

## Community Energy Funding

Community groups and not-for-profits are eligible to apply for **grant funding to assess the feasibility of a local, renewable energy supply** for the area. Carbon Smart is working with charities, community groups and Parish Councils to facilitate applying for the funding and to deliver the feasibility study.

### Recent successes include:

- Woolpit Parish Council (Mid-Suffolk) who has completed a renewable heat feasibility study with a grant of £18k from this fund
- Burnham Parish Council (South Bucks) who have installed two solar PV arrays based on the business case developed with an RCEF grant of £14k
- the Quakers who are investigating a range of technologies for their listed property in Cumbria with a £14k grant
- Saxon Weald Charitable Housing Association who used a £17k grant to explore solar electric vehicle carports
- Cuxton Parish Council (Kent) who used a £14k grant to assess including renewables in the refurbishment of their pavilion

## Introduction

Rural communities in England have an opportunity to explore local, renewable energy supply which would benefit residents, contributing to the long-term future of the community.

A renewable energy supply would generate additional income streams for the community via government subsidies, as well as reduce energy costs for the members of the community who had their energy supplied by the system. This could be the Village Hall, local school, sports facilities, or vulnerable households. Renewable energy also cuts carbon emissions, helps protect against future energy price volatility, and has the potential to provide local employment.

Carbon Smart is working with community groups to develop local energy projects. Community groups are using this funding to explore projects including:

- Solar panels on schools giving pupils low cost electricity while tackling fuel poverty
- Heat networks at a medical centre ensuring low cost, low carbon heat at critical community facilities
- Community owned solar farm in Oxfordshire generating returns for local share holders

## Grant funding available

The RCEF supports rural communities to maximise the income generating potential of renewable energy and put it to work locally; to make progress against the Government's target to increase renewable energy generation, and promote community-owned renewable schemes; and to promote rural growth and job creation.

**The Fund has two stages:** Stage 1 is a grant of up to £40k for initial feasibility work; Stage 2 is a grant of up to £150k for business planning and project development. The Stage 1 grant covers consultancy and professional



costs associated with the feasibility study. Applications are reviewed on a rolling basis. There is no obligation to progress to Stage 2.

The grant would cover all costs associated with an energy feasibility study for the applicant, requiring only minimal input from the applicant. Indeed, part of the grant can be used to cover management costs, for example, paying for the Chair's time to oversee the delivery of the feasibility study. Should a scheme prove feasible, Carbon Smart would review all available funding sources which may identify finance options including the Stage 2 grant.

**The criteria for a grant application are:**

- Rural location
- Community organisation (with eligible legal structure: community interest company (CIC); industrial provident society (IPS); parish council; registered social landlord; charity; development trust; faith group)
- Suitable technology (for example, biomass heat networks, air and ground source heat pumps, solar PV)
- Suitable scale, requiring planning permission or pre-planning development, supplying multiple buildings, and large enough to generate a return for the community
- Must explore a specific technology and site, although some part of the grant can be used to explore suitability of a range of technologies
- Must supply defined benefit to the community, with a "good level" of community engagement in advance of the project and on an ongoing basis

## How to apply & next steps

The application process is being finalised by the new fund administrators, but is expected to be similar to the previous process, which is outlined below.

Applying for the Rural Community Energy Fund feasibility grant requires:

- Completing the application form
- Issuing a project delivery brief to consultant(s)
- Collating and review quote(s) in response to the brief, including CVs
- Submitting legal and financial records for the applying body

The key document for the applicant to draft is the project brief. Carbon Smart can work with you to ensure a suitable brief is developed.

The Fund is being administered by the local Energy Hubs: Greater South East Energy Hub, Midlands Energy Hub, South West Energy Hub, North West Energy Hub, and Humber & North East Energy Hub. These Energy Hubs will assess applications from within their own communities, however we understand that the process will be similar across each region, so we can support you to develop an application and contact the relevant Hub.

Carbon Smart wants to work with community groups to ensure a successful application, and would deliver the feasibility study should a grant be awarded. A successful outcome would be award of grant funding for the feasibility study, and associated administrative and management costs for the applicant, if included.

## About Carbon Smart

Carbon Smart has been providing renewable energy consultancy services since 2007. We deliver robust appraisals and thorough feasibility studies, for clients ranging from parish councils, local authorities, charities, community groups and businesses. Our clients choose us because of our credibility, flexible approach, focus on social, environmental and financial benefits, and our skilled, experienced and passionate team.

Carbon Smart works with local authorities and community groups to scope decentralised energy systems for their operations – providing them with a local, renewable, secure supply, protecting them from the volatility of the grid and helping them cut costs and harmful emissions. We're able to support single sites or networks of installations.

Councils and community groups have worked with Carbon Smart to secure over £100,000 in grant funding to:

- Conduct feasibility studies – including demand modelling and profiling, resource assessment and energy yield prediction; for single site retrofits, through to multi-user networks
- Lead engagement and communications activities – including community engagement, education and persuasion, ensuring sufficient coverage within the community, and specifically addressing concerns and objections raised
- Provide comprehensive project management support for intensive projects on short time scales, and for long-term engagements delivering successive outputs; to clients with multiple drivers and competing demands
- Develop persuasive business cases for investment decision and seeking external finance, ensuring appropriate financial metrics are included, e.g. ROI over the relevant term

## Team

Our team of renewable energy experts has an extensive experience working with councils, community groups and charities to deliver feasibility studies for renewables, and overseeing successful implementation of renewable energy generation projects.

### Louise Quarrell – Director



Louise is a Director of Carbon Smart, leading and growing the team since she joined in 2010. Louise is committed to helping organisations realise growth opportunities through sustainability action and has 15 years' experience leading environmental programmes. Louise leads all our renewable energy projects and supervises RCEF projects to ensure project execution meets the requirements of all parties.

Louise has delivered feasibility studies to many high profile and complicated organisations, and developed business cases for investment, identifying over £1m annual cost saving and 10 GWh annual energy savings. She has also delivered workshops, training, and community engagement activities for clients to secure necessary buy-in.

Louise's local government and community group clients include: Cuxton Parish Council, the London Borough of Islington, London Borough of Croydon, London Borough of Wandsworth, Knowsley Council, East Staffordshire Council, Winchester

City Council, Beccles Public Hall and the Religious Society of Friends.

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### Helen Troup – Programme Manager



Helen has wide experience in advising local authorities, businesses, and community groups on renewable and decentralised energy generation projects. She delivers high quality feasibility studies for all market-ready renewable and low-carbon energy generation systems, as well as ensuring Carbon Smart's approach incorporates the latest development and innovation in renewables. A recent business case secured capex investment of £1m, and Helen is also in demand as a project manager to oversee the installation of low carbon technologies.

Helen studied physics at Oxford, covering atmospheric physics and climate change. Her Masters project involved building an experimental wind-turbine generator, which marked the start of her pursuit of renewable energy solutions. Since joining Carbon Smart Helen has been the driving force behind our renewable energy projects.

Helen's local government and community group clients include: Woolpit Parish Council, Religious Society of Friends (Quakers), Saxon Weald Housing, Worcestershire County Council, Suffolk County Council, Anglesey & Gwynedd Joint Planning Policy Unit, and South East London Community Energy.

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### Daniel Collins – Renewable Energy Advisor



Daniel is a Consultant at Carbon Smart. Since joining the team, Daniel has delivered multiple projects to support businesses and other organisations to measure and reduce their environmental impact, including multiple renewable energy feasibility projects funded by RCEF. Daniel delivers high quality feasibility studies for all market-ready energy and low carbon systems, as well as incorporating the latest development and innovation in decentralised energy. He is expert at adapting his approach to ensure he delivers high value support, suited to the requirements of different sized sites and organisations.

Daniel studied Environmental Biology at University College Dublin, and completed his Masters in Climate Change and Development at the University of Reading, with a dissertation focussed on solar PV viability in different settings.

Daniel's recent clients include: Slinfold Parish Council, Cuxton Parish Council, East Sussex County Council, Peterborough Environmental City Trust, Religious Society of Friends, Epsom College, and Burnham Parish Council.

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