

## **Consultation on Community Energy: Energising Communities in the North East to tackle climate change and build fairer and more resilient local communities**

Today we're launching the 'energise your community consultation' on behalf of the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and Local Authorities in the North East. They are keen to understand how they can better support the Voluntary Community and Social Enterprise sector in the North East to tackle climate change and build more resilient communities through their support for community energy.

The consultation is being led by the Centre for Sustainable Energy and the survey link is here: <https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/HV11QZ/>

### **But what exactly is 'community energy'?**

Community energy is a broad church and can include things like wind turbines or solar farms that have been set up by local people or aim to benefit the community; community groups offering energy advice to people in their neighbourhood; householders opening their homes to showcase their eco renovations; locally established retrofit projects; insulation giveaways; green tariff switches; car sharing clubs... the list goes on.

And there are thousands of different community energy projects in the UK, with different sizes, structures and aims, all unique in their own way, and all making a difference locally whilst being part of something bigger.

At one end of the spectrum there are groups that consist of just a few people meeting every few months and sharing information with their neighbours. At the other end are large social businesses with assets worth millions, generating enough profit to be able to run their own grant schemes.

### **Can this all help to create a fairer and more sustainable North East?**

We believe, overwhelmingly, yes it can!

What all of the projects above have in common (and the way we define 'Community Energy') is an emphasis on local leadership and control, with the local community engaged and benefitting.

Benefits like addressing poverty, improving draughty and damp homes, reducing energy bills, improving local buildings; bringing people together; raising income for local facilities; generating jobs; and - crucially - making it possible for 'ordinary people' to play a more active role in creating a more equitable and future-proofed society.

Smaller projects can respond very nimbly to local needs and opportunities that are specific to a given community or set of conditions. Larger projects can provide jobs and infrastructure. At all scales there is an undeniable 'people and place' element of community energy projects which taps into a grassroots connection with communities that is simply not possible from a top-down level.

It's also striking that almost without exception, local community energy projects bring people along with them, which is another reason why they are so important as the North East - along with the rest of the country - adopts radical decarbonisation plans which don't leave anyone behind.

### **Is this for me?**

Even if you have never really thought about community energy before, it's an area that is becoming increasingly relevant and accessible.

Maybe you have a village hall, sports hall or place of worship where you're thinking about putting in solar panels or a new heating system.

Maybe you already provide advice and support to householders and you want to branch out into energy advice or help people manage fuel debts.

Maybe you're trying to find ways to address the climate emergency in your community, or tackle dependencies of being off-grid and depending on oil for heating?

Maybe you're a Parish Council that wishes to set-up an electric car club or to help develop more local sustainable building jobs?

I could go on, but I think you get the picture!

**Are you interested?**

If so, we need to hear that loudly and clearly through this short consultation:

<https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/HV11QZ/>

We're not asking for lots of information but we do need to know a little more about your organisation and the types of projects you're interested in. We want to know what kind of support you need to make them happen.

All the information we receive will be used to answer the questions that the Local Enterprise Partnership and Local Authorities have posed: what are the structures, mechanisms, models and support that would enable the successful development and delivery of community energy projects in the North East LEP area?