



# Community Energy: Notes from NACRE Zoom Meeting 28 July 2020

Presentation by Harry Mellor, Chair Easton Neston Parish Meeting on behalf of SNAC (South Northamptonshire Action on Climate)

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## Key points

- Community Energy projects are initiated by local enthusiasts for the direct benefit of their community.
- Might start with a local area house-by-house energy survey to identify cost savings.
- Survey could also be used to promote greater awareness of energy-saving opportunities.
- Possible opportunities for community-owned renewable energy installations and low-carbon transport.
- Significant Government funding is available.

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## Introducing SNAC

South Northamptonshire Action on Climate [SNAC] was formed in 2019 following Town Hall Meetings in Towcester, when residents from across the area came together to talk about the climate emergency.

Convinced of the urgency to do more than was being done to protect neighbourhoods from the effects of global heating it was decided that direct action was needed to avoid disaster. And SNAC was born.

Strong interest in climate issues from a far wider area has attracted participation by people of all age groups and prior affiliations. Grandchildren, parents and grandparents, elected representatives, business people and community organisations have united in the common cause of surviving the climate emergency and are now attending SNAC's regular online meetings, which are open to all and to which all are welcome.

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## SNAC, SNC, NACRE and Community Energy

The decision to promote Community Energy projects arose from a May 2020 meeting between SNAC representatives and the South Northamptonshire Council Climate Change Officer, Felicity Parker, and Trevor Pugh, Assistant Director of Environment and Regulatory Services. Elaine O'Leary, Northamptonshire ACRE Chief Executive, subsequently kindly offered this opportunity to present Community Energy to Parish Councils.

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## What is Community Energy?

Community Energy can be characterised as collective action to purchase, manage, generate and reduce consumption of energy within and for the benefit of a defined local area.

Typically local enthusiasts, motivated to tackle climate change and reduce their own energy costs, will get together to do their own research and perhaps decide to consolidate their early enthusiasm into a formally constituted Community Energy project to benefit themselves or their wider community.

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## Community Energy projects to support household cost saving

A house-by-house area energy survey will establish the scope for energy cost saving, for example by negotiating a discount for the bulk purchase of heating oil or for the installation of cavity wall insulation.

The household survey might be used to encourage a switch to using a renewable energy source by replacing an existing space-heating appliance with a heat pump or a biomass boiler or maybe use sunshine to generate electricity (solar photovoltaic - PV - panels) or to heat water (solar thermal).

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## Community-owned renewable energy installations

Where there is land available, a sufficiently large solar array or wind turbine can generate electricity for an entire community. Where there has been a watermill, then hydroelectricity might be an option.

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## Low-carbon transport

Although walking and cycling are more environment-friendly than powered transport, most rural communities are not yet using low-carbon transport. A Community Energy team might consider the feasibility of installing electric vehicle charging points, or of adopting an electric bus for community transport, or even switching to hydrogen-powered transport.

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## Funding feasibility studies

Government grants of up to £40,000 are available for feasibility studies from the Rural Community Energy Fund. Additionally, up to £100,000 of Community Energy project funding is available for the expenses of confirming that a chosen technology is suitable, for planning application costs and for developing a business plan. Note that the Rural Community Energy Fund will not pay the capital costs of equipment and its installation. These must be locally funded by subscription or by investment from another source.

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## Further information

**Community Energy England** styles itself as *The Voice of the Community Energy Sector*:

[Community Energy England main website](#)

[Community Energy England Resources site](#)

[Project examples](#)

[Getting people involved](#)

Relevant information from the **Centre for Sustainable Energy**:

[Centre for Sustainable Energy main website](#)

[Local and community energy page](#)

[Additional resources](#)

see : [Community-wide energy saving projects](#)

**The Rural Community Energy Fund** is administered through:

[Energy Hub website](#).

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