

Meeting Minutes 30th July 2020

Present:

Syed Ahmed - Energy for London, CEL
Victoria Ward - ASP
Tanuja pandit - PUNL
Jamie Baxter - CREW & CEL
Liz Ainslie - Islington Council
Pamela Harling - Wolves Lane
Paul Hallas - SE24 Sustainable Energy
Rob Poole - LB Barnet
Hannah Short - Solar SOAS
Toby Costin - CREW
Helen Mayer - Haringey Labour Climate Action
Paul White - Wandsworth Labour Party
Sydney Charles - en10ergy and more
Luisa Brotas - LB Hackney
Patrick Manwell - TTK Energy Group Kingston
Giovanna Speciale - SELCE
James M - Crew
James Sheward - SELCE
Bill Wright - independent Retrofit Coordinator
Gill Cox - Haringey
Alex Hartley - SELCE
Alban Thurston
James Sheward
Ahmet
Tania Jennings
Mick O'Sullivan
Martin Narraway
Kirsty Hamilton
Dermot Barnes
Nicky Gavron
Mike Smyth - Schools Energy Coop

Apologies:

Zahrah - tomorrow is Eid!

Minutes

1. Introduction

Agenda:

- Going to be chatting through the Chancellors announcement about £3 billion energy efficiency funding
- Also going to chat Public sector decarbonisation fund
- Presenting a paper that will be published on the CEL page next week about climate emergency action plans
- Some plans have gone dormant during Covid-19 - but lots of things are reigniting now
- AOB

2. Green Homes Grant

- Announced by Chancellor on 7th July
- Part of Covid economic recovery package - focus has shifted more to stimulating economic activity and jobs, rather than CO2/ KWh
- £2 billion for Green Homes Grant, £1 billion for the Public Sector Decarbonisation Fund
- Follows on from Conservative Party manifesto commitment

Eligibility

- Home Upgrade Grants (HUGs) - but focussed on off-gas grid, which is only 15% of London homes
- Green Homes Grants will be for off/ on gas grid homes
- Not sure what will be included in the grant yet, though it seems like solar will be included (according to the Solar Trade Association)
- Should be starting in early September

Timeline

- Money has to be spent by March 31st, may have to be installed by March 31st
- Money will possibly go to 600,000 households - vouchers will be up to £5k, with households paying up to $\frac{1}{3}$
- Eligible low income households will get up to £10k with no contribution needed
- £0.5 billion of the fund for fuel poor households
- May be launching September/ autumn
- Government guidance should be issued any day now

What role is there for community energy?

- Lots of money to be allocated in a short period of time
- Identifying and alerting households who might not be aware of the scheme, and to support them through the process of applying
- Influx of a massive number of contractors
- Supporting fuel poor roll out - signposting households to the council, or vice versa
- Area-based programmes - might want to approach area-based programmes for installation

Lots of bits in the newspapers about this money coming through, and past government money leading to poor installs e.g. cavity wall insulation. A big problem is the false deadlines that are introduced.

- Issue on the number of qualified assessors!

Comments:

- Discussion of PAZ 2035 vs. PAZ 2030
- → originally thinking maybe the role for CE would be to train up assessors etc.
- Requirements may be for the measures to be installed by March 31st, not just applied for
- In London it would be better for fuel poor to apply for the Warmer Homes scheme
- Has anyone assessed which of the two incentives - upfront cash or rhi is better? And question of whether or not you can get them together
- Got a real shortage of trained up people - perhaps we can encourage the funding to be put towards training people up
- From Tania - jobs skilling up at the forefront of their work, 'know your score' campaign to make sure that people understand what EPC scores mean and the practical side of that (before the site goes live). Getting the criteria from BEIS in a matter of days
- There is £9 billion - if £3 billion is spent well, hopefully the further £6 billion will be made available.

Comment in the chat: A school we are working with has just received the following email, which in summary says: DfE might have a framework available for school solar next year, the government is giving money to decarbonise schools but we can't tell you anything more about it, but in the meantime we might allow schools to work with community energy organisations. Climate crisis, what crisis?

"I wanted to update you following previous correspondence concerning your application for SoS consent to grant a lease of /licence to occupy roof space for the purpose of a solar panel installation in return for the first call on electricity generated by it at a reduced tariff.

As you know, our former minister raised concerns around the commercial model and questioned whether schools currently have access to the best available deals in this sector. This led to DfE commercial considering the available options culminating in a decision to procure a central framework for solar and other energy saving solutions."

This is the response from Emma Bridge (CEE) who investigated the claims made about CE solar on Academies/Schools. She says "According to the civil servants that I've been speaking to, there hasn't been any change in policy and permissions should have been being sought for both. However, I have also spoken to a few different legal firms which don't agree that is the case. So, as ever, it is as clear as mud. I want to get a comprehensive picture of how this affects the sector before pushing back too hard - I think retrospective action is highly unlikely and would have huge reputational issues for DfE if they did but there is still that slight risk. I'll be writing out

to all community members beginning of next week to find out numbers of projects undertaken with schools, whether they have leases/licences, what additional benefits have come from the projects, etc. to help build our case as well as who has supportive politicians in their project areas in case we have to launch a campaign.”

Public sector decarbonisation fund

- £1 billion for money to be spent to increase carbon efficiency and carbon reduction of public sector buildings (for England)
- Many climate emergency plans start with ‘we should be leading by example’ - here is a pot of money to actually lead by example with
- When this fund is released, we will share it with our members to send to your councils
- Should be in autumn

3. Community Energy in a Climate Emergency

- 29 out of 33 London Boroughs have signed climate emergencies - good opportunity to embed community energy in their thinking
- Syed sits on the Waltham Forest climate emergency commission.
- London Councils Joint Statement on Climate Change was signed in December - including a section on citizen engagement.
- Camden Climate Action Plan published in June 2020 - lots of sections mentioning community-led climate action, extending the Camden climate action fund, and about retrofitting.
- So it seems like the message on community energy is getting through - woo!!

What can community groups do to work with Local Authorities?

- Contact councillors and councils
- (check presentation for more info)

CEL briefing paper ‘Community Energy in Climate Emergency Plans’ to be posted next week

Will be updated as more plans come soon

Hopefully will be hosting events as part of LCAW coming soon on this

Merton council also mentioned working with community groups

Question about whether or not there are any groups based in Sutton?

Yes - Thinking Works

4. What do people want as CEL priorities?

- CEL is a good forum for co-learning, as some of us are at different stages
- Would be good to share learnings e.g. on how to make the most of the funding that has been made available by the government
- E.g. engineering skills etc.

- Sharing experience is great
- Keeping us up to date on what is available and how to apply for it
- School situation is a bit disappointing - would be great to roll out a big program
- Cooperating more for sure
- Good to share good practice, but also resources
- I feel we should shift effort more to Retrofit, as solar may not be viable and we need a green employment recovery
- Doing more stuff around heat pumps
- It would be good to have part of the team constantly bidding in for cash so the org can have more money to start
- Would be good to have a platform to post things on - e.g. CEL forum
- CEL forum now live on the website - everyone needs to sign up
- More LCEF
- More capacity-building
- Good to flag the need for UCEF

Other notes:

- There have been some positive noises about the possibility of a future UCEF
- Submitted an application for funding to MCS for £25,000 - fingers crossed!
- Still poised to launch the Crowdfunder - didn't launch it sooner because of Covid, but looking to launch soon. Keen to get it launched before the next meeting! The funding would be to have staff. Committee meets in the second week of September
- Could explore corporate sponsorship more - we recognise that it would be good, but haven't done much towards it
- Giovanna's offer - the skill in fundraising is not about finding funders but about identifying outcomes that match funders priorities. I know I keep saying this yadda yadda yadda but I think we need to ask ourselves what can we productively do together. I would be happy to run the fundraising training again pro-bono but with a focus on CEL.