

Groundwork UK Learning Partnership

Communities Living Sustainably Learning report Focus on Energy

This report has been produced by the Communities Living Sustainably Learning Partnership



Funded by the BIG Lottery Fund



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Introduction

This report draws out learning from the Big Lottery Fund's Communities Living Sustainably (CLS) programme up to October 2013. This report looks specifically at activities related to energy and aims to highlight key issues and experience from the CLS projects as well as reviewing the range of differing activities. Detailed analysis of the relative success of different activities has not been possible as the majority of projects are still at a relatively early stage of development. However early successes and difficulties will be highlighted.

This report is based on telephone or face-to-face interviews with all the CLS projects carrying out activities related to sustainable energy. The interviews were planned using background information on energy activities under CLS, gathered by Groundwork.

About Communities Living Sustainably

Communities Living Sustainably is a £12 million programme funded by the Big Lottery Fund. Twelve communities in England have received funding to help deal with the potential impact of climate change and build the sustainability and resilience of their local community. The programme will run for five years, with these communities providing inspiration to other communities across England and sharing what they have learned with each other.

The Groundwork UK Learning Partnership is made up of five organisations each with expertise in tackling climate change and helping communities to live more sustainably. The partnership comprises Groundwork UK, The Energy Saving Trust, The Federation of City Farms and Gardens, The New Economics Foundation and Building Research Establishment (BRE).

This partnership has been brought together to encourage and support the funded local communities to capture and share any lessons from their projects. A learning network has been established to encourage peer learning between communities, to better understand how communities can successfully live and work in a sustainable way and to provide information to inform and influence policy and practice both within the CLS programme and within the wider sustainability arena.

Executive Summary

Energy activity within Communities Living Sustainably

Eleven of the twelve Communities Living Sustainably (CLS) projects are carrying out energy-related activity; all of those projects are doing at least some work on energy efficiency and seven of them are carrying out activity on renewable energy. Two specific activities with high levels of interest are: establishing networks of volunteer energy advisors; and developing community-owned PV systems.

What are we learning?

The groups that are working on domestic energy efficiency are generally providing free advice to householders focused on promoting behaviour change and/or installation of energy saving measures. Local authorities have played an important role in many of the projects by helping projects get up and running quickly and giving a clear path to delivery of actual measures through partnering with the private sector.

The groups are measuring the impact of their activity using a range of different metrics. Most are using at least some indicators of reach (number of people advised/engaged etc.), many are also recording installation of measures. There are also some examples of “before and after” behaviour change surveys being used for monitoring as well as some use of energy monitors in a sample of properties.

Innovation

CLS is funding a range of innovative approaches that are building on existing ideas and concepts within the community energy sector. Examples of this include:

- A community-led approach to renewable energy using “planning for real” style mapping exercises.
- A range of different variations of “Eco-house” and “Open homes” approaches to engaging the public through seeing energy saving and micro-generation measures in-situ.

Next Steps

Interviews with representatives of the CLS projects highlighted strong support for peer networking through workshops. Many groups emphasised the value of face-to-face contact, particularly at an early stage in their projects. Peer to peer support at workshops could be especially helpful given that many groups are facing similar challenges on their energy projects. Possible subjects for peer networking include:

- Establishing volunteer energy advisors
- Turning advice into installations - Green Deal, Eco (energy company obligation), FiT (feed-in tariff), RHI (renewable heat incentive) etc.
- Stimulating and monitoring behaviour change
- Metrics and monitoring for energy projects
- Community PV (photovoltaics)- covering business model, business planning, legal agreements etc.
- Opportunity and feasibility studies for renewables

Considerations

The CLS programme represents an opportunity to learn from a group of diverse communities working on energy projects. As CLS will be monitoring projects via a range of different metrics for four to five years, this is an opportunity to contribute to the development of that evidence base.

Free and impartial advice is clearly highly valued by the CLS groups and is an area where government intervention could make a significant contribution to the growth and impact of the sector.

The timescale of CLS, which funds projects for up to five years, not only enables a wider range of activity to be undertaken than single year funding, but also allows time for measureable impact (e.g. energy efficiency measures installed and renewable energy systems installed or at least consented) to occur in time for evaluation. The results of this longer term approach could be used to inform development of future national government programmes.

General Observations

The CLS projects are at an early stage of development. Many are still planning or just beginning their energy activities. Where partnerships have already started delivering significant outputs their activity is generally building on previous initiatives or partnering with current activities by other stakeholders. In fact a key learning point is that most of the CLS projects have linked to pre-existing plans, aspirations and projects on sustainable energy within their communities. This has highlighted the range and scope of aspirations around energy within communities across the UK.

Types of energy related activity across the CLS projects:

- Of the 12 CLS projects, only one is not carrying out any energy-related activity (its focus is around food).
- All of the 11 projects that are working on energy are doing at least some work on household energy efficiency.
- Seven of the 11 projects working on energy are also carrying out activities around renewable energy.

There are some more specific areas where a number of different community groups are delivering similar activities so could learn from each other, for example:

- There are eight groups that are already working to establish and support volunteer home energy advisors or researchers
- There are four groups developing community-owned PV projects
- All of the groups working on domestic energy efficiency have a common interest in how their projects can drive uptake of measures within the current support and incentive regime

Recommendations for the CLS Learning Partnership and Projects

Develop a programme of peer to peer learning workshops themed around practical issues identified in this report. This would provide opportunities for exchange of experience between groups, input from external experts and may stimulate further collaboration (e.g. joint-procurement by groups with similar needs). Possible subjects for workshop sessions include:

- *Volunteer advisors* – training, support, quality of advice and safety
- *Turning advice into installations* - working with Green Deal, Eco, FiT, RHI etc.
- *Stimulating and monitoring behaviour change* – reviewing different behaviour surveys and behaviour change techniques
- *Metrics and monitoring for energy projects* – discussing user-friendly ways to measure impact in carbon, money saved/economic benefit, carbon emissions

reduced, energy saved/generated, impact on fuel poverty and Social Return on Investment.

- *Community PV* – how to develop community PV including, business models, assessing feasibility, roof-rental agreements, legal structure and sale of shares
- *Identification/feasibility for renewables* – reviewing how projects have carried out opportunity studies and engaged the community with renewable energy projects, also discussing freely-available information and resources on renewable energy and specification of feasibility studies.

Understanding Change and Impact

The review of change and impact related to energy has been broken down into the following subject areas:

- Behaviour change and advice
- Home Energy
- Business and Community Buildings
- Renewable Energy Generation

Behaviour change and advice

Behaviour change work

Most of the groups are addressing behaviour change, with energy issues being an aspect of that activity. Whilst some groups are monitoring activity through number of people engaged, some are actually carrying out before and after surveys of environmental behaviour and/or household carbon footprint (including Greening Wingrove with the “Wingrove Barometer” and the Dorset Communities Living Sustainably which aims to do ‘before and after’ carbon footprinting). Sunderland: Sustaining our Communities has ambitious targets for its behaviour change programme that will be monitored through surveys:

- 500 people to save money through behaviour change and energy efficiency
- 50% of people engaged will report change in behaviour to save energy
- 250 BME residents taking part in One Planet Living training
- 750 residents taking part in One Planet Living training

Green Prosperity is providing advice around energy saving and sustainable behaviour to homes at risk of fuel poverty. Alongside this they are also running a programme with the local school where students use energy monitors to track energy use in their homes. This could provide some insight into the impact of different types of environmental behaviour on energy bills across a range of different properties.

Tools and approaches

The CLS projects are taking a range of different approaches to behaviour change, with some opting to use established concepts and systems (including “One Planet Living”, the “PACT” system and “Transition Streets”) whilst others have yet to decide on a system or are developing their own surveys. It is therefore likely that it will be difficult to compare outputs across all the groups, although many groups are using common metrics such as number of people engaged/advised and number of measures installed. An advantage of the range of different approaches taken by the groups will be the opportunity to compare the benefits and challenges of using these different approaches. This may also help to draw out whether particular approaches are more successful with different demographics.

Engaging communities

The projects are engaging people with their behaviour change activity through:

- bespoke events
- attendance and stalls at other local events
- roadshows
- outreach by volunteer advisors
- outreach by professional outreach staff trained to provide energy advice and refer people into their project
- working through local organisations/networks (including faith groups, community support services and business networks)

Advice

Volunteer and semi-professional advisors

As noted earlier, seven of the groups are delivering home energy advice, with the majority doing this through volunteer advisors or training professional “front line workers” who carry out home visits to discuss energy issues. Several groups are using or considering using the “Green Doctor” home visit approach developed by Groundwork, whilst others are using alternative systems as the basis for their advice such as PACT and Transition Streets, or have yet to commit.

The large number of groups training volunteer advisors is interesting and may reflect projects seeking to tap into grass-roots word-of-mouth communication channels, but also possibly the reduced availability of local, free advice on energy. Some of the groups are using existing campaigns to identify volunteers, for example Sustainable Irwell Valley is working with “Church Action on Poverty”. This project is also taking a bottom-up approach to targeting their activity, recruiting “Community Green Champions” first before working with them to develop specific programmes.

Greening Wingrove specifically raised the challenges of ensuring that quality of advice is maintained by unpaid advisors and that adequate safety policies are in place to protect them (especially when making home visits and travelling alone) on a limited budget. Some of the groups also have quite substantial targets for advisors trained and households advised (e.g. 50 advisors trained and 1000 people or organisations advised) so affordable solutions will need to be identified for training and support. All the groups carrying out this work will be facing the same challenges so there is an opportunity for exchange of experience and possible co-operation in this area. It is envisaged that a workshop themed around working with volunteer advisors will be organised as an early event in the energy peer networking group. This will bring together groups working in this area to share their experiences.

Demonstration homes

Demonstration of carbon reduction measures in real homes is being used as an engagement and advice tool in a number of different ways by different groups. Three distinctly different approaches have emerged:

- *Eco-house* – this involves establishment of a particular property as an eco-demonstration house, with substantial retrofit of sustainability features. It enables demonstration of a wide range of sustainable living options in one place but does require significant investment and relies on members of the public to make a special trip to visit it. Sustainable Harborough Challenge has taken this approach and has worked with a Housing Association to retrofit one of its properties and recruit a family with an interest in sustainable living but little experience. The property will be opened twice a year and the family will be blogging about their experience and regular updates will be sought from them as the basis for media work. The property will also be monitored and compared with a neighbouring property. Green Prosperity will open a retrofit eco-home to demonstrate locally-relevant measures within their CLS area. The plan is to open this property for the duration of their CLS project and sell or rent the property subsequently.
- *Distributed demonstration* – Greening Wingrove had originally intended to establish an Eco-centre; however they are now considering a change to their project to implement a larger number of smaller demonstration installations in public buildings. This aims to take the demonstrations out to where people are rather than expecting them to make a special trip to an Eco-centre.
- *Open Homes* – This approach involves running periodic events in which people with energy saving/sustainability features within their homes open their properties to the public. Dorset Communities Living Sustainably has already funded a local community group to run such an event which opened 19 homes with a wide range of different measures installed across Bridport.

Home energy

Identifying opportunities and engagement

Most of the projects are carrying out some form of review of the existing housing stock to better understand what measures are likely to be most effective and what barriers they may face.

Green Prosperity is partnering with a local “Warm Zone” scheme. This has enabled them to use survey data from the Warm Zone to identify households that are most at risk of fuel poverty and offer them additional energy and behaviour change advice through the CLS project.

Several groups are carrying out studies to develop a series of “archetypes” that are representative of house types within the area. The intention is to use these both to develop packages of measures that will be relevant to the area but also to help ensure that communication around domestic energy efficiency is kept relevant to their community. Many of the groups have partnered with academic institutions to carry out or support this activity.

Several of the projects are encountering challenges due to non-standard (hard to treat) house types and tenures or the demographics of their area, for example:

- L8 Living Sustainably has a housing stock that includes Georgian and Victorian terraces. It also has significant numbers of houses in multiple occupancy and 60% of the population are non-English speaking (mainly Somali). They also noted the need to be sensitive to cultural as well as language differences. Liverpool is using the housing stock survey and archetypes approach outlined above.
- Greening Wingrove has a 25% student population mainly living in privately rented accommodation. These properties tend to be rented from a large number of different landlords each with a small number of properties. The group is looking to work with a council-run energy efficiency programme for private landlords and was also referred to the “Student Switch Off” campaign as a possible source of ideas and experience through this learning report. There are also 70 different languages spoken in the pilot area so the project is learning from other parts of the community sector and looking to work with community translator training, using energy efficiency as a topic for building language skills.

Advice programmes

As noted above, many groups are carrying out advice programmes through volunteer or paid advisors. Several of the groups are also using demonstration homes and buildings to raise awareness and normalise energy efficiency and sustainable living. These activities are covered in the “Behaviour change and advice” section above.

Implementing measures

Five of the groups are currently involved with promoting uptake of specific energy saving measures (note that this does not include groups that are delivering advice programmes but are not yet proactively engaging with installers/incentive schemes). Most of these groups are working with their Local Authority to either refer into Council-run schemes or as an intermediary to help them access ECO and Green Deal finance.

Housing Associations

A number of groups are also working with Housing Associations in their area to improve their housing stock. One group reported that engaging Housing Association tenants with energy was challenging as they tended to view energy as the responsibility of the landlord. It will be interesting to review impact and experience from this approach later in the project, to see whether community groups are able to communicate behaviour change messages effectively to tenants, whilst also working with landlords to install physical measures. Again, this topic could be the focus of an event in the energy peer network.

Finance and incentives

Some groups reported difficulty accessing funding to deliver measures to fuel poor households and incentivise installation by “able-to-pay” households. The groups appear to reflect experience elsewhere that the transition from widely available grants and discounts, under the well-established CERT (Carbon Emissions Reduction Target) programme, to loans under the Green Deal (and grants targeted at fuel poor households under ECO) has been challenging. Many of the groups are finding the process of referring households to have measures installed more complex than it was under CERT (where there were many Council-endorsed generic offers available). Sustain Eden also cited lack of funding for “lower-level” measures such as draught proofing as a barrier. Their project is focusing initially on draught proofing and distribution of powerdown and shower saver devices, with the aim of expanding into ECO referrals later. The group also aims to work with a Housing Association to bulk purchase measures and set up group-buying of energy efficiency measures in their community.

Summary

In general groups are still at an early stage and engaged with the planning work outlined above, rather than delivering measures. However one exception to this is One Planet Middlesbrough. This project has been able to tap into an existing Middlesbrough Council scheme with accredited installers and access to ECO funding.

This project gives an indication of the level of delivery that is possible for effective community-local authority partnerships with established relationships with installers and sources of funding/finance. It could be a useful case study for the role of communities in supporting energy efficient retrofit. It is important to note that this project is delivering to households that qualify for substantial support under ECO and works with a well-established Council insulation scheme. We would like to recommend working with this and other similar schemes to monitor their impact and draw out learning on success factors - which activities were most effective and how the community has benefited and reacted to the project.

To date One Planet Middlesbrough has delivered a total of 966 households advised and 833 measures installed since the beginning of the CLS project. These measures **could lead to lifetime fuel bill savings well in excess of £1.3million and carbon dioxide savings of almost 5300 tonnes.**¹

Please see Annex 1 for more information around the One Planet Living project

Monitoring

In measuring the impact of their home energy activities many groups are using the same metrics as their behaviour change work, counting the number of people reached or advised whilst some are carrying out behaviour change surveys. As noted above, a smaller number are already counting actual measures installed and this is generally done by working with an existing scheme and establishing a referral mechanism to log how many installations have been initiated through contact with the project. As shown above, indicative figures for carbon and bill savings can be generated from measures installed.

Green Prosperity is exploring whether they can gather actual energy use data from a sample of homes. As noted in the “Behaviour change” section, they are planning to work with schools providing energy monitors to students to record energy use within their homes. They are also exploring whether a sample of the homes they work with could be provided with internet connected energy monitors. With user consent these could provide information on energy use direct to the project.

¹ Based on the mix of measures in Table 1 with bill and carbon savings from energy saving trust (<http://www.energysavingtrust.org.uk/Energy-Saving-Trust/Our-calculations>) and assuming a 15 year lifetime across all measures. The cost saving figures are also based on current fuel costs, in reality these are likely to rise significantly.

Apart from their value in demonstrating the programme's impact to policymakers this data on measures installed and energy used/saved can be used in local awareness-raising work to challenge assumptions about individual action being ineffective (especially where carbon dioxide figures are presented with proxies such as - equivalent of the emissions from x households/cars). Data on carbon emissions reduction can also help to maintain morale within community projects and build their credibility with other stakeholders such as local authorities, funders and businesses. Peer to peer support could help to spread this approach across more groups.

Social Return on Investment

Sustainable Irwell Valley is working with the University of Salford to develop a method of quantifying and monitoring "Social Return on Investment" (SROI) from their projects. SROI is an approach to understanding and managing the value of the social, economic and environmental outcomes created by an activity or an organisation, rather than merely focusing on economic value. If successful this could be helpful to communities across the UK in evaluating the impact of their projects and developing an evidence base for the broader benefits of community energy projects.

Business and community buildings

Energy and Carbon saving in local businesses

There is less activity on sustainable energy in businesses than on domestic energy. However a number of groups have targets to provide energy advice to local businesses. Some of these projects are supporting volunteer or semi-professional advisors who will target SME's as well as households. These projects are generally at an early stage but it will be useful to review what approaches they take, how successful they are and what types of business they are able to engage with different approaches.

Sustain Eden has worked to continue and develop the existing "Enworks" service, which provides one to many advice to businesses. With the new funding, the service will be testing new approaches, including proactive work with young farmers and linking their advice more to climate change. So far the service is well ahead of its target having delivered advice to 37 businesses, against a target of 100 businesses advised by the end of the project.

Carbon reduction in community buildings

Few groups have focussed on carbon reduction and sustainability in community buildings and where they have done so this is generally to achieve wider aims, for example:

- Greening Wingrove is considering distributing demonstrations of energy saving and renewable energy measures across community buildings to make them visible to more people.
- Sustainable Harborough Challenge and Dorset Communities Living Sustainably both aim to establish larger community-owned PV arrays and are working with local authorities to install them on community buildings (rather than being ground-mounted or on commercial properties).

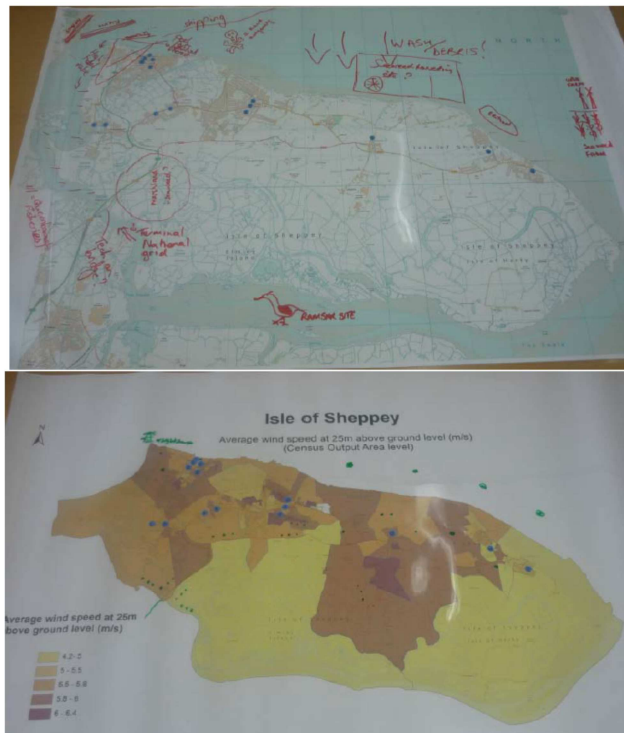
Renewable Energy Generation

As noted elsewhere, seven of the CLS projects are addressing renewable energy. The groups are at differing stages in the development of their projects. Several have introduced early stage feasibility studies into their schemes or are carrying out promotion of household renewables, whilst others have identified existing plans for renewables projects that they can help bring to fruition using CLS resources.

Opportunity studies and engagement

Sustainable Sheppey has taken an innovative approach to renewable energy by engaging their community at the conception stage. The project ran a community energy workshop aimed at consulting local people about which renewable energy technologies should be

developed on the island and how. The workshop included sessions on the different technologies using maps of the area with key resource and constraints data presented with colour coding. Background information on the technologies was provided at the beginning of sessions and facilitators were on hand to answer questions. Participants were then encouraged to draw and write on the maps to highlight opportunities and constraints and express their views about the different technologies.



Examples of renewable energy resource maps used for the Sheppey consultation event showing mark-up by workshop participants.

Separate feedback forms were also available for anyone not able to attend the event. There was strong feedback that a broad range of technologies should be taken forward with Wind and Biomass having the strongest support as topics for their funded feasibility study.

This approach empowers local people by engaging them at inception and giving them input into the design of the scheme. The positive response to renewable energy at the event (especially to a controversial technology such as wind energy) suggests that this early engagement can avoid some of the conflict that often results from presenting fully developed renewable energy schemes at consultation. As CLS will support the project for several more years there will be opportunities to review this again to determine to what extent conflict can be avoided and mitigated and which are the trigger points for any conflict that does arise.

L8 Living Sustainably has contracted out feasibility work to recommend the most appropriate renewable energy technologies for their community whilst Sustain Eden used the "Plan Local" resources from CSE (Centre for Sustainable Energy) in their project and now plan to conduct feasibility studies for hydro power and anaerobic digestion.

Project development

The majority of projects aim to have renewable energy systems installed by the end of their CLS-funded activity. Whilst community renewables projects can take a long time to implement, the timescale of CLS will allow projects to either install or at least complete much of the preparatory work. Many of the groups have tapped into existing plans or aspirations for renewable energy projects that people have failed to progress due to lack of resources. This provides an indication of the level of interest in and demand for community renewable energy across the UK.

Several of the projects identified feasibility study costs as a key barrier to community renewables and six projects are carrying out feasibility studies. This could be another area for peer to peer support, particularly for projects that have yet to draw up specifications for their studies. The range of technologies currently being considered includes; Wind, Hydro, PV, Biomass and Anaerobic Digestion.

Finance and implementation

Most of the CLS participants are not yet at the stage of developing finance packages for their projects. However a number of groups are planning to do so, in particular raising finance for community PV schemes, in many cases including the option for sale of shares to local people.

The interviews conducted for this report highlighted four different groups all developing community PV projects and at different stages in the process. Roof rental agreements, running share offers and legal structures were all cited as issues to be resolved. This suggests that some of the groups could learn from others (for example Dorset Communities Living Sustainably have already bought in consultancy from Bath and West Community Energy who have implemented a portfolio of PV schemes) through the peer to peer strand of CLS. Some community energy groups outside CLS have shared templates for legal agreements and advice on business models in the past, resulting in significant savings in legal costs and development time. There may also be opportunities for the groups to reduce their costs by working together in procuring technical or legal consultancy in future.

The metrics being used to monitor renewable energy projects are generally; number of feasibility studies carried out, systems installed and installed capacity (kW). Some groups are still working to determine the metrics they will use.

Peer to Peer Learning

Current peer learning

Peer learning on energy projects is at an early stage but Groundwork UK has established a peer to peer network on energy which will be developed using the findings from this report.

The Northern-based CLS projects have already established an informal peer to peer networking group between themselves with face to face meetings. This is still relatively new but all of the feedback gained from the Northern CLS projects was positive with groups feeling that there was value in exchanging experience with others engaged with CLS and carrying out similar activities.

As noted above, Dorset Communities Living Sustainably procured consultancy from Bath and West Community Energy (a non-CLS community group that has developed a portfolio of community PV projects) to support the development of their community PV project. One Planet Middlesbrough has used evaluation toolkits through the forum and is also involved in peer to peer learning with CSE (Centre for Sustainable Energy).

Recommendations for future peer learning

There is a strong appetite for face to face peer networking from the groups with many of them specifically requesting workshops. At this stage the groups struggled to list specific topics for peer networking as they generally had limited knowledge of what activities the other projects are undertaking. However many groups expressed a wish to network with other projects involved with CLS and potentially engaged with similar activities. One group reported feeling a little isolated and also suggested that sharing experience across the projects could help to enable innovation. One group did also report that attendance at networking events was not included within their budgets so could be difficult to afford if travel costs were too high.

Face to face contact often helps to stimulate other forms of networking. The RHPP2 (renewable heat premium payment phase two) Communities scheme (a DECC programme administered by EST, supporting community buying networks for domestic renewable heating) ran a programme of workshops at an early stage, providing an opportunity for representatives of the projects to meet each other. An online collaboration portal was established which was well used for the remainder of the programme as the groups felt that they knew each other well, making online communication much easier.

We would endorse the idea of running face-to-face workshops for the groups as an early activity of the energy peer networking group. The workshops could be focused on addressing specific issues raised by this report to ensure that it is responsive to the needs of participating groups and helps implementation of their projects. Initial suggestions for themes of workshop sessions are:

- *Volunteer advisors* – training, support, quality of advice and safety
- *Turning advice into installations* - working with Green Deal, Eco, FiT, RHI etc.
- *Stimulating and monitoring behaviour change* – reviewing different behaviour surveys and behaviour change techniques
- *Metrics and monitoring for energy projects* – discussing user-friendly ways to measure impact in carbon, money saved/economic benefit, carbon emissions reduced, energy saved/generated, impact on fuel poverty and Social Return on Investment.
- *Community PV* – how to develop community PV including, business models, assessing feasibility, roof-rental agreements, legal structure and sale of shares
- *Identification/feasibility for renewables* – reviewing how projects have carried out opportunity studies and engaged the community with renewable energy projects, also discussing freely-available information and resources on renewable energy and specification of feasibility studies.

Learning how Communities learn about sustainability

Practical experience

Practical experience seems to be highly valued by the CLS communities so peer to peer learning from other groups appears to be one of the most widely used methods. Examples include:

- In addition to buying in consultancy from Bath and West Community Energy in developing its community PV project, Dorset Communities Living Sustainably is also considering adopting the “Transition Streets” method developed and piloted by members of the Transition Network (including Transition Totnes).
- Sustain Eden and Manor House PACT projects are adapting the “Green Doctor” process to use within their projects.

Free advice

At an early stage in their projects many groups rely on free advice to help them assess viability before committing substantial resources (in the same way that householders often adopt measures or in-depth surveys following initial free advice). In addition to the obvious issue that many groups are cash-poor there are reputational risks for groups if they commit substantial resources to a particular project that turns out not to be viable. An extreme example of this was a LEAF (Linking Environment and Farming) programme-funded project by a voluntary community group which carried out a feasibility study for a community wind turbine. The feasibility study identified constraints that meant the scheme, as originally conceived, could not go ahead. Local anti-wind activists then lobbied hard for the group’s grant funding to be reclaimed from them on the basis that they had wasted taxpayer’s money and should have known about the constraints. These risks can be managed by provision of free at point-of-use advice. Whilst not replacing in-depth feasibility work, this advice can cost effectively use national data to identify at least some potential barriers and steer projects away from them.

In recent years the scope and availability of free and impartial advice on energy at community level has reduced (for example with the end of the Energy Efficiency Advice Centre Network and austerity measures impacting many council-funded advice services). Other community groups are therefore one of the few sources of free advice available to groups. This appears to work well where documents can be shared and where informal contact is sufficient and CLS has the opportunity to facilitate this between the scheme participants where they can share experience on different aspects of their projects to gain mutual value. However demand for in-depth peer support can also put significant strain on the resources of well known, pioneering groups. In these cases a consultancy approach is more appropriate and, as noted elsewhere, some groups are already using CLS resources to do this.

The Role of Enablers

The enablers have supported the CLS projects in their energy related activities, in addition to their central role in drawing out learning from the programme. This has been especially true where enablers have specific energy expertise. In addition to general advice, support given by enablers has included providing friendly challenge on energy aspects of projects and signposting to useful sources of information or support. The Irwell Valley Sustainable Communities project commented that their enabler had been “a very useful sounding board” and had helped to provide links across the project and to other external activities.

One example of an enabler taking a more proactive, technical role in a project is Sustainable Sheppey’s renewable energy planning days. As outlined in the renewable energy section, the project ran a consultation event, using a “planning for real” format, to determine public

attitudes to deployment of different renewable energy technologies on Sheppey. The enabler worked alongside the group developing the event and took on the role of preparing supporting information to present technical energy information in an accessible format. This involved accessing data (e.g. average windspeeds) from an existing renewable energy study and producing GIS maps to help participants to understand the potential from different resources and where there might be particular opportunities. He also helped to produce supporting technical information around the scale and practicalities of the different technologies and supported with facilitation on the day. This illustrates the value of the enabler's multidisciplinary skills and approach as well as their potential role in providing easy access to technical information.

The telephone survey for this report was carried out by enablers. As well as using their knowledge of the programme to efficiently draw out insight for the report, this provided the opportunity to signpost the CLS participants to information that could support their projects. This included:

- Signposting to the websites of relevant successful community projects (e.g. successful community PV projects)
- Signposting to useful online tools for assessing potential for renewable energy projects
- Discussing key issues and highlighting where other projects had similar experiences

Next steps – future role of enablers

The proposed changes to the enabler's delivery model should help to facilitate better use of their specific expertise to support the CLS projects. Taking a more thematic approach to the work of the partnership will enable the CLS projects to benefit more from the specific expertise of its members. As the enablers are not contracted by the projects their support can focus around challenge and discussion of project delivery models as well as straightforward advice and information. Within the partnership there is significant experience in the following areas that could address need identified in this study; providing energy advice, training energy advisors, running local insulation schemes, supporting community renewables, energy efficiency and renewable energy technologies and social enterprise models for community energy projects.

Having partnership staff working more across the CLS projects (rather than with one project only) is also likely to support peer networking as they will, more easily, be able to identify where common issues are arising and where there is potential for peer support.

Local networks

Alongside looking to groups from other areas for practical experience of similar activities, the CLS groups seem to have been effective at learning from and working with local networks to develop their projects. The projects that have already delivered significant outputs have tapped into pre-existing schemes that support their project aims (e.g. the "Enworks" programme in Cumbria and the energy efficiency programme in Middlesbrough).

Local Authorities

Local Authorities have had an especially important role in supporting energy initiatives through providing easy access to funding and advice schemes for home energy and helping to facilitate wider consultation around renewable energy. A number of projects also reported lack of engagement from their local authorities as being a significant barrier. Engaging with local authorities could be a topic for future peer networking. Some groups reported that the Lottery Grant had helped to raise their profile and enabled better co-operation with Councils as the groups had their own finance available and could offer to help councils deliver their own priorities rather than asking for funding.

One additional point worth noting is that many groups have brought in external contractors to deliver their evaluation plans. This creates the opportunity to bring additional academic rigour to their evaluation but also carries the risk that the partnerships themselves could become less engaged with monitoring and evaluation

Disseminating learning to other stakeholders

Dissemination carried out by CLS projects

As most of the projects are at an early stage, a limited amount of dissemination has occurred to date. Most projects have either developed dissemination plans or have carried out stakeholder mapping. Some early highlights are outlined below:

- Many of the groups are working with universities on evaluation, monitoring or project planning. This will create opportunities to disseminate findings well beyond the CLS programme through academic papers.
- Many of the groups are working through local authorities to reach the population in their area and access their resources in staff, contacts and, in some cases, funding.
- Some projects are including regular media work in their projects. For example Sustain Eden has a regular column in a local newspaper and other projects are using blogging as a communication method.
- Several of the groups are using established community energy networks to share experience and access peer support.

Later in the programme it may be worth reviewing the makeup and structure of the different partnerships and their relative impact. The structure of the partnerships varies significantly with some having a clear lead organisation delivering most of the work, others having a much flatter structure where activity is shared across equal partners and at least one with a lead partner acting as a managing agent and subcontracting activity to other organisations.

Recommendations for the CLS Learning Partnership and Projects

Develop a programme of peer to peer learning workshops themed around practical issues identified in this report. This would provide opportunities for exchange of experience between groups, input from external experts and may stimulate further collaboration (e.g. joint-procurement by groups with similar needs). Possible subjects for workshop sessions include:

- *Volunteer advisors* – training, support, quality of advice and safety
- *Turning advice into installations* - working with Green Deal, Eco, FiT, RHI etc.
- *Stimulating and monitoring behaviour change* – reviewing different behaviour surveys and behaviour change techniques
- *Metrics and monitoring for energy projects* – discussing user-friendly ways to measure impact in carbon, money saved/economic benefit, carbon emissions reduced, energy saved/generated, impact on fuel poverty and Social Return on Investment.
- *Community PV* – how to develop community PV including, business models, assessing feasibility, roof-rental agreements, legal structure and sale of shares
- *Identification/feasibility for renewables* – reviewing how projects have carried out opportunity studies and engaged the community with renewable energy projects, also discussing freely-available information and resources on renewable energy and specification of feasibility studies.

Conclusion

As this report showcases, there is a strong focus on energy within the CLS programme with eleven out of the twelve funded groups undertaking energy related activities. Many of the groups are working on similar projects, experiencing similar issues and looking to exploit similar opportunities within the energy sector. This coupled with the appetite from funded groups for face to face peer networking opportunities has provided a clear steer for the learning partnership to develop an energy peer network. This will comprise of a programme of peer learning workshops themed around the practical issues identified in this report.

Annex 1

One Planet Middlesbrough

The One Planet Middlesbrough project is taking an integrated approach to energy efficiency and behaviour change. This approach is common across the CLS projects however the Middlesbrough project has been able to make significant progress at an early stage through working alongside an existing Council-led insulation scheme. This project is being presented as a case study of what can be achieved by effective community-local authority partnerships with established relationships with installers and sources of funding/finance.

One Planet Middlesbrough's activity focuses around energy efficiency. They are not currently undertaking any activity related to renewable energy but, in addition to their domestic energy efficiency programme, they are also providing energy advice to local businesses and community organisations.

Domestic Energy Efficiency

The focus of One Planet Middlesbrough's work programme on domestic energy efficiency is to address fuel poverty. The CLS funding is being used to resource a programme of training, awareness events and advice which then signpost residents into an existing Middlesbrough Council scheme with accredited installers and access to ECO funding. The scheme aims to ensure that installation of measures is accompanied by good advice to help embed environmental behaviour and help residents to realise the energy savings from installed measures.

The CLS funding is delivering a campaign of public events, drop in sessions and surgeries in community settings to promote energy efficiency and make energy advice more accessible. In common with many other CLS projects, One Planet Middlesbrough is developing a network of residents and frontline staff acting as energy champions to provide energy and benefit eligibility advice and refer households into the Middlesbrough Council scheme. These Champions are receiving training through the CLS project, some of which is accredited through the Open College network. The project is also working closely with a large Housing Association to carry out in-home advice to their tenants and install energy efficiency measures in their properties.

To date One Planet Middlesbrough has delivered a total of 966 households advised and 833 measures installed since the beginning of the CLS project. These measures **could lead to lifetime fuel bill savings well in excess of £1.3million and carbon dioxide savings of almost 5300 tonnes.**² The majority of these measures have been installed in owner-occupied or private rented sector properties. The measures installed and estimated annual bill and carbon dioxide savings are summarised on the following table:

² Based on the mix of measures in Table 1 with bill and carbon savings from energy saving trust (<http://www.energysavingtrust.org.uk/Energy-Saving-Trust/Our-calculations>) and assuming a 15 year lifetime across all measures. The cost saving figures are also based on current fuel costs, in reality these are likely to rise significantly.

Table 1:

Measure	Number installed	Estimated annual cost saving	Estimated annual Carbon Dioxide saving
cavity wall insulation	164	£22,960	92 tonnes
external wall insulation	69	£33,810	131 tonnes
loft insulation top up	433	£10,825	48 tonnes
energy efficient boilers	135	£20,925	82 tonnes
central heating repairs	32	0	0
Total	833	£88,520	353 tonnes

Assumptions from Energy Saving Trust³. Note: no savings assumed from central heating repairs as these are not sufficiently specific to accurately estimate savings.

It is important to note that this project is delivering to households that qualify for substantial support under ECO and works with a well-established Council insulation scheme. Working closely with a major Housing Association will also help the project to deliver significant numbers of installations through training their outreach staff and working with an engaged and supportive landlord.

We would like to recommend working with this and other similar schemes in future to monitor their impact and draw out learning on success factors for community activity on domestic retrofit. This could help to determine which activities were most effective and how the community has benefited and reacted to the project.

Businesses and Community Buildings

One Planet Middlesbrough also aims to increase awareness around energy efficiency and compliance with environmental regulation amongst businesses and community groups. This outreach work will aim to explain how different measures can affect energy bills and help to reduce costs for businesses.

This work is currently at an early stage but has highlighted an opportunity to target advice at community buildings that have recently transferred to community management so are likely to be looking at reducing costs across the board.

³ <http://www.energysavingtrust.org.uk/Energy-Saving-Trust/Our-calculations>

Annex 2

Organisation	Amount awarded	Project description	Duration	Location
Cumbria Action for Sustainability	£955,270	Working with the remote, dispersed community of Eden in Cumbria. The project will look to tackle fuel poverty, address flood risk issues through effective planning and investigate potential sustainable transport models. There is a strong emphasis on community resilience and skill sharing with particular focus on older people as a demographic most at risk	3 years	Penrith, Cumbria
Environmental and Management Solutions Limited	£812,956	The project looks to support a 'Green Homecare Service' which aims to promote sustainable transport options for care workers. The project will also support communities to become more energy efficient, reduce waste and tackle fuel poverty through practical advice and home visits. The project will also create an Eco-house demonstration project which forms an interactive element of the project.	3 years	Hull
Manor House Development Trust	£999,049	Aims to deliver the PACT (Prepare Adapt Connect Thrive) programme. The PACT will work under the strands aimed at promoting access to open spaces, providing 'Green' vocational training opportunities and promoting interaction in the local neighbourhoods with a focus on climate change	3 years	London Boroughs of Hackney and Haringey
Swale Borough Council	£946,275	This project aims to promote the importance of local resources, making greener choices and developing new skills. The project will look to promote sustainable living through a Sustainable Homes Initiative; a community food initiative and renewable energy sources particularly a waste oil recycling scheme. Employment and skills will also be increased through the provision of an environmental awareness courses and training opportunities for energy champions.	3 years	Isle of Sheppey
Sunderland Black and Minority Ethnic Network Limited	£999,066	A partnership approach across Sunderland. The project aims to increase the awareness and understanding of climate change through activities aimed at reducing fuel poverty; increasing environmental awareness particularly among social housing tenants and school children. Volunteers will also be provided with certified training which aims to improve their employability. The project will also look to engage the BME community who are traditionally less aware of climate change issues.	4 years	Sunderland

Granby Toxteth Development Trust	£917,045	Operates across the Princes Park and Riverside areas of Liverpool. The project seeks to promote energy efficiency and sustainable energy sources including Solar PV and encourage local food growing through the creation of a patchwork farm. A community energy venture will also seek to provide local households with electricity at a reduced rate, including potential savings of around 30 per cent on household bills	5 years	Liverpool
Middlesbrough Environment City Trust Limited	£998,928	Promotes the principles of One Planet Living across Middlesbrough and the Tees Valley. The main focus of the project will be on sustainable transport; local and sustainable food; sustainable water; climate change adaptation; zero carbon and zero waste. The project looks to achieve behaviour change among deprived communities, those with low educational attainment and people living with a variety of health issues.	5 years	Middlesbrough & Tees Valley
Rural Community Council (Leicestershire & Rutland)	£999,962	This project has a focus on the town of Market Harborough as a 'test bed' for sustainable living, and looks to improve the environmental sustainability and resilience to climate change of an entire town. The project also aims to make an impact in water and energy efficiency, food growing and bio-diversity, as well as look to make an economic impact through the launch of a sustainable energy company and the Harborough Currency for example. RCC will also develop a demonstration house which will be retro-fitted for more sustainable living. The property will be used as show home for sustainable living with events held to highlight the changes that can be made.	5 years	Leicestershire & Rutland
The Broughton Trust	£999,986	A community-led project based in Salford. The project will increase awareness of climate change issues through community based working and interaction with local people to develop solutions which are most applicable to them. A key element of the project will be to develop land for the community to use for food growing initiatives. A carbon impact tool will also be used by local residents to raise awareness of the impacts behaviour change can have with a focus on fuel bills and energy savings. Green Champions will also support the community by promoting sustainable living.	5 years	Salford
Workers' Educational Association	£978,147	Based in the Wingrove district of Newcastle. The project activities will focus on three main strands which are the maximisation of community assets, conscious consumption and a community innovation fund. The work areas include demonstration projects on topics such as food growing, water usage and energy generation. The community innovation fund will support the local community to develop initiatives and activities which will form part of the wider project with each initiative being responsive to the needs of the local community and be designed by them.	5 years	Newcastle upon Tyne

Willow Park Housing Trust	£1,000,000	Based in Wythenshawe, Manchester this project aims to promote greater community cohesion and engagement with climate change. The project will include five flagship projects which draw on local resources. The five flagship projects include an indoor growing system; outdoor growing spaces; a walled community garden and sustainable eating. The project will also launch five community hubs to provide support and advice with a focus on the individual flagship projects. Examples of the community hubs include the Manchester College and University Hospital South Manchester.	5 years	Manchester
Dorset Community Action	£960,523	This project aims to improve resilience to climate change across Dorset by delivering a range of activities to address the greatest needs. It will involve engaging communities and businesses to adopt 'green' behaviours, supporting schools to achieve 'eco-school' status, recruiting residents as volunteers to help people in their community improve their resilience to climate change and developing social enterprises such as a wood fuel enterprise that uses local woodland resources	5 years	Dorset

