM Faiths project widened its scope to include all GM Faiths and the aim to set up a delivering vehicle for solar projects on faith buildings when it became clear the wide spread interest from the faith community.
- The Energise Sholver project became the Energise Westwood project, switching between two areas in Oldham which had been part of the Oldham Energy Futures project. The project Shover wanted to take forward was a large solar project and it quickly became obvious that it was not going to be possible to deliver within the project timescale because of the timescales involved with engaging with the site owner.

Other themes we can draw from the projects point to how important community level action is for the delivery of a just energy transition.

Lesson 2: Community engagement is key to the delivery of a just transition.

The projects have demonstrated that to be able to understand a community's issues and barriers and to develop an effective response it is essential to engage with them in a meaningful way. This involves in personal

contact, listening, respect and understanding. It also involves trial and error to see what works and perseverance to continue when things get tough.

- The Solar Made Easy project has helped householders install significant amounts of solar energy by engaging with local communities to understand their needs and provide the support they need. The project reached the model of delivery that works through trial and error.
- The Solar of GM Faiths project is closer to helping the Muslim community to unlock the benefits of community energy in a way that meets their beliefs following conversations about their thoughts on investments and interests.
- Engaging with Farmers through the Farming Futures projects has helped 5 farms take the next steps with installing renewable energy and supporting a larger number of about 30 farmers with understanding the issues in more detail. It has also provided ENWL with invaluable feedback which will help us to develop our services.
- The Energise Westwood research shows the barriers that impacting low-income, predominantly ethnic minority communities and preventing them accessing the fuel poverty support that is available. By working with the community, it has also identified ways these barriers can be overcome. We will take this feedback on board for the development and delivery of our Take Charge fuel poverty programme.

Despite the success of these projects there are still some significant challenges remaining which have been identified by these projects. It is useful to highlight them so work can begin to tackle them.

Lesson 3: Challenges remain with developing community energy projects despite the enthusiasm of the groups involved.

- The original Energise Sholver project highlighted the long lead times that can be involved with developing a larger, more complex community project with a third party.
- Middleton Community Power are also experiencing frustrations with finding third party sites to develop and finding the process is taking longer than expected. They also want to use local supply to make their business model work and get the local support they need but this also has challenges to deliver.
- At the other end of the size scale for projects Solar for GM Faiths has found that some community projects are too small by themselves for a share offer so community groups need a portfolio of projects. They have also discovered that many faith buildings have low electricity consumption making them marginally viable for a community benefit society to invest in.

All of these groups will continue to work on their projects and the track record of community energy would suggest that they will eventually be successful in delivering their projects.

The extensive consultation with farmers through the Farmer for the Future project has resulted in the following recommendations for how a DNO like Electricity North West can support them.

Lesson 4: Important feedback for Electricity North West on how to help farming customers.

- They feel confused and stressed by the rising energy costs and the barriers that seem to stop them from taking direct action and installing renewables.
- Farmers want the DNO to tell them the maximum they can generate now with their existing connections.
- Farmers also want to know what can be accommodated with grid reinforcement and what the cost is.
- They want simple and clear pre application guidance.
- They want a named person to talk to and someone to visit their farm to talk through their situation and offer advice on what is best for them in their given scenario.
- They are hugely frustrated with the lack of communication both with installers and the DNO (who can't talk to them about a project if their application has been made by a third party) and often feel left in the dark, during the application process.

Case Studies

Applicant: Cumbria Action for Sustainability

Project: Farming Futures - Agrivoltaics

Amount received: £10,000

Summary

This project investigated the demand for, and viability of, on farm renewables in Fell foot, Cumbria to unlock barriers to implementation. It built on the Fell foot Forward Whole Farm Carbon pilot which calculated baseline farm greenhouse gases and highlighted areas where emissions can be reduced.

The project set out to deliver a simple decision tree matrix to support farmers to make decisions about how to decarbonise their farms by installing solar PV. By talking to farmers as part of the project it became clear that it is not that simple; farmers need bespoke advice. The project has undertaken successful engagement and delivered useful information to the group of farmers that took part in the project. It has also collected valuable insight into the barriers faced by farmers and feedback on what support they need.

Why is the project community energy?

This project is focussed on a “community of interest” in this case a community of farmers in the Fell Foot area of Cumbria. By working as a group, they can make more progress in identifying and implementing technologies to reduce the carbon footprint of their farm.

The project

The project worked in-depth with 5 farms and delivered wider engagement through workshops and the audit process with over 30 farmers. The 5 farms that received the in-depth support have moved on to developing renewable energy projects in solar and wind. The project has also delivered learning about the barriers and issues facing farmers to decarbonise their energy usage and what further support is required.

The project found that although farmers are keen to explore how to decarbonise their energy supply there are several limiting factors inhibiting their ability to take projects forward.

Barriers include:

- Capital cost – the cost of solar systems has been coming down for decades, but the trend is now slowing/reversing.
- Roof space – issues with the structural integrity/age and access for scaffolding is an issue on some sheds.
- Capacity of electricity supply – One of the main limits is securing a grid connection at an affordable cost.

- The value in a PV scheme is maximising onsite usage however matching generation to load can be complex.
- Batteries can store surplus electricity for a few hours or days for use later so **may** be helpful but will add significantly to the cost. It wasn't a financially viable options for the farms supporting in this project. However, if a significant proportion of electricity consumption is in brief spikes or early or late in the day adding a battery to the solar system may be worthwhile – so could potentially benefit dairy farms.

There is a dedicated Project Webpage which has the case studies, engagement and reporting to date.

Picture showing one of the workshops held by the project. Credit – Cumbria Action for Sustainability



What has happened post project?

Since finishing the Powering our Communities project, CAfS have been supporting farms to look at retrofit (mainly focussing on building fabric improvements this time, but also picking up on renewables). Six farms have had a Home Retrofit Planner (HRP) assessment, which models the building's energy performance and generates scenarios for different improvement measures.

Those farms will be supported to then refine what they want to do, based upon those modelled options. The retrofit support has been funded by the Energy Redress Scheme (which is also part

funding CAfS continuing work on Solar Made Easy – another Powering our Communities project).

Testimonial from the Cumbria Action for Sustainability project manager

“The Powering our Communities Funding was invaluable for working with the farmers and finding out how we can really support them with their decarbonisations plans and the energy transition. They are a group that are at risk of being left behind without the support of organisations like CAfS and the Farmers Network, so it was great to have the opportunity to work with them through this project.”

Applicant: Cumbria Action for Sustainability

Project: Accelerating Community Solar

Amount received: £15,000

Summary

This project worked with communities across Cumbria to overcome barriers faced by individuals to invest in solar PV, specifically a lack of confidence about where to start or who to approach. It is also seeking sites to develop as community owned PV.

The project set out to engage residents across a number of communities in Cumbria to empower them with the information they need to install their own solar PV and identify opportunities for community owned solar.

Over 500 households have been engaged across 6 communities either by attending an event or receiving a newsletter and nearly a fifth of them have so far requested a quote for solar PV. A number of sites have also been identified for community owned solar.

Why is the project community energy?

This project is about communities coming together to take collective action to overcome their barriers to adopting solar PV. By working together, they can make progress towards the installation of their own solar projects. It will also identify opportunities for community owned solar.

The Project

This project built on a previous Powering our Communities Fund project "community energy start-up" which explored the potential for implementing solar power and helping local communities to better understand and map their carbon footprints. That project was the start of developing a whole place approach to decarbonisation based on priorities identified by the community and informed the development of this project. The aim of this project was to investigate a community energy concept called Solar Made Easy as a way of overcoming the identified barriers.

This project was delivered across six communities where CAfS worked in partnership with a local community group and/or council. This makes sure the process is locally owned and promoted through a wide range of local channels, including schools, village halls, sports clubs, community facilities, shops, local social media and press. This method proved successful in raising awareness throughout the community and attracting many residents and business owners to take part.

The project then held in person events in the heart of these communities which brought all of these interested people together in one room. CAfS believe being able to see others wanting to do the same thing builds confidence in individuals to progress their own plans and builds community cohesion.

The project successfully investigated the Solar Made Easy model, learning how to effectively engage people and how to run successful community solar events. CAfS also learned that it is

key to plan carefully around installer capacity and to manage people's expectations around timescales.

The project was highly successful in engaging with households about solar PV. People have expressed gratitude for the support in navigating what can be a daunting and frustrating process and have especially appreciated the opportunities to get independent advice from CAFS and to meet the installers at community events and have their questions answered. The project has also been successful in stimulating interest in the CAFS Cold to Cosy Homes and Retrofit for Cumbria service through this project, as intended.

Testimonials from households supported by the project

'I knew little before. Now I feel I can make a fairly informed decision'

'I think it's been very confusing before and I never know how much is in interests of commercial companies. This talk was honest, clear and informative. I know who I can talk with now and have a better understanding of what I need.'

'Having a local vetted installer there was the most illuminating. Mostly you hear from salespeople who are too forceful.'

'Did not know all about the battery side of it. Met a local installer we didn't know about. Like the idea that CAFS has already done the due diligence and filtered installers.'

Reports available at: [Community Energy Start-Up - CAFS](#)

What has happened post project?

The next steps for the project are to further develop the Solar Made Easy model and expand it to more communities. The community energy opportunities identified by this project will also be taken forward, probably in partnership with another community energy organisation.

Picture showing an advert for a Solar Made Easy Community event



Applicant: Middleton Cooperating

Project: Establishing Middleton Community Power

Amount received: £15,000

Summary

The aim of the project is to establish a local solar PV co-operative in Middleton including identifying opportunities for the deployment of community owned solar PV projects on land and buildings in the town.

It aims to do this with the support of Middleton Co-operating which is a unique business model designed to act as a catalyst for the development of local co-operative owned businesses including community energy. This project has two main aims. Firstly, to develop a community energy organisation with a growing core of members. Secondly assessments of the potential for deploying solar PV and associated technologies on a range of local authorities, social housing, community and business assets across Middleton to identify sites to develop.

To date it has delivered significant engagement and training to support the establishment of Middleton Community Power. It has also undertaken significant amounts of work to investigate suitable sites for community owned renewable energy and will be focussing initially on Middleton's schools.

Why is the project community energy?

This project is considered as community energy because it is aiming to set up a local energy cooperative which will develop solar PV. Members of the local community will have the opportunity to become members of the cooperative and have a say in how the cooperative develops and how it invests any surplus it generates.

The Project

Middleton Community Power (MCP) has been developed as a community energy business through activities to increase awareness and membership, training for the volunteers and direct support from Middleton Cooperating who have recruited a member of staff to support MCP.

A scoping study has assessed the potential for community owned solar PV installations at local schools, Rochdale Boroughwide Housing, other Rochdale Borough Council assets (children's centres, community centres, libraries and car parks), Springhill Hospice, faith buildings and a range of commercial sites). It concluded that a focus on schools should be a priority. MCP now has the support of Rochdale Borough Council for this and is working in partnership with Greater Manchester Community Renewables (GMCR). An analysis of a potential business case, based on data supplied by GMCR suggests that the removal of the feed-in tariff, increased interest rates and fuel price volatility present significant challenges, particularly to cashflow, but that the scheme can still be viable.

School solar PV projects in the past have generally only installed as many panels as are required for on-site use. Most schools have considerably more roof space available and larger installations would be more viable if excess electricity could be sold on at a reasonable price. Unfortunately, prices for selling directly back to the grid are currently very low (typically less than a third of the price of electricity purchased from the grid). Alternatives are to install batteries alongside the panels to maximise the potential for on-site use and to establish “energy clubs” to sell excess electricity to local residents at a discount below the grid price. Given that many of Middleton’s schools are in areas of multiple socio-economic deprivation, the latter option aligns particularly well with Middleton Cooperating’s values. MCP have thus partnered with Greater Manchester Community Renewables (GMCR) to commission feasibility studies of both these options with funding from the Community Energy fund.

While these studies are being completed, MCP is continuing to work on a three-phase plan. The first phase will use capital from a first community share offer to install solar PV on a number of local schools with some excess

capacity (over what is required on site). The second phase will establish the viability of ways to generate income from the excess electricity generation that this yields, with a particular focus on the development of energy clubs. The third phase, underpinned by the success of the second phase, will hold a second share offer to maximise the installations both on existing schools and new schools. It is hoped the first share offer will be held in 2024.

For more information see the Middleton Community Power website

Middleton Community Power | Middleton Cooperating

Applicant: Salford Diocese Trust

Project: Solar for GM Faiths

Amount received: £15,000

Summary

This project is led by the Salford Diocesan Trust and is working with an interfaith group in Greater Manchester to overcome the barriers to the installation of low carbon energy in religious buildings.

The project is aiming to deliver information and resources to help faith groups and organisations to install solar PV.

Through early engagement it became clear that there was wider interest from the inter-faith community in Greater Manchester and the project was amended to enable the establishment of Solar for GM Faiths. Work is still on going to identify suitable sites for development.

Why is the project community energy?

This project is bringing together a community of faiths to work together to find solutions to their shared issues and barriers.

The Project

This project has supported engagement with the faith community across Greater Manchester on the best way to support them to engage in the low carbon transition. As a result, Solar for GM Faiths has been established to support faith communities across Greater Manchester to install solar panels on faith buildings with a particular focus on achieving this through a community share offer in partnership with Greater Manchester Community Renewables. A governance structure has been established with the Faith Network for Manchester and information about the scheme is available through their website. It was formally launched at the Our Faith, Our Planet conference in September '23.

The project set out to address some of the barriers that are specific to faith organisations such as the different ways they approach, and the attitudes towards, fund raising and investing. It was recognised that faith communities have traditionally raised money by asking their members and wider communities to donate (or occasionally lend) rather than promoting investment for return as in a Community Benefit Society (CBS) model. Greater Manchester Community Renewables effectively already accept loans through an option for investors to waive share income, but there is no equivalent for accepting donations.

To address this issue with the faith community a discussion document was prepared which identified three mechanisms for accepting donations and assessed how these would affect the underlying business model. The document included how the benefits of the donations should be shared between the individual faith community and the CBS responsible for the share offer.

The three mechanisms were:

- Donations directly to the Community Benefit Society

- Donation directly to the faith community which then purchase shares in the CBS as an institution.
- Donation to the faith community who purchase part ownership of the panels alongside the CBS.

All three have the same overall beneficial effect on the business model with the exception that donations made to the faith community are eligible for Gift Aid whereas donations directly to the CBS are not. Given that the

third option had no particular financial advantage it was regarded as unnecessarily complicated. For most cases option 2 is preferred and can be accomplished within GMCR's existing processes.

Members of the Muslim community were consulted about their attitude to interest. The feedback was that although there is considerable variability in the attitudes and behaviour of individual Muslims, most mosques are wary of engaging in schemes based around the payment of interest on investments (even if there is an option for individuals or groups to opt out of receiving that interest). Although the CBS route will be open to any faith community which feels able to participate, it appears unlikely that many Muslim communities would consider this an option.

The project has run workshops, produced guidance and asked for expressions of interest from faith buildings to identify suitable sites for developing solar PV. Which has confirmed that the single biggest issue with finding a suitable site is the low levels of electricity use. GMCR have advised that 30kWp is the smallest viable installation to justify the time and financial cost of raising finance through a community share offer. Very few of the buildings that expressed an interest had high enough consumption to warrant an installation of this size.

Lessons learnt and next steps

There are over 500 faith buildings in Greater Manchester which would suggest a significant opportunity for solar PV. However, the findings of this project suggest that low onsite electricity consumption mean that it is difficult to justify solar PV on economic benefit to the organisation, particularly using an administratively heavy finance model such as a community share offer. However, there may be interest and means for some faith organisations to self-fund solar PV to help reduce their energy costs and because it's the right thing to do for the environment.

Communicating with individual worship communities has been difficult. Each one has its own structure and key points of contact which makes it time consuming to find the most effective way to communicate with them. This is compounded by increasing workloads for clergy and competing agendas. Faith communities are dealing with a number of issues including food and fuel poverty, work with refugee and asylum seekers, increasing mental health problems and international concerns. Environmental issues and concerns often get squeezed out.

The project is still delivering and it intends to build on the lessons learnt and the relationships developed. It will continue to support the small number of sites that are viable for solar PV to develop a portfolio big enough to warrant a community share offer. It will work on case studies to look at options for funding models that are suitable for the Muslim community. And lastly, it wants to use the power of the communities attending the faith buildings to have a positive environmental impact by encouraging domestic retrofit through these communities.

Testimonial from project participant

"I represent the Faith Sector on the GM Green City Region Partnership Board and, given our commitment to accelerate the decarbonisation of our faith buildings, this resource is incredibly helpful."

Revd. Ian Rutherford, Co-Chair of the Greater Manchester Faith and Belief Advisory Panel

Pictures showing Solar for Faiths launch at Our Faith, Our Planet conference in Manchester Museum



Applicant: Carbon Coop

Project: Energise Westwood

Amount received: £14, 975

Summary

The aim of this project was to research the barriers faced by the community of the Millenium Centre, in Westwood Oldham to accessing energy efficiency advice. Their community is a low-income area with a high number of BAME residents with low levels of English as a first language (22% of the households have no people who speak English as their main language). However, despite the obvious need there is low uptake of fuel poverty and energy efficiency advice services.

The Westwood Community Hub has been inspired to provide support to its community members on energy issues. The Powering our Communities funded research designed to help understand and overcome barriers to engagement. The research will also support Electricity North West to make sure its own energy efficiency advice service, Take Charge, reaches those in the Westwood Community and others like it.

Why is the project community energy?

This project centres on a community working together to help each other take up energy efficiency advice and measures to overcome fuel poverty.

The Project

This project was originally called Energy Sholver and was designed to support an emerging community energy project in Sholver. Westwood and Shovler are both areas of Oldham in Greater Manchester and their communities have both been part of the Carbon Coop led project Oldham Energy Futures. As a result of the Oldham Energy Futures project both communities had energy project ideas to develop. The community energy project explored by Sholver was not going to be deliverable in the timescales of this project so it was decided to re-allocate the funding to the Westwood community.

The project sought to better understand culturally specific issues relevant to Westwood's predominately Bangladeshi community, and what an effective energy advice service could look like. This community, like many others in the UK, are often considered 'hard to reach.' There is a growing understanding that these communities, rather than being hard to reach, are often not reached out to. This research sought to better understand and connect with the community in Westwood, and to look at what the design of energy advice services with (rather than for) the community could look like.

The research found that the critical issues faced in Westwood are damp and mould and paying for energy bills. Several factors shape this community's experience of the UK energy crisis. Without understanding these culturally specific factors, it is a challenge for energy advice services to meet the needs of this community. These factors were identified as:

- Informal Private Rental Sector (PRS)

- Newer ‘European Bangladeshi’ migrants
- An attitude of ‘suffering in silence’
- Gender dimension
- Newness of energy issues

This research explores the accessibility of existing energy advice services, focusing on support offered by Citizens Advice. An ideal Westwood Energy Advice Service is envisioned, with a key finding around advisors being ‘alongside’ those seeking support and the need for more in-person services.

The Energise Westwood project was successful in delivering this community research piece, alongside organisational development and sharing learning work packages. Carbon Coop supported the Westwood Millennial Centre to better understand their community needs around energy, and their own capacity to deliver energy efficiency services. They built connections between the Hub and the local Citizen Advice branches

(Manchester (MCR) and the Stockport, Oldham, Rochdale and Trafford (SORT)) and are currently exploring a collaborative energy efficiency advice project.

A report sharing learning from the research work has been published:

<https://carbon.coop/2024/06/co-designing-energy-advice-services-with-underrepresented-communities/>

What has happened post project?

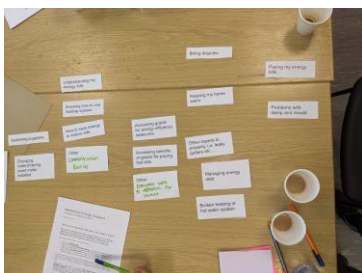
The report's outcomes will be used by the Westwood Millennial Centre and ENWL to inform the development of fuel poverty and low carbon advice services. It will help to ensure that services are developed for those most in need and most likely to be left behind if their circumstances are not considered and therefore will contribute towards the delivery of a just transition.

Testimonial from project participants

“It was great to work with Carbon Co-op and help them and Electricity North West understand the impact of the energy crisis on our community here in Westwood. While understanding the situation is important, we really want to see more services designed with our involvement as we are so well placed to help support our community. The issues we face with damp and mould, energy bills, as well as the cost-of-living crisis, are huge.

We are looking forward to working in partnership with Carbon Co-op and Citizens Advice into the future.” Imamul Hoque, OBA Millennium Centre, Westwood

Picture of output from one of the focus groups sessions at the Westwood Millennial Centre.



Applicant: Leigh Preservation Trust

Project: Greening our Mill

Amount received: £8,500

Summary

This project was run by Leigh Preservation Trust who look after Leigh Spinners Mill which is a Grade 2 listed building. The Mill has been converted to a hub for local businesses, community, arts, sports and organisations. The aim of the project was to investigate the feasibility of options to renovate the building with energy efficiency and renewable energy to reduce its carbon footprint and running costs.

Why is the project community energy?

Leigh Preservation Trust is working with its community of tenants and local neighbours to investigate low carbon energy options.

The Project

The project established a costed strategy for the assessment of options for the use renewable energy and energy conservation for the mill looking at opportunities such as solar, battery storage, ground and air source heating. The report and analysis were driven and published by Red Co-Op, who provided the workings for heat loss summary, fabric costs and operating and plant costs. The report delivered provided the basis of further investigation to implement solar energy within the mill, in particular in partnership with a community energy group.

What has happened post project?

The option for developing community owned solar is being pursued. The Trust has also continued to work with the community on its commitment to becoming a carbon neutral and environmentally friendly working mill.

Testimonial from grant recipient

“It was great to receive the grant from Electricity North West. Without it we couldn’t have got the data and assessment of options to help us identify how best to reduce our carbon footprint. Armed with this information we now feel confident to pursue options for community energy our building.”



Picture showing Leigh Spinners Mill



Keep up to date

Sign up for our newsletter
Visit the community and local energy
section of our website

**[www.enwl.co.uk/communityandlocal
energy](http://www.enwl.co.uk/communityandlocalenergy)**



Get in touch

If you are developing a community or
local energy project
please get in touch to discuss your
plans



Contact details

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