

Net Zero Community Energy Fund 2022

Case study projects and key themes

December 2023



Produced by Regen on behalf of Northern Powergrid

Contents

Summary	2
Grant recipient summaries	3
Key themes from the projects	6
Details of the funded projects.....	8
Grimsby Community Energy	8
Humshaugh School Governors	10
Low Impact Living Affordable Community (LILAC)	12
Northallerton Methodist Church	14
Positive Active Developments (PAD CIC)	17
Pennine Community Power.....	18
Yetton Together	20
York Community Energy.....	21

Front cover photograph: Grimsby Community Energy: T-shirts for share offer promotion

About Northern Powergrid

Northern Powergrid is a Distribution Network Operator (DNO) that manages the electricity network that powers everyday life for more than 8 million people across 3.9 million homes and businesses in the North East, Yorkshire and northern Lincolnshire.

It has a key role to play in facilitating the energy transition and recognises that supporting the growth of community energy helps to ensure this transition is as fair as possible with no one left behind.

In 2014, Northern Powergrid was the first DNO to launch a Community Energy Seed Fund and in 2020, published a Community Energy Engagement Strategy for 2020-2023, setting out 26 commitments to support the community energy sector. A refreshed version of the strategy covering 2023-2025 is due to be published in 2023.

About Regen

This report has been written by Regen to share the case studies resulting from the projects that received funding from the Net Zero Community Energy Fund in 2022.

Regen is an independent centre of energy expertise, market insight and analysis with a mission to support and accelerate the transformation of the UK's energy system to a low carbon future. Regen's analysis work is underpinned by our stakeholder engagement, events and communications capability, which enables Regen to present new energy concepts and ideas to a wider audience, including a network of over 250 community energy organisations across the UK.

Regen has supported Northern Powergrid on the Community Energy Engagement programme since 2019. The programme consists of in-person forums, online training sessions, newsletters and as of 2022, the Net Zero Community Energy Fund.

Summary

In April 2022 Northern Powergrid launched its Net Zero Community Energy Fund, with £50,000 in funding to support new and existing community energy organisations and climate action groups across the North East, Yorkshire and North East Lincolnshire.

The fund aims to help new and existing groups with up to £10,000 to build capacity, access expertise and explore feasible project ideas in the early 'at risk' stages of project development, and support emerging community energy organisations with start-up costs.

The £50,000 was distributed in September 2022 to nine local organisations working on energy projects. Through the fund, the organisations across the North East and Yorkshire have been able to take the next steps on their journey towards bringing about lower carbon communities.

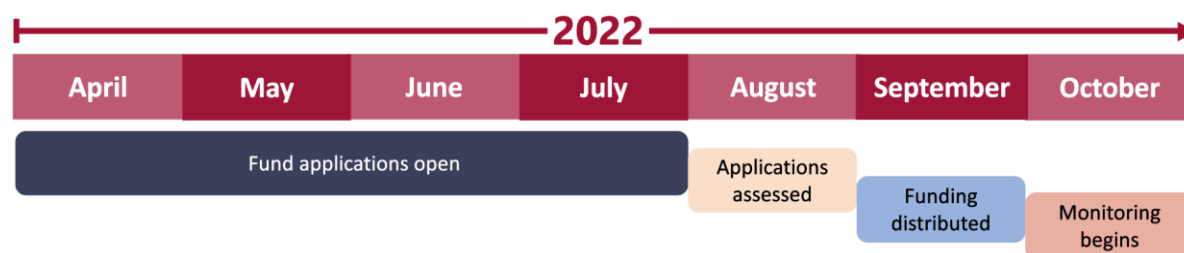
Projects that received funding undertook activities like launching a share offer, creating a

plan to decarbonise a church, finding new host sites for community renewables and training new staff to develop new areas of business. The projects ran for a maximum of 12 months, with all projects completed by September 2023.

This report sets out the key learnings from the 2022 Net Zero Community Energy Fund projects that can be drawn upon by the wider community energy sector, including the importance of taking a participatory approach, adapting to difficult economic contexts, establishing longevity, and careful project planning.

Following the success of the fund in 2022, it was continued in 2023, with eight organisations receiving a share of £50,000. We look forward to following their journeys and reporting on this in 2024. We are excited to support more organisations through the Net Zero Community Energy Fund for years to come.

The process



Grant recipient summaries

Organisation	Project name	Amount
Grimsby Community Energy	Trebling solar PV capacity and community benefit	£9,463
<p>Grimsby Community Energy (GCE) is a cooperative, run by members who are dedicated to bringing community energy projects to their local area. It currently operates solar PV in multiple locations and is looking to expand.</p> <p>GCE launched its fourth community share offer, seeking to raise £314,000 for six installations of solar PV with a total capacity of 436kW. The funding enabled GCE to develop the share offer, launch the promotional campaign and begin processing the share offer applications. Two interns from a local college were taken on to support this work. The funded activity has led to 30 share applications, totalling £165,050 to date.</p>		
Humshaugh First School Governors	Humshaugh First School ASHP Project	£5,000
<p>Humshaugh Church of England First School serves the Parish of Humshaugh, Northumberland, and surrounding communities with provision for nursery, reception and Years 1-4 children, i.e. aged 2-9 years old. The project was initiated when the Governors were asked to undertake a programme of decarbonisation in response to the climate emergency.</p> <p>Humshaugh First School Governors replaced the oil boiler in Humshaugh First School with Air Source Heat Pumps (ASHPs). The Church of England was able to cover 90% of the costs, with Humshaugh First School Governors required to find 10%. The Net Zero Community Energy Fund was a crucial part of the Governors contribution.</p>		
Low Impact Living Affordable Community (LILAC)	Net Zero for Community Led Housing	£4,000
<p>LILAC (Low Impact Living Affordable Community) is a co-housing community of 20 eco-build households in West Leeds. The homes and land are managed by residents through a Mutual Home Ownership Society, a pioneering financial model that aims to ensure affordability.</p> <p>LILAC used the funding to complete a feasibility study to determine the steps needed to take to become a net zero residential community by the mid-2030s, culminating in a comprehensive report presented to LILAC members. The results of the study will directly inform the first cycle of replacements in a planned asset maintenance process and has increased awareness of Net Zero among housing co-op members.</p>		
Northallerton Methodist Church	Net Zero: Permission To Go	£5,000
<p>Northallerton Methodist Church, built in 1865, is the largest Methodist Church in the Thirsk and Northallerton Circuit. The Net Zero: Permission to Go project stems from the commitment made by the Yorkshire North and East District of the Methodist Church to become net zero by 2040.</p> <p>The Church used the funding to develop a 'Pathway to Net Zero' that sets out a detailed plan for decarbonisation which they will use to attract capital works funding. The study found that the church could achieve operational net zero at a cost of £291,000 through the installation of 38.8kWp solar PV array, 48kW battery and air source heat pump (topped up with electrical heating and retrofit works). Crucially, this project provides an exemplar that could be replicated by other churches in the district</p>		

Northern Community Power	North of Tyne Community Energy - The next steps	£4,500
<p>Northern Community Power is a social enterprise focused on community renewable energy development and fuel poverty. Its goal is to create income streams from renewable generation that can be used to support low income neighbourhoods with energy efficiency.</p> <p>The Net Zero Community Energy Fund supported Northern Community Power to identify and explore opportunities for new renewable installations and energy advice delivery. The funding provided essential capacity that enabled the organisation to build relationships with key local stakeholders (including local businesses and local authorities) and spend time developing ideas. This has resulted in a new partnership, a plan to conduct feasibility studies on two partner sites and enhanced relationships with three community centres.</p>		
Positive Activities Developments CIC (PAD-CIC)	Heat or Eat	£5,000
<p>Positive active Developments (PAD-CIC) is a not-for-profit, Community Interest Company developing innovative, community-led and managed renewable energy, conservation and sustainable food solutions.</p> <p>The Net Zero Community Energy Fund supported PAD CIC to undertake essential energy advisor training to upskill key team members and secure longer-term prospects for the organisation. The funding also enabled PAD CIC to continue offering energy advice and develop the support programme that it offers.</p>		
Pennine Community Power	Retrofit Calderdale	£9,500
<p>Pennine Community Power is a Community Benefit Society, started in 2012 by members of the community in the upper Calder Valley. Previous projects include the installation of solar PV on a local school and the installation of a 10kw wind turbine. The Retrofit Calderdale project was a collaboration between Pennine Community Power and Carbon Coop.</p> <p>The Net Zero Community Energy fund enabled Pennine Community Power to deliver a Community Champions initiative which recruited eight householders in Todmorden, monthly retrofit workshops for local residents attended by approximately 75 residents, and a two-day retrofit workshop for tradespeople and contractors interested in moving into the retrofit sector.</p>		
Yetton Together	Energy efficiency	£400
<p>Yetton Together is a community group made up of the residents of Kirkheaton and the surrounding area which was established to promote a community spirit and life improvement.</p> <p>The funding enabled Yetton Together to install a smart thermostat to manage the heating more effectively. Now that the smart thermostat is installed, they can heat the community centre more efficiently by adjust timings and temperatures remotely and avoid heating the building when it's not in use.</p>		

York Community Energy	Warmer Homes York Development Project	£7,557
<p>York Community Energy is a social enterprise with the aim to reduce York's carbon emissions by both saving energy and generating community-owned renewable energy.</p> <p>The project aimed to integrate YCE's retrofit and fuel poverty services under the umbrella of York Energy Advice, creating a One Stop Shop for retrofit in York. The funding was used to develop a business plan and initiate its implementation. This included the purchase of new Customer Relationship Management software and a thermal imaging camera to enhance service delivery. YCE was also used to expand its energy advice service, receiving 74 retrofit enquiries and conducting 34 assessments. In total the funding helped support 304 vulnerable households. The project enhanced YCE's energy and retrofit advice service, and the business plan and lessons learned will guide future growth.</p>		



Northallerton Methodist Church: Solar panels on the roof of a church building

Key themes from the projects

The 2022 funded projects all focused on different elements of decarbonization with different objectives and different ways of achieving them, from feasibility studies to training, and equipment purchase to community champion programmes. However, there are several key themes that have emerged from all the funded projects.

Adapting to a difficult political and economic climate

At least two of the projects were impacted by the current economic and political climate. Grimsby Community Energy, has prior experience delivering share offers and found that it was harder to attract small investors (£100 - £1000) because of the cost-of-living crisis and high interest rates on savings. This led to a pivot in the fund raising strategy, whereby GCE focused on small businesses and other local institutions rather than individuals. A key learning is that this could be an untapped source for community energy funding. Similarly, Northern Community Power found that when identifying potential host sites for solar PV, some existing leads dropped away, and new leads were more tentative. Resulting in a need to be patient in how they engage and allow discussions to progress.

Enhancing future prospects

Many projects used the funding to procure equipment or take steps towards establishing services that will have longer lasting impacts for the organisations. It is crucial that organisations take a longer-term perspective with funding, as key issue for many organisations in the wider community energy sector is establishing long term business models that do not solely rely on grant funding.

Key examples of this are:

- PAD CIC undertook the *National Energy Action: Level 3 Energy Advice* course which enables them to deliver energy advisor training to others. The organisation is considering running a course to increase the number of advisors in the area and develop a new source of income generation.
- York Community Energy procured a new Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system to track client interactions, helping professionalise the service that it offers. They also procured a new thermal imaging camera which has, and will continue to be, an additional paid service that they can offer retrofit clients.
- In addition to developing and launching the 2023 share offer, Grimsby was also able to start developing its 2024 share offer – engaging a long list of potential host sites.
- Northallerton Methodist Church now has a detailed plan that has robust technical assessments to provide any potential capital works funders. The study also provides guidance to contractors on exactly what is required to decarbonise the church. They were able to begin the planning permission process, receiving confirmation that the solar PV would be approved as “permitted development” and submitting a planning application for the heat pumps, which was later granted.
- LILAC’s study has resulted in a set of recommendations that will inform the upgrades that are made to the communities buildings over the coming years.
- Northern Community Power spent time networking, developing and engaging leads for potential host sites for solar PV. They have now secured funding to carry out a feasibility assessment in 2024 with one of the leads that were engaged through this project.
- Pennine Community Power, through the work engaging the residents of Calderdale on climate change and retrofit, has enabled the development of an emerging peer to peer network, noting that many participants set up Whatsapp, Facebook and email groups to continue communicating with each other.

Taking a participatory approach and sharing results.

Many of the projects took a participatory approach to achieving their project outcomes. In many cases, this led to the organisations co-developing targets and outcomes with the communities that they were working in, and upskilling those communities through this process. For example, LILAC held an initial consultation workshop with a group of 20 co-op members, followed by a series of meetings with a core energy group. They also conducted an online member survey with detailed questions about energy use and the experience of our buildings and technologies. The final report was presented to coop members at presented in an all-member workshop.

Many of the organisations involved were able to maximise impact through wide dissemination of the project results. Some projects demonstrated feasibility and/or implementation of decarbonisation in a specific context (e.g. in a church, housing coop or school building) that could help similar projects understand what type of work is required and at what cost. Both LILAC and Humshaugh School Governors planned to share the project results widely and Northallerton Methodist Church is part of a church network which will directly benefit from the results of its pathway to net zero study.

Planning and timescales

Many organisations also learnt valuable lessons about managing net zero projects in communities.

York Community Energy learnt that there is a difference in when retrofit work is desired and when it is best carried out. Demand for services increases in September, but actual retrofit work is best done in spring/summer months which poses challenges for year-round staffing and understanding revenue flow over different months in the year. This is something YCE was able to reflect on in more detail in its business plan.

Grimsby Community Energy found it challenging to plan around partner organisations with complex approval processes and highlighted that it is important to factor this into project planning.

Northallerton Methodist Church noted that it was challenging to ensure that the timelines of grid permissions, planning permissions and length of funding were aligned. The organisation highlighted occasions when the funding could have run out before they had secured planning permission, or that the planning permission could be invalid by the time they secure grid permissions. To overcome this, Northallerton Methodist Church were able to secure additional funding to ensure they had capacity to apply for planning permission

Humshaugh First School: Heat pump installation



Details of the funded projects

Grimsby Community Energy

Project: Trebling Solar PV Capacity & Community Benefit
Amount Received: £9463

Background

Grimsby Community Energy (GCE) is a cooperative, run by members who are dedicated to bringing community energy projects to their local area. It currently operates solar PV in multiple locations and is looking to expand.

The project

The Net Zero Community Energy Fund supported the launch of GCE's fourth community share offer, seeking to raise £314,000 for six installations of solar PV with a total capacity of 436kW. The funding enabled GCE to develop the share offer, launch the promotional campaign and begin processing the share offer applications. Two interns from a local college were taken on to support this work.

The funding provided the organisation with essential capacity required undertake the administration and communication associated with the development, promotion and launch of the share offer. This included launching a multi-platform promotional campaign via social media, a launch event, networking events, radio, press, TV and leafleting.

The interns gained experience in developing and promoting a share offer, bookkeeping, processing share applications, social media communications, and video creation. They are now better informed on climate change, community energy, renewables and small business administration.



Grimsby Community Energy: T-shirts for share offer promotion

Involving interns supports the continued diversification of the community energy sector, bringing in younger people and perspectives. The two interns successfully completed their placements with GCE, and GCE report that since hosting these two interns, it's gained reputation as a good provider of placements.

The activities funded by the Net Zero Community Energy fund have, to date, delivered 30 share applications totalling £165,050. When the 436kW of solar PV capacity is installed, it will save approximately 60.5 tonnes of carbon per year. Over the 25-year lifespan of the installations, the host organisations will save an estimated £300,000. The project has put GCE in a position to apply for larger and longer-term funds that will see it through 2024 and its fifth share offer.

Key lessons learned

When planning project timelines, be sure to factor in the time it may take to work with partner organisations, especially those with more complex approval processes like local authorities.

Raising a share offer is difficult at present. Finding small investors (£100 to £1000) has been much more difficult than previous share offers. The cost-of-living crisis and high interest rates on savings make it difficult to attract investors. Approaching small businesses and other local institutions may be a new way for community energy to attract investment, as this has worked well for GCE.

LinkedIn advertising did not help them gain new investment and was expensive. Facebook posts worked well, and those that gained the most traction were posts that featured pictures of beneficiaries and instigated a discussion.



Grimsby Community Energy: Share offer promotion material

Humshaugh School Governors

Project Name: Humshaugh First School ASHP Project

Amount received: £5,000

Background

Humshaugh Church of England First School serves the Parish of Humshaugh, Northumberland, and surrounding communities with provision for nursery, reception and Year 1-4 children. The project was initiated when the Governors were asked to undertake a programme of decarbonisation in response to the climate emergency.

The project

The School, built in 1833, was previously heated by an oil boiler that used 8,000 litres of oil annually, emitting approximately 25,000 kg carbon dioxide each year. To address this, the Governors initiated a project to replace the oil boiler with Air Source Heat Pumps (ASHPs). The Church of England was able to cover 90% of the costs, with Humshaugh First School Governors required to find the final 10%. The Net Zero Community Energy Fund was a crucial part of the Governors contribution.

The ASHPs were installed during the summer holiday in 2022. Heat is now supplied by four Mitsubishi ASHPs which heat a buffer tank that in turn heats hot water for a hot water tank, wall-mounted fan-assisted radiators and floor-mounted conventional radiators.

The system has been working well since installation, including during the very cold period of weather in December 2022. The school has encountered some operational issues, but these have been or are being addressed in a timely manner by the contractors.

The project achieved its key objective of reducing the carbon emissions associated with the schools heating. In addition to the above direct impact of the project, the successful completion of the project has demonstrated the feasibility ASHPs as a low carbon heating system for similar schools and other public buildings.

With appropriate maintenance the contractors estimate that the heat pumps will last at least 20 years.



Humshaugh First School: Heat pump installation

Lessons learned

Based on current estimates, the running cost of the ASHP's is likely to be similar to the oil boiler. Consequently, the reduction in carbon dioxide emissions of 25,000 kg each year will not be associated with any marked change in recurrent heating costs.



Humshaugh First School: Heat pump installation

“The funding from the Northern Powergrid’s Net Zero Community Energy fund has been invaluable in realising the decarbonisation of the primary school by replacing the existing boiler with ASHP – which now heats the school very well.”

Herbie Newell CBE, Chair of Governors, Humshaugh CoE (Aided) First School.

Low Impact Living Affordable Community (LILAC)

Project Name: Net Zero for Community Led Housing Feasibility project
Amount received: £4,000

Background

LILAC (Low Impact Living Affordable Community) is a co-housing community of 20 eco-build households in West Leeds. The homes and land are managed by residents through a Mutual Home Ownership Society, a pioneering financial model that aims to ensure affordability.

The project

LILAC used the funding to complete a feasibility study to determine the steps needed to reach its goal of becoming a net zero residential community by the mid-2030s. It worked closely with Leeds Environmental Design Architects (LEDA), a local based housing energy expert organisation, and the results of the study will directly inform its first cycle of replacements in its planned asset maintenance process.

The feasibility study included baselining and criteria setting, options development, appraisal and detailed engagement. It held an initial consultation workshop with a group of 20 LILAC members, followed by a series of meetings with a core energy group to provide LEDA with the data required to do a full analysis of energy use in the community. It also conducted an online member survey with detailed questions about energy use and the experience of buildings and technologies. This was used to compile the final report, which was submitted and presented in an all-member workshop in June 2022. Final changes have been made and the report will be shared with networks and as part of learning workshops.



LILAC: co-housing community buildings

In addition to achieving the main objective of completing a one-year feasibility study to support the journey to net zero, there were a significant number of additional impacts from the project. Members of the housing co-op are now much better informed about their energy use and have key takeaways for how to be more efficient, whilst also having clear ideas for how to replace technologies when they reach their end of life. LILAC also now has the evidence needed to make informed decisions about how to cost-effectively decrease overall carbon footprint, and detailed product breakdowns and recommendations for replacing current systems, such as Mechanical Ventilation and Heat Recovery (MVHR), and solar thermal. The project has benefits that go beyond the co-op itself, as they will be able to share the findings with other eco builds and communities with similar net zero aspirations.

Lessons learned

Involving members in the process is key to ensuring that plans are developed collaboratively. In addition, involving members helps to improve their understanding of what is required to achieve net zero.

“The funding from Northern Powergrid provides our housing coop with an important stepping-stone to undertake future energy use planning.”

Lara – LILAC member and project lead.



LILAC: Co-housing community members

Northallerton Methodist Church

Project Name: Net Zero: Permission to Go

Amount received: £5,000

Background

Northallerton Methodist Church, built in 1865, is the largest Methodist Church in the Thirsk and Northallerton Circuit. The Net Zero: Permission to Go project stems from the commitment made by the Yorkshire North and East District of the Methodist Church to become Net Zero by 2040.

The project

The Net Zero Community Energy Fund supported Northallerton Methodist Church to develop a 'Pathway to Net Zero' outlining practical steps for achieving net zero. It built on the Rural Community Energy Fund (RCEF) funded feasibility study, which explored the potential for 21 churches in the district to achieve net zero. Northallerton Methodist Church was selected to serve as a test case for the district. The Pathway to Net Zero study aimed to develop a detailed plan that prepared it to take the specific measures forward and provide an exemplar that could be replicated.

Sizing and specification work was carried out for the proposed heat pump, solar PV and battery solution, in addition to an assessment of the required energy saving measures. The study found the church could save 17.8t CO2 pa with the installation of 38.8kWp solar PV array, 48kW battery and air source heat pump. These measures alongside electrical heating and retrofit works means the church could achieve operational net zero at a cost of £291,000.



Northallerton Methodist Church: Room used for net zero planning

The study outlines a clear pathway for the church and demonstrates to potential capital works funders there is a researched and costed plan for achieving net zero. It shows the project has a firm foundation, with a robust technical assessment to give funders the confidence that the final solution is appropriate and viable. The study also provides guidance to contractors on exactly what is required to decarbonise this, and potentially other prospective buildings.

Crucially, this project serves as a demonstrator to other churches in the district, the national Methodist network and beyond. Once capital works are completed, they plan to share the project via local press, social media and the Churches Together network. The project has received national recognition and was shortlisted for an award at the 2023 Community Energy England Awards.

After completing the study, the church was able to begin applying for planning permissions. It received confirmation that the solar PV would be approved as “permitted development”. And submitted a planning application for the heat pumps, which was later granted.



Northallerton Methodist Church: Old heating system inspection

Key lessons learned

Often building occupiers do not keep records of the energy data required for studies of this nature, which can lead to inaccurate assumptions being made about building energy use. However, in this case the building occupier had been interested in energy data for some time and had kept records of usage, which meant this phase of the project ran more smoothly. This was particularly useful as the church is an old building made up of four different parts that have very different uses.

Explaining the complex details of the Net Zero Pathway to the church congregation, who are a non-technical audience, was an important aspect of this project. The church praised consultant D3 associates for effectively translating technical information and ensuring everyone understood and felt included in the changes.

Finally, the church noted that with projects of this size and scale, it can often be difficult to align the timings of the grid permissions, planning permissions and funding cycles. At points throughout the process the organisation got close to losing funding needed to push through the planning permissions.

“This funding has made a tremendous difference. It has enabled us to plan the best pathway towards fulfilling our Net Zero ambition. We look forward to sharing our learning with others.” -

Rev Arthur Harbottle, Superintendent Minister of Northallerton Methodist Church

Positive Active Developments (PAD CIC)

Project: Heat or Eat

Amount received: £5,000

Background

Positive Active Developments (PAD CIC) is a not-for-profit, Community Interest Company developing innovative, community-led and managed renewable energy, conservation and sustainable food solutions.

The project

The Net Zero Community Energy Fund supported PAD CIC to undertake essential energy advisor training to upskill key team members and enable them to secure longer-term prospects for the organisation. The funding also enabled PAD CIC to continue offering its energy advice and develop the support programme that it offers.

Through this project, PAD CIC has trained two members of staff. One member of staff undertook the *National Energy Action: Level 3 Energy Advice* course, the other undertook the *City and Guilds: Energy Awareness and Energy Advice* course. Both courses provided essential skills for the staff and organisation that enabled it to further develop its energy advice and support service. The Level 3 Energy Advice accreditation also enables them to deliver energy advisor training to others. PAD CIC is now considering organising an energy advisor course locally, to increase the number of advisors in the area and develop a new source of income for the organisation.

In addition to training, PAD CIC delivered 12 energy advice mornings throughout the year to provide energy advice in a casual setting, reaching approximately 100 people. These sessions helped people to understand simple energy efficiency measures, using heating effectively, interpreting an energy bill, where to go for further help and signposted any grants they could apply for. Crucially, PAD CIC undertook an initial research session, attended by six people, to gather insight on the sort of support that people needed. This was a crucial step as PAD CIC tends to help people who have disabilities and may have complex energy needs. PAD CIC plans to apply for additional funding to be able to build upon what it has learned and continue to offer these services.

Overall, the project has helped PAD CIC to spread the word about the work that it does, both locally and nationally, resulting in higher numbers of views on its website and more interest in its services. The project has put the organisation in a good position to apply for further funding and enabled them to learn about new opportunities and methods for helping people with energy efficiency.

Key lessons learned

The courses undertaken and service delivered have helped the organisation to understand more about the type of support that people need, how this can change from person to person and how it depends on the geographic region. In addition, the organisation has learned about new opportunities for providing energy advice, like thermal imaging cameras.

Pennine Community Power

Project: Retrofit Calderdale

Amount received: £9,500

Background

Pennine Community Power is a Community Benefit Society, started in 2012 by members of the community in the upper Calder Valley. The Retrofit Calderdale project was a collaboration between Pennine Community Power and Carbon Coop.

The project

The Net Zero Community Energy fund enabled the Pennine Community Power to deliver a Community Champions initiative, monthly retrofit workshops for residents and a two-day retrofit workshop for tradespeople and contractors.

During the Community Champions initiative, eight people in Todmorden were recruited as champions to lead discussions with friends and neighbours. The champions received energy assessments and led seven informal gatherings with friends and neighbours. During these sessions, conversations included how to support each other with retrofit aspirations and how to overcome barriers such as finding reputable local tradespeople, contractors etc. Many community champions have set up email lists, WhatsApp and Facebook groups with neighbours and local friends to continue the conversations.



Pennine Community Power: Community workshop

Between February and May, Carbon Coop hosted monthly workshops retrofit workshops which were free for all residents. It covered four retrofit themes:

- Use of Thermal Imaging cameras;
- DIY airtightness and ventilation;
- Retrofit and Flooding; and
- Home Energy Assessments.

Workshops were introductory and beginner friendly. The four sessions were attended by approximately 75 residents in total. The topics were well received by all participants and feedback repeatedly mentioned the positive impact of meeting other residents interested in retrofit.

In mid-September, Carbon Coop and People Powered Retrofit (PPR) ran a two-day retrofit workshop on the fundamentals of retrofit skills for local tradespeople and contractors. A total of 12 organisations registered their interest and six learners completed the full course. Five construction professionals and one community champion who was also a keen on DIY retrofit participated in the workshop. This session introduced the key skills to existing contractors / tradespeople or individuals looking to move into retrofit and learners provided good feedback about the course content, delivery and venue.

Key lessons learned

All workshops had great engagement with participants actively contributing and asking questions.. The Saturday morning sessions had the highest number of participants compared to the weekday evening sessions. Future programmes of this nature should learn from this and maximise weekend workshops whenever possible.

The workshop with the best attendance was the second workshop on Ventilation and Airtightness that focused around DIY and (relatively) low cost measures. This confirms similar experience in running this kind of workshop in other programmes. It is clear there is a real interest and need by local householders to understand early, easier to implement retrofit measures.

The organisation set aside £500 to offer subsidies for attendance where needed. This proved to be a good plan and helped subsidise two places for people from the community champions programme. This should be repeated for future programmes of this nature.



Pennine Community Power: Community workshop

Yetton Together

The project: Energy efficiency
Amount received: £400

Background

Yetton Together is a community group made up of the residents of Kirkheaton and the surrounding area which was established to promote a community spirit and life improvement.

The project

The Kirkheaton Community Centre applied for this grant as part of a project to reduce energy bills and carbon emissions. The centre is a Victorian ex school building which is expensive to heat, so the organisation has been looking at ways to use its heating system more effectively.

The £400 it received from the Net Zero Community Energy Fund enabled it to install a smart thermostat to manage the heating more smartly. Now that the smart thermostat is installed, it can heat the community centre more efficiently by adjust timings and temperatures remotely and avoid heating the building when not in use. The group now hopes to “zone” the building's heating system by purchasing individual thermostats for the radiators, which will enable them to heat only the rooms that are in use.



*Right: Yetton Together: Kirkheaton Community Centre
Left: Yetton Together: Smart thermostat installation*

York Community Energy

Project: York Retrofit One Stop Shop
Amount received: £7560

Background

York Community Energy (YCE) is a social enterprise which aims to reduce York's carbon emissions by both saving energy and generating community-owned renewable energy.

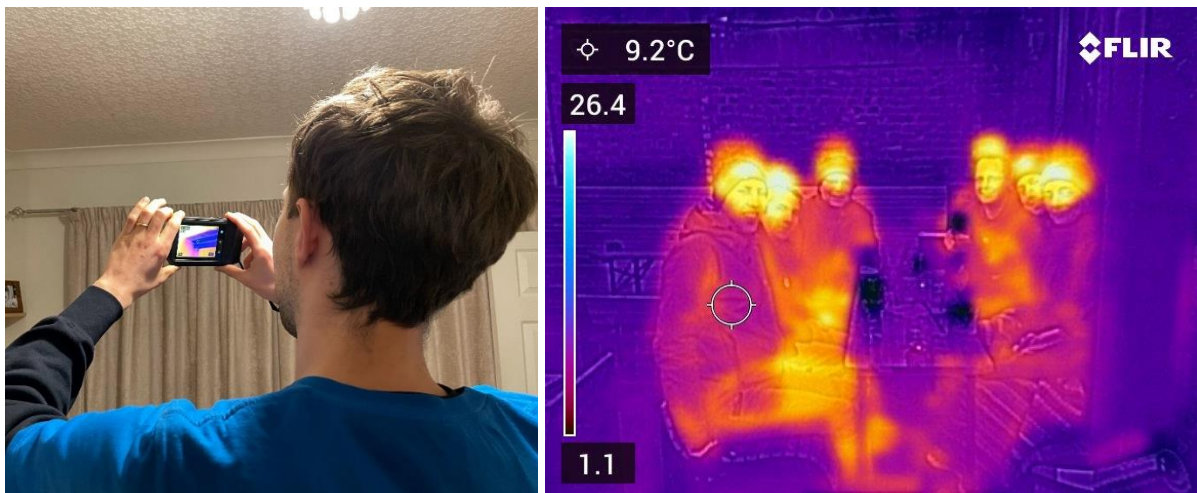
The project

The project aimed to integrate YCE's retrofit and fuel poverty services under the umbrella of York Energy Advice, creating a One Stop Shop for retrofit in York. The funding was used to develop a business plan and initiate its implementation.

As part of YCE's retrofit and fuel poverty service development, it procured a new professional Customer Relationship Management (CRM) software to track client interactions. It also procured a new thermal imaging camera to conduct paid thermal imaging assessments for retrofit clients (used 27 times). Clients have been positive about this service and have benefited from understanding where heat is being lost from their home.

YCE used funding for staff costs to expand York Energy Advice, receiving 74 retrofit enquiries and conducting 34 retrofit assessments. The service has been well received by clients, who whilst able and willing to pay for retrofit works on their homes, have previously lacked reliable information on the subject. A post-assessment hand-holding service and video consultation were attempted but had limited success. The Net Zero Community Energy Fund, along with other sources, allowed YCE to support 304 vulnerable households facing high energy costs.

YCE now has a more rounded and comprehensive energy/retrofit advice service for York residents. It will use its business plan and the lessons learned throughout this project to continue to grow and develop its service. It has been successful in various funding bids to keep the service running beyond this project and has forged stronger links with City of York Council, which has opened up new opportunities.



York Community Energy: Using new thermal imaging camera

Lessons learned

YCE planned to engage local retrofit contractors and sign them up to a code of conduct in line with their community values. However, it faced challenges as busy tradespeople didn't immediately see the benefits of engaging with community energy, and that engagement with other key stakeholders will help it take a coordinated approach.

The post-assessment hand-holding services had mixed success. Some engagement occurred, but clients were hesitant to pay for handholding through the retrofit design and contractor engagement. YCE recognise the need to promote this more in future and make it clearer what the benefits are for the communities involved.

YCE has learnt that there is a difference in when retrofit work is desired and when it is best carried out. Demand for services increases in September, but actual retrofit work is best done in spring/summer months which poses challenges for year-round staffing and understanding revenue flow over different months in the year. YCE reflect on this in more detail in its new business plan.

“Tom was friendly, helpful, thorough and knowledgeable and I just feel better knowing you guys are out there. Your service is invaluable in these current conditions we’re living through.”

Ms LB, vulnerable energy advice client

“Thanks to the funding, we have been able to purchase a thermal imaging camera to carry out heat loss surveys with, as well as provide energy advice and install energy-saving measures for people in fuel poverty”

Tom, York Community Energy