**Introduction to Community Renewable Energy for**

**Parish and Town Councils**

**What is a 'community' renewable energy scheme?**

Community energy refers to communities coming together to take control of their energy requirements. One part of community energy is energy generation – renewable energy schemes such as solar PV, hydro, biomass, wind power or ground/air source heat pumps. Community energy projects should have an emphasis on local engagement and the local community should benefit collectively from the outcomes.

**Why should parish/town councils consider community energy schemes?**

There are many reasons for local councils to consider involvement in renewable energy. There are opportunities for parish or town councils to invest reserves, with returns to be used to benefit the local area. In addition, community renewables put communities in control of their energy, improve energy security, can reduce local energy costs and reduce carbon emissions / pollutants.

**How can parish/town councils be involved?**

Parish and Town Councils which are eligible to use the General Power of Competence under the Localism Act are able to invest, set up community co-operatives or community benefit societies, or form a partnership to do the same. Councils could therefore consider direct investment in a scheme, which might be managed by themselves or by another organisation or community group, or may set up or support a registered community organisation. A number of renewable energy projects raise a proportion of their funding from community shares; often this is then supported by a loan. Traditional loans can be difficult to obtain so alternative sources of finance, such as from a local council, could ensure a project can go ahead. Councils could also consider a shared community ownership model if there is a commercial renewable energy project being planned locally (developers are being encouraged through a voluntary framework to offer shared ownership).

**What funding is available to help us get started?**

Funding for feasibility studies is currently available, with the Rural Community Energy Fund currently available and the Urban Community Energy Fund due to be launched in Dec 2014. The Rural fund also offers a loan to assist groups with detailed business case development, once a feasibility study has been completed.

**What are the next steps?**

Discuss this during a council meeting and see if there is general interest. It's then worth talking to your local district council and to Worcestershire County Council – we can help put you in touch with existing community energy groups in your area or ones who could give you advice. You will then need to talk to your community and consider the types of renewable energy that you may wish to investigate. You can then consider an application for funding for a feasibility study.

**Website links**

* Rural Community Energy Fund [www.wrap.org.uk/content/rural-community-energy-fund](http://www.wrap.org.uk/content/rural-community-energy-fund)
* Central Government advice [www.gov.uk/community-energy](https://www.gov.uk/community-energy)
* Community Energy England [www.communityenergyengland.org/](http://www.communityenergyengland.org/)
* Centre for Sustainable Energy (PlanLoCal) [www.planlocal.org.uk](http://www.planlocal.org.uk/)
* Energy Saving Trust [www.energysavingtrust.org.uk](http://www.energysavingtrust.org.uk)
* Sharenergy (a local co-operative to support co-ops) [www.sharenergy.coop](http://www.sharenergy.coop)
* Shared Community Ownership [www.sco-res.uk/](http://www.sco-res.uk/)
* Community Shares [www.communityshares.org.uk](http://www.communityshares.org.uk)
* Community Pathways [www.communitypathways.org.uk](http://www.communitypathways.org.uk/)

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