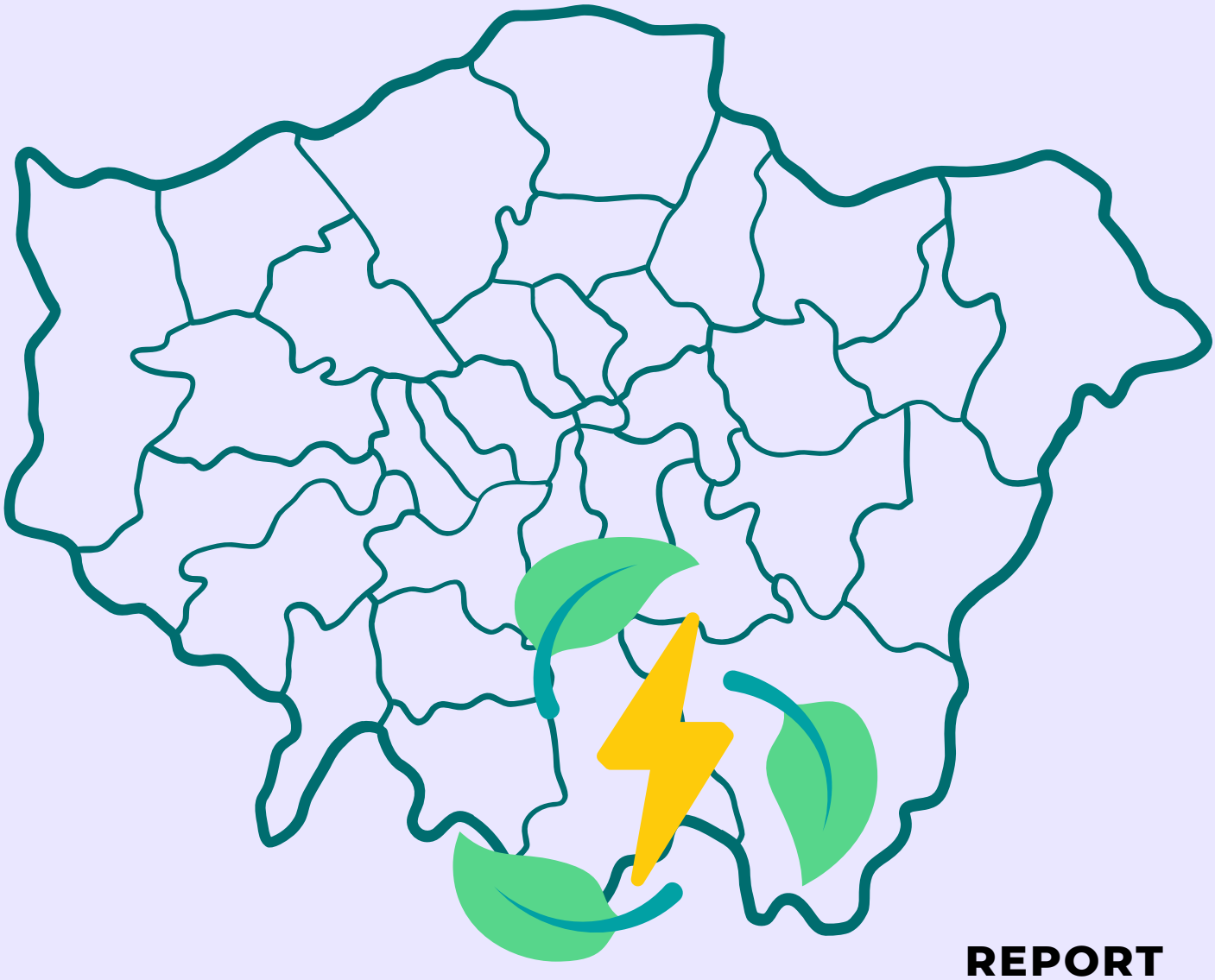
Community Energy London

Community Energy Now!

*Powering Up **South** London*



REPORT

JULY 2025

Acknowledgements

This report was produced by Syed Ahmed and Katherine Linsley of Community Energy London (CEL) with the support and contributions of CREW Energy, SE24 Energy, SELCE, Croydon Community Energy, SE1 Solar, Repowering London, Lambeth Community Solar and Brixton Energy Solar.

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Introduction

As part of London Climate Action Week 2025 (21 - 29 June) Community Energy London (CEL) partnered with its members to host four events across the city to present the significant work undertaken by groups to date. The events showcased the variety of projects delivered by groups to date, alongside their work with local authorities to develop new opportunities for the sector. Also highlighted was the huge potential for community-led action to decarbonise London's buildings, and the wider social and economic benefits community energy can bring.

Following these events, ***Community Energy Now! Powering up North/East/South and West London***, four reports have been prepared which set out for each region:

- Case studies of community energy action undertaken
- Analysis on the potential for future community energy projects
- Proposals to policy makers on how to boost growth in the deployment and scale of community energy.

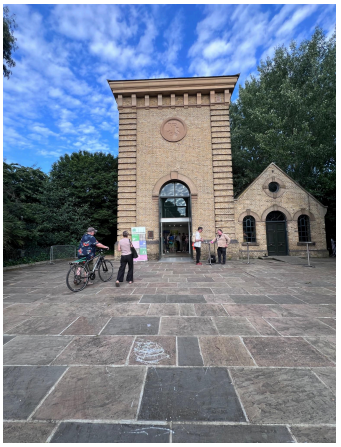
This report focuses on the South London boroughs of:

- Bexley
- Bromley
- Croydon
- Greenwich
- Lambeth
- Lewisham
- Merton
- Southwark
- Sutton
- Wandsworth

LCAW EVENT: Community Energy Now! Powering up South London

Speakers:

- Cllr. Paul White, Cabinet Member for Environment, LB Wandsworth
- Syed Ahmed, CEO, Community Energy London
- Toby Costin, Director, CREW
- Giovanna Speciale, CEO, SELCE
- Mark Hughes, CEO, SE24
- Henrietta (Etta) Dale, Solar Development Manager, Repowering London



Background

The past few years have seen community energy activity grow at pace in London, with renewable energy and energy efficiency projects delivered by an increasing number of groups supporting the delivery of cleaner, more affordable energy in their neighbourhoods.

For example, across the city, community energy groups are helping schools, cultural venues, places of worship and other community and public buildings to generate their own green energy and reduce both their carbon footprint and running costs.

In 2023, CEL created a Community Energy Potential Map for London. Working with the Greater London Authority (GLA), who provided access to their extensive datasets and mapping tools in relation to building energy consumption and rooftop solar power potential, CEL combined data from the GLA's London Solar Opportunity Map, London Heat Map and the London Building Stock Model to:

- Match up this energy data to existing community buildings across the city
- Allow for this data to be explored by administrative areas (borough, Parliamentary constituency, and council ward) or for London as a whole
- Estimate the potential of solar PV capacity that could be deployed across these community buildings

Using this data CEL developed an innovative map that can support community energy groups to identify potential projects in their areas, as well as providing policy makers a tool to visually explore the potential of community energy in their area.

In summary:

- We identified 20,849 community buildings in London of the type which may be of interest to community energy groups
- Up to 85% of these buildings have an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating less than C. Hence, all of these buildings will need to be retrofitted if London is to achieve its Net Zero goal

- 11,508 of these community buildings could host solar PV projects, which amounts to a total capacity of 1,126MW. This level of electricity generation is equivalent to powering about 350,000 homes (around one-tenth of London homes) and would save over 200,000 tonnes of carbon annually
- As of mid-2025, there are over 200 community energy projects in London, the majority of which are recorded on a separate projects map on CEL's website.

On the basis of our findings Community Energy London has set an ambition to have 1,000 community energy projects in place across the city by 2030 - an approximate fivefold increase over the current level of projects.

This can also be viewed as 30 projects in each of London's 33 boroughs by 2030.

"I am determined to unleash the power of community energy across the country. Through Great British Energy's Local Power Plan, this Government is supporting local authorities and community energy groups to help build local clean energy projects – from community-led onshore wind, to solar on rooftops and hydropower in rivers. The profits generated from these projects could then be reinvested into community projects or take money off people's bills."

Rt Hon Ed Miliband MP, Secretary of State, Department of Energy Security and Net Zero

Power in Our Communities, Labour Climate and Environment Forum (LCEF) x Co-operative Party, June 2025

Community Energy In London

CEL was founded with the aim of facilitating collaboration among London-based groups to exchange experiences, resources, and knowledge, while also encouraging the formation of new groups and advocating for greater public sector support for community energy initiatives.

The past few years have seen community energy activity grow at pace in London with an increasing number of projects delivered by a growing number of groups and practitioners. The sector has been supported by the Mayor through the London Community Energy Fund (LCEF) alongside a number of boroughs who have established their own Community Energy Funds (CEFs).

Considerable work is now underway to help accelerate the deployment of projects including:

- Phase 2 of the Mayor's ***Community Energy Task Force*** which will bring together representatives from community energy groups, London boroughs, the finance and business sectors and other key institutions to unlock structural barriers to the sector's growth and identify routes to securing additional funding.
- Two projects by **London Councils' Community Energy Working Group**:
    - The development of a **Community Energy Toolkit (LCCET)** to help support the case for community energy to officers within local authorities and provide officers with a practical set of tools, resources and evidence that support their work on community energy.
    - A **community energy mapping study**, being undertaken by the Mayor's Zero Carbon Accelerator (ZCA) programme, will produce an individual report for every London council on the potential for community solar generation projects in their borough.
- Most importantly, the development of the Government's **Local Power Plan**, which "*will work with local communities to empower people to generate their own energy, save money on their energy bills, and reinvest the savings where they are most needed*" and is a key output of the Government's publicly owned company, GB Energy.

The Potential For Community Energy In South London

For South London boroughs, CEL's Potential Map sets out the following opportunity in terms of the PV solar capacity identified across community buildings. These include sites such as community centres, educational institutions, leisure centres, museums, art galleries and libraries, theatres, concert halls & cinemas and places of worship.

South London Boroughs	Number of Community Buildings	Total Solar Capacity/kWp
Bexley	343	37,586
Bromley	432	44,028
Croydon	399	42,303
Greenwich	475	44,020
Lambeth	374	36,929
Lewisham	357	30,009
Merton	310	29,172
Southwark	510	40,234
Sutton	237	23,072
Wandsworth	461	45,437
Total:	**3,898**	**372,790**

Table 1

However, community energy extends far beyond just solar, with groups taking a holistic approach to decarbonising buildings. Community energy organisations are delivering cleaner and cheaper energy for South London in a wide variety of ways. CEL's members are working in partnership with local authorities, businesses and the third sector, whilst securing funding from grant-giving organisations and programmes such as the Energy Redress Scheme, and raising millions of pounds of investment through community share offers.

A few example case studies follow below.

CEL Member Case Studies

Case Study 1: Croydon Community Energy (CCE)

After receiving £40,000 from the government's Community Energy Fund in 2024, CCE launched its first share offer with the aim to raise at least £120,000 for solar panels at three sites: Archbishop Tenison's CofE School, Shree Swaminarayan Temple (ISSO) and Holy Innocents Church. In May 2025 when the share offer closed CCE had raised £142,000 from 135 investors, and even received £60,000 from the Co-operatives UK Equity Booster Fund. As a result, the first 90kWp of solar will be installed in July 2025.

https://www.croydoncommunityenergy.co.uk/

Case Study 2: CREW Energy

CREW Energy works across the boroughs of Wandsworth, Richmond, Merton and Kingston. They have been a strategic partner to their home council of Wandsworth for almost a decade, most notably delivering energy efficiency advice and equipment to residents at risk of fuel poverty.

In 2025, the Wandsworth Neighbourhood Renewal Fund – funded through Neighbourhood Community Infrastructure Levy (NCIL) payments – opened up a new opportunity to work with the council to decarbonise local buildings.

CREW was awarded an initial tranche of £397,000 to support local organisations with feasibility studies, planning and surveys, capital projects and funding bids to further their decarbonisation plans. Two of these ongoing projects in particular offer a shining example of both the range of community energy projects out there (beyond the traditional solar model!) and the boosted potential for local decarbonisation with the support and backing of an engaged local authority.

Kimber Skate Park
Technologies: Air source heat pumps, building management system, LED lighting, Hydromx heat transfer solution, solar PV, battery storage and solar-powered device charging cables.

The skate park building currently has a number of heating issues which could be counteracted with a building management system (BMS) to zone areas, and Hydromx heat transfer fluid for more efficient heating.

Upgrading lighting to LEDs could cut energy consumption by 50% and a combination of air source heat pumps and 63 solar panels could make the skatepark a net energy exporter, even becoming carbon negative.

Annual savings: 11 tonnes of CO2 equivalent and around £6,000 on energy bills.

St Barnabas Church

Technologies: Destratifier fans, air source heat pump and Hydromx heat transfer solution.

The church has an extremely high gas consumption of 100,000 kWh p.a. Currently in winter, the heating comes on first thing Saturday morning to get the space up to temperature for Sunday service. The first phase of the project will install Hydromx heat transfer solution in the main chapel and hall and destratifier fans in the main chapel. These measures aim to reduce heating demand, warm-up times, and improve comfort.

Annual savings: 9 tonnes of CO2 equivalent and £3,800 on energy bills.

https://www.crewenergy.london/

Case Study 3: Sustainable Energy 24 (SE24)

SE24 offers a one-stop solution to fund, install and manage retrofit energy-efficient LED lighting systems and solar panels. Much of this work has been financially supported by the GLA's London Community Energy Fund and Southwark's Community Energy Fund.

Among our most recent projects is at Woodside Academy in Bexley, a school for autistic 4-19-year-olds with a wide range of learning needs. We replaced the school's existing lighting with LEDs and we recently completed installation of 144.5 kW of solar PV.

The immediate results of the LEDs included a significant improvement in lighting quality, especially for those with sensory sensitivities, the new lighting created a more comfortable learning environment. Both the staff and the students noticed the difference: a Year 11 student said, "The new lights helped me when I was helping with the Christmas performance

because they weren't glaring in my eyes.". Headteacher Kathryn Freame said, "To any other schools who are considering taking these steps and working with SE24, I would just say do it. It's been a win-win situation for us."

Woodside Academy is part of the London South East Academies Trust (LSEAT). John Hunt, Group CFO and deputy group CEO, spoke about the importance of the partnership in an article for Schools Week. He said, "Importantly for us, SE24 is community-focused, with a genuine commitment to social impact and values that very much align with our own social mission. The partnership has enabled us to install around £200,000-worth of LED lighting and solar panels without any upfront cost to the trust or the schools." He added, "the LED and solar package will save the school almost £400,000 over 25 years and reduce carbon dioxide emissions by over 300 tonnes". He added, "This is a mutually beneficial model: no upfront capital investment for us; immediate energy and cost savings; clear long-term financial gain; and real, measurable progress against our trust-wide sustainability targets".

The partnership is now extending to other LSEAT schools, the first being a solar PV installation at LSEAT's Endeavour Academy Bexley. Meanwhile SE24's Community Engagement committee is preparing to work with the Trust on an ongoing basis, using their community fund to support the Trust's premises managers in maximising energy efficiency.

https://se24.co.uk/

Case Study 4: SE1 Solar

SE1 Solar was formed to help fight fuel poverty through using solar on council estates roofs. They recently supported a 60 year old man living with health conditions. He was struggling to heat his home due to high bills and switched off his boiler to save money and washed with boiled water from the kettle.

SE1's energy champion conducted a benefit check and found that he was only receiving the basic amount of Universal Credit. His health conditions prevented him from working and because of that he was entitled to receive an extra £420 per month. This additional income was explained to him as was how he could request this from the DWP. He was also having

some of his income deducted due to an overpayment and the adviser confirmed that the amount was within the limits of what the DWP could deduct. However, the energy champion provided options including requesting a delay to payment, asking for a reduction to the deduction, or waiving the deductions as he was in financial hardship and provided him with a template letter if he wished to pursue this.

The energy champion looked at the EPC rating to see his home's energy efficiency and this had likely expired as they could not find one. She advised to request a new one from their landlord as if the EPC was rated below E, they could request improvements to their home to save money on energy. She also gave energy saving tips and was able to provide a food voucher.

The client returned to SE1 later regarding his disability review form which they helped to complete so that he could remain in receipt of this and he hopes to receive an increase of £66 a week.

https://se1.solar/

Case Study 5: South East London Community Energy (SELCE)

M – Energy Advice Case Study

M is a 54-year-old single parent. She's had a difficult journey: after a separation, she spent two years in temporary accommodation; she also had to stop working to take care of her daughter. While they are now finally in a new flat together, she has limited knowledge of how to lower her energy bills and came to the food shelter seeking support.

Together, SELCE's Energy Advisor went over her energy bills and discussed the various ways she can save energy within her home, plus some small behavioural changes that can be implemented to save her energy for long-term:

- The advisor suggested changing M's thermostat temperature to adapt to the weather and home temperature.
- M's household income was assessed and a partial application to Water Help for her water bill was started.

- The advisor also registered M for the Priority Service Register (PRS), as she is dealing with anxiety and depression due to her past experiences.
- As she was still in the process of applying for PIP, SELCE issued her with a top-up voucher.
- As M's home is a newbuild with an EPC rating of B and LED lightbulbs are already installed, the focus was more towards behavioural changes rather than urgent home improvements.

After their second session, SELCE was able to check in on M to see how she was doing. She informed them that the advice had a positive impact and she had been able to reduce her monthly bills by roughly £15 per month. This meant she could spend more quality time with her daughter on outings. She also felt more confident in managing her bills.

Edmund Waller Primary School LED Case Study

Edmund Waller is a primary school and nursery near Telegraph Hill in Lewisham. SELCE conducted an in-depth lighting survey of the school's premises, considering areas of the school designated for SEND, plus areas where brightness levels were inadequate for learning. The survey found that the school had 465 mostly fluorescent and some halogen light bulbs.

SELCE applied for a capital grant on behalf of Edmund Waller to the London Community Energy Fund (LCEF 7) and Lewisham's Community Energy Fund (LewCEF2) to fund a portion of the project costs. The remaining project costs were funded by SELCE's 2024 multi-project community share offer. The installation took a few weeks to complete during the summer holidays.
Results:

- It is estimated that the project will save the school c. £19,400 per year in electricity bills
- The work is projected to save 8 tonnes of CO2 emissions per year
- In addition to the carbon and electricity cost savings, the installation contributed towards improved wellbeing for pupils and staff members. Due to the flicker-free nature of LED lighting, building users will experience less eye strain and migraines that are sometimes attributed to long term exposure to fluorescent lighting

https://selce.org.uk/

Case Study 6: Lambeth Community Solar (LCS)

Lambeth Community Solar was created in 2019, and is supported by Repowering London. LCS has raised £137,200 in community shares through a community share offer to install solar panels on two Lambeth schools: 83kWp on the Norwood School in October 2019, and 62kWp on the Elmgreen School in February 2020.

The group of volunteers, together with LCS's Community Lead, work together to keep developing the pipeline of rooftop solar sites, and regularly engage with the local community around community-owned solar energy and deliver energy support initiatives. These include energy support workshops, creative energy clubs and frontline workers training.

www.repowering.org.uk/lambeth-community-solar/

Case Study 7: Repowering London and Brixton Energy Solar

Local electricity supply with Energy Local Roupell Park

Sitting just a short distance from the busy South Circular road in Brixton, the Roupell Park Estate is made up of a cluster of low- to medium-rise flats built in the 1950s and owned by Lambeth Council. In 2013, a local community group set up the Brixton Energy Solar co-op to install solar panels on a number of the blocks, with the support of Repowering London. The panels have been operating successfully since then, supplying electricity to the communal areas of the buildings, such as the lifts and lighting, and exporting any surplus to the public distribution network. The profits from the scheme are used to repay members of the co-op and create a community fund. The fund has supported a range of local initiatives such as out-of-school activities and free energy-saving advice sessions for residents.

Six years later, a partnership between Bioregional, Energy Local CIC, Repowering London, Connected Response and Octopus Energy took up the challenge of using new smart technologies to enhance the existing scheme by allowing residents of the estate to benefit directly from the output of the solar panels.

The aim of this next phase was to bring the systems installed on the flats into line with most solar photovoltaic installations on street-level

properties, where households receive a reduction in their electricity bill whenever their consumption coincides with solar generation. If successful, this model would help unlock new solar installations in urban communities across the UK and at the same time reduce fuel poverty by pricing the 'local' electricity at a discount in relation to standard electricity tariffs. Over time, the model could further support the transition to a low-carbon energy system by encouraging households to move some of their electricity usage to times when local renewable electricity is available. For example, this could mean running a washing machine around midday when solar energy is usually at its peak.

During the trial, an average of 40% of participants' total electricity usage was matched with the local solar generation on a half-hourly basis. Extrapolated to a full year, this would translate to 27% of demand due to the lower level of solar generation in winter.

Since July 2022, Energy Local Roupell Park has been operating on an ongoing basis, with up to 16 members. Households decide together how to price the electricity and are in charge of their energy choices. Currently, solar electricity is priced at 6p/kWh, compared to the 35p/kWh cost for grid electricity. With the business model proven, a second site operated by Repowering London has been identified as the next step in the wider rollout.

https://www.repowering.org.uk/

Council Support for Community Energy

In addition to the Mayor's London Community Energy Fund (LCEF), which has seven rounds of funding to date and supported around 200 projects across the city[1], a number of boroughs in London have introduced specific funding programmes to support the growth of community energy activity in their area These funds are typically financed by carbon offset payments collected from developers through Section 106 (s106) legal agreements which are required to be paid under Council planning policy where applications fail to meet required carbon reduction targets set by councils' Local Plan. The relevant s106 agreements require that the contributions must be used to reduce carbon emissions. A short profile of each of these is set out below.

Southwark Community Energy Fund

This fund gives grants to local schools, faith groups and community groups for green energy projects. This could be through building upgrades, or the addition of technologies such as solar panels or heat pumps. It could also be for workshops or training to help tackle fuel poverty.

A part of the fund is available to support community energy groups. This is to help create new groups or expand existing ones.

The second round of funding closed to applications on 6 April 2025.

In total, £400,000 of grant funding is available for the second round of Southwark Community Energy Fund. The fund is split into four streams, meaning grants are available for projects at different stages of development.

Further information can be found at:

https://www.southwark.gov.uk/planning-environment-and-building-control/environment/climate/southwark-community-energy-fund-0

[1] See - https://www.london.gov.uk/programmes-strategies/environment-and-climate-change/net-zero-energy/london-community-energy-fund

Lewisham Community Energy Fund

Originally launched in 2019, Lewisham launched a second round of their Community Energy Fund in 2023 with grants of up to £10,000. Community and voluntary groups, including cooperatives, faith and equalities groups, social enterprises, and schools, are encouraged to apply if they have projects that generate renewable energy, reduce fuel consumption, and promote awareness about energy efficiency.

The fund covers four streams of activity:

Stream A – Feasibility and business case development (up to £10,000 per project)

Stream B – Project implementation and delivery (up to a third of the capital value, capped at £10,000)

Stream C – Innovation and pre-feasibility development (up to £5,000 per project)

Stream D – Training, events, and engagement (up to £5,000 per project)

Further information can be accessed via:

https://lewisham.gov.uk/articles/news/lewisham-community-energy-fund-returns-to-help-local-communities-cut-carbon-and-lower-energy-bills

Greenwich Community Energy Fund

The Royal Borough of Greenwich Council Co-operative Commission, launched in April 2024, focused on implementing co-operative principles in three main areas, one of which was community energy. Following the publication of the Commission's report, *Together for Greenwich: Co-operation for the future*, in February the council approved a major £1 million investment in a new Community Energy Fund (CEF). The CEF will help local people and organisations set up projects that use renewable energy to cut carbon emissions and lower energy bills. Eligible expenditure will be funded through the use of one-off Section 106 resources (Carbon Offset Fund) of £1.0m.

Why Support Community Energy?

Many community energy groups' first projects involved the installation of solar PV on rooftops, responding at the time to the Government's Feed in Tariff (FiT) incentive. The FiT scheme closed to new applicants in 2019, and over time, as groups delivered more projects and increased their knowledge around different energy solutions, they have diversified their skills in areas such as energy efficiency advice, building retrofit, LED installations, heat pumps and fuel poverty alleviation projects.

Groups continue to innovate and deliver projects which:

- Reduce greenhouse gas emissions
- Re-connect people with how energy is generated and consumed - supporting wider behaviour change
- Lowering energy bills and helping support programmes tackling fuel poverty
- Return benefits to the local economy

Community energy groups can support local organisations - including councils - by:

- Providing project development support to helping identify carbon reduction solutions
- Host energy and climate change advice and training workshops for residents
- Secure funding through routes not always open to local authorities (e.g National Lottery Climate Action Fund, Ofgem Redress Funding, etc)
- Raise finance through issuing community share offers.
- Supporting local businesses involved in the building and retrofit sector
- Develop and install renewable and energy efficiency projects
- Inspiring communities and maintaining enthusiasm around climate and energy issues

Routes To Support The Growth Of Community Energy

Councils can support the growth of community energy activity in their area - and help accelerate the deployment of projects via a number of routes. These could include:

1. Setting out clear commitments within council climate change action plans to develop local community energy activities exploring options such as providing start up support to community energy groups, shared staffing, access to councils skills
2. Collaborate with groups to identify site opportunities for potential projects, including on council assets; connecting community energy groups with potential site owners/ leaseholders/ occupiers; leveraging the Council's contacts, standing and endorsement
3. Examining the potential for utilising carbon offset funds, or Neighbourhood Community Infrastructure Levy (NCIL) (as LB Wandsworth did earlier this year) to accelerate the deployment of local community energy projects (also see CEL's '*Setting up a Local Authority Community Energy Fund*' guidance document for further details)
4. Developing partnerships with community energy groups in any funding applications the council may be applying around retrofit, such as Government Warm Homes Plan programmes
5. Promoting and supporting community energy group projects - including share offers - to the wider community and introductions to local businesses
6. Develop documentation and processes to support community energy project developments - such as leases, licences and grant claims across departments including Procurement, Housing, Property and Legal
7. Providing spaces for community energy groups to support local capacity-raising opportunities and workshops for residents on energy issues.

Conclusion

Community energy is at a pivotal moment with increasing levels of interest from communities to businesses to policy makers wanting to support the deployment of projects. However, groups remain constrained by a lack of resources, access to development sites, and the absence of a policy framework for the sector. Forthcoming outputs by the Mayor, and London Councils, should help, but the Government needs to set out their ambition for community energy in their Local Power Plan as soon as possible.