



Community renewable energy for rural communities

How can rural communities deliver and manage renewable energy schemes?

What is community renewable energy?

- DECC described community energy projects as having “an emphasis on local engagement, local leadership and control and the local community benefiting collectively from the outcomes”.
- Communities might develop different sources of renewable energy including solar, wind, hydropower, biomass and geothermal.

What benefits do community renewable energy schemes offer?

Many successful community renewable energy schemes have been delivered.

Potential benefits include:

- Income generation.
- Improved energy efficiency.
- Support for community facilities.
- Increased pride/sense of community.
- In some cases the provision of all power and/or heat needs, leading to improved local economy through job creation and business start-ups, reduced energy bills and possibly their first reliable energy supply.

What does a community need in order to achieve success?

- Energy efficiency measures that reduce the demand for energy.
- Citizen “entrepreneurs” or “pioneers” to start and drive the project forward.
- Trust between the community and leaders of renewable energy projects.
- Community ownership or contribution to local structures and governance arrangements for the renewable energy projects.

What are the implications for UK policy?

If communities are to make a significant contribution to the UK energy mix changes are needed in the forthcoming Energy Bill and Community Energy Strategy:

- To the Balancing and Settlement Code, enabling community energy companies to connect to the National Grid both as customers and suppliers of electricity in real time.
- Enabling community energy companies as energy suppliers to supply only their community should they choose to do this.

Further information:

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An unpublished thesis on whole settlement approaches to community energy will be available in 2014, please contact Rhona for further details.

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