



TAKING CONTROL OF ENERGY, FOR PEOPLE AND PLANET

COMMUNITY POWER

Now



WHAT IS COMMUNITY POWER?





Community power is the principle that decisions about our energy systems should be in the hands of people. It is about communities and citizens being the owners and controllers of renewable energy production, and enjoying the benefits. Community power is about an energy revolution. Community power projects can be as diverse as communities themselves.

Community power projects are already producing and supplying energy across Europe. Existing projects are informing and inspiring more communities to take control of their own energy. They vary from community-owned wind turbines and solar panels, to co-operatives or trusts that own shares in bigger energy installations.

For example, in Scotland a group called the Neilston Community Development Trust has bought a wind farm near their village together with a bigger developer. In Wadebridge in England the community has plans for a third of its energy to be from renewable sources by 2015. In Hungary groups of people are working and learning together in 'energy neighbourhoods' to reduce their energy use.



Neilston community wind farm.



WHY RENEWABLES?

Burning fossil fuels – like coal, oil and gas – to produce energy, is the largest contributor to climate change. The amount of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere has already reached dangerously high levels and we continue to pollute every day.

We must take urgent action to cut emissions – this means reducing the amount of fossil fuels we burn. Governments are slow to act, and the large corporations which control energy production want to protect their profits before the planet.

Communities can be the solution. You can reduce the amount of energy you use, produce your own electricity from renewable sources – like the wind and the sun – and take control of energy production for the benefit of your community and our shared planet.

A GLOBAL MOVEMENT

Getting involved in community power means becoming part of a global movement that is building the clean fossil fuel-free future we need. From Australia to the Americas people are getting involved in renewable energy – by investing in wind turbines or small-scale hydro power, by putting solar panels on the roof of a local school, and in many other ways.

In Europe the movement is even stronger, from co-operative energy suppliers in France and Belgium to communities in the Czech Republic working together to insulate their homes. Community power projects are putting people at the heart of energy decisions.



Community energy celebration at westmill wind co-op.



WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS?



1. REDUCED EMISSIONS

Many community energy projects grow out of a desire to do something about climate change. An issue as big as the climate challenge can lead to feelings of powerlessness and apathy – getting involved in community energy can be a way to counter this. Renewable energy projects reduce the levels of damaging greenhouse gas emissions because less pollution is being emitted from burning fossil fuels. We all use electricity, and by replacing fossil fuels with clean electricity, you can become part of the solution.



A Community energy project can be a rewarding journey.

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2. COMMUNITY FUNDS

Communities involved in community energy often generate income – either through producing extra energy that they sell to the grid, or by offering advice services about renewable energies to others. These projects often set up charitable trusts to manage the money and ensure democratic decisions are made on how it should be spent to best benefit the community. The money can be given as grants to local voluntary groups and clubs or spent in other ways that benefit the community as whole.

3. COMMUNITY PRIDE

Seeing a community energy project through to completion can be a rewarding journey, a journey that can strengthen and inspire communities. Common experiences and challenges bind people together and the sense of achievement can reverberate deeply into the local psyche and boost community spirit.





4. COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Think about where your money goes when you pay your energy bill. Who is benefiting from receiving your business? Locally-owned projects ensure that your money stays closer to home and is more likely to benefit the community, rather than multinational corporations. Community power projects are more likely to source equipment and labour locally, and profits are more likely to be spent in the best interests of the community. A strong local economy can play a big part in making your town or city a better place.

5. REDUCED ENERGY COSTS

Energy bills are a significant part of every household's budget, especially in disadvantaged areas. If your community produces some, or all, of your energy then it will cost less. Some communities are even be paid for the energy they produce. If your community works to improve energy efficiency or insulation, then you'll use less energy and benefit from cheaper bills.

6. ENERGY DEMOCRACY

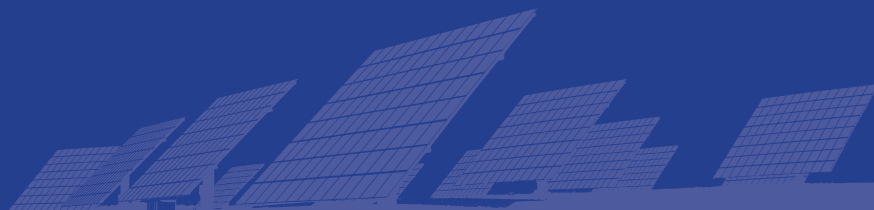
Local opposition to energy projects can be a stumbling block to renewables schemes, but when communities own or run the projects themselves it makes a difference. If we are to truly transform our current energy system we'll need all of society to get behind it, and this means involving communities in important decisions about how energy is produced. Community power gives communities the autonomy to decide on the type and scale of projects that most suit their needs.



Damaged coastal defences in the United Kingdom.



Power to the People: community owned power station, Hertfordshire, UK.



COMMUNITY POWER PROJECTS IN EUROPE



NEILSTON COMMUNITY WIND FARM, NEILSTON, SCOTLAND

www.neilstonwindfarm.org

The Neilston community wind farm grew out of a 20-year vision to regenerate and develop the village of Neilston in Scotland. The project began through a partnership between a wind power developer and a local community trust – which now owns more than a quarter of the four turbines constructed in the village.

The relationship between the developer and the community has ensured that revenues from the wind farm are spent according to the community's needs, and that the local population is actively engaged and supportive of the wind farm.

Over the lifespan of the wind farm, the Neilston community trust will earn an estimated £10 million to fund local community projects. This sum is significantly greater than so-called 'community benefit payments' commonly handed-out by large private developers of wind farms in Scotland, which also don't involve the community in decisions about how they are spent.



Community Wind Turbine
at Neilston, Scotland.

“We’ve shown that communities in Scotland can control their own destiny by becoming involved in the development and ownership of renewables. It has been a long process but it has been worth it – we’ve secured a brighter future for Neilston.”

Pauline Gallagher of the Neilston Development Trust

“History suggests that people here in Wadebridge are up for innovation, there are enough renewable energy resources around here to supply the town’s needs, so why don’t we use it locally and control it locally?”

Stephen Frankel WREN chair.

**WADEBRIDGE RENEWABLE ENERGY NETWORK,
WADEBRIDGE, ENGLAND**

www.wren.uk.com

Wadebridge Renewable Energy Network or WREN is a co-operative community group centred in Wadebridge that aims to help local people take greater control over their energy use. It has a shop on the high street where the group shares information on energy matters.

Wadebridge is a small town in North Cornwall, which serves a rural population of about 8,000 people. The WREN co-op has over 1,000 members and is growing. At its core are active members who love where they live and want a sustainable future for their community. WREN was launched in January 2011 and registered as a co-operative the same year.

Wadebridge has been at the forefront of new technological revolutions before. In 1834 the Wadebridge-Bodmin railway was one of the first railways in the world. It is a town with a history of innovation and entrepreneurship, with a community who have found ways to position the town to benefit from new technologies. WREN continues that tradition.

WREN wants to see at least 30% of the town’s energy coming from renewable sources by 2015. As WREN point out, over

£12,000,000 a year is spent in the immediate area on energy (heat, power, transport) and most of that money leaves the county. WREN wants to turn energy from a cost to an income.

WREN shares information across the local community on energy issues. The shop in the high street is a big part of this, but they also hold bigger events and workshops on energy related issues.

WREN has a Community Fund grown out of a small commission received when it connects buyers with suppliers. It is WREN’s members who decide how the Community Fund will be spent. Successful projects are likely to have social, cultural, sporting or environmental purposes, such as youth groups, sports clubs, arts groups, or from those helping vulnerable people.



The Hawkey Family, local MP Dan Rogerson and WREN members open the PV array at the Olde House near Wadebridge.





ENERGYNEIGHBOURHOODS, NATIONWIDE, HUNGARY

www.energiakozossegek.eu

EnergyNeighbourhoods is an energy efficiency and energy saving campaign which aims to inspire and encourage households and communities to reduce energy consumption through changes in their daily routines.

The original project design is from Belgium, where BBL, the Belgian coordinating NGO has been organizing EnergyNeighbourhoods for about 10 years. In Hungary, EnergyNeighbourhoods were formed all over the country.

The most important element of the methodology is the creation of small groups in which people and households can support and motivate one another in their effort to save energy. In some cases, these groups stay together even after the EnergyNeighbourhoods competition is completed, because they like each other's company and they want to achieve more together.

An EnergyNeighbourhood is comprised of 5 -12 households, and is led by an energy master, a voluntary, usually non-expert member of the group. EnergyNeighbourhoods do not have to be real neighbourhoods, but can also be groups of friends, colleagues, interest groups, etc.

Anyone can join, if they are prepared to:

- take part in energy saving for at least 4-5 months,
- read their meters / report consumption data at least once a month,
- co-operate with their EnergyNeighbourhood.

It is worth noting that a lot of the people who volunteered to be energy masters – coordinators of EnergyNeighbourhoods - were at some kind of a changing point in their lives. So, for them becoming an energy master was, in a way, a career option. The energy masters have achieved high levels of satisfaction from their “careers” in energy saving. Generally they start as a member of one of the neighbourhoods, and then move on to lead their own EnergyNeighbourhood groups.

EnergyNeighbourhoods are open to anyone wishing to learn about saving energy at home. Decision making in the small groups is participatory. Municipalities are invited to support EnergyNeighbourhoods working in their areas in different ways. In many cases in Hungary the municipalities are involved in providing support and information to the ‘energy masters’.



WHAT YOUR COMMUNITY CAN DO



Here are some examples of what different community power groups across Europe are doing right now:

- Drawing-up practical plans for making the local area more sustainable
- Providing information to friends and neighbours about renewable energy – this could be by renting a shop, holding meetings, having a stall at local events, etc
- Buying and controlling the local electricity grid
- Owning or jointly owning a wind farm, solar park or hydro dam
- Putting solar panels on the roof of the local school, library, town hall or other public building
- Starting a co-operative to produce and supply energy
- Running 'draught-buster' workshops or other energy efficiency trainings
- Setting up a community fund to share profits from the energy they produce.





So there are many ideas – from small to big – that can inspire you.

But being part of a local community power group isn't the only way to support community energy.

We need politicians and decision-makers everywhere to support community energy and help it fulfill its potential. You can contact your local politician or your energy minister and ask them to support people's ownership of renewable energy. Tell them that to stop burning fossil fuels once and for all and to move to clean, renewable energy, community power needs their support. Ask them to support:

1. Legal targets for community-owned energy. Scotland already has one.
2. National agencies dedicated to promoting community energy. A one-stop-shop for all the information communities need.
3. Fair and reliable support schemes such as 'feed in tariffs'.
4. The end to all fossil fuel subsidies.
5. An electricity grid designed for renewable energy.

FURTHER READING

1. The Rough guide to community energy. www.roughguide.to/communityenergy/resources/
2. Sustainable Energy Without the Hot Air a book by David MacKay
3. The co-ops manifesto for a community energy revolution. www.uk.coop/energymanifesto
4. How to set up a community energy project- A presentation from OVESCO. www.transitionnetwork.org/sites/www.transitionnetwork.org/files/HOW%20TO%20Friday%2014th%20Sept%20OVESCO%20&%20TT%20Conference%20+%20REconomy%202012%20Final%20Doc-1.pdf
5. How to engage your community in Climate Change projects. www.energysavingtrust.org.uk/scotland/Publications2/Communities/How-to-plan-and-deliver-a-successful-community-climate-change-project
6. www.die-buergerenergiebewegung.de/energiebuergerinnen/ (German) A website of the community aspect of the German Energy Shift.
7. An English language website on the German energy shift <http://energytransition.de/>
8. Guide to developing a community energy project. www3.cec.org/islandora/en/item/3610-guide-developing-community-renewable-energy-project-in-north-america-en.pdf (North American)
9. The Transition Network's toolkit on building up a community energy project. www.transitionnetwork.org/tools/building/community-renewable-energy-companies
10. Keep an eye on the Community Power website for news and resources. www.communitypower.eu



This is a publication of the Community Power project, a project in 12 European countries aiming to put people at the heart of increased renewable energy. Check out the website of the project at www.communitypower.eu

The partners in the Community Power project are:

Friends of the Earth Europe www.foeeurope.org

Amigos de la Tierra www.tierra.org

CEE Bankwatch Network www.bankwatch.org

ClientEarth www.clientearth.org

Ecopower www.ecopower.be

ICLEI www.iclei-europe.org

Friends of the Earth Ireland www.foe.ie

Friends of the Earth Scotland www.foe-scotland.org.uk

Hnutí Duha www.hnutiduha.cz

Magyar Természetvédők Szövetsége www.mtvz.hu

NOAH <http://noah.dk/>

WIP-Renewable Energies www.wip-munich.de



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www.communitypower.eu