

Submission to the Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC) on Community Energy Call for Evidence

From the RCUK-funded collaborative research project, EVALOC
(Oxford Brookes University and University of Oxford)

www.evaloc.org.uk

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Introduction

The following is a combined response to the Department of Energy and Climate Change's Call for Evidence on Community Energy (6th June 2013) from Oxford Brookes University and University of Oxford, drawing from the emerging findings of the on-going RCUK funded EVALOC project (see description section below) and related research. Please note that whilst insights from the project are captured within this document, the project is on-going and some of the emerging findings are yet to be published and require further verification.

EVALOC – EVALuating LOw Carbon communities

www.evaloc.org.uk

EVALOC is a 3.5 year Research Councils UK (RCUK) Energy Programme funded interdisciplinary collaborative research project between Oxford Brookes University and the University of Oxford. The research aims to evaluate the role, impacts, effects and limits of low carbon communities in motivating energy reduction and renewable investment amongst local residents. It involves active participation from six low carbon communities that had projects funded through the Department of Energy and Climate Change's (DECC) Low Carbon Communities Challenge (LCCC). The main work streams take place on two levels; community and household, using a variety of research methodologies and survey instruments including community events (14 events across the six communities), focus groups and case study household monitoring and surveys (88 households across the six communities).

Research Councils UK – Energy Programme

<http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/research/xrcprogrammes/energy/Pages/Mission.aspx>

The RCUK Energy Programme aims to support UK and international research collaboration to expand the UK's research capacity in energy related areas to ensure the UK meets the objectives and targets set out in the 2007 Energy White Paper. It has several main priorities including low carbon innovation, enhanced understanding of the social, environmental and economic implications of potential energy options, reduction in energy consumption and the building and sustaining of international links.

Low Carbon Building Group (LCBG), Oxford Institute for Sustainable Development (OISD), Oxford Brookes University

<http://architecture.brookes.ac.uk/research/lowcarbonbuilding/>

The Low Carbon Building Group, within OISD, is an interdisciplinary team with an international profile in the field of energy and building research. The group holds world-leading expertise in carbon counting and common carbon metrics, building performance evaluation, advanced low-carbon refurbishment, climate change adaptation and low carbon communities.

Environmental Change Institute (ECI), University of Oxford

www.eci.ox.ac.uk

The Environmental Change Institute is the University of Oxford's interdisciplinary institute for research on the complex processes of global environmental change, the exploration of sustainable solutions and the promotion of change for the better through partnership and education. The ECI has an international track record for research in forests and ecosystems, energy demand and climate impacts and adaptation.

Our response

Section 3. What do we mean by ‘community energy’?

4. We would like to hear your views about the definition of ‘community energy projects’ outlined in this section. In particular:

- a. Are you aware of any community energy projects that go beyond the goals of reducing, managing, generating and purchasing energy as outlined here?
- b. Are there other types of community that should be in scope for the Community Energy Strategy? If so, please explain why they should be included.

The definition of Community Energy Projects (CEP) is sufficient in so far as it relates to the immediate community, but evidence generated from our research suggests that community energy projects exert influence in three directions which the definition does not capture:

- **downstream** (e.g. reducing, managing, and generating energy at a household level),
- **midstream** (e.g. doing this at a collective community level; influencing and enabling other groups as well as reaching out to and engaging groups with influence in the community that may see their locus of activity as being outside of the energy sector); and
- **upstream** (e.g. influencing the local and national policy environment).

Depending on the stage that the project is in, the CEP might be involved in all three areas, or have as a focus one or two of these aspects. Throughout this response we will use these directions of influence.

Additionally, CEPs work usually extends beyond direct energy, to include wider sustainability issues such as food, transport and consumption.

Note on terminology throughout this response: We have used the term ‘Low Carbon Community’ / (LCC) to describe the groups involved in the EVALOC research. In this submission the terms LCC and CEP can be used interchangeably.

Section 5. The potential benefits of community energy

6. We would like evidence or examples of the benefits of community energy approaches (please see Section 4 for more information on the types of evidence that we are seeking).

- a. How have community-led approaches delivered energy and climate change outcomes more cheaply or effectively than top-down Government action? These outcomes could include generating renewable electricity or heat, reducing greenhouse gas emissions or helping consumers save money on energy bills.
- b. How has participation in community energy projects changed attitudes to or increased engagement with energy and climate change issues?
- c. What are the wider social and economic benefits of community energy projects? These might include improving health, education, jobs or transport; strengthening communities; or tackling other local issues.

Emerging findings from the EVALOC community and household level qualitative and quantitative research shows that community-led energy projects have a number of wider benefits, in terms of successful delivery of projects. The research activities to date includes 2 rounds of focus groups and 14 community events across the 6 communities (and including other community energy groups), key stakeholder interviews and semi-structured interviews and household surveys with 88 households (across the six communities) as well as in-depth whole house monitoring of 29 households.

Outcomes and Impacts

Reduction in energy use and carbon emissions (household and community):

Currently there is not enough quantitative data to confirm actual trends in energy reduction across the communities. However, qualitative evidence produced at both community and household level appears to suggest community-led projects have decreased energy bills in both homes and community buildings, with between 78-90% of respondents in the EVALOC household surveys believing that the LCC has helped them reduce energy use and bills (Figure 1).

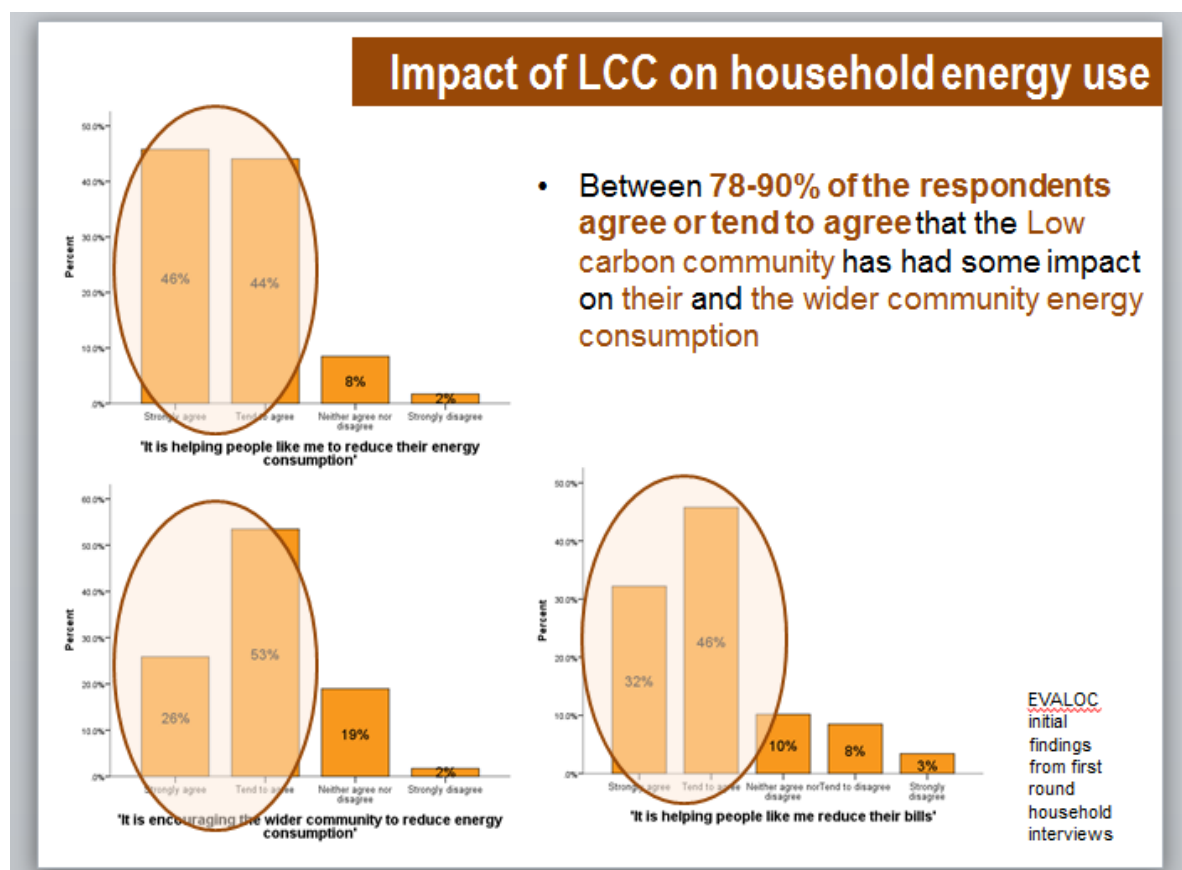


Figure 1. EVALOC presentation (2013) showing impact of LCCs on EVALOC households

Of 63 households that participated in their local community energy project, over 85% said that it (the low carbon group) was accessible and relevant to them. Most importantly, our findings have discovered that of the EVALOC households that participated in the LCCs energy projects, when responding to the question, 'overall how important would you say the LCC advice or support has been in helping you reduce your energy use', over 75% said that it was either 'crucial, they wouldn't have done it otherwise' or 'a lot'.

LCC role and delivery of projects:

We do not have specific data to provide evidence of the cost effectiveness of LCC approaches

compared to top down government approaches. The evidence we have on the effectiveness of LCCs shows that they:

- Are trusted members of community (able to recruit and engage people – see later comments)
- Have contextual knowledge and able to ‘localise’ agendas
- Provide important ‘missing’ link between individual households and larger local and national actors
- Can undertake range of delivery roles at different levels; downstream (community innovatory approaches, engagement and empowerment, behaviour change, delivery or active encouragement of uptake of technologies); midstream (provide scalability and extended reach through partnership working, catalyst to other local actors, local authorities, business and housing associations as well as inspire, advise and support other community energy projects); upstream (building acceptance for government action on climate change, influencing policy). Community groups tend to be strong in innovatory approaches, engagement, empowerment and behaviour change, whereas Local Authorities tend to be strong at coordinating the delivery of technical measures, addressing fuel poverty, providing integrated advice and associated process roles. So partnership approaches which combine strengths of different actors can increase reach and scale
- Can implement/aid large and complex local energy projects across full range of community energy strands (reduce, manage, generate, and purchase)

The six low carbon community groups (LCCs) that are participating in the EVALOC project have used DECC funding (alongside other funding sources) to deliver energy efficiency, renewable and behavioural measures to approximately 300 plus households of which 88 involved physical measures (energy efficiency and/or renewables). They have distributed or loaned energy display monitors to 880 households and have reached far wider numbers of the community through other community events and community food, transport and waste reduction projects. For example one community has reached 500 people through an arts project. They have also installed renewable measures on 16 community buildings including schools which has impacted on large numbers of people and also creates a small income flow which can be reinvested into future projects.

As we note below, however, LCCs are constrained by lack of funding which limits the scale, speed and reach of local energy projects. Lack of stable funding also incurs considerable resource costs for the LCCs: for example, lack of revenue for core LCC roles meant that they have either had to divert paid staff time from other pressing priorities (in the case of local authorities or charities), and/or rely on unpaid volunteers (in the case of community groups). It also raises serious questions about the long term sustainability of local energy projects as volunteers cannot necessarily be expected to undertake core roles or complex project management roles over the long term (see question 8 below).

Influences on energy use :

- Increased positive attitudes towards energy and climate change issues found within local households that participated in community energy projects. Data gathered from 88 households across the six communities in 2012 also appears to suggest an increase in concern towards global warming and climate change from 2010¹ (when the LCCC was first implemented). Qualitative data from the semi-structured interviews appears to confirm this, as well as point towards increased motivation and intention in individuals that have participated in community energy projects to volunteer for further related activities, given the necessary infrastructure.

¹ DECC, (2011) *Low carbon communities challenge interim report 2010/11*, London

- Apparent positive increase in energy related social ‘norms’ within wider community. In households that have not had any contact with the local energy groups or projects (Group Cs), over half agreed that in their area, trying to reduce your carbon footprint was the ‘normal’ thing to do. This shows the potential wider positive impacts on attitudes and social norms within the communities.
- Increased individual capacity, motivation and intention in terms of both household energy use and community energy action
- Engagement and recruitment of persons who are part of the community but would either not have previously considered themselves ‘green’ and/or would not be able to afford the technology
- Analysis of data on energy behaviours is on-going.

Wider social and economic benefits:

- Increased social interaction within community
- Increased comfort levels and enhanced internal environmental conditions in homes that have received fabric measures such as cavity wall and loft insulation
- Increased pride in community, leading to decreased crime rates and potentially to other related socio-economic benefits
- Alternative transport measures being adopted (positive impact on individual health and wider environmental issues)
- Wider community acceptance of renewables and low carbon technologies
- Scaling up and sharing of good practice with other LCCs
- Informing policy development

7. Do you have evidence or examples of any potential drawbacks or negative consequences of community energy?

No significant direct drawbacks or negative consequences from the EVALOC LCCs have been found. However, our interim evidence indicates that in most of the LCCs, there is a lack of resource and technical knowledge base to provide adequate behavioural and/or technical advice as well as sustained ‘trouble-shooting’, which appears to lead to unintended consequences as well as a significant gap between intent and outcomes.

Monitoring and evaluation of EVALOC households

Within the 88 households participating in the EVALOC study, qualitative and some quantitative data is emerging to suggest there are a number of unintended negative consequences³ to both behavioural and physical interventions⁴, which LCCs should be aware of (see Figure 2).

| Negative |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Increase in poor internal environmental conditions following building fabric improvements (P) |
| Occupants not adapting habitual behaviours to suit LCTs & renewables (P) |
| Increase/no change in energy bills following installation of physical measures (P) |
| Adaptation of LCT and renewable systems to suit habitual behaviours (reduced comfort |

³ Gupta, R and Barnfield, L. (2013) Unravelling the unintended consequences of home energy improvements in *Sustainable Building & Construction Conference*, 3-5 July 2013, Coventry (forthcoming publication)

⁴ Gupta, R. and Barnfield, L. (2013) Evaluating the impact of low carbon communities on household energy behaviours in *PLEA conference*, 10-12 September 2013, Munich (forthcoming publication)

| |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| levels and potential unnecessary energy use) (<i>P</i>) |
| Increased energy-intensive behaviours following installation of physical measures (<i>P</i>) |
| Larger appliances bought due to higher energy efficiency rating (but with increased energy consumption) (<i>B</i>) |
| Over-exposure of energy-saving related advice potentially resulting in energy lethargy (<i>B</i>) |
| Potential segregation of wider community (socio-economic, values & attitudes) (<i>P&B</i>) |
| Lack of knowledge into maintenance of LCTs and renewables (potential early degradation of systems) (<i>P</i>) |
| Incomplete installation of physical measures (under-performance of systems/energy savings potentially not as expected) (<i>P</i>) |
| <i>B</i> = from behavioural interventions; <i>P</i> = from physical interventions; <i>P&B</i> = from both behavioural & physical interventions |

Figure 2. Extract from forthcoming EVALOC conference paper (PLEA, September 2013)

Whilst such issues are not just found in community energy projects specifically (similar issues are being raised in separate research studies undertaken by Oxford Brookes University⁵⁶), inexperience and lack of both technical and behavioural knowledge as well as a lack of infrastructure and resources (particularly in terms of installation and commissioning) within the CEGs can exacerbate such problems. This highlights the need, as with any rollout of unfamiliar technology or approach, for the provision of appropriate training and support at national level.

Section 7. Unlocking the potential of community energy: barriers and opportunities

Barriers to community energy

8. What evidence or examples do you have of the barriers faced by community energy projects and the ways in which they have been overcome, or could be overcome? Categories might include:

- Community capacity and capability
- Access to funding
- Legal and regulatory framework
- Selling electricity generated and grid connections
- Gathering evidence of the benefits of community energy and evaluating projects

Community capacity and capability:

As outlined above our interim research findings support other evidence (such as the submission to the Community Energy Strategy call for evidence from the University of Oxford's Environmental Change Institute) and show that LCCs play important roles in influencing the demand for take up of energy efficiency, conservation and generation measures. However, their capacity to deliver is affected, and in various cases constrained by:

- Availability of finances (particularly to fund community energy group (CEG) delivery roles)
- Existence of structural barriers

⁵ Gupta, R., Gregg, M. and Cherian, R. (2013) Tackling the performance gap between design intent and actual outcomes of new low/zero carbon housing in *Panel 5A cutting the energy use of buildings: projects and technologies, the European Council for an Energy Efficient Economy (ECEEE) summer study*, 3-8 June 2013, Toulon, France

⁶ Gupta, R. and Chandiwalla, S. (2010). Understanding occupants: feedback techniques for large-scale low-carbon domestic refurbishments, *Building Research & Information*, 38: 5, 530 – 548

- Lack of partnership with other local actors, as well as industry and academic institutions

The EVALOC case study communities can, very generally be split into three groups: local authority-led local energy projects, partnership and community-led energy projects. Both have many strengths, but emerging evidence does show that there are a number of barriers to their capacity and capability:

Local Authority-led energy projects:

- Lack of resource and scope within structure to address localised issues (eg. Fuel poverty in higher income areas)
- Tendency to focus on one-off technical measures and neglect longer-term, time-intensive behavioural interventions that raise awareness and create value and understanding of low carbon technologies within both the individual households and the wider community
- Inability due to moving of goal-posts and shifting focus to ensure sustained follow-up

Community-led energy projects:

- Voluntary nature and uneven resourcing creates uneven spread, capacity and reach
- Lack of resource and consequent reliance on volunteers, makes it difficult to do time-intensive outreach, deliver physical measures to households and/or provide follow-up, which is particularly important to ensure vulnerable groups can access low carbon technologies
- Lack of mandate, resources and/or skills to address related concerns/issues that may arise from energy projects (eg. In relation to benefits, health and safety, negotiations with landlords, legal and administration issues etc.)
- Unable to organise and/or reap the efficiencies and/or economies of scale of city/town wide energy efficiency approaches
- Difficulties in accessing ECO and/or tender for and accredit installers and suppliers (charities can be constrained from recommending specific suppliers if it breaches public benefit rules)

Partnerships

- Combine strengths of local authority, city wide not for profits, and community groups

Access to funding:

There is evidence within all of the EVALOC LCCs that inadequate funding, both capital and revenue, is a key constraint contributing to capacity. It limits the reach, speed and scale of programme delivery, risks burn out and raises questions about the long-term sustainability and replication of the projects.

Within the EVALOC communities, there are two specific examples that highlight the impact of inadequate access to sustained funding.

1. Due to Government funding cuts (combined with the withdrawal of statutory obligations on local authorities), one EVALOC local authority has experienced large voluntary redundancies resulting in a scaling back of energy projects and community engagement. This has also resulted in a 'brain drain' of vital environmental and fuel poverty-related skills and knowledge
2. In another of the EVALOC LCCs, lack of sustained funding for a paid project worker has resulted in the collapse of their very active volunteer base, as their core role was to provide an infrastructure in co-ordinating the volunteers, providing motivation and organising events

Alongside these examples, the EVALOC LCCs note that repeated fundraising is time-consuming and inefficient, often detracting time from project implementation.

Evidence shows that a lack of funding revenues emphasising collaborative work between community groups and industry (Figure 3) is impeding the scalability and transferability of community energy projects across the country, which is a substantial barrier to the sustainability of such action and an area in which CEGs could benefit from innovative approaches, skills and knowledge.⁷

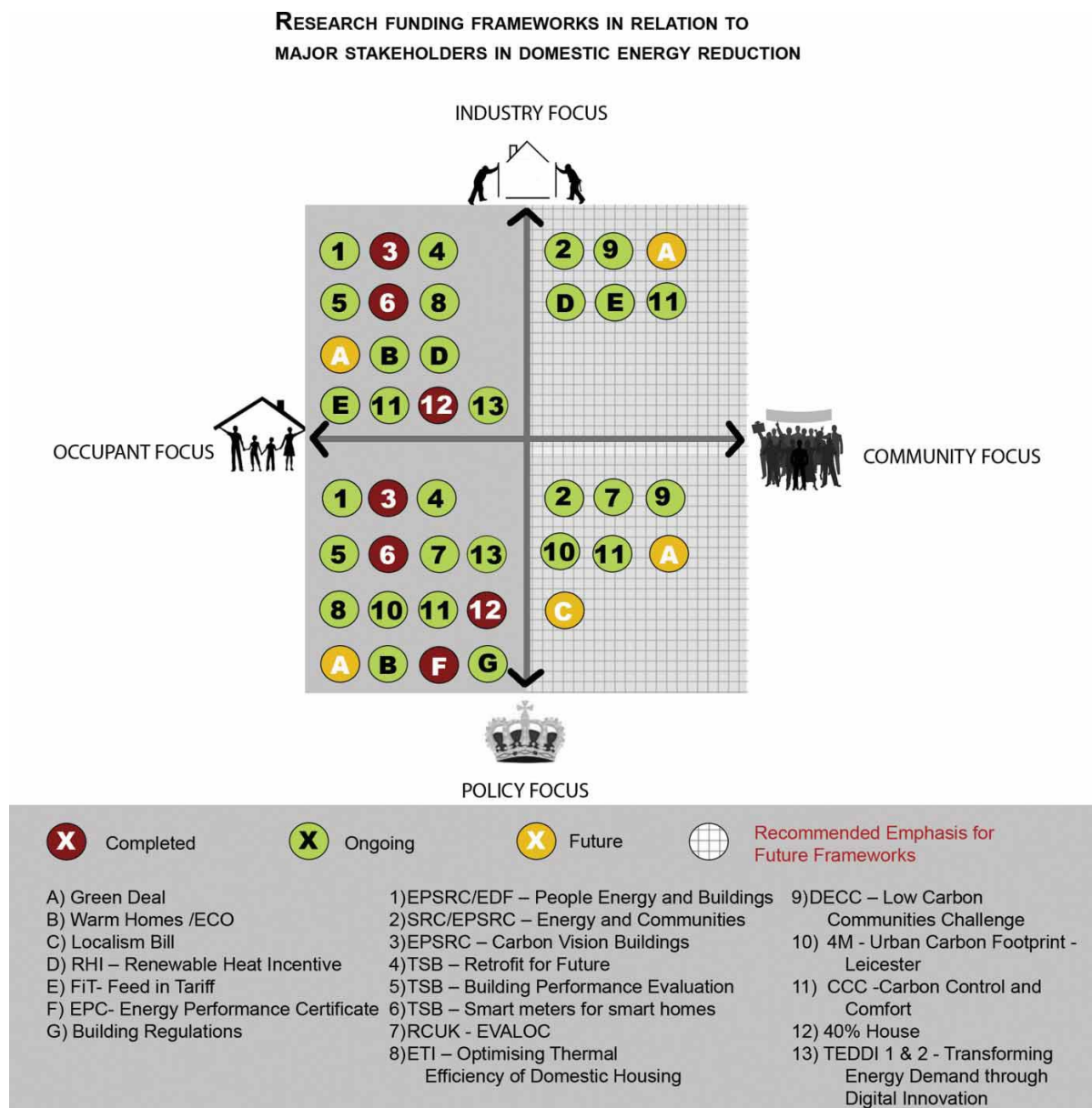


Figure 3. Funding frameworks in relation to major stakeholders in domestic energy reduction
(Gupta, R. and Gregg, M. (2012) Appraisal of UK funding frameworks for energy research in housing, *Building Research & Information*.40:4, 446-460)

Legal and regulatory framework:

Legal and regulatory framework barriers that are evident through the EVALOC research, and/or mentioned by LCCs, include:

- Mixed messages from (different parts of) government about the need for government and

⁷ Gupta, R and Gregg, M (2012) Appraisal of UK funding frameworks for energy research in housing, *Building Research & Information*.40:4, 446-460

public action on climate change resulting in a lack of public and investor confidence in investment of low energy projects

- Lack of integration between economic, low carbon and social policies and regulatory frameworks
- Continued absence of independent and trusted assessors and suppliers as well as regulatory framework governing the quality of installation and commissioning of improvement measures
- Lack of legal obligations on residents to increase energy efficiency combined with a lack of motivation, agency, time and/or resources among residents to take action (often face more pressing concerns)
- The use of EU regulations on energy efficiency product labelling appears to have the unintended consequence of recommended energy efficiency measures by LCCs potentially increasing the energy consumption of individual products and appliances within households. Whilst labelling can provide a useful tool, greater is required between concepts of 'efficiency' and 'consumption'.
- Current regulatory frameworks do not include adequate monitoring of installed technical measures, which can lead to poorly installed and inefficient performance of low carbon technologies as well as easily resolved issues not being undertaken (example: one EVALOC household with solar thermal system installed had been running on a 'closed loop' due to incomplete commissioning of the system. This was only discovered and resolved when the EVALOC monitoring equipment was installed).

Gathering evidence of the benefits of community energy and evaluating projects:

All EVALOC LCCs have undergone at least one evaluation study, including the overall LCCC evaluation through DECC, as well as other external, academic and self- evaluations. There appears to be a number of barriers to evaluating such projects as well as gathering evidence:

- : Some external evaluators have used an extractive approach and failing to involve the LCCs in the research design and analysis reducing potential for future learning and understanding.
- Lack of baseline data: it is often difficult for external evaluations to obtain 'hard' evidence of the impacts of community energy projects due to the lack of baseline data and understanding of localised intentions (if indeed any have been specified).
- Lack of longitudinal data: this risks missing the longer term impacts and outcomes of the individual projects.
- Skills: most of the EVALOC LCCs lack the resources to undertake their own monitoring and evaluation (M&E), with no consistent (and therefore non-comparable) methodology.
- Time-intensive nature: many feel that existing community M&E tools require a significant amount of additional work, such as the EST community carbon footprint tool⁸. Where this is an integral part of the LCCs existing projects, it can be incorporated but is unlikely to be undertaken otherwise.
- Robustness and rigour: all EVALOC LCCs have stated that they would like support from academics to help them define (and where appropriate implement) their own M&E frameworks that are both robust and rigorous.

9. We would like to hear your views about sources of information and advice for community energy projects. In particular we would like to hear from you about:

- a. Which current sources of information or advice have you found most useful in setting up a community energy project?

⁸ <http://www.greencommunitiescc.org.uk/Default.aspx>

- b. What information or advice would have been helpful when you were setting up a community energy project?
- c. Do you think there is potential for a new information resource for community energy groups (see box above), and who might be best placed to develop and host such a resource?
- d. How could more be done to build interest among those communities who are not already involved in community energy?

Useful current sources of information in setting up a project:

EVALOC LCCs have mentioned the following organisations as being helpful to set projects up:

- Community Energy Scotland (onshore wind farm)
- Course run by Hockerton Housing Project
- Wessex reinvestment trust (support and advice for solar PV share offer)
- Development Trusts network, such as the Tiree and Westray development trusts (useful sources of funding models for community energy)

In addition, carbon mapping of the communities as part of the EVALOC project is building on successful use of carbon mapping of a community area in Bicester as part of a LEAF-funded energy project. This enabled further participatory engagement of local people as well as allowing the local community energy group to target appropriate areas within their community in terms of providing technical and behavioural advice and support.

The application of a unique carbon mapping approach enabled a local community realise the potential for improving the energy efficiency of their housing stock, rapidly, and on a house-by-house level, using a case study neighbourhood in the town of Bicester (Oxfordshire, UK). DECoRuM, an award-winning GIS-based carbon counting model is used to measure, model, map and manage energy use and CO₂ emission reductions from 374 houses in the Highfield neighbourhood area of Bicester, resulting in community-wide estimates of current carbon emissions and an evaluation of potential retrofitting interventions based on a combination of best practice energy saving measures, low carbon technologies and behaviour change interventions.⁹

Incremental packages of energy saving measures are analysed for their impact on energy consumption, fuel costs and CO₂ emissions to reveal the potential for large-scale refurbishment in the local area. Eligibility for a £10,000 Green Deal 'equivalent' package is also tested to show that 69% of homes in the neighbourhood are suitable for the funding. The results are visualised and fed back to the community using colour-coded spatial maps. Furthermore targeted door-step marketing is undertaken by the community organisation to encourage the uptake loft and cavity wall insulation in homes which do not have them.

Helpful advice required when setting up community energy project:

Access to legal, technical and financial expertise at specific times is important to enable the project to progress is particularly important at start-up phase. This was mentioned by two of the EVALOC LCCs. In both cases the advice was pro bono, at the beginning at least, which was important for the group as they did not have sufficient funds to cover the costs without a revenue stream.

All the LCCs have links with their city, district and/or county councils and Universities, with most groups having a variety of links with a wide variety of support and funding organisations that have been built up over the years.

⁹ Gupta, R. and Cherian, R. (2013) Mapping communities and neighbourhoods for local carbon reductions, in *Panel 3 local action and national examples, the European Council for an Energy Efficient Economy (ECEEE) summer study*, 3-8 June 2013, Toulon, France

Potential for new information resource:

There is certainly a need for one although there are already regional organisations fulfilling many of these roles (e.g. Centre for Sustainable Energy¹⁰ SE and the Oxfordshire Low Carbon Hub¹¹), so it would seem appropriate to assess which roles they are performing, and how best to support the existing organisations. The question remains at what level it is best to deliver this service. A national service delivered through more regional partners, or centrally? We have seen evidence of the benefits of a more regional delivery, (see the ECI submission for further information).

Building interest among other communities:

- Providing resources for shared learning activities (eg visits to and from other communities, shared learning workshop, networking events etc), and peer mentoring between communities, can help stimulate interest in energy projects by other communities.
- Appropriate framing of messages e.g. by highlighting the strong synergies between carbon reduction, fuel poverty, affordable warmth, community development, and/or wider regeneration initiatives. The experience of EVALOC LCCs suggests it is helpful to highlight both the practical benefit and the environmental and social value of energy and carbon reduction projects, including in economically disadvantaged communities.
- In other cases it might not be a question of lack of interest, but more of lack of capacity. Integrating energy advice/training into existing front line services or resourcing and/or supporting existing local organisations to incorporate energy issues into their on-going projects can be helpful here.
- Resourcing and supporting CEGs and front line agencies to understand the needs of different tenures and socio-economic groups, link them to services provided by different local agencies, and developing cross referral systems between the different agencies and community groups is also useful.
- Use innovative approaches to engage the wider community on issues such as carbon reductions but also the longer term impacts of climate change.¹²

10. We are interested in your views about peer mentoring. In particular:

- a. Do you have any examples of successful peer mentoring schemes?
- b. What more could be done to support and enable peer mentoring schemes such as that described in Case Study 14 above?
- c. Are you aware of any other models of peer mentoring or advice sharing which could help community energy projects address skills and knowledge gaps?
- d. What more could be done to support peer mentoring schemes in the community energy sector?

From EVALOC, there is evidence of LCCs finding other LCCs a valuable source of information and advice, as they have already been through a similar process. Three LCCs are already involved in providing mentoring to other groups, but in these cases additional funding has enabled them to perform this role to the depth and breadth necessary.

Examples of successful peer mentoring schemes:

From our research, it appears that the example given in case study 14 covers the most pertinent

¹⁰ <http://www.cse.org.uk/>

¹¹ <http://www.lowcarbonhub.org/>

¹² Gupta, R and Gregg, M (2013) Preventing the overheating of English suburban homes in a warming climate, *Building Research & Information*. 41:3, 281-300

points of peer mentoring. However, there are two additional examples we would like to give from the EVALOC project:

1) Low Carbon West Oxford was involved in developing their renewable energy model and the Low Carbon Living Programme materials and mentoring other LCCs in Oxfordshire to adopt it both directly and through the Low Carbon Hub. This was possible through a DECC grant to Oxford City Council under the Local Climate Framework Pilot in 2010.

2) AAT has been involved in the Welsh Government's Ynni'r Fro programme which uses European Structural Funds to offer social enterprises grant aid, loans and free, independent, hands-on advice and information to help social enterprises develop their own community scale renewable energy schemes across Wales¹³ and two staff members are employed as Technical development officers within this programme.

Supporting and enabling peer mentoring schemes:

Sustained funding would help to establish and support intermediary organisations over time. Essentially the mechanism of a 'hub' drawing on community expertise needs to be established, which can provide the type of support when needed. Funding can help free up the time of those with expertise for peer mentoring – who are also often driving their own community energy projects.

Other models:

There are numerous examples of EVALOC LCCs running one off shared learning events or materials (some supported by EVALOC). For example:

- EVALOC has supported a number of shared learning workshops between EVALOC and other communities on Carbon reduction in communities of disadvantage, arts and climate change, partnership working, the Low Carbon Hook Norton low carbon scheme
- Sustainable Blaenau ran a successful 'Blaenau Sustainability Convention', which shared the learning from their DECC funded LCCC and other projects with wider groups in the area, and other LCCs.
- Low Carbon West Oxford / West Oxford Community Renewables have produced a useful guide to their experiences 'Low Carbon Living – Power to Make it Possible'¹⁴.
- Eco Easterside has used the media and talks to other communities to share good practice with other communities and areas.

Feedback forms from the EVALOC supported events outlined above show positive effects on participants' learning, motivations and intentions.

Further work to support peer mentoring in community energy sector:

As well as furthering the suggestions above, an online and regularly updated searchable national resource library, containing examples of case studies and dissemination material.

11. How can we ensure that vulnerable groups, including those in fuel poverty, are able to take part in and share the benefits of community energy projects?

Experience of EVALOC LCCs indicates that vulnerable groups are unlikely to access low carbon measures without considerable handholding due to the pressing economic and social challenges they face. Evidence from EVALOC communities and from shared learning workshops with LCCs working in economically disadvantaged areas indicates the need for the following approaches:

¹³ <http://www.energysavingtrust.org.uk/wales/Communities/Finding-funding/Ynni-r-Fro-programme>

¹⁴ <http://www.lowcarbonwestoxford.org.uk/index.php>

Government action

A supportive policy framework and financial incentive structure (as outlined above) which includes:

- A more substantial allocation of public revenue (to support the current capital funding) funding to enable local actors (local authorities and/or city wide not for profits) to coordinate the local delivery of energy efficiency measures and behavioural interventions to vulnerable, and low income households
- Broadening the fuel poverty scheme eligibility criteria to include more very low-income households in the rental sector more access to energy saving initiatives and better coordination between landlords' and tenants' incentives.
- More far-reaching policies to address the structural barriers outlined in question 8 above

Local action

- The area-wide delivery of free energy-efficient measures to residents coordinated by a local authority or trusted city/area wide body
- Direct engagement with residents (e.g. through door-knocking) and handholding
- Helping people see and access the practical benefits from low carbon projects and lifestyles
- Building trust and getting consent from social and private landlords
- Provision of integrated advice/support on energy use, issues including energy tariffs, benefits, health safety, damp etc. tailored to different tenures and household types e.g. private tenants face different issues to owner occupiers;
- Training of front line staff in the provision of basic energy saving advice;
- Use of multi-lingual representatives to convey messages in a more understandable way in multi-ethnic communities;
- Conditioning provision of free technical measures on participation in accessible community information, training and/or skill share events

Higher income areas

In the short to medium term local authorities are unlikely to have the resources needed to ensure the coordinated delivery of measures in higher income areas. However, to ensure that the pocket of low income and vulnerable people in these areas can access energy efficiency measures they need to ensure at a minimum that there is:

- access to the ECO
- a joined up and effective cross-referral system between the council, other front line agencies, and LCCGs,
- training in basic energy saving advice to frontline council and agency workers.
- funding for community groups to help identify and link up vulnerable people to services

12. We are interested in your views on the potential for community groups to engage in delivering the Energy Company Obligation (ECO). In particular:

- a. What could be the role for communities in delivering ECO, either through participation in ECO brokerage or building partnerships with energy companies?
- b. What might be the potential barriers to community groups participating in ECO brokerage?

The key point we wish to make about the Energy Company Obligation is its lack of ambition. Peer reviewed work undertaken by colleagues within another research project, using data on ECO and

Green Deal supplied by DECC officials, indicates that the current policy framework of Green Deal and the ECO represents a substantial reduction in ambition for household energy efficiency policies¹⁵. The effect is shown diagrammatically in Figure 4.

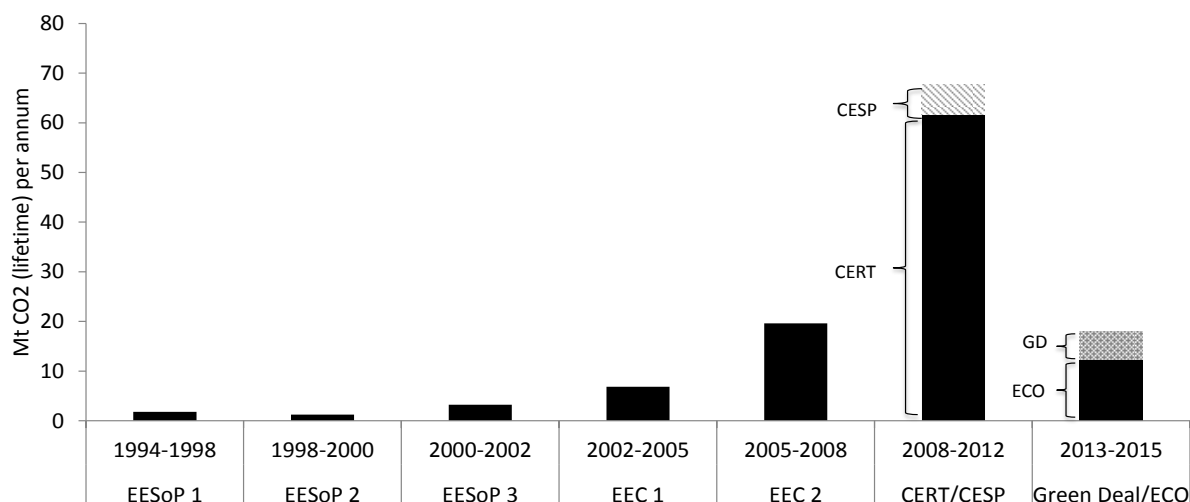


Figure 4. Projected carbon savings from major household energy efficiency policies in the UK

This ex-ante calculation is supported by the recent trends in installation of cavity wall insulation reported by CIGA shown in Figure 5.

In this situation the huge absolute reduction in activity is likely to be far more important for community engagement than any other factor in scheme design. We therefore believe the evidence indicates that, in the short to medium term, the Government should return to allowing low-cost insulation measures to be eligible for support under all sections of the ECO.

Subject to this important caveat, we believe the introduction of a brokering mechanism within the ECO is a design improvement. We agree with the underlying reason DECC has proposed for the change, i.e. that there is a potential problem of energy supplier market dominance in assessment and installation. Evidence from CERT is that the dominance of energy supplier led activity had a significant impact on market structure, e.g. concentrating the cavity wall installation industry as suppliers preferred to deal with larger companies. Whilst this may have had some beneficial effects on costs, it implies that the ability of actors, such as community groups, other than suppliers and large companies to undertake work in ECO would be very limited without mandatory brokerage.

¹⁵ Rosenow, J. and Eyre, N. (2013) The Green Deal and the Energy Company Obligation. Invited paper, accepted for publication in *Energy Proceedings of the Institute of Civil Engineers*.

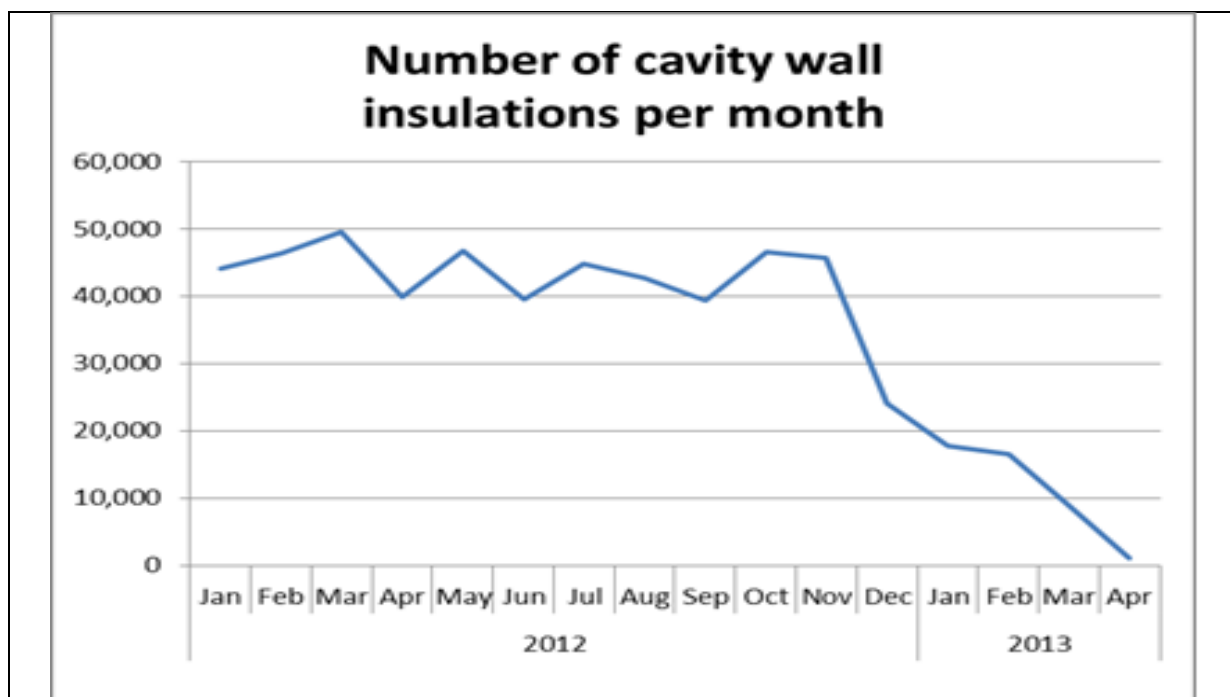


Figure 5. Monthly rates of cavity wall insulation in the UK

Nevertheless, we suspect that brokerage is unlikely to provide anything approaching a complete solution to community group involvement in ECO. We see no evidence of interest in brokerage in the low carbon community energy groups with whom we work. Community groups are not generally able to guarantee future delivery of energy efficiency measures because of their voluntary nature and funding uncertainties; and they are very unlikely to have the financial and legal capacity to make bids into the brokerage mechanism. They are therefore likely to be highly dependent on an effective aggregation service, which, to date, has not proved effective in household energy efficiency in the UK. The only positive example of which we are aware of an active market in delivery of energy efficiency in this way is Italy¹⁶, where it is contingent on the obligations being placed on DNOs (i.e. non-retail market actors). In short, such a complex measure seems unlikely to appeal directly to community groups focussed on non-market objectives in their own communities, and the wider UK policy framework does not encourage it. A more plausible route to engaging community groups is via local authorities or other non-profit Green Deal providers with whom they have a relationship. However, the structure of ECO means that these organisations need to have a relationship with an energy supplier or the capacity to bid into the brokerage mechanism. This adds additional complexity, and therefore cost, and so may well not be an attractive delivery mechanism unless additional funding is provided by Government for local authority roles and community group roles eg. in engaging residents and coordinating delivery of measures, providing integrated advice, technical support and behavioural advice etc.

Without this we suspect that the only likely role for community groups within ECO will be in specific programmes where energy suppliers believe they can provide a cheap route to delivery of specific measures. However, this will not be a major effect, and also risks undermining the perceived independence of, and hence public trust in community groups, and nor does it address the desire of most community groups for policy to be designed to enable multiple, smaller scale energy efficiency projects to be a major part of the Government's delivery plans.

¹⁶ Pavan, M. (2008). Tradable energy efficiency certificates: the Italian experience. *Energy Efficiency* 1, 257-266.

13. If you are a community energy project, what has been your experience of accessing funding from Feed-in-Tariffs (FiTs) or the Renewable Heat Incentive (RHI)?

Through focus groups within the six EVALOC LCCs, it appears that LCCs have experienced considerable delays in accessing the FiT from energy suppliers as well as having to undertake considerable amounts of paper work, which is both time and resource intensive. This resulted in some projects having to lay off key staff with a concomitant loss of knowledge and expertise. Again, without reliable core funding community initiatives may not be sustainable in the long term.

Solutions

Possible solutions would include the government and/or OFGEM setting a minimum period for energy supplier to process and deliver FiT claims.

14. Do you have any other examples of, or ideas for, innovative revenue generation models for community energy projects, particularly for projects not based on electricity generation?

15. We would like to understand the different types of funding available for community energy projects at different stages of their development and the barriers to accessing these. In this question we are particularly keen to hear from potential investors in community energy projects, as well as community energy groups.

- a. In addition to those sources mentioned in questions 12-14 above, what types of funding are available for community energy projects at different stages of their development?
- b. What barriers do community energy projects face in accessing funding at different stages of their development?

Types of funding available and barriers:

DECC provides a list of loans and financial incentives for Sustainable Energy Projects:
http://www.local.gov.uk/c/document_library/get_file?uuid=d61d2f45-2c2b-4986-a802-9099735cc5f2&groupId=10171.

The development of renewable energy projects requires upfront capital expenditure and risk for CEPs in the development phase i.e. before planning permission is given.

As mentioned above, lack of reliable revenue funding for core roles is a major constraint both for local authorities and CEGs from activities where there is no market such as core process roles and behaviour change.

Capital funding

Government grants

- EVALOC LCCs accessed Government test bed grant funding from the LCCC for capital measures (under the de minimus level), as well as the FiT, however the government's subsequent restrictive interpretation of state aid rules means that other LCCs are not able to receive both a capital grants for renewables and the FiT

Loans

- One EVALOC LCC used DECC LCCC capital grant to establish a local revolving loan fund

- It can be difficult for LCCs to access low cost or no interest loans if they are not located in deprived communities
-

Community Share Offers

- Community Share Offers can provide an alternative lower cost source of capital than loans. One of the LCCs has subsequently successfully raised a large amount of capital to expand its renewable portfolio from its own share offer but this might not be replicable in other communities, particularly if it is a deprived area. One LCC has modelled that to generate a net return of £30,000 p.a. –i.e. enough to pay a part time worker and fund small projects - would require an initial investment of £1 million in solar panels

Crowd funding

- Groups experience of crowd funding organisations such as Energyshare has been mixed. Some groups have mentioned that the amount of time dedicated has seemed disproportionate to the amount of grant funding that is actually available. Others have felt that involvement in these types of projects can compromise the CEP's perceived independence from energy companies.

Accessing ECO

- It is not yet clear to what extent it will be possible for Local Authorities or CEPs to access funding for measures under the ECO carbon savings element. The ECO brokerage framework has been established by DECC to encourage transparency and drive down delivery costs, however as yet it is only open to 'Green Deal providers' ?
- Experience with the previous supplier obligation (CERT and CESP) suggests that the coordinated area wide delivery of measures is an efficient and effective way of ensuring low income and vulnerable groups access affordable warmth element. But there appears to be no additional revenue budget line allocated for LCCG, LAs, or other city wide actors to play this role.
- It is not yet clear how fuel poor and deprived people living in higher income areas will be able to access the affordable warmth element of ECO (even if cross-subsidised with green deal measures).

Revenue funding

Lack of revenue funding is a significant constraint for EVALOC LCCs:

Grants

- Depending on the location of the CEPs, grant funding can be accessed from council/rural development councils although these are often small and tied to specific projects. Typically this is sufficient to help cover the cost of events and specific items of equipment (e.g. funding to purchase a thermal imaging camera), but is not normally sufficient to cover the costs of someone's time, either those involved in a CEP or to buy in the assistance of outside legal, financial or energy expertise. This can impede some groups, although more ambitious CEPs are driven by the motivation of specific members.

Social enterprises

- Four of the six EVALOC LCCs used the LCCC funding to invest in community renewables projects to develop independent self-sustaining income streams from the FIT. However, the net return (after subtracting interest payments, replacement of inverters) has not proven sufficient to both finance core roles and reinvest in further community projects. One community estimates that the net return over the first 10 years – until replacement

inverters are installed - will only be about half the value of the FIT income generated' .

- Other than the market created by the FIT for renewable energy there appears to be few markets for other vital LCC roles which means they will remain reliant on grant funding e.g. management/coordination, community development or engagement, motivating people, behaviour change programmes and/or complementary carbon cutting projects relating to waste, transport and food.
- Community groups have been encouraged under the Green Deal to accept referral fees from private providers, however, this can risk undermining residents' trust in them as independent parties and hence their distinctive competence in engaging and motivating people to take action.

Pro bono support

- Sources of pro-bono support have been crucial for the development of more ambitious energy projects. In the case of two EVALOC communities, this has been accessed independently through the group's contacts. The assistance offered by organisations such as Carbon Leapfrog can be of assistance here.

Solutions

- Government (revenue) funding for the core roles of LCCs in undertaking the coordinated area wide delivery of measures to local households (including community engagement; the coordinated delivery, provision of integrated advice and support; behavioural support and advice, and on-going technical support and maintenance etc). This could be financed from various sources including a financial transactions tax, clamp down on tax avoidance, carbon taxes etc.
Capital grants and/or low cost loans for bona fide LCCs, particularly those addressing fuel poverty, to invest in community renewable energy generation. (Capital grants would require a clarification of State Aid so that bona fide community groups, which are using the FiT for community benefit and fuel poverty, can receive both the FiT and capital grants (up to the 'de minimis' level).
- Expansion of ECO and provision of subsidised loans for people just above the benefit line.

16. If you have been involved in community energy, what legal or regulatory or planning barriers have you encountered during your project?

Whilst the majority of legal and regulatory barriers have been mentioned previously, evidence from EVALOC interim findings are as follows:

- Difficulty in using procurement rules to enable councils to use local firms to undertake local insulation programmes (and hence create local jobs, regenerate the local economy etc).
- Considerable delays in accessing the FiT from energy suppliers as well as considerable amounts of paper work.

17. We would like to hear your views on the role of Government or others in making it easier for communities to deal with these regulations. For example:

- a. Are there any regulations or processes that could be improved or simplified?
- b. What support could help community energy groups navigate these regulations or processes?

We would suggest the following to help communities deal with regulatory, legal and planning barriers:

- Government guidance about procurement rules for local authorities
- A minimum period for energy suppliers to process and deliver FiT claims
- Strong leadership and consistent public messages from government about the need for urgent government and public action on climate change and adaptation of buildings for future climate change¹⁷
- Progressive financing of Feed in Tariffs (FIT), and the new Energy Company Obligation (ECO), either through block/escalating tariffs with exemptions for low income groups and/or taxation
- The gradual introduction of legal requirements on owner occupiers to implement energy efficiency measures, with exemptions for low income and vulnerable groups, and differential financing mechanism for different income groups (This would require an equity assessment first)
- Income maximisation policies to reduce fuel poverty e.g. simplification and regulation of fuel prices; living wage policies; training and apprenticeship programmes and hiring policies for disadvantaged groups to benefit from new low carbon employment opportunities etc.
- Wider government policies to address structural barriers such as perverse market signals, , consumerist pressures, etc
- Low cost monitoring to be included within any regulations relating to the installation of low carbon technologies and renewables along with accessible equipment and a requirement to actively participate in monitoring the performance of the installations
- Increased mandatory regulation relating to the tendering process, installation and commissioning of renewable equipment and systems

18. How could it be made easier for community energy projects to sell the energy they generate and connect to the grid?

Evidence and evaluation

19. Research published alongside this Call for Evidence (Community Energy in the UK: A review of the Evidence) has found that the evidence base for community energy is currently limited. We are interested in how community energy projects are evaluated and how better evidence could be collected.

- What approaches have you taken to evaluating the impact of your community energy project? Where have these worked particularly well or badly?
- What kind of evidence would help potential investors and funders make more informed financial decisions about community energy projects?
- What support do community energy groups need to better evaluate their projects and collect evidence of different outcomes and benefits?

Approaches taken to evaluate impact:

CEPs involved in the EVALOC project evaluate their work to different degrees. Whilst some do

¹⁷ Gupta, R and Gregg, M (2011) Adapting UK suburban neighbourhoods and dwellings for a changing climate, *Advances in Building Energy Research Journal*. 5: 1, 81-108

minimal evaluation, other groups have highly developed Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) in place to capture the impacts of their project on those involved. Due to the wide range of benefits CEPs may generate (outlined in question 3), the M&E undertaken should encompass not only the quantitative measurement of impacts but a greater qualitative understanding of processes and outcomes. Some CEPs have had negative experiences from evaluations provided by funders, whilst others have found them useful.

Evaluating the impacts of the CEP on a wider scale has proved difficult. Experience using some online tools has required substantial additional input of time, as mentioned above. Capturing those who are not involved with the CEP has been beyond the capacity of those involved in the CEP.

Evidence from EVALOC's second round of focus groups concerning the roles of CEPs shows that evaluation approaches which include the impact that the CEP is having on other groups and partnerships (their midstream impact) is also important to evaluate. Two CEPs involved in EVALOC have devoted significant amounts of time to sharing the knowledge and expertise they have built up with other CEPs who are developing energy projects. In addition to the information gleaned from the CEPs involved in the EVALOC project, EVALOC also conducted a wider survey¹⁸ between July – September 2012, which included responses from 102 CEPs, 55 of whom were from the UK. The majority of these groups were Transition Initiatives. Whilst these groups would have a wider remit than energy, for most groups energy is a significant component of their work.

The survey showed that around half of the CEPs are conducting some kind of M&E. The variety of M&E varies however, in a similar manner to the more detailed evidence from the CEPs involved in the EVALOC project, and is shown in Figure 6.

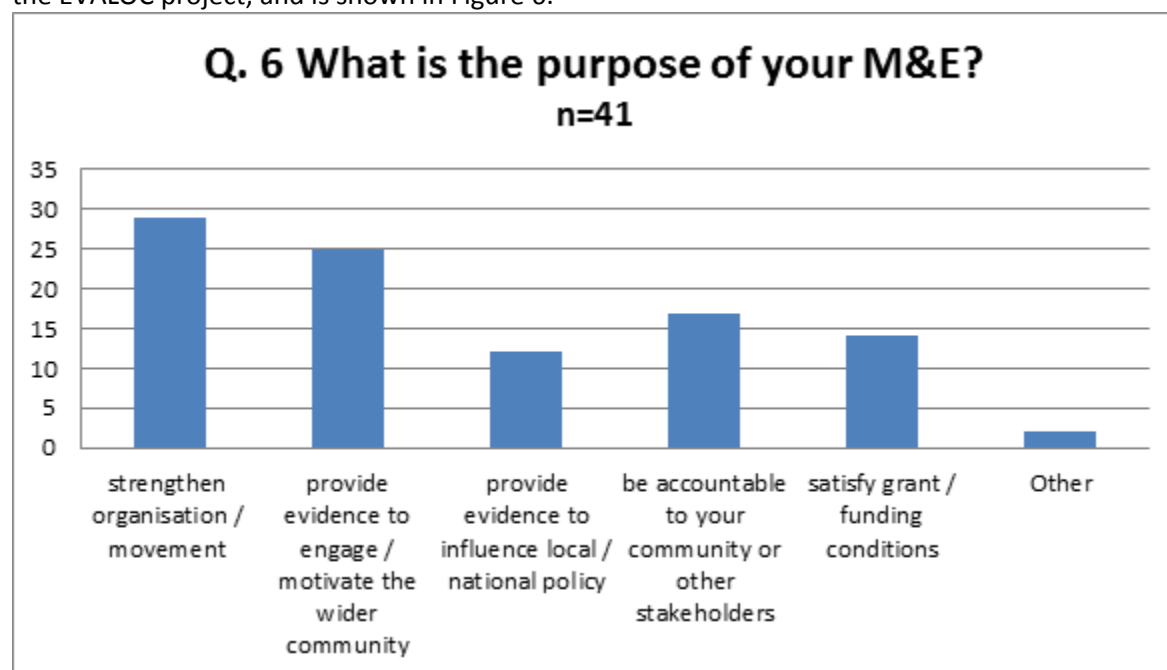


Figure 6. Q.6 What is the purpose of your M&E?

A more detailed impression of the issues and indicators that CEPs are monitoring is revealed in the following Figure 7, which show the range of issues and indicators where groups are already conducting some form of M&E, and also where groups would like to conduct M&E. 'Participation in activities' was the most popular issue selected for organisations who are already conducting some

¹⁸ Hamilton, J. (2013) *Community Monitoring and Evaluation methods survey report and analysis (Interim Draft)* EVALOC, Oxford

kind of M&E, and for those who would like to M&E. This is unsurprising, as it can be one of the most straightforward indicators to monitor, however, many community organisations are not currently monitoring these activities. 'Community engagement / inclusion' and 'organisational capacity and sustainability' were also popular choices for those already involved in some degree of M&E. What the results clearly show is that in most areas, M&E is not taking place, although there is a desire to do so by the community organisations.

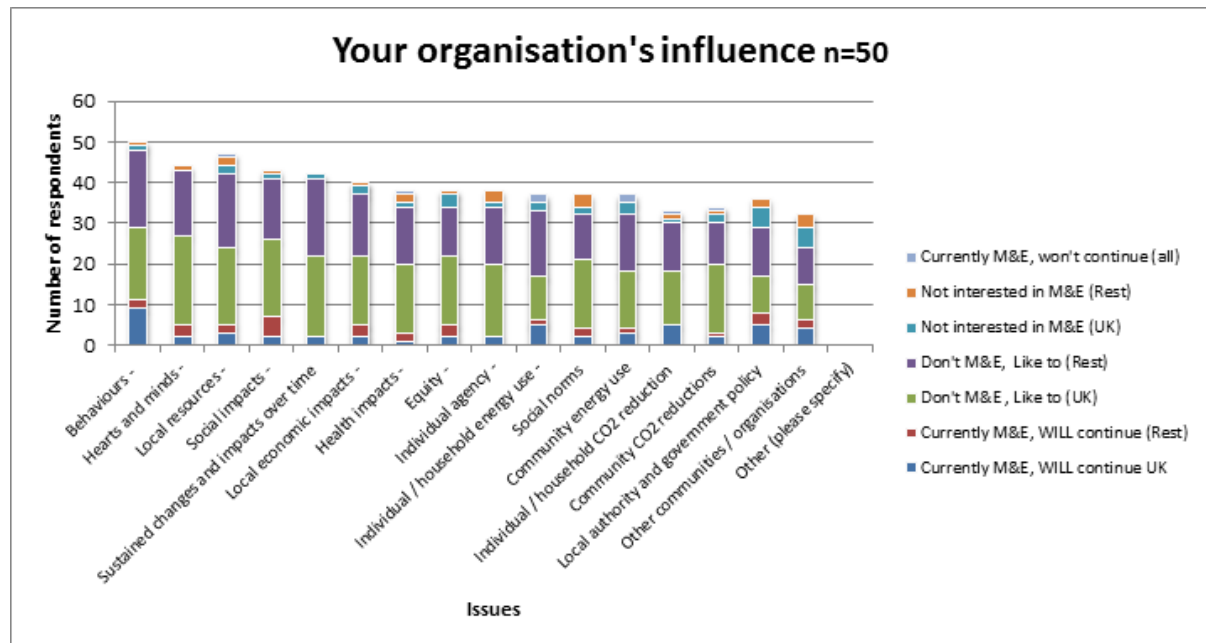


Figure 7. Q.9 Which issues / indicators about your organisation's influence do you currently monitor / evaluate, and which you would like to monitor / evaluate? n=50

Monitoring and evaluation of technical measures and actual carbon reductions:

There is a lack of overall knowledge in terms of the impact of CEPs on actual energy reductions at both a community and individual household level. This is particularly important in terms of quantifying the impacts and success of CEPs, including potential unintended outcomes, and is relevant for both policy-making and practitioners engaged in the area of large-scale domestic energy reduction. The EVALOC research team has identified a number of relevant low-cost monitoring and evaluation activities and survey techniques that should prove useful in enabling CEGs to understand and quantify their impact on both the wider community and local domestic buildings, thus improving their knowledge of what works, and what doesn't and allowing them to make confident decisions in terms of the types of measures they further invest in.

Community level: carbon mapping

As previously stated, carbon mapping provides estimated carbon emissions as well as potential carbon savings over a whole community. By understanding the baseline energy data, and comparing it to a further map showing the area post-improvement measures, CEGs can easily visualise their impact and understand their building stock.¹⁹

Household level: monitoring of individual households who have directly benefited from CEP funding

Such M&E is vital to understanding actual energy use and behaviours. Within EVALOC, 88 households are undergoing M&E at varying levels (Figure 8) to create robust case-study based

¹⁹ Gupta, R. (2009). Moving towards low-carbon buildings and cities: experiences from Oxford, UK. *International Journal of Low-Carbon Technologies* (4), pp.159 -168

evidence on the impacts of community energy action. The M&E uses a mixed method active research approach²⁰ to ensure both qualitative and quantitative data is gathered and cross-analysed.

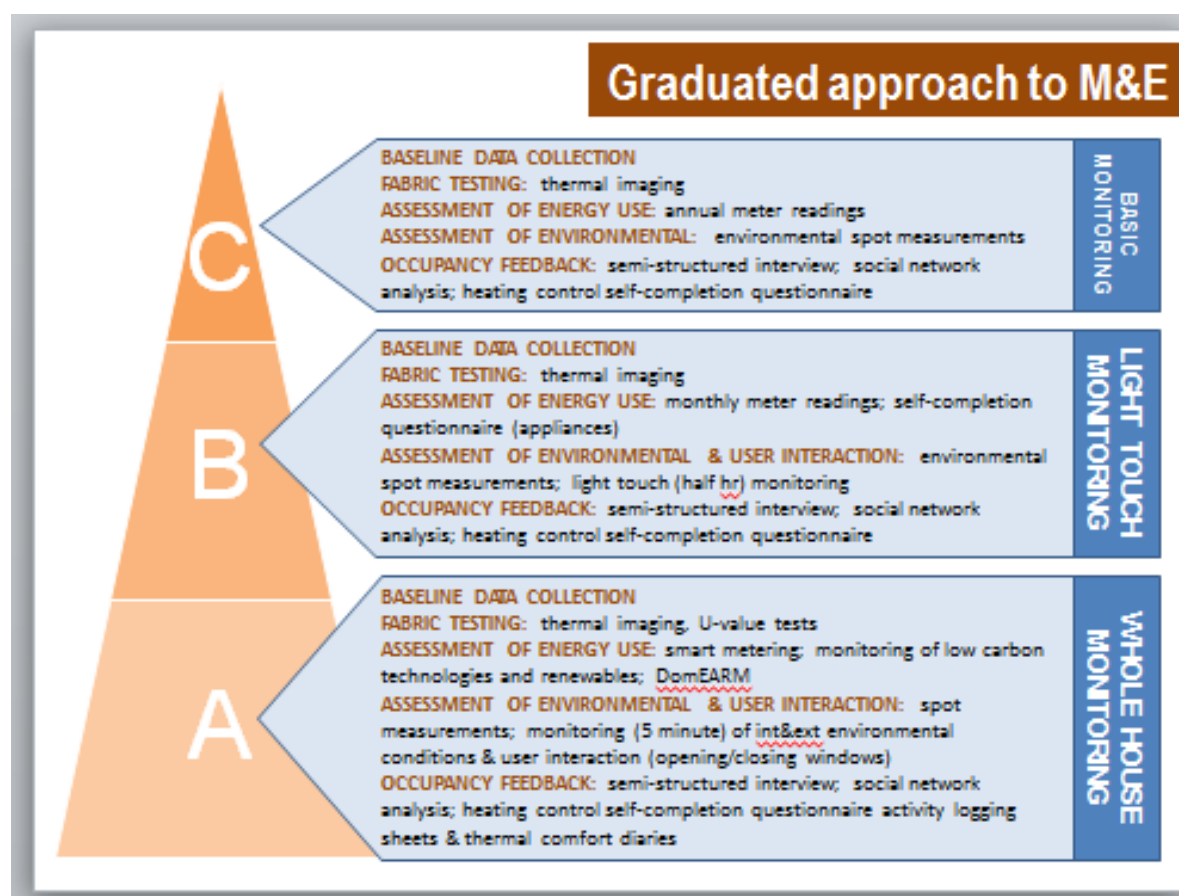


Figure 8. Graduated approach of EVALOC household M&E (taken from EVALOC presentation 2013)

Community-university collaborations have also been found to be mutually beneficial in both the EVALOC and LEAF projects. Whilst both are strategically non-profit oriented, such collaborations give community groups access to technical expertise and impartial advice from a trusted source (which is identified as one of the barriers in the Call for Evidence), and Universities get to reality-check their research and generate impact (a factor becoming a vital component of the Research Evaluation Framework (REF)). This collaboration could also involve postgraduates and PhD students. This arrangement cannot be generalised but provides an opportunity for cross-fertilisation of ideas and practices. As an example, a published paper is attached (Mapping communities and neighbourhoods for local carbon reductions) on the application of DECoRuM carbon mapping approach in Bicester, which illustrates the collaboration between Grassroots Bicester and researchers of Low Carbon Building Group of Oxford Brookes University through a LEAF funded collaboration.

Evidence to help potential investors/funders

EVALOC LCCs have indicated that resources such as modelling tools would be helpful to enable them to quantify and demonstrate the multiple benefits arising different types of project to funders (eg to quantify the health benefits from energy efficiency measures/warmer homes, the carbon savings over time, and various social benefits). M&E approaches taken within the EVALOC project are the

²⁰ Gupta, R. and Darby, S. (2011) Action research approach for gaining, and providing, feedback on domestic energy use to understand occupant behaviour, perceptions and expectations. *Proceedings of the Energy and people: futures, complexity and challenges conference*, 20-21 September 2011, Lady Margaret Hall, University of Oxford, Oxford.

types that can provide a strong and robust evidence base for both potential investors/funders as well as the CEGs themselves.

Support needed for CEGs to better evaluate their projects and collect evidence of different outcomes and benefits

Drawing on interviews with the CEGs involved with EVALOC, the following types of support required were identified:

- Energy data at a more granular level would enable CEGs to assess their impact on overall energy consumption.
- Academic support to help CEGs develop self M&E programmes and assess longitudinal changes.
- Larger surveys, conducted over time, would help CEPs evaluate how their project is impacting the wider community, particularly those who are not directly involved with the project. We are in the process of developing more M&E resources with CEGs involved in the EVALOC, so can provide more detailed responses to this.

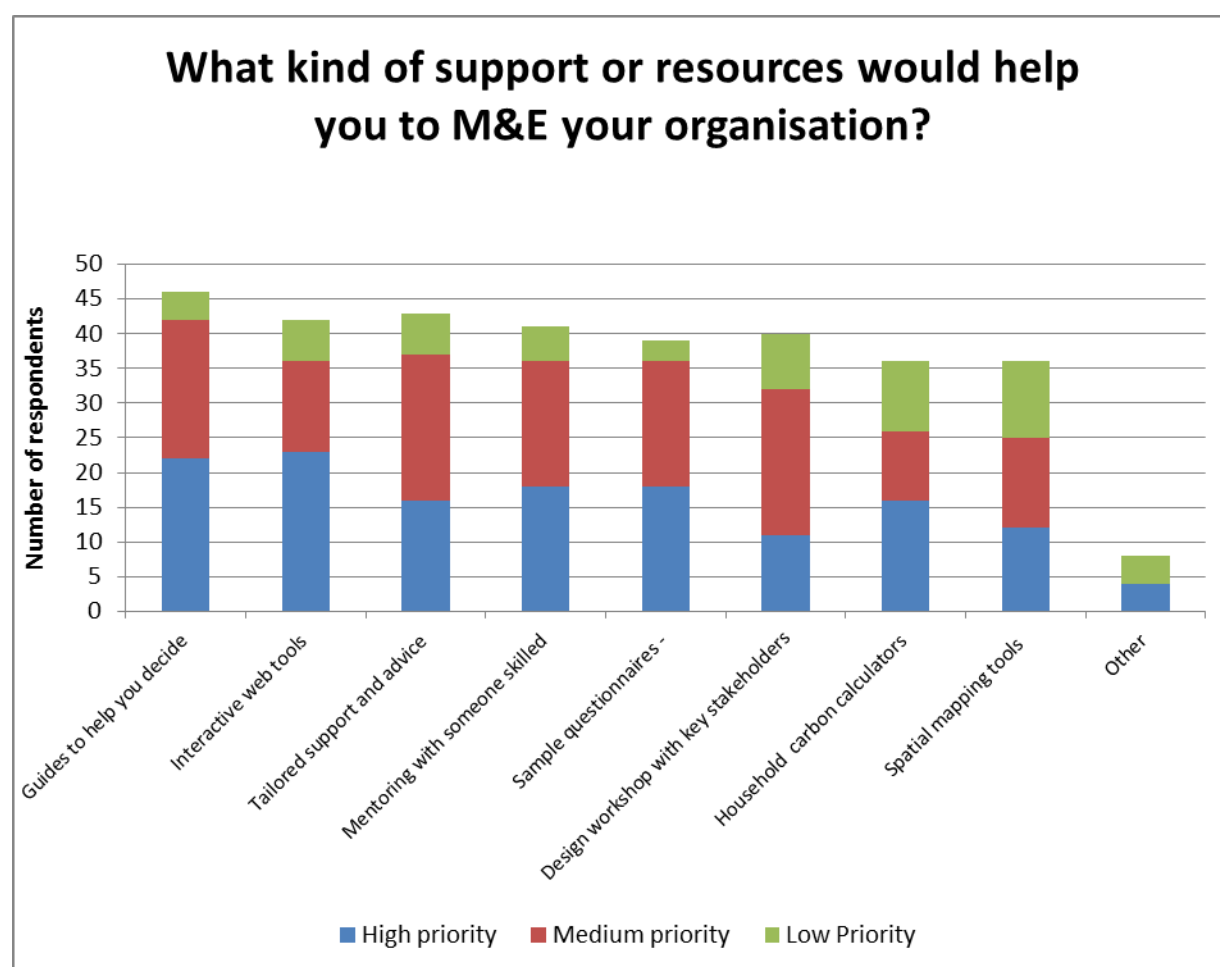


Figure 9. Q. 12 and 17 The support or resources needed to help M&E, n=52.

Just under half of the survey respondents replied to these questions relating to the support or measures needed to help M&E. However for those who did respond there wasn't a clear 'favourite' resource, with many respondents selecting most of the support and resources in the list. Figure 9 illustrates the results, showing the spread between priorities.

The three highest priorities for respondents were Interactive Web tools, guides to help you decide

your M&E approach, and sample questionnaires. Overall however the results demonstrate a medium / high priority for a variety of approaches to M&E, and suggest the development of a menu of approaches from which organisations can select the most suitable for them. The most people intensive resources were ‘mentoring with someone skilled’ and ‘tailored support and advice’, but these possible with CEG partnering with academic institutions or even industry and commercial practices.

Experience suggests that the main input would be needed at the beginning of the M&E process, and could be delivered in a variety of ways, such as workshops with specific follow up help provided.

Partnerships

20. We want to hear your views about how central Government could engage communities more effectively in developing and delivering its policies.

- Do you have examples of where Government engagement has worked well or badly?
- Are there specific Government processes that make it hard for communities to engage?
- How could the role of local authorities as ‘brokers’ between central Government and communities be strengthened?

Examples of Government engagement and processes

- LCCC test bed funding has provided EVALOC LCCs with a positive opportunity to either develop new energy initiatives or accelerate the implementation of existing ideas.
- However, the extremely short time scales; the lack of revenue funding to provide follow up to the capital projects including on-going management, maintenance, and technical advice to users creates serious difficulties for LCCs, and also risks deterring LCCs from responding positively to future government funding calls (There is a thin line between government using test-bed funding to nurture LCC ‘niche innovations’ and ‘exploiting’ them as cheap providers)
- DECC’s evaluation of the LCCC was conducted one year after the funding was granted. This was too short a time frame to assess the outcomes and impacts which occur over a longer time frame. Also, most EVALOC LCCs reported that the challenges of installing capital measures temporarily diverted their attention away from awareness, community engagement and behavioural interventions
- EVALOC LCCs would like more opportunities to share their practical learning of what does and doesn’t work on the group directly with the government rather than only mediated through academics, consultants, evaluators

Solutions

- Longer term grant funding would accelerate the speed, reach and scale of delivery of policies after the pilot development stage.
- The government could resource and facilitate shared learning workshops with and between LCCs at city and county level to share best practice and draw out implications for national policy (rather than relying on community contact group)
- Partnership working can increase the reach and scale of local energy projects if resourced
- A strong and fair policy framework and financial incentive structure which supports local energy reduction, plus policies to address wider structural barriers
- Resourcing for building wider public support and policy influencing roles of LCCs

Role of Local Authorities as brokers between central governments and communities

In two of the EVALOC communities local authorities have sub contracted some of their energy roles to a town wide charity and city wide community interest company respectively, as they are considered to have a better knowledge and experience of energy/climate change projects and/or engaging local communities, and/or are able to attract additional sources of funding. These organisations are not directly representative of, or accountable to, the electorate so are not necessarily bound to meet public priorities except through funding contracts.

The removal of statutory duties on local authorities to reduce carbon emissions and fuel poverty means has reduced the likelihood that local authorities will act as brokers between government and communities to address climate change and fuel poverty.

Solutions

- The introduction of a properly resourced statutory duty on local authorities to reduce carbon emissions and address fuel poverty with flexibility about the partnership strategies used to achieve this
- Guidance to, and opportunities for shared learning between, local authorities and community groups about best practice in partnership working based on shared learning workshops and existing research (eg from EVALOC –
- Funding pots for local authorities to contract out roles and/or channel grant funding to community groups or other local actors to carry out certain roles (following an assessment of capability)

Where resourced local authorities, community groups and not for profits felt strong at disseminating and sharing good practice with other groups. There was a sense that their practical experience on the ground means they are well placed to shape policy but they lacked resourcing and time to do this effectively.

21. What could be the role for Government in helping community energy projects to build partnerships with other organisations, such as energy companies, local authorities and installers?

22. How might several community energy projects work collectively in order to negotiate and partner with larger organisations more effectively?

23. How might Government encourage greater community ownership of or involvement in larger energy infrastructure projects?

24. How might 'community benefits' packages associated with large energy infrastructure projects help support community energy schemes in the area?

25. For some respondents we would like to follow up with additional questions. Are you happy to be contacted for further information if required?

Yes. If required, please contact:

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