

EVALOC community level research: methodological approach and emerging findings

Aims of community level research

- Using 'action research' to investigate the impacts, effectiveness and success of Low Carbon Communities (LCCs), including awareness raising, networking and social influences, social learning and capacity building
- Bring out differences in household and community level approaches to changing energy behaviours
- Develop and test community toolkit: monitoring & evaluation, awareness-raising, capacity building and communication with other stakeholders
- Identify and evaluate practical ways that LCCs engage communities in energy behaviour change



School play



Partnership shared learning workshop



Arts and climate change event, at Awel Aman Tawe



Community celebration & fuel poverty event at Kirklees council

Community events:

Analysis is underway from the 6 community events completed. These included sharing learning about partnerships, a school play, an arts and climate change event, a community celebration event with fuel poverty information, a feedback event with poster designs and a school workshop.

Messages from Round 1 Focus Groups

Impact of DECC LCCC capital grants on the LCC:

The grants enabled development / accelerated implementation of new energy initiatives, but tight time scales and ; changes to goal posts; shifted focus from away from community engagement & awareness/behavioural interventions.

Engagement:

The reach and capacity varies, LCCs have engaged sections of communities including non 'green', and in many cases, low- income households, but all face challenges widening circles of engagement; and overcoming divided social networks. Partnerships with local authorities and other agencies help increase reach and effectiveness.

Monitoring and Evaluation:

No consistent methodology between groups. Some M&E sophisticated, some rudimentary . All requested further assistance / development

Round 2 Focus Groups

Richer reflection and learning on roles and activities.

Visuals: good evaluation tools

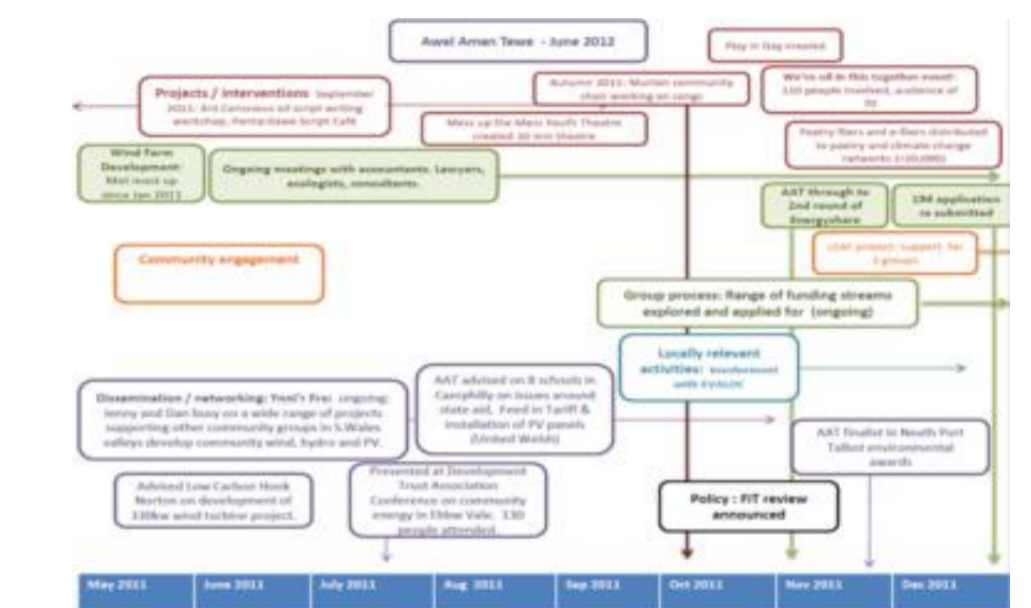
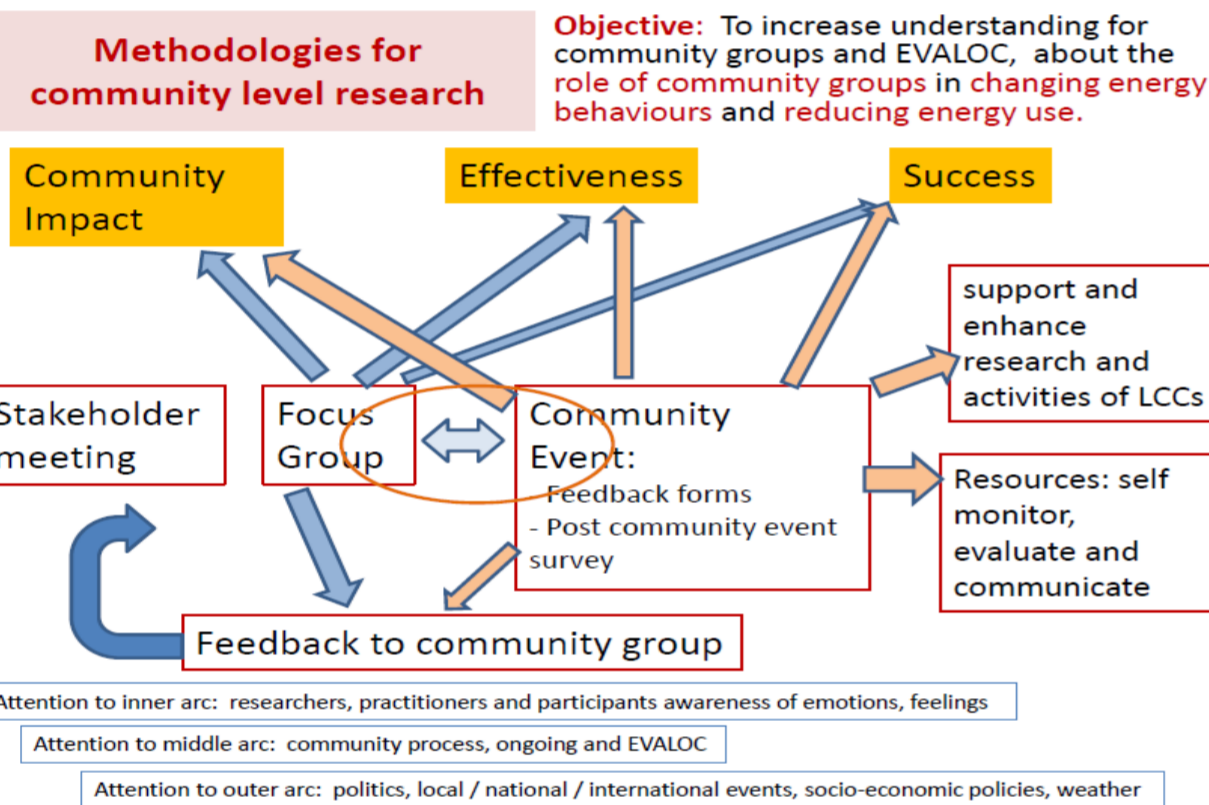


LCC roles which contribute to systemic change:

- disseminating and sharing experience with other groups or partnership working;
- influencing local and national government policies (advocacy)

Limits of LCCs

- Where there is a LA / city-wide lead, or partnership (in areas of deprivation), LCCs are relatively less confident about their capacity to empower people, change their energy behaviours and/or develop innovatory approaches.
- Where LCCs are operating largely on their own (in areas of medium or low deprivation), they are relatively less confident about their ability to tackle fuel poverty or encourage/enable the adoption of new technologies



LCC roles within communities included:

- community engagement;
- empowering individuals and groups to take action; developing innovatory approaches to reducing local energy use;
- changing energy related behaviours/practices; encouraging adoption of &/or delivering low carbon / energy efficient technologies;
- addressing fuel poverty; generating community / socio-economic benefit;
- process roles' e.g. community engagement coordination of third party installers and partner agencies, management, marketing, liaison with landlords, legal advice, administration.

Action Research methodology

- Practical knowing...in pursuit of worthwhile goals (Reason and Bradbury 2001)
 - Partnership approach: collaboration, empowerment through participation
 - Research design and implementation: Flexible, opportunities to respond/feed into design and interpretation
 - Cycles of planning, action and reflection for researchers and participants
 - Aims to produce results participants truly care about
 - Sharing emergent findings is helpful for researchers and LCC
- BUT**
- Time / funding commitment: power imbalances
 - Researcher positionality: Openness/ critical friend
 - Biases / burdens for researchers and communities

Next steps:

1. Monitoring and Evaluation framework: combining research from different work packages

2. Learning and reflection across groups and across themes

3. Refining and testing evaluation tools with LCCs and wider networks

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