

Community Energy in the North West

Sector Survey 2019

Understanding and supporting
communities through the energy
system transition



Electricity North West Limited
Registered number 02366949

electricity
north west

Bringing energy to your door

ABOUT THIS REPORT

This report has been produced by Electricity North West in partnership with Community Energy England and Community Energy Wales. The information and data contained in this report is part of the Community Energy - State of the Sector research project. This report focuses on Community Energy during 2019 across the North West of England.

Author Details

Lead Author – **Sandy Robinson** (Scene)

Contributing Author – **Dominic Stephen** (Scene)

Editor – **Helen Seagrave** (Electricity North West)

Copywrite

Copyright © 2020 Electricity North West Limited. All rights reserved. This strategy was produced for Electricity North West by Scene. No part of this document may be reproduced or published in any way (including online) without the prior permission of Electricity North West.

Publishing Details

Community Energy in the North West 2019 uses data collected between January and April 2020 for Community Energy England's Community Energy – State of the Sector relating to community energy in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Data

An open-access anonymised database of all non-sensitive data is available on request from Community Energy England. Please email

data@communityenergyengland.org

to request access.

Electricity North West and Community Energy England and the State of the Sector project adheres to GDPR (2018) regulations.

Date Published: 12.06.2020

Front Cover Image: GenFit installation for Burnside Community Energy 2019



Foreword

This is the second 'State of the Sector' report of community energy organisation in the Electricity North West area, prepared for us in partnership with Community Energy England and Scene. I would like to thank them for the opportunity to work together again. The survey results give us vital intelligence about the sector in our region and informs how we develop our support for the sector.

I would also like to thank the community energy organisations that took the time to respond to the survey; this report would not be possible without their support. The survey indicates that there has been a significant increase in community owned generation across our region with seven generation projects installed last year, totalling 826 kW. This takes the total of community owned generation in our area to 17.5 MW. There has also been an increase in the number of groups recorded this year to 32 community energy groups. Despite this growth we are aware from our conversations with community energy customers that the sector still needs our support to develop.

Community energy organisations in our area are also working on energy storage, energy efficiency and low carbon transport projects, including a project to roll out community owned electric vehicle charging points across the north of our region; the sector also employs 37 full-time staff.

This report highlights the benefits of community energy and the value the sector can bring to our region. We believe community energy is an opportunity to engage the community on energy issues and can deliver a range of benefits such as carbon savings, energy efficiency and community benefit funds that can help transform the communities of the North West.

Electricity North West is committed to supporting communities to take an active role on decarbonisation. As part of this we have published a **Community and Local Energy Strategy** which we developed in response to stakeholder's needs and sets out how we are supporting the sector to grow in our region. We have a dedicated community energy manager and a programme of activities which aims to help us develop our service for the benefit of community and local energy groups. You can read more about our activities at the end of this report.

I hope you find this document interesting and informative and I encourage you to share any feedback you have with us.



Steve Cox

Engineering and technical director
Electricity North West

Contents

About this document	3
Community energy headlines	4
Community energy in 2020	5
Community energy in the North West	6
Funding & finance	13
Valuing community energy	14
Challenges in a post-subsidy sector	15
Supporting communities	16
Looking ahead	18
Working with Electricity North West	19

About this document

This report provides an in-depth understanding of community-led energy projects throughout the North West of England in 2019. The information presented ensures Electricity North West can provide effective support to community energy organisations, their projects and the benefits which they deliver within the region.

Understanding the trajectory of community energy in the North West enables Electricity North West to better support, collaborate with and catalyse communities' role in the low carbon energy transition. As Electricity North West adopts an increasingly active role in the emerging local energy system, they will be working to support locally-owned, distributed energy generation and energy services to ensure long lasting beneficial impacts.

This research is supported by Community Energy England. It uses data collected as part of the annual Community Energy - State of the Sector research project and survey, carried out by community energy consultancy, Scene, between January and March 2020. Within this larger body of research, 34 community energy organisations in the North West of England were identified and surveyed.

The survey focused on providing insight into:

- Community energy activities throughout 2019
- Innovation in the facing of changing policy
- The value of community energy
- Community motivations and challenges in 2019
- Funding and investment in 2019
- The future of the community energy sector into 2020



Electricity North West

Electricity North West Limited (ENWL) is the North West's electricity distribution network operator (DNO). They own, operate and maintain the network of overhead lines and underground cables and are proud to power the lives of five million people in the region.

From heating homes to charging cars and streaming TV shows, they work around the clock to keep customers switched on for today and tomorrow.

The way we use electricity is changing rapidly. Electricity North West are at the forefront of energy innovation, working with local communities, key stakeholders and expert partners to ensure everyone has the power they need when they need it.



Community Energy England

Community Energy England (CEE) is a not for profit organisation that represents and supports the community energy sector. CEE was established by the sector to provide a voice for community energy and to put people at the heart of the energy system by helping to create the conditions within which community energy can flourish.



Scene Connect

Scene is a social enterprise focused on strengthening communities through consultancy, research and development of ICT products and services. Scene work across the renewable energy and energy access sectors.

Community energy headlines

In 2019, community energy across the North West of England comprised:



32 community energy organisations identified throughout the Electricity North West area working on local decarbonisation projects, supported by 37 full-time staff.



826 kW of newly installed electricity generation capacity, taking the total regional capacity to 17.5 MW and generating 40 GWh of electricity in 2019.



12 community organisations delivering energy storage, energy efficiency and of low-carbon transport projects in their local areas.



£412,500 in funding and investment for community energy projects raised and distributed locally.



Community benefit funding spending of over £68,000, alongside the creation of six full-time jobs and £65,000 of cost-savings for community homeowners and businesses.



15 community organisations planning innovative and impactful low carbon projects into 2020, including electricity generation, low carbon heating, transport and energy efficiency in local homes and schools.



£75,320 in funding distributed by Electricity North West to fund community energy projects, support local energy champions, reduce fuel poverty and develop innovative new approaches to community-led of low carbon energy.

Community energy in 2020

Whilst there has been a slight upsurge in new electricity generation in England, Wales and Northern Ireland during 2019, it is expected that the UK community energy sector will be more focused on smaller developments, innovations and new approaches to delivering community-led energy in 2020. In the short term, prospects for low carbon energy generation are diminishing, due to the end of the UK Government's Feed-in Tariff (FiT) subsidy scheme for small to medium scale electricity generation. In response, energy use reduction initiatives are becoming an increasing focus of community energy organisations.

A changing landscape

The community energy sector, and the wider energy sector it forms a part of, has seen rapid changes over the preceding ten years. The increasing pace of low carbon development, as well as decentralisation and digitisation of energy networks, has provided opportunities for community-led energy. In 2019, certain changes are presenting challenges to the sector, including incoming subsidy changes for low carbon electricity and heat. Alongside these challenges are new and emerging opportunities to deliver community-led projects as part of the wider low carbon energy transition.

Changing policy

First launched in 2010, the Feed-in Tariff (FiT) scheme provided income for small to medium scale electricity generators as means of accelerating low carbon energy deployment. The FiT rates were then significantly reduced in 2011 and 2015 beyond expected rates, before the planned closure of the scheme on April 1st 2020. Though there are several replacement mechanisms being introduced, such as the Smart Export Guarantee (SEG), there is now no longer subsidy support for electricity generation at community and local scales.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the viability of small to medium scale renewable projects is expected to diminish throughout 2020/21, however if capital costs continue to fall, projects may remain viable. As a result, small and medium scale generators are exploring new business models, ownership structures and innovative technologies in order to ensure that low carbon community energy continues to thrive in the UK.

Transition to distribution system operation

As the use of low carbon energy technology continues to grow, the UK's energy system will be increasingly comprised of distributed, intermittent, unpredictable and diverse energy flows. To manage this complexity, the role of distribution network operator (DNO) must adapt to take a more active and comprehensive 'systems-based' approach to energy network management. This will involve the real-time monitoring of energy generation and use, and utilising energy flexibility techniques to ensure that the changing energy demands of the network are met at the right time. This will be achieved through a diverse array of generation, storage, prediction, and communications technologies.

Community energy organisations in the UK will play a vital contribution to this sector-wide energy system transition. Network operators have a core role in engaging with, supporting and advising communities about how to benefit from the energy transition. Through funding, partnerships and knowledge sharing, Electricity North West's [Community and Local Energy Strategy](#) sets out their approach to working with communities throughout the North West of England.

In response to the post-subsidy policy landscape, this report focuses on the technologies, business models and community partnerships which are emerging to boost the impact, sustainability, and commercial success of community-led projects into the future.

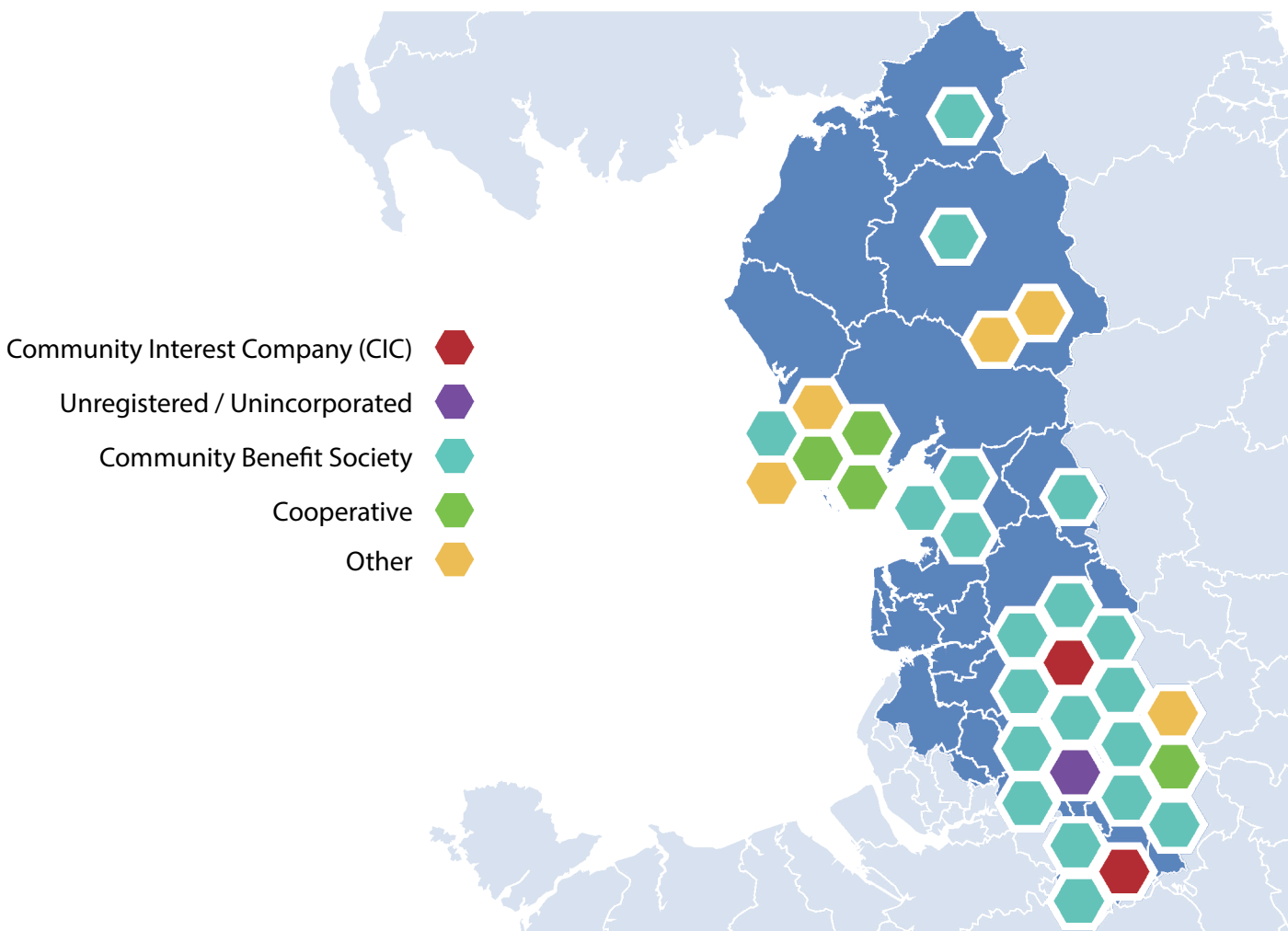
Community energy in the North West

This year’s report identified a total of 32 community energy organisations in the North West of England. These organisations were found to employ 37 full-time equivalent staff and engaged over 12,000 community members, including children, homeowners, businesses and local authorities.

Similar to the rest of the UK, rural areas of the North West were host to the area’s larger energy generation projects, such as Mean Moor’s 6.9MW wind farm near Ulverston, while smaller rooftop solar photovoltaic (PV) installations and energy efficiency schemes were situated within urban centres, such as Manchester and Lancaster.

85% of community energy organisations reported involvement in low carbon electricity generation. The size of these installations ranges widely, from small scale hydro up to large scale wind farms. Energy efficiency formed the focus of eight organisations, in particular retrofit of domestic and commercial properties and the provision of awareness raising and education initiatives for community members. Four community organisations were found to be involved in non-energy generation activities, including three energy storage projects and a low carbon transport project, seeking to deliver electric vehicle charging infrastructure across the North West.

Community energy organisations in the North West

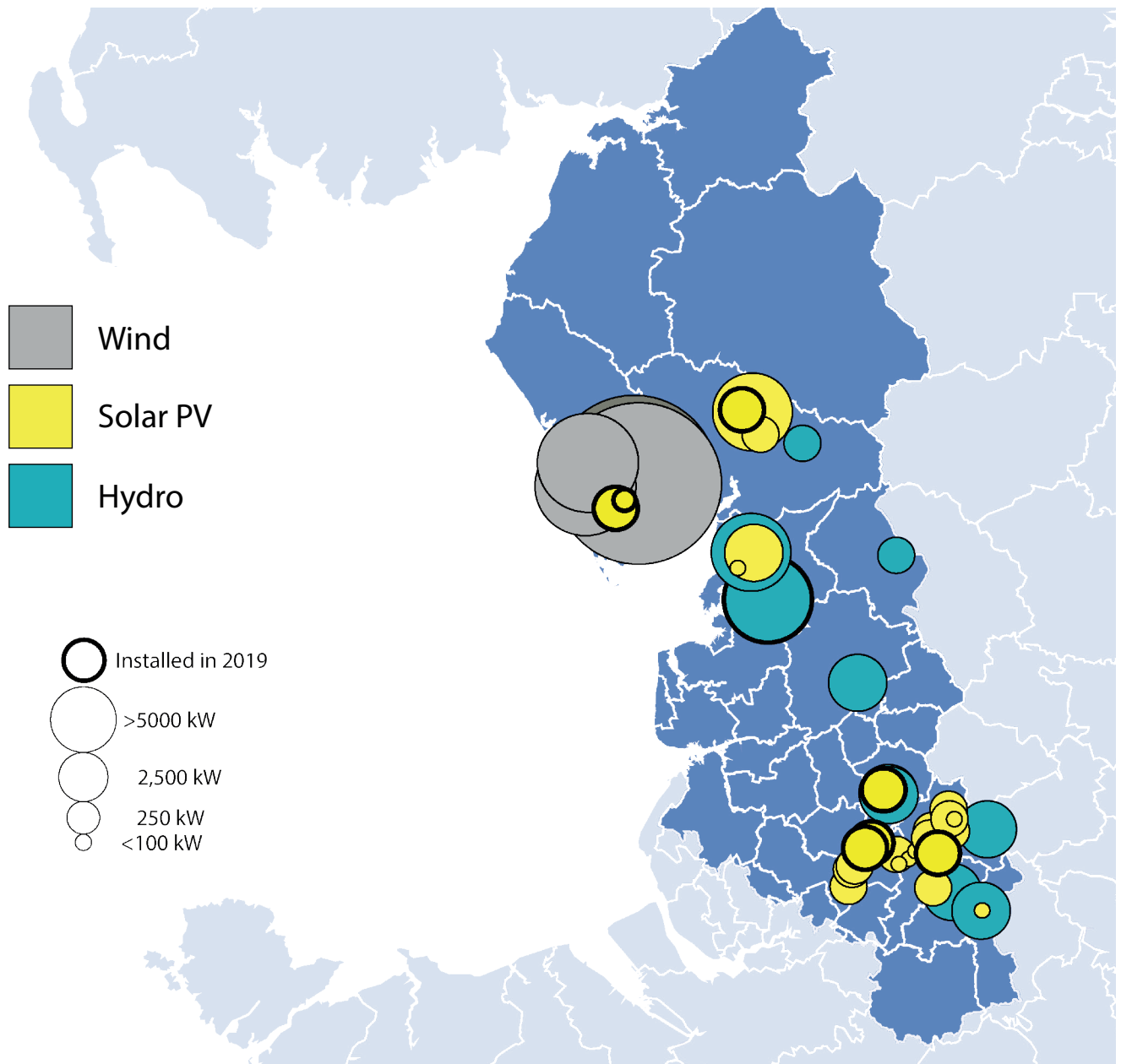


Electricity generation

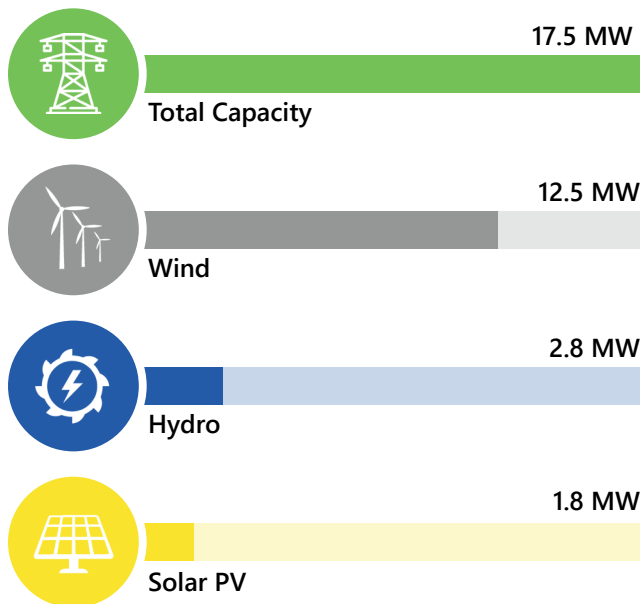
In 2019, 826 kW of new community-owned electricity generation was installed, with success found through share-funded solar photovoltaics (PV) and partnerships with commercial and public partners. This added capacity is a marked increase on 2018, which saw additional capacity of just 58 kW installed. New capacity in 2019 was installed across seven new sites and comprised 200 kW of hydroelectric generation and 626 kW of solar PV.

The most notable successes in 2019 included Burnside Community Energy's installation of 430 kW of solar PV across five separate schemes in partnership with Cumbria Action for Sustainability and James Cropper PLC - as well as a further 20 kW installed on a local school building, funded through the organisation's community benefit fund. Further to this, Greater Manchester Community Renewables installed three separate rooftop solar arrays at local schools between September and November 2019, totalling 127 kW of additional capacity.

Community electricity generation in the North West



Community electricity capacity in 2019



Total operational electricity generation capacity in the North West was 17.5 MW in 2019, including:

- 12.5 MW wind
- 2.8 MW hydroelectric
- 1.8 MW solar PV

All community wind capacity in the North West is owned by Energy4All supported organisations, including Baywind Energy Cooperative, Energy Prospects and High Winds Community Energy Society. A large proportion of hydropower sites were also identified, totalling 57% of all community-owned hydro capacity in the UK.

Alongside 0.8 MW of capacity installed in 2019, a further 6.75 MW of previously unidentified generation capacity is included in the total for 2019. This includes 2.15 MW hydroelectric and 4.6 MW wind capacity. In total, community energy projects generated 40 GWh during 2019, preventing 10,860 tCO_{2e} of carbon emissions - equivalent to the demand of 13,300 UK homes.

The Feed-in Tariff (FiT) scheme supported three projects in 2019, however no new projects in the North West were found to be pre-registered for the FiT prior to the subsidy scheme's closure in April 2020. Despite this lack of subsidy support, seven groups reported plans to deliver electricity generation projects in 2020. Projects focused primarily on solar PV and wind, including Greater Manchester Community Renewables (GMCR), which intends to install solar PV on local schools, utilising existing local demand to provide cost savings and ensure the financial viability of schemes without the need for subsidy support.

Heat Generation

A total of four low carbon heat projects were identified which were owned or being developed by community organisations in the North West, including biomass, solar thermal and anaerobic digestion projects. The total heat generation capacity was found to be unchanged since 2018 at 22 kW, across two small-scale air-source heat pump systems. In line with national trends, community-owned low carbon heat has very low deployment rates comparative to electricity generation projects. This low level of deployment is related to both the complexity and cost of large, community scale heat infrastructure projects, as well as the fact that some smaller heat projects are installed at the domestic level and therefore not picked up in this research.

For larger commercial-scale heating infrastructure, the UK Government will be reducing their Renewable Heat Incentive (RHI) payments by 10% for new connections April 2020, meanwhile extending the closure of the domestic RHI until March 2022, after which a replacement scheme is expected. With subsidies still in place and a number of supporting funds for low carbon heat projects, two community energy organisations were found to be planning projects in 2020. This includes installation of an air-source heat pump by Morecambe Bay Renewables (MORE) at a community building and the development of an innovative heat-from-sewage project by Brampton and Beyond Energy.

Case study

Great Manchester Community Renewables (GMCR)

Formed in 2015, Greater Manchester Community Renewables (GMCR) is a community benefit society which installs solar panels on schools and community buildings. The organisation is managed by volunteers, it raises funds for its solar projects through community shares. GMCR's solar panels support their partners to save money on energy bills, reduce their carbon emissions and inspire learning about energy and the climate crisis.

GMCR has installed solar panels on the rooftops of nine schools and community centres across Greater Manchester since 2016, generating over 417 MWh since the first 30 kWp installation at Fiddlers Lane Primary School.

The focus of these projects is on reducing carbon emissions, with surplus funds channelled back into the schools and local communities through Community Fund grants to support energy efficiency and environmental education initiatives. Their work with the Manchester Environmental Education Network (MEEN) supports specialist environmental education at the partner schools.



Case study

Cumbria Action for Sustainability

For 20 years, Cumbria Action for Sustainability (CAfS) has delivered community projects to strengthen local resilience to the effects of climate change. By sharing expertise, the group empowers Cumbrian residents to become more sustainable and informed. With the Alston Moor Partnership, CAfS supported the development of Alston Moor Community Energy, and in 2019 they collaborated to finance and install a 27 kW solar PV array on the local school. Funded by a blend of grant and crowdfunding, over its lifetime the array will save over 150 tonnes of CO₂ and nearly £70,000 in energy bills.

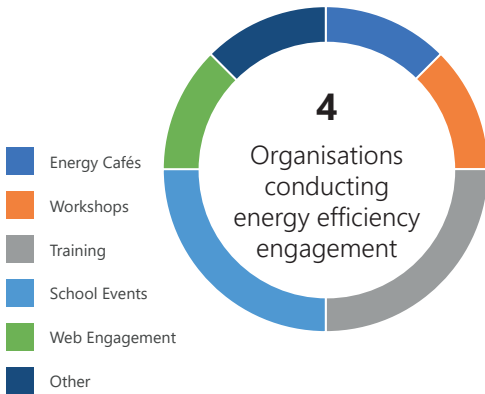
They have also explored the potential for an 'Energy Local Scheme', allowing residents to buy power from the scheme at lower costs and keep profits in the local area, and are working on delivering an energy efficiency scheme which will resume following lifting COVID-19 restrictions.

CAfS also supports local business initiatives through the Cumbria Green Build and Sustainable Living Festival, which showcases the range of ways by which energy and carbon reduction can be achieved in all areas of life and work. With tours of their community projects, training courses and sponsorship in 2019 from Electricity North West, the festival highlights the commitment and accomplishments of the community energy organisation to supporting low-carbon and sustainable lifestyles.



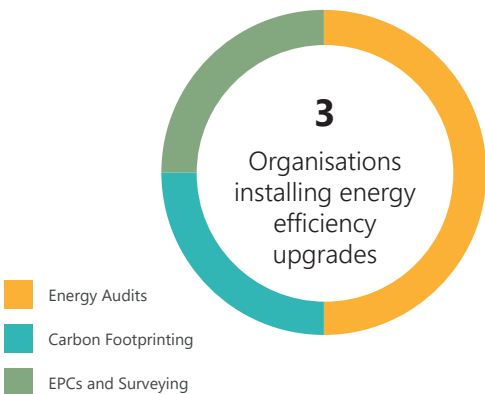
Energy efficiency

Community-led energy efficiency formed the focus of eight community organisations in the North West, including a wide range of community outreach, efficiency services and improvements to homes, community buildings and businesses throughout the community.



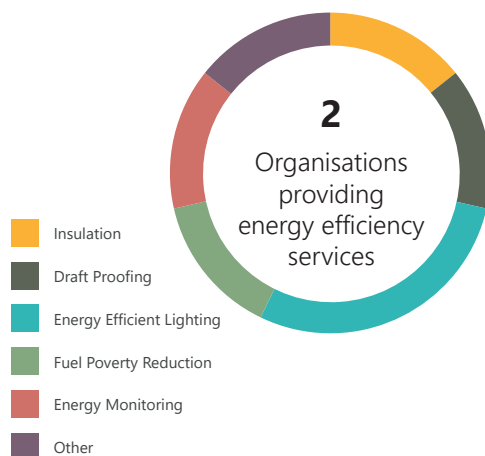
Engagement

The most common type of energy efficiency project focused on engagement with local community members, businesses and other organisations. Activities included school visits, hosting energy advice cafes, training and workshops, and web-based engagement. Organisations also reported setting up stalls at events and markets to raise awareness around the aims and benefits of low carbon energy projects. In 2019, these events and workshops engaged over 1,000 community members, 20 local businesses, and ten public sector bodies.



Services

Second to engagement, communities were found to provide enabling services to help communities householders and businesses understand current energy usage and plan future upgrades. Three community organisations in the North West offered energy efficiency services, including energy audits and helping homeowners switch to cheaper, more efficient and greener energy tariffs. One community organisation, Transition Buxton, provides training for local residents to repair their own electrical appliances, reducing waste and supporting local skills development. In 2019, 500 local people were reported to have received energy efficiency services or training.



Improvements

Improvements, such as the installation of insulation, improving ventilation, and the servicing of windows, doors and heating systems, were provided to 50 households across the North West by community energy organisations. Most notable of these, Carbon Co-op's People-Powered Retrofitting service is a household and local contractor-led approach to tackling some of the key barriers to improving domestic energy consumption and efficiency within Greater Manchester. The value of energy efficiency improvement installed by community organisations in 2019 was found to be £1,000,000.

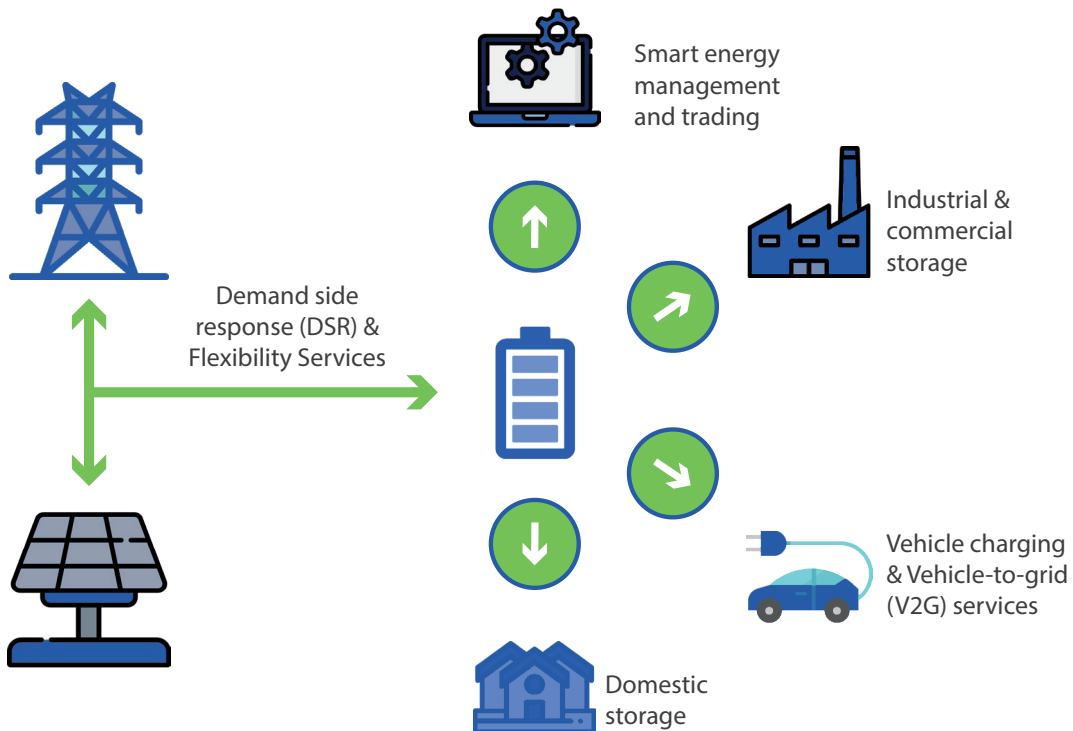
Three organisations reported plans to provide energy efficiency engagement, services, improvements and funding in 2020. Including a project by Greater Manchester Community Renewables (GMCR) to conduct community engagement in schools towards improving energy saving measures, as well as using the platform to engage with community members, including parents at school events on energy efficiency opportunities. This project was successful in receiving funding from the Electricity North West Empowering our Communities fund, which was awarded in early 2020.

Energy storage

Energy storage is a critical component of a post-subsidy energy system, allowing users to reduce their reliance on grid imports, saving energy costs and increasing local low carbon electricity consumed. Users installing energy storage also help to balance the daytime fluctuations in demand and generation, helping to smooth the peaks and troughs of the grid. This in turn can help to facilitate even more low carbon technologies to be connected to the network. Furthermore, as the costs of storage technology continue to fall, the opportunities and accessibility for smaller projects grows.

In 2019, three groups in the North West were found to be developing energy storage projects, with a particularly innovative aim to provide flexibility services to the grid in 2020. Flexibility can provide another income stream to grid connected technologies, whilst providing aggregate benefits across the entire national grid.

The benefits of integrating energy storage into the electricity network



Brampton and Beyond Energy are working to understand the feasibility of installing a multi-MW battery storage system alongside methane-based anaerobic digestion plant, which is currently in development. When fully operational, the organisation will be able to respond to calls for flexible services from the DNO, if a requirement appears in their area generating more income for community benefit.

Integrating energy storage with energy demand flexibility is increasingly feasible with more affordable technology, whilst providing new sources of income which support future project viability. By providing storage, demand flexibility and vehicle-to-grid services, community groups can generate income whilst helping to maintain the stability of their regional energy system.

Low carbon transport

Only one organisation was found to be involved in low carbon transport in 2019, installing electric vehicle charging points across Cumbria and Lancashire.

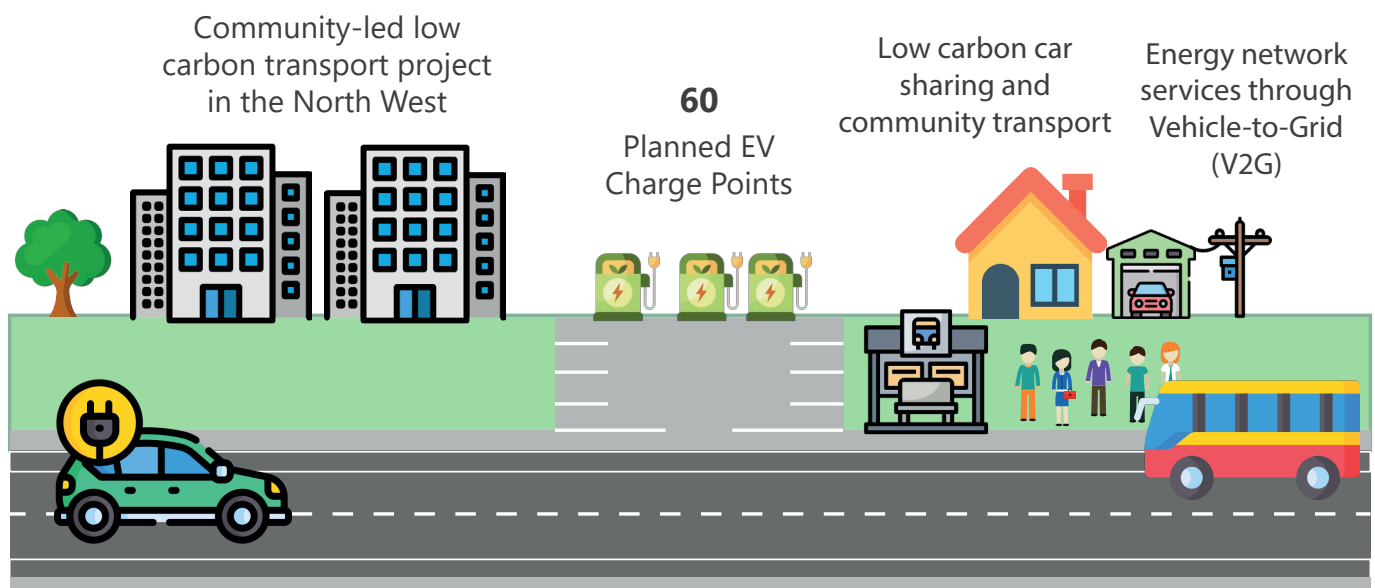
Charge my Street are planning to expand their charging network to 60 separate charging points during 2020. The organisation is stimulating demand for electric vehicles in rural Cumbria by installing charge points bought through community shares, an approach that is being replicated in several areas of the UK, including Wales. By 2021 the organisation hopes to have a network of 200 fast chargers across Northern England. They operate a demand-led business model, with charge points being installed at sites with the greatest need, rather than the greatest commercial return. Through integrating with solar panels and battery storage, and by installing in more rural parts of the country, projects will generate environmental as well as social benefits, removing one of the key barriers to EV purchasing currently experienced by new consumers.



Electric vehicles (EV) offer greater benefits than just low carbon mobility.

Not only reducing the consumption of fossil fuel, low carbon transport can also provide valuable energy storage and flexibility services for both the user and network operator. Owners of electric vehicles may also, in the future, be able to provide grid services to their DNO, using the storage capacity of their cars to ease congestion over the energy network when plugged in – also known as vehicle-to-grid (V2G). By charging and discharging on demand, electric vehicles can be a useful tool in managing the complex, intermittent, and time-sensitive nature of the evolving energy system.

Community-led low carbon transport in the North West



Funding & finance in 2019

Funding for the development of new and innovative projects increased in 2019, although fewer organisations accessed funding in 2019 in comparison to the previous year. Whilst there was an increase in new community energy projects in 2019, the level of investment raised by the community energy sector dropped by 78% on 2018 levels.

Funding

Community energy organisations raised £265,000 in funding for low carbon projects in 2019, all coming from the UK Government – through the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) and Innovate UK, the innovation and research agency. Several organisations noted funding continuing from 2018, including support from the Rural Community Energy Fund (RCEF), as well as self-funding from existing income generation projects.

This is an increase of 30% on 2018 funding value, which saw £204,000 in total funding raised. The funding raised in 2019 was found to be targeted at innovative, frontier projects, seeking to prove new concepts and test new delivery models. A low number of new RCEF supported projects were seen in 2019, despite the relaunch of the fund. It is expected that several communities in the North West will access the RCEF in 2020, with a number already successful in gaining support in the first round of RCEF funding.

Finance

Investment in community energy totalled £147,500 in 2019, reported by three organisations and all raised through community share offers. Of this total, £107,000 was secured by Greater Manchester Community Renewables and financed their school rooftop solar PV, commissioned between September and November 2019. This amount represents a significant drop compared to 2018, which saw a total investment value of £665,000.

Although six organisations specified that no investment had been raised in 2019, several noted loans and share raises from 2018 which were used to support the delivery of projects in 2019. This includes £328,500, which was raised by Burneside Community Energy through a share offer which closed in December 2018. The low levels of investment seen in 2019 may therefore be an early sign of reduced community energy activity into 2020.

Funding & financing community energy in 2019



Valuing community energy

The broad economic, social and environmental impacts of community energy are significant, diverse and well-documented. It is important to quantify the direct and indirect impact that community energy has on local people and communities, acknowledging and supporting a sector which delivers greater benefits than just income generation and carbon reduction.

Economic impact

In 2019, 16 community groups in the North West were reported to have a dedicated community benefit fund. As of December 2019, the collective value of these funds was over £88,000, with £25,000 spent during the same year on educational, environmental and engagement initiatives within the recipient communities. Further to this, through projects such as LED lighting, solar PV installation and energy switching, communities supported cost savings of over £65,000 in 2019.

Community organisations also created further indirect local economic benefits through the creation of six new full-time jobs, additional to the 37 staff members employed within community energy organisations. Furthermore, community organisations provided £52,000 worth of grants and over £1,000,000 in community loans to local people, charities and businesses to support low carbon projects and initiatives.

The economic impacts of community energy in 2019



The social impacts of community energy in 2019



Social impact

The benefits of community energy projects are not just financial; in 2019 community organisations supported educational initiatives, the ownership of numerous community assets and reductions in fuel poverty. One example of this is Baywind Energy Community Trust, which supported refurbishment of Swarthmoor Reading Rooms, the purchase of sports equipment at Kirkby Sports and the delivery of Forest Schools in Cumbria.

Environmental impact

Community energy provides environmental benefits through carbon emissions reduction as well as for more local environmental improvements including conservation, pollution reduction and recycling schemes. Through energy generation, community energy in the North West preventing 10,860 tonnes CO₂e emissions in 2019.

Further examples include LED light refits in Saddleworth Museum and the development of recycling measures and solar panel repairs at a school in Greater Manchester.

Challenges in a post-subsidy sector

Similar to recent years, and comparable to other regions in the UK, the predominant barriers to the community energy sector in the North West ultimately relate to a lack of organisational capacity. With better funding, community energy organisations would have improved access to necessary expertise, skills and staff, as well as greater time available to navigate the complexities of low carbon project development.

The development of new business models and financial strategies is therefore a key pillar of a post-subsidy community energy sector, freeing up the capacity and resources necessary for organisations to thrive in 2020 and onwards. The most common reported barriers to community energy activity success in 2019 were:



Lack of organisational capacity



Removal of the Feed-in Tariff



Lack of time



Limited access to a suitable site



Lack of expertise



Planning complexity

As a result of these challenges, six projects in the North West were reported to be either on hold or stalled, including wind, anaerobic digestion, hydro, and energy storage. The main reasons for this were the reported lack of a viable business model due to the upcoming removal of the Feed-in Tariff and difficulties faced in the planning process – including lack of support and an overly complex and time-consuming process.

The introduction of a meaningful subsidy, and better access and options for project funding to support community-scale renewables, would do much to address these barriers. A clearer position from the UK government on future policy changes to the sector, particularly in relation to community and locally-led energy, was also mentioned as a growing need.

Supporting new opportunities

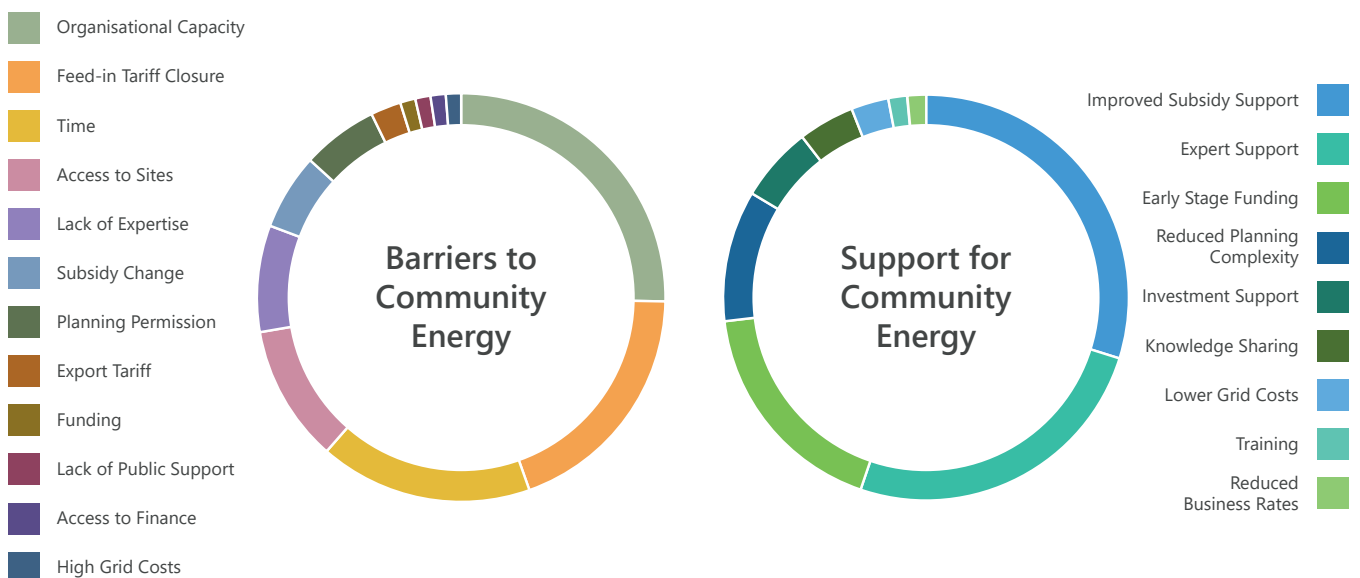
The removal of subsidy support mechanisms is expected to be a challenge for the community energy sector in 2020. However, it has also stimulated sector-wide innovation, as organisations throughout the UK look to adapt and capitalise on new technologies, delivery models and novel ways of doing business.

The community energy sector has been subject to unreliable and unexpectedly reduced subsidies for renewable energy generation over the last decade. Whilst projects are slowly finding means of viability without FiT support – such as through greater local use of energy and through partnership projects – it is perhaps unsurprising that the most respondents mentioned that improvements in subsidies for renewable generation would be important in supporting the sector. Aside from electricity generation, there are still numerous opportunities in heat generation - with new funding schemes and continuity of the RHI scheme - energy storage, transport and energy efficiency projects.

The focus of this year’s research reflects a growing trend towards community energy organisations investigating and developing new technologies, business models, and partnerships within the sector.

- Fifteen organisations in the North West reported to be involved in developing projects through partnership, most commonly with other community energy organisations, local authorities and commercial developers. The key benefits from these collaborations were found to be improved access to skills, funding, and new knowledge.
- Ten groups in the North West were interested, currently investigating, or actively involved in developing innovative energy technologies. These included a saltwater battery storage project and a Virtual Power Plant (VPP) platform to support local energy flexibility, monitoring, and peer-to-peer energy trading.
- Eight groups were interested, currently investigating or actively involved in innovative business modelling approaches, including a community-owned EV charging network and the integration of flexibility markets into energy generation and reduction projects.

The barriers to community energy projects and where communities need support



Case study

Charge My Street

Charge My Street installs and operates electric vehicle (EV) charge points across Cumbria and Lancashire, aiming to reduce the barriers to switching to an electric car. Following their initial success, they are now expanding their chargepoint network in both urban and rural locations, supporting the further reduction of air pollution and greenhouse gases in local communities.

In order to achieve this expansion of chargepoints throughout the North West, the group have conducted feasibility work on the technology needed and the capacity available. As well as finding suitable locations for the installations, Charge My Street are also investigating battery storage options for integrating renewable energy generation and they are developing an app to encourage EV charging when supply is the largest, maximising renewables consumption.

Backed by Innovate UK and in partnership with Scaling On-Street Charging Infrastructure (SOSCI) Consortium, the group aims to install 100 community chargepoints in the North West, encouraging easier access to charging and greater use of electric vehicles.



Case study

Carbon Co-op

Carbon Co-op enables home carbon emissions reduction through innovative projects, training and householder services provided to people around Greater Manchester.

Through the new 'People Powered Retrofit' service, delivered in partnership with URBED and funded by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS), Carbon Co-op are aiming to overcome commonly identified barriers in creating a new, local market for retrofit. The service includes retrofit advice, My Home Energy Planner, a whole house energy assessment and on site quality assurance and oversight. They have carried out extensive supply chain training and established a new network of local contractors across Greater Manchester to increase capacity for works and improve standards.

Carbon Co-op now aims to extend the service throughout the region in partnership with organisations such as Electricity North West and the Greater Manchester Green Growth Hub.



Looking ahead

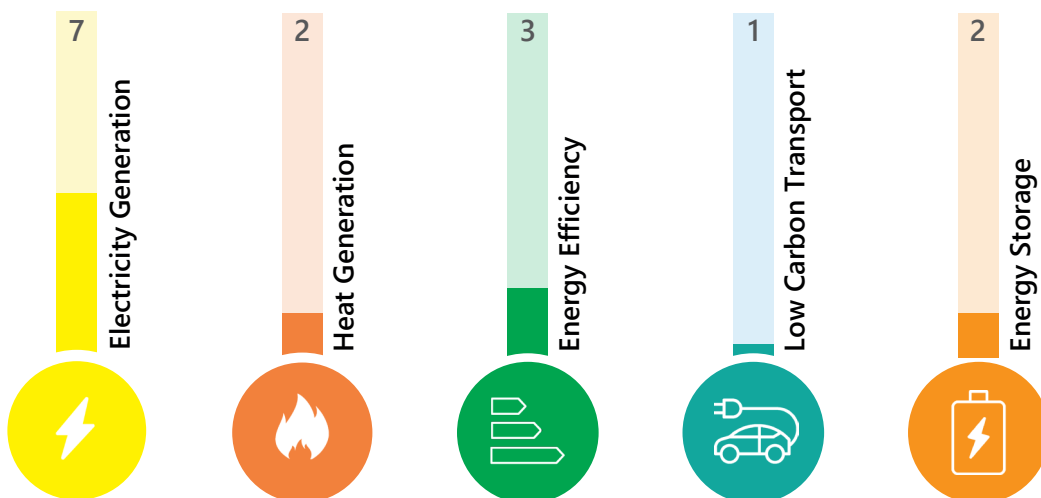
The energy system throughout the UK is undergoing a rapid and radical change, becoming more decentralised, distributed, and digitised. The opportunity for community energy to actively participate in this transition is significant. The year 2020 will provide some first insights into whether these newly introduced policy and financial mechanisms will effectively promote growth, innovation, and uptake of low carbon community energy schemes in the UK.

Respondents to this year’s State of the Sector research expressed mixed perspectives on the future of community energy, with outlooks divided evenly between optimism and concern. While some worried that subsidy removal would spell the end, particularly for small scale hydro projects, others embraced the future as an exciting ‘breakthrough’ opportunity for the community energy sector to become fully resilient and self-reliant.



Community energy organisations are showing resilience and adaptability in their plans for 2020, investigating new opportunities and developing new projects outside of their current focus to cope with the rapidly changing support landscape. Whilst there are new opportunities developing, communities must be better supported to understand, engage and take advantage of these emerging opportunities, enabling the sector to grow and pass on the benefits to local people and places.

Community energy projects in 2020



15 Community energy projects planned in 2020

Working with Electricity North West

By Helen Seagrave, Community energy manager

We recognise the increasingly vital role that community energy will play in helping to build and maintain the energy system of the future. Through consultation with key stakeholders, we have developed a three-pronged [Community and Local Energy Strategy](#) to make sure we respond to the main issues affecting community groups in our region. This includes ensuring accessible and dedicated communications with ENWL representatives and tailoring our service for customers in the community energy sector, an annual seed fund for local energy projects, and working with community groups' input to develop inclusive and valuable regulatory measures for the future of the energy system.

We provide an annual seed fund - [Empowering our Communities Fund](#) - to help local communities become more resilient through developing energy generation, efficiency and expertise measures. The fund, with a total value of £75,000 for community groups, allows up to £15,000 each. The criteria for the fund are broad and invites a wide range of organisational structures and innovative ideas aimed at addressing the barriers community groups are facing.

In 2019/20 the Fund committed a total of £75,320 across six separate projects in the North West of England. Among these includes :



A feasibility study into the provision of community-owned renewable energy for affordable and shared housing.



A regional community energy hub.



Capacity support to a community energy group to provide energy efficiency advice.



A scheme to enable young people to talk about energy issues and climate change.



Promotional material for a zero carbon community hub to help promote energy efficiency.



A podcast series exploring the past, present, and future of energy in Greater Manchester.

We invite input, collaboration and feedback from local community groups. We also host regular Community Connects workshops, give presentations at local energy events and publish a regular [newsletter](#) to keep customers and stakeholders up to date on new activities, successes or changes to the sector.

To find out more about how you can engage with us visit:

www.enwl.co.uk/zero-carbon/community-and-local-energy/



Burnside Community Energy, 2019



Electricity North West,
Borron Street, Portwood
Stockport, Cheshire, SK1 2JD



communityandlocalenergy@enwl.co.uk



[@ElectricityNW](https://twitter.com/ElectricityNW)



+44 (0) 844 209 1957

Community Energy Hub

CEE manages the Community Energy Hub, a free to use, single point of access for information on community energy. It is designed at its core to be a platform where community energy groups can share information and resources amongst themselves and with other organisations.

Consider joining CEE to help make your voice stronger. Membership of CEE is inclusive and is open to any organisation that is committed to the development of the community energy sector.

www.communityenergyengland.org/pages/join-us



Electricity North West

Borron Street,
Portwood
Stockport
SK1 2JD

www.enwl.co.uk

Community Energy England

The Workstation
15 Paternoster Row
Sheffield
S1 2BX

www.communityenergyengland.org

Scene Connect

Suite 1
46A Constitution St
Edinburgh
EH6 6RS

www.scene.community