

What Next for Community Energy in London Workshop Outcomes

Date: 28th November 2019

Location: Committee room 4, City Hall

25 people present

Purpose: to get a steer on the direction of CEL moving forward, what to feed-in to the Mayoral manifesto consultation, and input into projects for funding applications

Findings

Broader vision

- Broader recognition and support for what community energy is
- Every suitable rooftop fitted with solar
- All citizens have their energy needs met
- 100% renewable energy system, including transport
- No fuel poverty
- All buildings retrofitted to passivhaus or as high as possible
- Massive demand reduction through energy efficiency and behaviour change
- Reduced energy demand
- Bill reductions
- More planning and financial support for projects
- Everyone has access to or is aware of their local community energy group
- Focusing on the need and addressing problems vs. developing models and applying them everywhere → and looking at more than just energy generation e.g. heat networks, water stress
- CE has a broader scope - more buildings, resilience and people
- Identifying a clear remit of what community energy is - is it just about installing projects? Community engagement?
- Identifying what the needs are and responding to that

For community energy groups

- New groups! More people getting involved
- Share knowledge and learning - more peer mentoring
- Business models that sustain community energy groups/ coops
- Activities that go beyond solar
- CE groups to help promote domestic retrofit across London
- More collaboration across groups
- Fully supported funding for projects
- Supporting training for installers

For community groups generally

- Community scene looks like a network of different kinds of groups cooperating on energy projects
- Community groups to all have an energy component
- Easy to access toolkits for how to set up projects
- Local communities working together to create community owned generation at a sustainable level
- Planning and financial support as well as how to remove barriers to create their projects
- Community energy in all boroughs - joined up working with community housing groups

Funding

- Identify funding for projects including zero carbon pots → for both development and capital
- Stability of funding of the next 5 year period

Political

- Community energy central to climate emergency planning
- Developing an evidence base of viable projects
- Local authorities investing in community energy and community energy central to their climate and local planning, including housing
- Local authorities supporting radical solutions to tackle climate change
- Regulatory changes to support community energy
- Long term stability for solar projects
- More grants/ incentives made available
- Shift in funding priorities so more community energy projects supported by funders
- Some FITS reinstated to provide support
- SITR
- Working closely with local authorities and community energy organisations to help remove barriers and create new projects/ sites
- Community energy part of national NPPF and building regulations
- Political will to support community energy
- Public support/ engagement
- Local council buy-in and investment

Project specific

- **Help identifying project opportunities of appropriate and larger scale**
- Approaching tenants/ rental blocks and schools in a more strategic way
- Increasing low carbon generation
- Identifying viable financial models
- Supporting groups who don't have access to funds to do projects
- More of a role in supporting vulnerable members of the community

Different avenues for community energy

- Community-owned heat networks
- Supporting zero carbon grid operation through aggregated flexibility
- White label community energy company managing the energy value chain for London
- Smart locally balanced energy via DSM and storage
- Incentives for DSR/ FFR
- SMART metering to be rolled out
- Extend renewable heat incentive (RHI)

Support from the GLA

Strategy

- A Community Energy strategy
- GLA to help encourage local authorities to employ and support community energy to address the climate emergencies
- Try to get community energy incorporated into planning e.g. London Plan/ Mayoral manifestos

Resources

- Dedicated member of staff in the GLA who works on community energy
- Funding for CEL as an organisation

Funding

- More LCEF, of a similar type → need funding for feasibility!
- Helping to secure carbon offset funds for capital costs
- Community FITS

Other

- Pilot 'showpiece'/ leadership project that the GLA is part of and can point to as evidence of a successful project that will incentivise the mayor to support community energy
- Encourage London Power to buy community energy electricity
- Work with Community Energy London to promote Solar Together
- GLA to designate general improvement districts
- Mapping/ potential for solar in London to help with site identification
- GLA pension funds need to divest

Support from CEL

Supporting new and existing community energy groups

- Matching new groups and individuals with mentors/ existing groups/ volunteers/ professional support
- We need more people to get involved! CEL needs to focus on supporting new groups and people
- Sharing best practice between groups
- Foster peer mentoring
- Help navigate public procurement by highlighting the social value of these projects
- Signposting to existing resources
- Developing a knowledge base
- Help with resources, such as legal templates
- Need to be clear on when groups are collaborating, competing, or consolidating - all trying to do similar things, need more dialogue
- Support ongoing conversations about who is developing what skills and approaches

Advocacy

- Raising awareness about community energy
- Networking with other sectors and groups to make connections e.g. XR
- Approach big asset-owners, e.g. school Trusts
- Help highlight the fact that community energy is mutually beneficial

Political engagement

- CEL to facilitate pack for Local Authorities and councillors for groups to use → to help secure funding, and highlight role in taking action on climate emergencies
- Advocacy role with local authorities and other stakeholders
- Try to get community energy incorporated into planning e.g. London Plan/ Mayoral manifestos