

# Wessex Community Energy Network Meeting

25<sup>th</sup> April 2023 (Zoom)



## Summary of Presentations

### Tisbury Electric Car Club – Gustavo Montes De Oca, Nadder Community Energy

The aim of the car club is to reduce car usage in the community by sharing.

Tisbury electric car club currently has 82 members of which 20 are regular users.

#### How it works

- **Technology** - Uses a technology platform (Mobility Factory) for online bookings and access from phone. This reduces the administrative workload for volunteers. This platform is used by other car clubs including overseas car clubs, so offers the possibility for members to book cars in other locations. (There are other models such as facilitating a regional or national car club operator such as Co-Cars, or a sharing platform such as Hiya and Turo which operate similarly to AirBnB).
- **Membership** – Nominal annual fee – there are vetting checks and an induction process for driving the electric car.
- **Usage** – An app on the phone opens the car, with pay-as-you-go usage charges (standard charge currently £5.40/hour but there are discounted rates and concessions)

#### Key Challenges

- Changing behaviour – moving from ‘ownership’ to sharing and converting to electric car
- Insurance – very expensive to insure the cars (approx. £1,500 per car). An alternative is to have insurance for each user

#### Further Information

##### Case study, short video, and webinar about Tisbury Electric Car Club

<https://www.next-generation.org.uk/innovation>

##### Community Car Club Start-up Guide - work in progress document by the Tisbury Electric Car Club

<https://goldengus.notion.site/goldengus/Community-Car-Club-Start-up-Guide-cd4cb62fd41a4360993ef62c648c1729>

#### Gustavo’s suggestions for car clubs in smaller rural areas

- Start small e.g. with neighbours. You can put 5 or 6 people on an individual insurance policy.
- Set up a virtual car club – ask people to log their journeys and then by comparing usage and journeys you can see if there is scope to set up a car club.

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## The Local Electricity Bill – Steve Shaw, Power for People

**Aim of the campaign** – to enable growth in community renewable energy generation.

Power for People has drafted the 'Local Electricity Bill' to enable electricity generators to become local suppliers. The bill is an amendment to the Energy Bill and has 2 parts:

- Places a duty on larger licence suppliers (>200K customers) to offer contracts (minimum 5 years) to smaller suppliers for their energy. A fixed minimum price would be set by Ministers in consultation with Ofgem (Export Guarantee). Suppliers could exit the contract after 1 year.
- Creates local supply by placing an obligation on suppliers to allow their customers to be customers of local energy suppliers at a reasonable cost (The large supplier still does the billing on behalf of the local supplier but at a reasonable cost).

The bill also builds in an annual review by Ministers and Ofgem, to ensure that growth is happening and to revise the floor price if necessary.

### Campaign Status

The campaign now has the cross-party support of 318 MPs (including 125 Conservative MPs).

The Bill has just won the vote in the House of Lords and will now go to the House of Commons.

### Further info

Power for People <https://powerforpeople.org.uk/>

How you can help:

- Sign up your organisation to the campaign <https://powerforpeople.org.uk/organisation-sign-up>
- Write to your MP (a full list of MPs already on board is published on the Power for People website) <https://powerforpeople.org.uk/write-to-your-mp-leb>

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## Solar Power – Where should we draw our ethical boundaries?

Chris Rigby, Big Solar Co-op and Pete Capener, Bath & West Community Energy (BWCE)

There are 3 aspects to consider:

- Carbon footprint of the solar panels
- Social conditions of production (labour)
- Site selection

### Carbon Footprint of panels

It is difficult to establish how much carbon is embodied in the panel.

The following reports have useful data:

#### IEA: Special Report on Solar PV Global Supply Chains

<https://iea.blob.core.windows.net/assets/d2ee601d-6b1a-4cd2-a0e8-db02dc64332c/SpecialReportonSolarPVGlobalSupplyChains.pdf>

#### Wilmott Dixon: Whole Life Carbon of Photovoltaic Installations

<https://www.willmottdixon.co.uk/asset/17094>

One approach is to look for manufacturers who have committed to power their operations with 100% renewable energy – the [RE100 list](#) - but it is important to bear in mind that these are future commitments and it is not clear how close the Companies are to achieving this.

For further information see the blog post on the Big Solar Coop website:

<https://bigsolar.coop/2023/01/30/ethical-sourcing-of-pv-panels/>

### Social conditions of production (labour)

It is complex to track supply chains, and there is a balance to be struck between cost and labour exploitation. The following report identifies suppliers which should really be avoided:

#### Sheffield Hallam University:

#### In Broad Daylight - Uyghur Forced Labour and Global Solar Supply Chains

<https://www.shu.ac.uk/helena-kennedy-centre-international-justice/research-and-projects/all-projects/in-broad-daylight>

If solar panels could be purchased collectively at scale this could bring more expensive panels into range.

There is a need to increase pressure on mainstream suppliers to sort out supply chains. There is as yet no evidence of claims they make.

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Big Solar Co-op have chosen Meyer Burger panels which are relatively expensive (£400/kW). BWCE have opted for Q Cells which have been bought in bulk.

EU panels are more expensive (due to higher labour costs). There is currently no Solar PV manufacturing in the UK – this would need Government support.

**Community Energy England** have a working group looking at ethical procurement of solar PV

<https://communityenergyengland.org/pages/ethical-sourcing>

### Site Selection - should we only support host sites who have strong environmental credentials?

BWCE have adopted the following approach:

1. Are the activities of the organisation in conflict with BWCE objects?
2. Are they highlighted in the Triodos Minimum Standards?

<https://www.triodos.com/en/articles/2022/our-minimum-standards-provide-the-boundaries-on-what-we-finance>

<https://www.triodos.co.uk/binaries/content/assets/tbuk/personal-banking/triodos-minimum-standards-1.pdf>

3. If Yes for step 1 or 2, then Application reviewed by BWCE Board – needs unanimous decision in order to proceed

Big Solar Co-op are still debating the ethical boundaries re site selection.

### Other factors to consider:

- Need to bear in mind your own reputation when choosing who to work with
- Need to be aware of what activities the Companies are doing within the local community
- It is difficult to influence another Company's business (with respect to environmentally damaging practices) but it is worth giving feedback to help Companies to improve their standards.

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## Actions from General Discussion (Steering Group/CSE)

1. Important to involve Local Authorities – suggest invite some LA speakers to next WCEN meeting and make the agenda more LA focussed.
2. Topics for future meetings:
  - Planning
  - Update from Devon
  - Future planning (ensuring sufficient supply of electricity and water to locality in future)
  - Land mapping onshore wind
3. Send out bi-monthly newsletter
4. Organise Steering Group meeting in May – proposed date 16 May
5. Steering Group to consider fundraising
6. Next WCEN meeting to be in-person if possible. Members felt there was huge value to meeting in person. Meetings are particularly valuable for smaller energy organisations to see the wider picture.