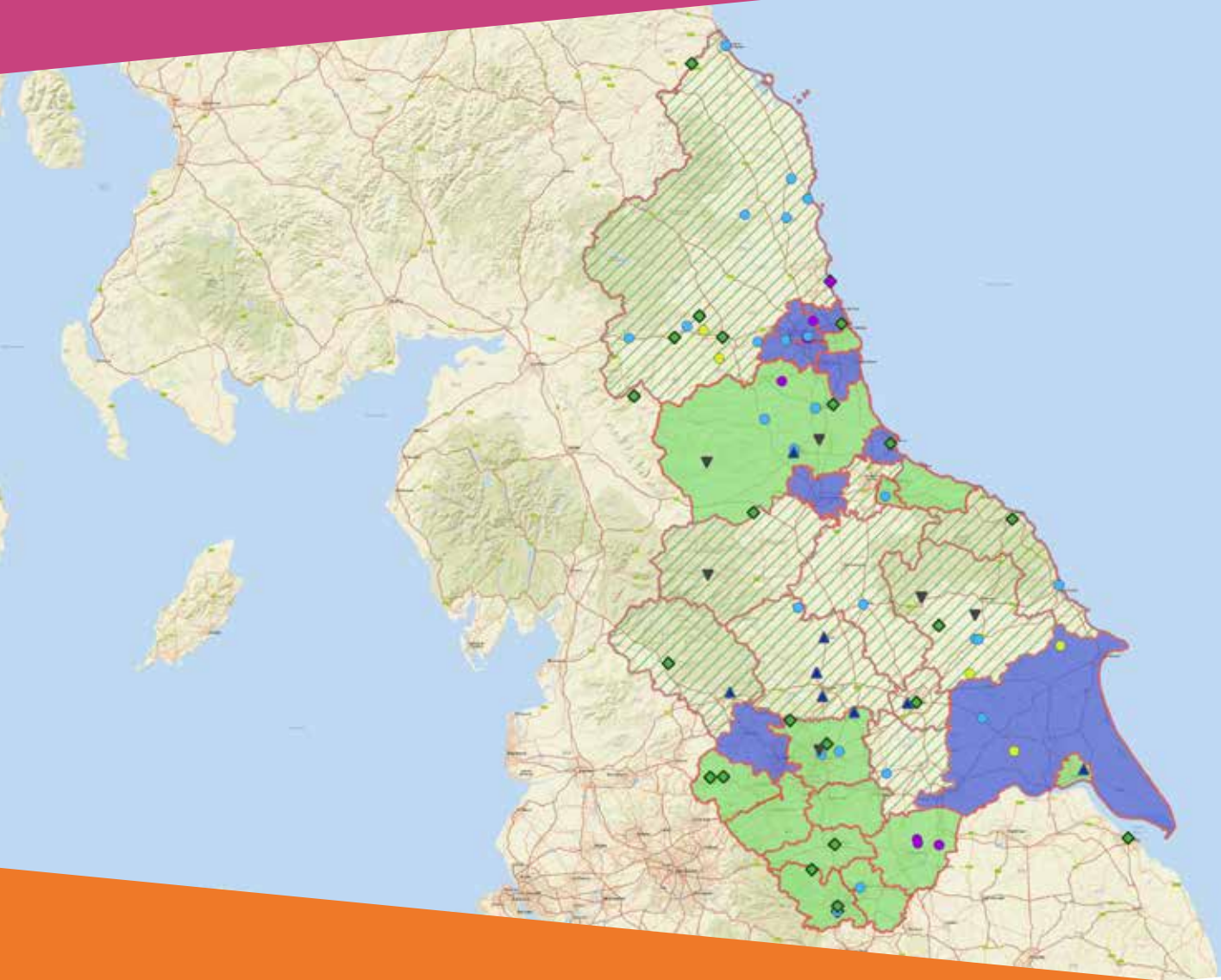


Community Energy Support in the North East and Yorkshire Region: How it can move forward

May 2023



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This framework approach has been delivered by Community Energy South and commissioned by the North East & Yorkshire Net Zero Hub

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1 Aims and objectives

This document provides recommendations for a framework to deliver a support programme for the community energy sector across the North East & Yorkshire (NEY) region. It makes recommendations to develop a viable and sustainable model for integrating community energy into the net zero delivery framework of the NEY region by developing a three-year roadmap towards sector self-sustainability.

The document should be read in conjunction with the 'Part 1 CENEY Report' which combines the status of the community energy sector alongside a snapshot of net zero policymaking in NEY during 2022/23.

Accompanied within this document, as appendices, is a SWOT analysis provided as part of the process to inform the recommendations.

2 Introduction - building the foundations

The evidence review provides a snapshot of the state of the community energy sector and supportive organisations, as well as the policy environment and capabilities. The key finding is that the sector in NEY is relatively immature with understanding and experience of community energy still developing across the region. Only around a quarter of local authorities that we engaged with had well developed, long-term links and experience with community energy groups. At the same time, the majority of local authorities recognise that community energy can play a strategic role in their decarbonisation programmes and the delivery of net zero.

Our findings suggest that there is an emerging community energy sector that could deliver widespread community renewable energy projects, retrofit and heating projects, and establish locally trusted energy advice services. With a planned and informed approach to coordination and networking, this sector could play key role in supporting net zero targets and strategies in the region, providing essential local delivery resource. We have found that both local authorities and community energy groups would welcome targeted support ('technical assistance') to facilitate the potential emergence of a thriving community energy sector in NEY. With the continued evolution of local authority (LA) net zero strategies and roadmaps it is clear that community energy has a clear role in delivering regional net zero targets. That role involves establishing community energy organisations who are representative of the region and who can ably contribute to net zero delivery, providing a trusted local service through independent and essential energy advice and forming an essential role in public engagement and advocacy for net zero. Based on these findings, and our experience in developing the Community Energy Pathways Programme across the UK, this paper sets out Community Energy South's recommendations to establish a thriving community energy sector in the NEY region in support of an inclusive transition to net zero.

Establishing a NEY community energy umbrella organisation

There is currently no umbrella organisation to represent and facilitate collaboration between community energy groups in the NEY region. Establishing such an organisation would allow the development of a unified voice for the community energy sector and create a capacity building forum. If this is taken forward, with understanding and experience of the sector, this would allow knowledge sharing, nurture capabilities, enable coordinated funding opportunities, attract finance to the region, actively engage with local authorities, and provide a contact point between individuals and communities. It would also facilitate representatives of the energy system to be embedded in the process, improving integration, governance and expected outputs.

We have identified the need for communications and stakeholder relations that provide a regional voice for the community energy sector. This facility should be coordinated by those with regional sector experience with the aim of providing a one-stop-shop umbrella organisation that delivers the following:

A voice for the region that comes from the regional community energy sector and helps to embed local, bottom-up net zero ambitions. It is noted that Community Energy

England (CEE) already provides an established national voice for the sector but it is critical that a regional focus is established that can inform and work alongside the Community Energy England capabilities.

The establishment and continuous development of a communications channel for community energy, enabling key people to attend events and speak for the sector within the region, providing case studies of community energy, and raising the profile of the sector. Communications functions must enable knowledge sharing and a platform for skills development.

A platform for key community energy practitioners within the region who can represent the region and whom should be selected through the existing community energy sector across the region. These groups would include representatives from experienced groups such as Energise Barnsley, Sheffield Community Energy, Climate Action Network Northumberland, Whitby Esk Energy, Otley Energy and Hartlepower.

The need for local representation has been evidenced by the activities of individuals throughout the UK such as Dan McCallum, Egni Co-op in Wales; Barbara Hammond OBE, Low Carbon Hub Oxford; Peter Capener, Bath and West Community Energy; Syed Ahmed OBE, Community Energy London; Afsheen Rashid OBE, Repowering London; Kate Gilmartin, CEO of the National Hydro Association; Jonathon Atkinson, Carbon Coop in Manchester; Jon Halle, Share Energy, Alistair MacPherson, Plymouth Energy Community and Ollie Pendered, Community Energy South. These are all examples of individuals who have led their organisations and built long standing key stakeholder relationships within their regions. These relationships have spanned political, local authority officers and regional support networks and organisations. They have become a part of a core network of individuals that have been called on time and time again to evidence their organisations work, represent their regions to support further development and also to evidence how support for the sector can be developed. During Chris Skidmore's Net Zero Review it was key stakeholders such as these that he called upon to give evidence and to bring examples leading local energy projects to the review.

In 2022/23, on behalf of the North East & Yorkshire Net Zero Hub Community Energy South (CES) assessed 14 of the region's Local Authorities. This provided a snapshot of the local authority capabilities of working with the community energy sector. In parallel to this programme CES through a DESNEZ commissioned study also assessed 10 UK wide LAs. This has been a key input into actively supporting the role that LAs play in enabling the community energy sector.

- Local education and advocacy, working with the local authorities across the region to align their local climate change commitments with community capabilities and engagement.
- A platform for communities and local authorities to gather and share best practice through webinars and masterclasses as evidenced through the 2022/23 NW Community Energy Capacity Building Programme.
- Opportunities and support for every 2 tier authority to benefit from a community energy organisation. This should be accompanied by networks of regional

community energy groups that can work alongside the regional authorities and support net zero through public participation.

The development of a local mentoring programme. Through this framework working alongside the CENEY Umbrella organisation there is an opportunity to create a bank of regional mentors from the existing groups and harness their expertise to mentor other groups. This requires funded positions to consistently and reliably build and enable capacity building given that there is not the voluntary capacity in the region at the skilled level required for successful implementation. This will also have the added benefit of building capacity within the experienced practitioners. Our recommendations for developing a mentoring programme for the region would be:

- To secure adequate funding for paid positions, offering part time roles to the established groups and skilled individuals in the region. These would include the individuals and groups that are part of the **platform for key community energy practitioners.**
- Focused 1-1 support, going beyond simple advice. A system that identifies individual needs and provides a programme of support with clear tasks and outcomes for working with groups needs to be established.
- Mentoring for groups need to be adequately resourced and programmed. Our programme of support for the NEY region has shown that groups need a programme of support rather than short term, time limited 'one hit approach' such as half a day 1-1 advice. This is evidenced by the action plans we have produced for groups that should be followed up with long term mentorship to allow effective results and a clear business outcome and success criteria based on the activity ambition.

Embedded Industry Partnerships. The region benefits from support from Northern Power Grid, Electricity North West, and National Grid. All organisations have expressed a keen interest in continuing and developing support and sector relationships in the region. The umbrella organisation, as outlined in this paper should be in a position to become a key partner for these organisations and work alongside them to develop the sector in the region. This takes into account the following factors:

- These industry organisations that operate in the region provide channels for enabling connectivity to the grid, supporting fuel poverty initiatives and actively involving communities in innovation project opportunities.
- The DNOs are a key stakeholder for accessing the electricity network and with future DSO and energy innovation. They have an increasing alignment with the community energy sector driven by OFGEM and their own commitments to stakeholders and the ED2 business plans.
- National Grid is a key stakeholder and should be encouraged to engage with and support the region through communities.

Public and private finance opportunities. There are many sources of public and private finance which can be harnessed to support both the development of powering down and powering up community energy business models. However, experiences raising private 'Green Finance' for community energy projects and LA decarbonisation initiatives are

not widely known or shared. The umbrella group should be provided with a remit that would cover these following items with the objective of furthering finance opportunities:

- Raising awareness, running access workshops/training and highlighting case studies would be positive.
- Developing the potential for Community Municipal Bond at regional level. This could allow each LA to apply for private finance with the umbrella organisation building a pipeline of projects across a region.
- Exploring the potential of Leading Authorities to work together to disseminate their Shared Prosperity Funds and Rural Development Funds and potentially enabling opportunities to secure match funding opportunities from the private sector.
- Informing LAs of the benefits of capacity funding and the benefits of the community energy sector. For example, Doncaster Council is a strong commercial arm that is bringing together public and private finance for utility scale development, a trend we are seeing this across the country. Building in community ownership finance opportunities would add to such offerings.
- Exploring the provision of low interest loan schemes for private residential retrofit schemes, which has been undertaken further afield, for example through County Deal in Suffolk, and with Lendology CiC in 19 West Country Local Authorities.

3 Community Energy Support for NEY – framework recommendations for a three year programme of support for the sector

We have outlined our recommendations for a three year programme for the development of the community energy sector in the NEY region according to six steps outlined in this section. Budgets are recommended as a guide for understanding the overall costs these are followed by a recommended programme.

Step 1

Assessment of community energy support in the North East and Yorkshire Region.

The work to-date has established a baseline of evidence that has been drawn from to generate recommendations for the sector development.

This stage has been completed.

Step 2

Establish an Umbrella Organisation, as outlined in section 2. This should be an incorporated entity with a governance structure and a clear vision to support the North East & Yorkshire Region Community Energy Sector. It is recommended this is a not for profit organisation such as a CIC or Company Limited by Guarantee, to allow access to related funding opportunities. As a minimum this should include:

- Administrator 1FTE
- 4 Executive Leaders (recruited from the community energy sector and representative of the region) – it is recommended that this is a funded role allowing 2 days per week role
- Administration costs and expenses

Annual recommended budget: £150,000

Step 3

Develop tools for the Organisation, to develop and put into place a communications strategy and resources that support the sector.

- Draft a establish a communications strategy with the theme of Voice for the Sector for the region and establish lines of communications for the sector and stakeholders, establish a brand, website, social media and a newsletter, prepare for online webinars
- Develop specialist tools for the organisation and sector that include a funding tracker, financial model mechanisms, technical resource and legal templates

Annual recommended budget: £50,000

Step 4

Local Authority Partnerships for the Sector, establish communications channels with LAs and aligned with previous Pathway strategy assessments undertaken to align with Tier 1 and Tier 2 Authorities. This should build a bridge between net zero strategies and community energy organisations. It is recommended that this is one full time role that has a particular focus on how LA's funding opportunities can support the sector.

Annual recommended budget: £50,000

Step 5

Training, business support networking, establish a skills development program disseminated through regular masterclasses.

- Run a monthly webinar program that showcases best practice around the region and allows for local community energy groups to connect, network and share experience/resource.
- Establish a bespoke mentoring programme for the sector. Working with the established regional community energy sector to develop a pool of community energy mentors. Establish a process for mentors to be allocated to the groups who require support with clear outputs and goals to measure success.

Annual recommended budget: £200,000


Step 6

Review and improve (to establish Umbrella Organisation sustainability), objective to ensure Umbrella Organisation is operationally sustainable (key to this is developing Local Authority Partnership).

- Review process on a quarterly-bases from first year to help meet objectives.

Annual recommended budget: £5,000

SIMPLIFIED RECOMMENDATIONS TABLE

Task	Output summary	Year 0 2022/23	Year 1 2023/24	Year 2 2024/25	Year 3 2025/26
Step 1 Assessment and Strategy	Work-to-date: community energy support in the North East & Yorkshire Region, evidence-gathering to establish a baseline across community energy groups and Local Authorities.				
 Step 2 Establishing Umbrella Organisation (Governance, Recruitment & Vision)	Invitation to existing community energy groups to appoint 3-4 core leaders (Voices of the Sector) to develop core vision - with x1 full time administrator, 4 x executive leaders recruited directly from the community energy sector and that are located to provide regional representation.				
 Step 3 Develop overarching tools (Communications & Knowledge Dissemination)	Establish lines of communications including 'Voice for the Sector' strategy, webinars, newsletters/bulletins, webpage/digital platform.				
 Step 3b Develop specialist tools	Develop and provide specialist tools including national and regional funding tracker and project support toolbox to include; financial models/mechanisms, technical tools and a suite of legal documents.				
 Step 4 Local Authority Partnership for the Sector	Develop communications channels with Local Authorities and establish Pathway strategies to align with Tier 1 and Tier 2 Authorities - building a bridge between net zero strategies and community energy. As particular focus on how LA's funding opportunities can support the sector.				
 Step 5 Training and networking - masterclass/webinars	Establish a skills development program disseminated through regular masterclasses. Run a monthly webinar program that showcases best practice around the region and allows for local community energy groups to connect, network and share experience/resource				
 Step 5b Sector business support through the establishment of a mentoring program	Establish a bespoke mentoring programme for the sector. Working with the established regional community energy sector to develop a pool of community energy mentors. Establish a process for mentors to be allocated to the groups who require support with clear outputs and goals to measure success.				
 Step 6 Review and improve (to establish Umbrella Organisation sustainability)	Objective to ensure Umbrella Organisation is operationally sustainable (key to this is developing Local Authority Partnership). Review process on a quarterly-bases from first year to help meet objectives.				

Appendix 1

SWOT analysis and Assessment

A strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats analysis has been undertaken, based on previous studies, sector engagement and local authority audits.

The main themes include:

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential for establishing a regional community energy mentoring programme • Powering Up programmes and showcasing best practice from the region • Powering Down with a support programme that enhances energy efficiency, fuel poverty and energy advice services • Strengthening stakeholder partnerships for the sector 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low number of installed powering up generation projects • Current legal structures of groups is not aligned with community fundraising • Lack of co-ordinated project support within the region and lack of coordinated networking • Inconsistency of professional support
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding opportunities • Network development and collaborative governance • Flagship pilot projects that can be replicated across the UK • Public consultation for net zero and local political buy-in 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uncertainty and changing funding landscapes • Financial viability and risk management • Balancing regional co-ordination and local delivery

Strength	Implications for support programme
<p>Harnessing the regions interest to develop community energy.</p> <p>We already knew that there was a clear interest in community energy, with over 300 RCEF enquiries and 33 funding awards. Previous research has identified highly engaged groups and also groups that have enthusiasm and willingness but need support with developing projects.</p> <p>The survey, event and follow up engagement conducted as part of this work shows that interest and local activities continue to be notable with 47 people responding to the survey and 48 people, of whom approximately 85% were representing community organisations. 26 people expressed interest in being part of the steering group.</p>	<p>Establishing a regional mentoring programme and sharing best practice.</p> <p>Support pitched at both groups starting out and at those with less experience needs to be provided. A network of local mentors would be invaluable to support those with less experience to develop community capabilities across the region.</p> <p>Example: This has been evidenced across the UK with regional based community energy mentoring programmes such as Community Energy London’s mentoring programme funded by the GLA.</p>
<p>Flagship local groups delivering powering up.</p> <p>The presence of well-established community businesses with well-developed community capabilities and a strong track record in delivering powering up projects.</p> <p>Example: Whitby Esk Energy, Energise Barnsley, Sheffield Renewables, Climate Action Northumberland</p>	<p>Powering Up by showcasing best practice within the sector.</p> <p>It is important to support and showcase the work of the expert and well-established groups within the region in both urban and rural settings and showcasing best practice.</p> <p>Example: This has been evidenced in Manchester the Carbon Coop, in Somerset with Bath & West Community Energy, and Wales with Egni Energy.</p>
<p>Strong track record for delivery on powering down - energy efficiency, fuel poverty and energy advice services.</p> <p>Much of the existing data on community energy in NEY is focused on the lack of success in delivering powering up projects and lack of associated capabilities. This overlooks the clear and well evidenced strength and organisational capabilities that groups across the region have in supporting their communities with Powering Down projects, i.e., energy efficiency advice and fuel poverty work.</p> <p>Example: York Community Energy’s Warmer Homes York project. This is a home energy assessment service that is looking for support to increase capacity and expand to become a One Stop Shop for retrofit advice in the City of York area.</p>	<p>Powering Down with a support programme should enhance existing energy efficiency, fuel poverty and energy advice services.</p> <p>A regional coordinated approach to energy efficiency, fuel poverty and energy advice services will ensure that locally trusted energy services are established with the benefit of bringing resilience to communities.</p> <p>There is existing funding available from the energy providers and central government to support this however with the current energy and cost of living crisis these programmes must be further enhanced and this is an opportunity for community energy and local trusted people to fill.</p> <p>Local authorities are looking to invest in these programmes using central government funding aligned with their local plans and by teaming up with local delivery agents.</p> <p>Example: This will allow emerging community energy groups to build their local reputation and a local service (<i>such as HartlePower</i>) whilst also developing their powering up renewable energy projects (solar roof top and heat projects) which take longer to develop.</p>
<p>Active Regional Stakeholders and Project Partners.</p> <p>The presence of dedicated resources for the community energy sector from regional stakeholders is a significant strength in the region.</p> <p>This is evidenced by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The NEY Net Zero Hubs ongoing support for community energy and acknowledged in the Chris Skidmore Net Zero Report • Northern Powergrid’s staff resource and ongoing support for the sector • Community Energy England’s general sector support supplemented by key staff being based in the region • Numerous local authorities demonstrating a clear desire to taking part in supporting the sector on an ongoing basis (as demonstrated by the 14 local authorities consulted in this work) <p>Example: Northumberland are running a Climate Champions programme and have started to support a large network of community energy groups who in turn benefited from the RCEF programme.</p>	<p>Developing Stakeholder Partnerships.</p> <p>The development of a support package for the region needs to be coordinated with existing and new partners. Support that partners can offer to the programme needs to be developed further as part of phase 2 of this project. We see that the Umbrella Organisation will ensure that the sector is represented with the stakeholder groups across the region.</p> <p>Example: This is evidenced across the established regions within the UK – with the Local Enterprise Partnerships, stakeholder events held by the DNOs and regional net zero taskforces.</p>

Weaknesses	Implications for support programme
<p>Low number of installed powering up generation projects.</p> <p>It is recognized that generation projects in the region are lower than in the rest of the country and that there is a lack of associated technical and financial capabilities. It is clear that the low success rate of generation projects is not likely to change without further support and intervention.</p>	<p>The pilot programme assessment identified generation projects that stalled and that could be progressed with the appropriate support and capability development. This could be done by matching stalled projects with business models that could help with development costs, planning issues and wider barriers.</p>
<p>Current legal structures of groups.</p> <p>The responses to the survey conducted as part of this phase of work showed that 42% of respondents were either a CIC or Charity. Only 5 were Community Benefit Societies and there were no Co-operatives responding. The current legal structures of groups (organisational capability) are of interest as only Community Benefit Societies and Co-operatives are able to raise funds through community shares (financial capability), which are particularly relevant for powering up projects.</p>	<p>Groups would benefit from advice and support for incorporation and running of appropriate legal entities (organisational capability) that would allow them to undertake share offers for powering up generation projects (financial capability). This could be included as part of a training programme.</p>
<p>Lack of co-ordinated project support.</p> <p>The RFEC programme identified a high level of interest in community energy and in providing funding through RCEF there was an ability to connect emerging groups to consultancy support and high level support from the NEY Net Zero Hub.</p> <p>As a result of the closing of RCEF there currently is little coordinated ongoing support for the sector in the region. There is also a clear need for funding support in the start-up and project development phases of community energy projects.</p>	<p>Some support is being provided by regional stakeholders but it is not coordinated. Regional funding programmes would be enhanced and show improved outputs if a regional community energy hub was established.</p>
<p>Groups are not well networked.</p> <p>A well-networked community energy sector has huge benefits for supporting projects to develop organically. It is clear from our work so far that despite excellent work happening within individual communities, there is not an adequate forum to bring them together or facilitate effective networking and capability development.</p> <p>At our networking event there were at least three community groups who were in close proximity to each other and working on similar projects, but were not aware of each other before the event.</p>	<p>Support needs to take into account the importance of networking alongside project development and training needs.</p> <p>Examples: Community Energy South runs monthly webinars for community energy groups in the South East, similar programmes happen in Bristol supported by CSE and the Bristol Energy Network and in London with Community Energy London. It is a great way of networking and connecting people.</p>
<p>Inconsistency of professional support.</p> <p>Current evidence suggests that there is a lack of consistency in the professional support they have received in terms of scoping potential projects and carrying out technical feasibility studies. This may be a key reason why so many RCEF stage 1 projects became stalled or failed to progress to stage.</p> <p>Our survey found that 42 people were looking for professional support with project funding, 32 for technical advice and consultancy and 30 for Business Plan Development</p>	<p>The support programme should consider developing a network of mentors and technical experts alongside a means of funding their time to support groups to develop technical and financial capabilities.</p>

Opportunities	Implications for support programme
<p>Funding opportunities.</p> <p>There are established and funding opportunities that present strong opportunities for the sector. These funds such as those administered by Northern Powergrid's and various small local authority grants for environmental community projects. There are also bigger and more strategic opportunities for funding such as the UK's Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) as well as public procurement and finance innovations such as Community Municipal Investments. (See introduction)</p> <p>The sector is evolving fast – the Lottery has a bespoke Climate and Energy Fund that is open specifically to community energy programmes that are supported by local authorities and are regionally focused.</p> <p>https://www.tnlcommunityfund.org.uk/funding/programmes/climate-action-fund-energy</p>	<p>A support programme should help groups understand and access existing funding opportunities. Such financial capabilities could be nurtured through the development of a regional funding tool, and advice and assistance from a funding expert who sits within the community energy hub.</p> <p>An NEY community energy umbrella organization can be strategically aligned to support these opportunities through webinars and mentoring.</p>
<p>Network development and collaborative governance.</p> <p>The aim of this current project to develop a regional network of community groups and the enthusiasm for this shown in the survey and initial engagement events offers to the opportunity to share learning, skills and experience as well and peer to peer support and</p>	<p>A regional networking hub of community energy groups is likely to be well received and will help to support a self sustaining community energy sector in the region.</p>
<p>Pilot projects that can provide scale and replicated across the UK.</p> <p>A range of projects would benefit from targeted support to overcome specific barriers, develop capabilities, and this could result in unlocking significant potential and progressing successful projects.</p>	<p>6 projects have been identified and provided with ongoing recommendations to help them progress – there would be further benefits to continue this support through the Umbrella organisation and help unlock issues and barriers during development.</p> <p>Example: Faith group projects and village hall Programme CANN and Net Zero for Humber Methodists, Net Zero for North East District Methodists, Net Zero for Nidderdale</p>
<p>Public consultation for net zero.</p> <p>With the 2023 local authority elections and to support the sector there is a need for targeted promotion of the community energy sector and associated benefits to local authorities both officer and departments but also elected representatives.</p>	<p>Through this programme we have reviewed 14 of the 32 local authority net zero strategies and a programme to follow this up is recommended.</p>

Threats	Implications for support programme
<p>Uncertainty and changing funding landscape.</p> <p>Despite the existing and emerging funding opportunities that are in place, there is still a current lack of sufficient project start-up and development funding in region. This is exacerbated by the closure of the RCEF scheme and a lack of financial capability among community groups to take on financial risk.</p> <p>There is also the issue that UKSPF opportunities to fill the gap of RCEF were not grasped or slow to pick up on by many of the local authorities. It was only the well organised local authorities with Climate Officers in post and supported by a robust Climate Strategy that could benefit from these funds.</p>	<p>Lesser used and emerging funding mechanisms including Community Municipal Investments through Abundance Energy, Bridge Financing through Thrive Renewables, Local Authority Power Purchase Agreements and establishing local markets for energy such as Energy Local Clubs should be assessed against project needs in the region and considered to be included within the support programme, and associated financial capability developed.</p> <p>The Local Authorities that can channel UKSPF funding into the community energy sector should be encouraged. This requires ongoing communications and development. A dedicated community energy umbrella group should focus on this.</p>
<p>Financial viability and risk management.</p> <p>Powering up renewable energy generation at community scale has become increasingly challenging across the UK following the removal of the Feed-in tariff and there are currently no plans for equivalent subsidies. Increased energy prices are allowing scope for increasing PPA prices, however this also translates to increased price for installation. Overall, price volatility implies that there is lower willingness to engage in long-term contracts at the moment. In addition grid capacity constraints and long term uncertainty for connections is providing much uncertainty and risk.</p>	<p>Targeted feasibility studies and information as part of the support programme could show that projects that were not viable when the FiT ended may now be due to changes in energy prices.</p> <p>Further afield it has been seen that larger rooftop solar (at least 150kWp) is becoming financially viable as long as a high percentage of direct use can be established.</p> <p>Example: In the Pathways programme in Hampshire new community energy groups in their third year of operation have now started to develop significant pipelines of community energy projects. This has been supported by bespoke legal templates, financial modelling that works for the current market place and technical training packages.</p>
<p>Balancing regional co-ordination and local delivery.</p> <p>There is a need for the different geographical areas within NEY to be provided with regional support according to their local circumstances and capabilities. A programme targeted at a solely regional level could mean that local issues and opportunities are not adequately addressed.</p>	<p>A support mechanism should consider ways of supporting local government participation as well as regional progress. This could be done by local forum groups or breakout groups within a wider regional meeting structure.</p> <p>There are benefits of establishing forums of Climate and Net Zero Officers as well as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encouraging cross department engagement in net zero such as Economic Development, Planning, Property, Community and Legal Departments • Education of political representatives to support community energy and understand the benefits of people participation

