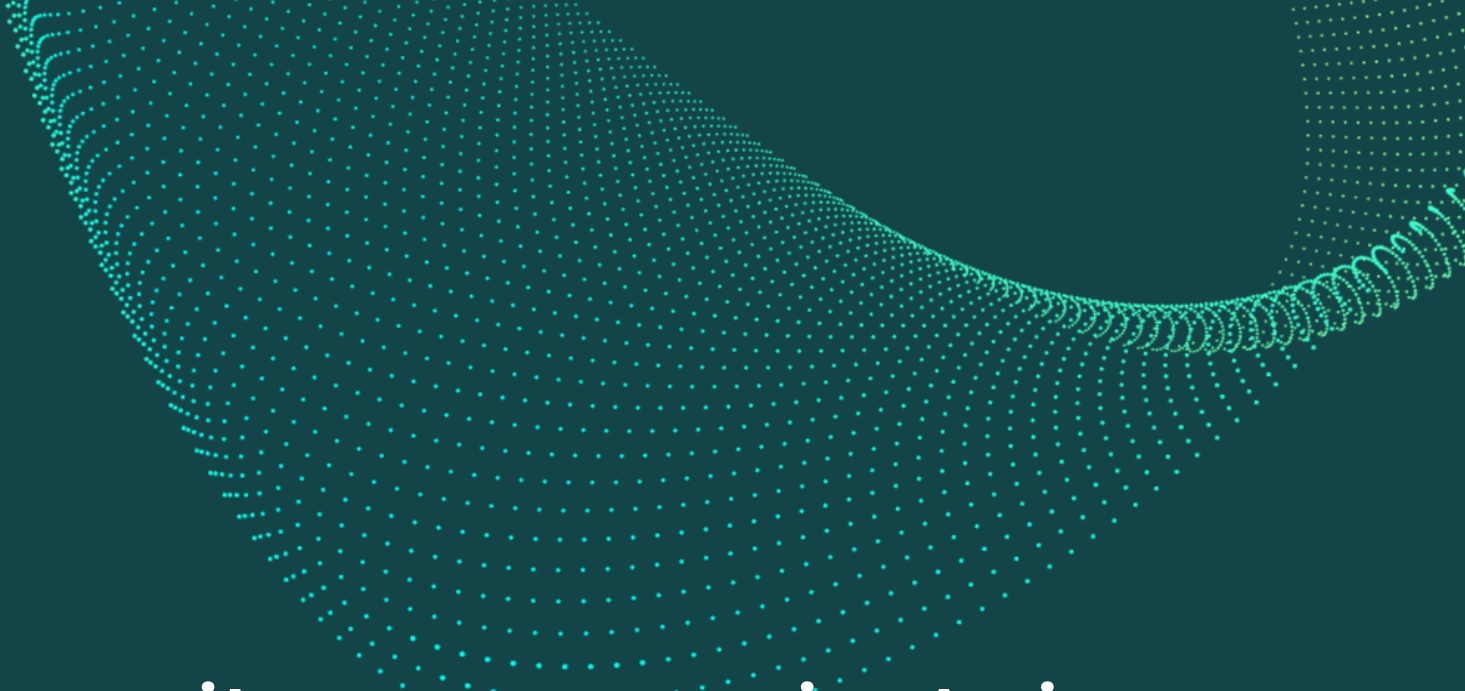




REGEN

Structuring your community energy projects in a just and inclusive way

Delivering projects that work for everyone

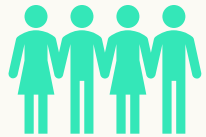
Fraser Stewart, Just transition and communities Lead

October 2025

Agenda

11:00	Introduction and aims
11:10	How can community energy support a just transition?
11:25	Breakout room: what a just transition means to you
11:35	Open discussion
11:45	Community Energy Scotland presentation
11:55	BREAK
12:05	Scenario 1: Inclusive engagement
12:30	Scenario 2: Maximising community benefit
12:50	Summing up
13:00	CLOSE

Aims



1. Develop a shared understanding of community energy's role in a just transition.



2. Hear about how projects have embedded this in practice.



3. Work through practical examples to clarify concepts in reality.



4. Meet other people and orgs working on this in the sector.



Community Energy

Louise Taylor

Community Energy Engagement Manager

Community Energy Strategy

- The work we're planning to deliver over the next year.
- How we aim to help more community energy groups get connected.
- And importantly, how we're learning from the progress we've made over the past 12 months.



Community Energy Support



Capacity Building Workshops



Connections Support



State of the Sector Report(s)



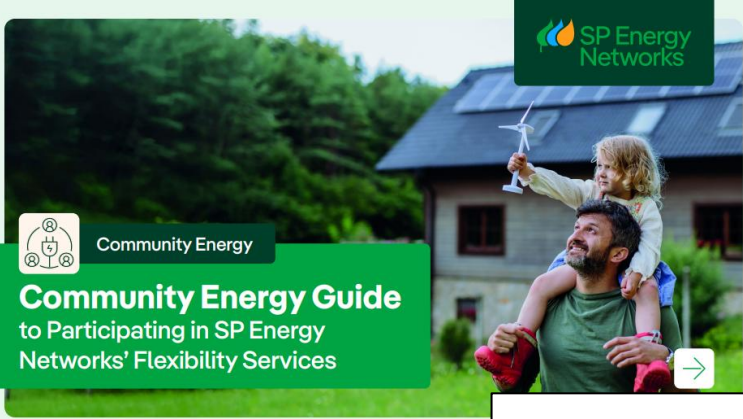
Case Study Development



Creating Partnerships



Engagement



Community Energy Workshop: Technology Webinar

SP Energy Networks: Community Energy Support

energy saving trust



Community Energy Case Website Updates



- Navigation and accessibility – making sure information is easier to find, clearer, and written in plain language.
- Case studies section – we've uploaded new examples from England, Wales, and Scotland. Each one is designed to show how different communities approached their projects, the challenges they faced, and the solutions they developed.
- Resource library – this will be expanded with our guides on flexibility, solar, and connections, plus future materials as they're developed.
- Practical tools – we're exploring how to include templates, checklists, and FAQs to make the site more action-focused rather than just information-based.

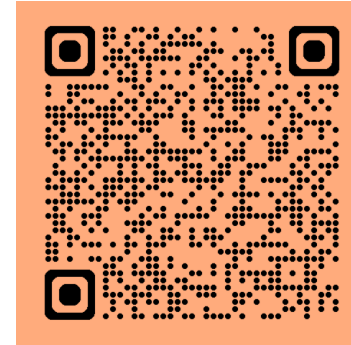
Community
Energy
Webpage:



Register as a
Stakeholder:



Community
Energy Strategy



Contact us: communityenergy@spenergynetworks.co.uk

How can community energy support a just transition?

History

- Took hold initially as a labour movement, traced back to COP meetings in the 1990s.
- Rooted in energy, climate and environmental justice (e.g. Jenkins et al. 2016; Sovacool et al 2017; Barca 2025).
- Now more encompassing, covering all aspects of the energy transition, embedded in policies and strategies (e.g. Scottish Government, networks, Newham Council, Bristol).

As we decarbonise in the UK, clear justice challenges exist:

- Fuel poverty and cost-of-living
- Price of new technologies
- Accelerating climate impacts
- Workers in high-polluting industries

All have far wider impacts, e.g. health, social exclusion, economy, public spending, politically – and potentially far wider benefits.

Join at menti.com | use code 2953 5140

What does a just transition mean to you?

fast bold
creative
inspiration leader focus
transpiration



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SPEN communities wor...



Choose a slide to present

What does a just transition mean to you?

Our working definition

“A net zero transition that seeks not only to avoid exacerbating poverty, inequality and social injustice, but tackles them head-on as a driving priority, maximising opportunities to create a better future for all.”

Community energy

- Rich legacy of supporting just transition
- Democratising ownership (and income!) of energy assets
- Engaging with wide and diverse groups of people
- Leveraging revenue to tackle social and economic issues, e.g. fuel poverty

Fair by default?

- However, community energy is not fairer, more inclusive or “just” by default
- Four key dimensions are critical to ensure projects are done in a just way:

- 1. Participation and engagement**
- 2. Ownership and governance**
- 3. Finance and funding**
- 4. Benefits and beneficiaries**

1. Participation and engagement

Meaningful, proactive engagement with a diverse range of citizens and communities; people supported to help co-design projects from early stages and on an ongoing basis.

- This covers all stages of a project, but is especially important at the start
- Without a wide range of voices, risk that project only serves small part of a community – leaves value on the table
- Need to **identify, understand**, and **reach** different parts of community, using a range of methods

Practical advice

- **Go where people are:** Don't expect people to come to you - engage at existing community spaces, events, schools and local gathering points
- **Use diverse engagement methods:** Combine face-to-face conversations, online surveys, community events, and workshops
- **Engage early and often:** Start conversations before you have firm plans, and maintain dialogue throughout
- **Partner with trusted organisations:** Work with local community groups, faith organisations, schools and charities
- **Be transparent:** Clearly explain how input will be used and provide feedback on what changed as a result

2. Ownership and governance

Democratic, accessible and accountable ownership, with proactive involvement of diverse citizens and stakeholders in decision-making.

- How projects are run also impacts how fair or inclusive they are
- More inclusive projects are more democratic, providing opportunity for regular input in decision-making e.g. ongoing engagement
- However, important to also be respectful of people's time, especially those working multiple jobs or with caring responsibilities

Practical advice

- **Representation:** Established your community board with representation from diverse local groups.
- **Voting rights:** Offering community shares on a “one member, one vote” basis, regardless of the amount invested.
- **Make meetings accessible:** Different times, locations, childcare, transport support, online options
- **Use plain English:** Avoid jargon in all communications and decision-making materials
- **Transparent reporting:** Regular, clear updates on decisions, finances and project progress

3. Finance and funding

Transparent financial models that do not exclude people from participation or benefit based on ability to pay.

- Projects are often funded by community shares, providing people a vote based on investment.
- This can exclude those with little-no money to invest.
- Commercial lending is also becoming more common – funders have their own agendas!
- Important that governance is clear on purpose of project with ways to participate and input throughout that don't require investment

Practical advice

- **Offer flexible investment options:**
 - Consider offering a lower minimum investment, such as £1 shares, or allowing people within the community to invest in pairs.
 - Implement a sliding scale where lower-income households can invest less for the same ownership percentage.
- **Provide payment plans:** Allow people to pay for shares in instalments rather than requiring lump sums.
- **Be transparent about all costs and profits:** Publish clear, accessible information about project finances, returns and risks.

4. Benefits and beneficiaries

- Community energy delivers extensive benefits above and beyond commercial projects (x34-100!)
- More “just” or inclusive projects seek to maximise social and economic value – shaped to local need – for a wide range of people
- This can be from community benefit funds, but also outreach or parallel activities (e.g. fuel poverty advice and support, climate education)
- Can be the backbone of more ambitious **community wealth building** approaches

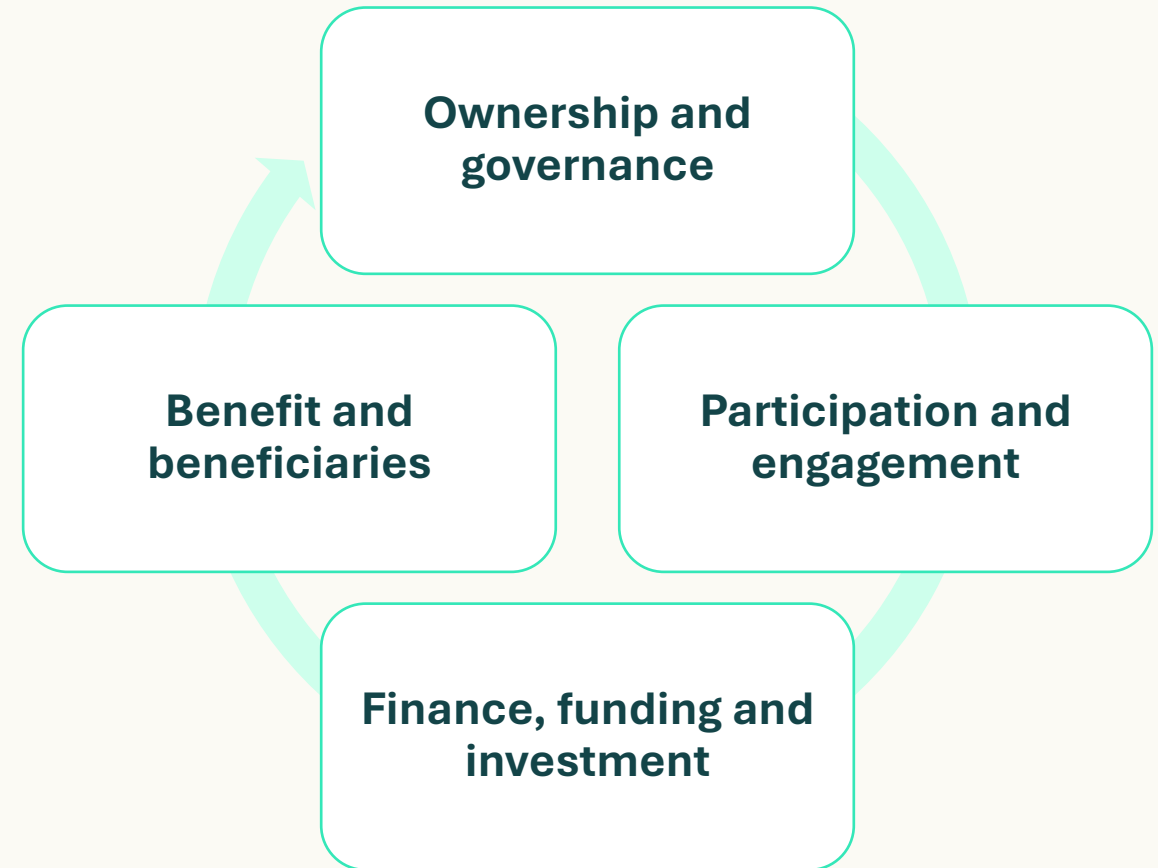
Practical advice

- **Engage to understand local priorities:** Work with local citizens and stakeholders to understand key needs/ambitions to shape community benefits.
- **Support new applicants:** Community benefit funds typically require applications, not everyone skilled here – be open to supporting new groups with forms and processes.
- **Ensure diversity in fund administration:** Typically, fund applications will be reviewed and approved by a board – ensure diverse representation in this process.
- **Consider a strategic approach:** To maximise value, think about what you want to achieve with the fund and explore potential partnerships or strategies.

The big picture

All dimensions are connected! Key questions for your projects to get at these are:

- Who has a voice or gets a say in this project?
- Who gets to shape the project and to what end?
- Who can afford to participate, and who may need additional support?
- Who benefits from the outcomes?



Tools for a just transition

- [Energy Justice POINTs framework](#)
- [Involve & UK100 Inclusive Climate Action toolkit](#)
- [CLES Community Wealth-building toolkit](#)



Internal Use

SEPTEMBER 2024

INCLUSIVE CLIMATE ACTION

A TOOLKIT FOR EFFECTIVE
PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT IN
DECISION MAKING



Breakout room

Discussion questions

- What does it mean to you to do a community energy project in an inclusive or just way?
- Why is this important to you?
- How are you already embedding this in your projects? Have you seen any other good examples of this happening in practice?

Case Studies



Community Energy Definition: the delivery of community-led renewable energy, energy demand reduction and energy supply projects, whether wholly owned and/or controlled by communities or through a partnership with commercial or public sector partners.

Community energy projects demonstrate how the energy transition can be fair, inclusive, and democratic by keeping benefits local, building resilience, and supporting vulnerable groups.

What does that look like in practice?

Greener Kirkcaldy

Community-led charity & development trust based in Kirkcaldy, Fife.

Works on sustainability, tackling fuel poverty, and climate action.

Range of activities: energy advice service, renewable energy development, food projects, active travel, community engagement.



Activities & Services

Free energy advice across Fife including home visits, debt and benefits advice, energy-saving support.

Focus on vulnerable households (low income, elderly, health issues).

Community Kitchen: cookery and household budget training, community meals.

Volunteer opportunities: over 100 active volunteers.

Energy

Delivering these services is energy intensive and very costly so...

- Refurbished community-owned with building fabric and energy efficiency upgrades.
- Installed 20 kW solar PV system, 27 kWh Tesla Powerwall battery and EV charging point.
- Smart controls maximise onsite renewable use.
- Visible demonstration project for the community to raise awareness of renewable technologies



Impact

6.4 tonnes of CO₂ saved annually from solar and battery.

£1,849 annual financial savings from energy generation.

3,700+ households supported with energy advice in 2022/23 and over £1.5m in household savings from advice and support.

Skills, confidence, and social benefits from volunteering and training.

Summary

Equity/Access: energy efficiency and fuel poverty reduction services focus on helping low income, older, vulnerable people access warmth and affordable energy.

Participation & Ownership: community-led structure and governance prioritises local people and local decision making. Renewable systems are visible and open to the public and are used as education and awareness tools to help to build capacity and knowledge.

Environmental Sustainability: reduced carbon footprint via ownership of solar pv and battery assets; energy efficiency and advice service serve to promote behaviour change; community kitchen/garden supports local food production.

Resilience & Local Benefit: services help to retain money (savings, income) within the community; builds skills and social capital; reduces exposure to higher energy costs.

Corwen Electricity Co-operative

Established in 2015, based in Corwen, Denbighshire, North Wales.

Owns and operates two community hydro schemes with a total capacity of 155kW

The project is owned by local people with funds raised via a co-operative share offer.

Revenue supports the community and maintains the hydro asset.



Ownership & Governance

One-member-one-vote system ensures fairness regardless of investment size demonstrating energy democracy.

Affordable investment: share offers were structured so that people with modest means could participate, democratising ownership.

Transparent and democratic governance: decisions are made by local members.

Benefits & Beneficiaries

Local ownership: residents hold shares, ensuring that profits stay in the community rather than going to external developers.

Community benefit fund reinvests surplus in local initiatives — e.g. environmental projects, local services, and improving community resilience.

Reduces reliance on fossil fuels, helping cut carbon emissions.

Benefits & Beneficiaries

Generates clean, renewable electricity

Raises awareness of climate and energy issues, giving local people hands-on involvement in the energy transition.

Demonstrates how rural communities can harness natural resources sustainably.



Participation & Engagement

Builds local pride and identity — the hydro project connects to the area's history of using water power.

Regular community meetings and reports ensure accountability.

Shows how small towns and rural areas can have a voice in the energy transition.

Why are these projects important?

Prove that rural and urban communities can generate their own renewable power.

Keeps financial, social, and environmental benefits local, not extracted by external developers.

Embody fairness in ownership, participation, and benefit sharing — key pillars of a just transition.

Acts as an educational and inspirational model for other towns and villages across the UK.

BREAK

10 minutes

Scenarios

Scenario 1: Inclusive engagement

Scenario: You are a new community energy group based in a socially and culturally diverse city with high levels of deprivation. You want to build a community-owned rooftop solar project on several local authority buildings. The local authority is supportive in principle. The city has many sports teams and faith centres, although attendance has been dwindling in recent years.

Task: Develop an engagement strategy to make sure that you hear from a broad range of community members from diverse backgrounds, ensuring that the project is shaped by and meets the needs of many different groups.

As a steer, steps you may want to consider are:

- Identifying the different types of people in your community
- Reaching different types of people in your community
- Methods for engagement to hear from different community members
- Taking what you've heard through your engagement and implementing those in your project plans

Scenario 2: Maximising benefit funds

Scenario: You are a community energy group that has recently completed an agreement with a commercial developer to take an ownership share in a big local wind farm. The community benefit payment from this project is in the region of £100,000 per year. You are based in a small town of 20,000-25,000 people, with a struggling high street, limited employment opportunities and high levels of fuel poverty.

Task: Develop an approach to delivering this community benefit fund, which will reach many different parts of the community and tackle key social and economic challenges faced in the local area.

As a steer, steps you may wish to consider are:

- Understanding the priorities of the community, including social and economic challenges
- Structuring your community benefit fund so that it enables most local value
- Promoting the community benefit fund in the local area and driving applications from different groups and individuals
- Assessing and managing the award of community benefit fund applications
- Tracking the value and impact of your community benefit fund



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