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Energy for Tomorrow: Social impact report 2026

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What's in this report?

Introducing Energy for Tomorrow

Energy for Tomorrow (EfT) is an independent not-for-profit organisation established by Centrica in 2007. Its aims are to:

- Support projects that change community energy use to reduce carbon emissions, while also benefiting communities through strong social impact;
- Engage communities in working towards net zero through collaborative action; and
- Identify the role Centrica can play to help ensure an equitable energy transition.

Between 2009 and 2015, British Gas made a donation to EfT to install solar panels on 268 schools. The schools' feed-in tariff payments have generated £4.6m so far, of which £3.3m has been allocated to EfT's two biggest programmes: the Regional Programme and the Sports Overhaul Programme.

This report looks at the impact of, and learnings from these two programmes. It draws on evidence collected throughout the programmes, as well as a survey of project leads, interviews and research visits undertaken and analysed by Chrysalis Research.

The Regional Programme (2021–25)

- £2.3m was donated to 33 community organisations
- Each received grants of £10,000–£100,000 alongside expert and volunteer support (1,096 volunteer hours)
- Delivered in stages across eight regions across the UK

Types of projects funded by the Regional Programme

- Low carbon technologies (solar, heat pumps, batteries)
- Energy efficiency upgrades and advice
- Education to engage the community in energy management and net zero
- Electric vehicle (EV) and sustainable transport solutions

The Sports Overhaul Programme (2024–28)

- £1m commitment to fund low carbon tech in sports clubs
- Match-funding model linked to community crowdfunding
- Expert and volunteer support from Centrica colleagues (154 volunteer hours)
- Focus on grassroots sports clubs as community hubs

£4.6m

Investment generated to support local communities transition to net zero

This report focuses on the impact and learnings from the Regional and Sports Overhaul programmes.

Key impacts and learnings

Key impacts

Reduced carbon emissions and energy costs

Projects funded by EfT are saving hundreds of tonnes of carbon and have reduced energy bills by thousands of pounds. Many have sold clean renewable energy back to the grid or locally at reduced rates.

£1.2m(1)

Estimated annual energy bill savings and 815 tonnes of carbon saved across 13 community energy products

£9.7m

Total energy bill savings for schools with solar panels, alongside 15,026 tonnes of carbon saved

Greater resilience

The projects have helped organisations become more financially stable, which brings greater confidence to plan and grow. They also have the credibility of successfully delivering relatively large and complex energy upgrade and carbon reduction projects, which allows them to secure further funding.

Improved facilities and services

Savings from lower bills – and less maintenance – means more money can go back into community services and facilities. Many organisations have expanded their programme of activities, made facilities more affordable and accessible, and can support more people.

80,000+

People have benefitted from upgraded facilities, expanded services and outreach programmes

Stronger connections

Community-based projects delivered visible, trusted benefits in places people value. Organisations have been able to showcase improvements and share the benefits with their communities.

1,250+

Hours volunteered by Centrica employees to strengthen projects and community connections

(1) Of this, around 1,315tCO_2e and £973,000 annual savings comes from Energy Sparks, an online energy analysis tool used by schools in Scotland and Wales.

Learnings and future direction

EfT has demonstrated the potential to change community energy use. This uniquely sustained, supportive programme gives community organisations the funding, confidence and expertise to engage in the drive towards net zero. EfT can become an even stronger advocate for, and effective facilitator of, the community energy transition through a more explicit, clearly communicated commitment.

This can position EfT as a stable and trusted partner in a politically and financially uncertain climate. This could involve:

- **Supporting more community groups** to take the difficult first step and helping existing recipients of funding to take the next step on their net zero journey.
- **Broadening its reach** by supporting wider non-funded groups with learning and guidance on how to successfully undertake carbon reduction projects.
- **Ensuring the net zero message is not lost** and that more of the wider community can directly experience the benefits of the energy transition.
- **More systematically capturing and reporting evidence of impact** to secure more support and funding.
- **Encouraging local organisations** to support community groups in their net zero journeys by sharing learning and challenges.

> **Organisations at the heart of our communities are under pressure and they need our help now more than ever. That's why Energy for Tomorrow is excited to use nearly two decades worth of experience to ensure it continues to make a real difference in people's lives.**

Abi Robins,
Centrica Responsible Business Director and EfT Director

Energy for Tomorrow's journey

Using money generated from solar panels installed at schools across the UK, EfT has evolved to meet the changing needs of its communities.

Key EfT milestones

2007
EfT launches
The social impact fund is created and has an initial focus on schools as well as academic research into renewable energy.

2009–15
School solar panels
Solar panels installed on 268 schools funded by a £15m British Gas donation.

2011
Investment in wind farms
Funding for two community wind farms marks a strategic shift to focus on communities and consumers.

2016
Local Energy Market Pilot in Cornwall
£2m investment in low carbon tech, along with advice for local businesses and events for schools.

2020
Supporting innovation
Funding to develop energy saving solutions and a net zero community engagement model.

2021–25
Regional Programme
Grants for 33 community low carbon energy projects, with Centrica support and Centrica volunteers integral to the approach.

2024–28
Sports Overhaul Programme
A £1m match-funding commitment to upgrade the energy infrastructure of grassroots sports clubs. Five clubs have benefited so far.

Impact in numbers

Carbon saving

15,026 tonnes of carbon has been saved in total by the schools portfolio up until the end of 2025.

815 tonnes of carbon were saved on average each year across the 13 projects that provided data.

Explanatory note: Not all organisations were able to identify financial and carbon savings as they were at the early stages of the project, had built new facilities and/or were open more often, resulting in increased energy use. Additionally not all projects involved community outreach so the people directly impacted was limited to users.

Direct financial savings

£9.7m has been saved by schools with solar panels through reduced energy bills.

£1.2m is estimated to have been saved each year by 13 community projects(1) who were able to report carbon savings.

For example:

- **BRAG Enterprises has saved £36,234 in energy costs** through the installation of solar panels.
- **The Globe Foundation** estimate that its battery storage solution will **reduce its energy costs by £1,000 a year**.
- **Overgate Hospice has saved around £28,000 each year** since replacing an ageing diesel van with a reliable electric vehicle.

Some organisations also reported an increase in their revenues as a result of revamped or new facilities, expanded services or increased community support.

People directly reached

At least **80,000 people have benefited** from the projects. These include local residents, visitors, service users and volunteers.

Isle of Wight Biosphere reached 582 people in the first month of its funded project, which aims to engage the wider community in net zero by helping them make energy savings.

Kent County Scout Council hosted 23,500 people at its revamped, more energy-efficient residential centre.

Socially Grown has provided 19,000 staff from 40 employers with access to webinars that debunk myths on energy, discuss energy saving measures and talk about funding and grants.

(1) Of this, around 1,315tCO_2e and £973,000 annual savings comes from Energy Sparks, an online energy analysis tool used by schools in Scotland and Wales.

Overview of the Regional Programme

The EfT Regional Programme ran from 2021 to 2025. It distributed £2.3m worth of grants to 33 community organisations over eight regional waves, starting in Scotland in 2021 to coincide with COP26.

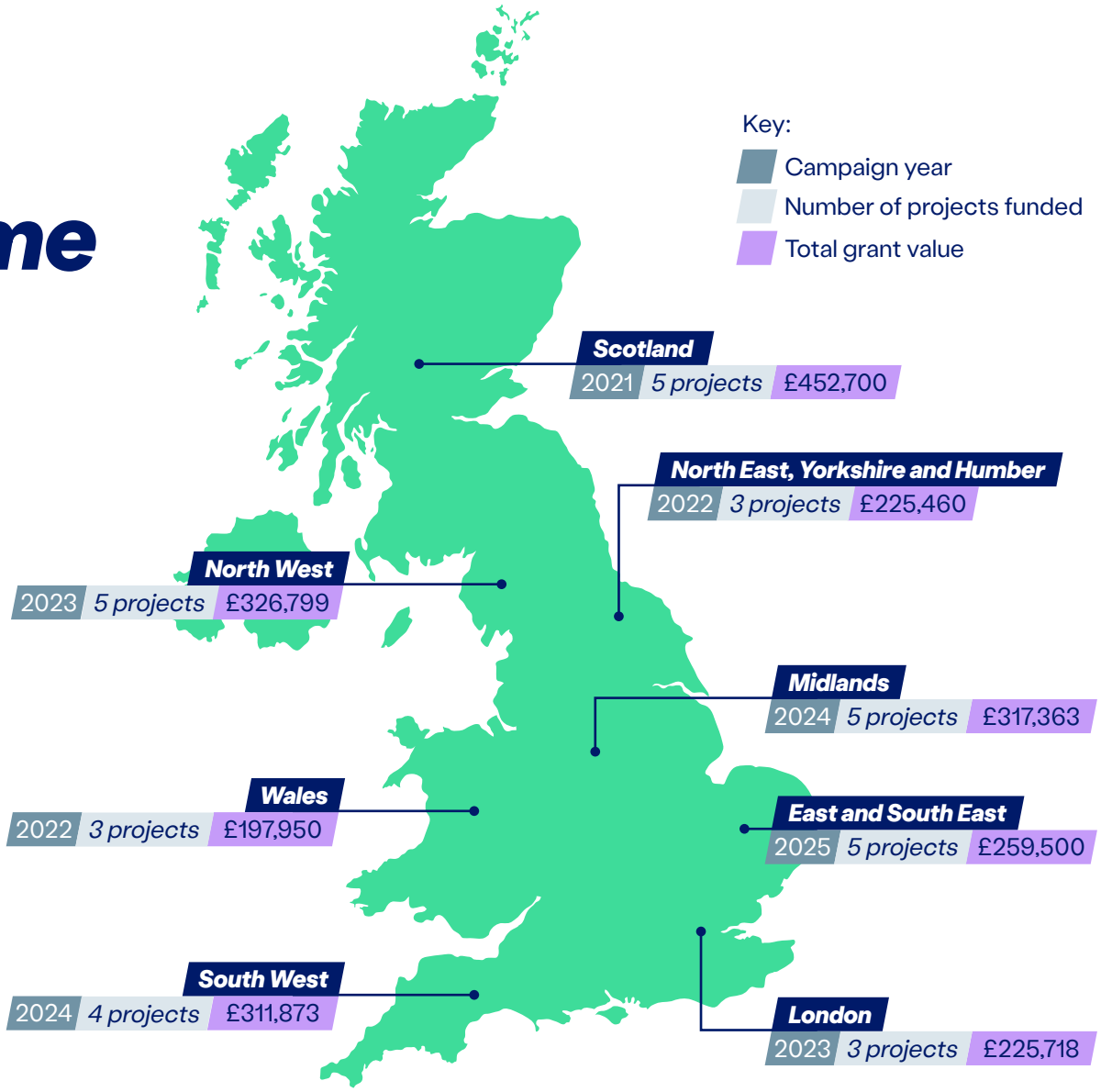
The programme provided community-based organisations with grants between £10,000 and £100,000, in addition to expert advice and staff volunteering support from Centrica.

The grants were funded by the feed-in tariffs from the solar panels installed on schools by EfT between 2009 and 2015.

Rationale

By focusing on specific regions, EfT was able to tailor support to the unique characteristics and challenges of each area. Using a 'test and learn' approach, learnings from early waves were used to inform the approach taken in subsequent waves.

The regional approach also meant communications and relationship building were concentrated in particular areas. This enabled the team to be more targeted, engage a wide range of organisations and work with key regional stakeholders, such as local community networks and MPs. Limiting applications to a specific area also enabled EfT to support smaller, voluntary groups.



Over 700 applications were received. Types of community organisation funded: churches, community energy companies, community hubs, community interest companies, museums, schools and youth projects.

How projects were selected and funded

EfT invited applications for projects designed to help communities on their journey to net zero.

Over 700 organisations completed an application form and pitched their ideas to a panel of Centrica employees. The EfT team supported applicants throughout the application process and continued to provide support for those projects that were awarded funding.

To be funded, projects had to:

- Offer benefits for the community and the environment;
- Actively involve the community;
- Aim to strengthen organisations financially or enable them to innovate; and
- Be sustainable and open to receiving non-financial support from EfT and Centrica.

The table below shows what the grants funded.
Many projects received funding for multiple elements.

Investment category	Technologies, kit or services funded
Low carbon technologies (14 projects)	Solar PV, heat pumps, batteries and biomass heating
Energy efficiency measures (7 projects)	Insulation, LED lighting, heat recovery systems, storage heaters and general retrofit/efficiency upgrades
Energy advice and support (8 projects)	Energy advice and education sessions, online energy tools, workplace energy programmes and fuel-poverty advice
Low carbon transport (4 projects)	EV charging infrastructure, EVs and e-bikes

> **The team looked after me – they wanted to make sure we succeeded. We had monthly meetings where they gave me advice and support, and I could always email the EfT team for help when I needed it. They were always there for me when I was stressed.**
>
> **Be The Change**

> **The EfT process was very good. We were supported by Energy for Tomorrow all along. Communication was excellent and support very helpful.**
>
> **Kent County Scout Council**

Benefits to the community

Better, more affordable facilities

The EfT grant enabled community groups to update their facilities and hire them out more often and at a lower cost – particularly during the winter months.

The upgraded facilities were also more enjoyable to use as they were now warmer, better lit and with easier access to hot water.

Less directly, savings on energy costs helped organisations upgrade other facilities.

The price of everything else has gone up, but the energy solutions have helped offset that and enabled us to invest in new facilities.

Atherton Cricket Club, England

Expanded services and reach

New facilities and savings on energy costs enabled organisations to continue, or expand, their frontline services and support more people in deprived communities.

The EfT-supported investment in renewable energy contributes to lower operating costs for the project, helping ensure that support can be delivered consistently and sustainably over the long term. This improves service resilience and protects frontline provision for future beneficiaries while also delivering measurable environmental benefits through reduced carbon emissions.

Boomerang, Wales

Enabling others to reduce their energy costs

By providing energy saving advice, resources and tools, the funded community groups enabled households and other organisations in the community to save money.

For example, **BRAG Enterprises** helped clear over £4,000 of household fuel debt and provided energy saving kits that will help those households save further.

Some organisations, such as **Boomerang** and **Yorkshire Methodists**, plan to go even further – providing cheaper, low carbon energy to their community.

We analyse the data then use that analysis to drive action recommendations for the school. Many schools can save around 40% of their energy use by targeting easy wins such as cutting out-of-hours energy waste, so that's a significant saving opportunity.

Energy Sparks, Scotland

Case study:

Whole Again Communities: Helping services go further

Whole Again Communities (WAC) began life in 2013 on the deprived Treneere Estate in Penzance. Initially a series of healthy cooking workshops for women on low incomes, the project developed into regular Open House events, promoting social connection and confidence building along the way.

Moving into its current building meant that WAC could extend its activities to community gardening, arts and crafts, and health advice events, among others. This provides a space for children's clubs, and holiday activities. Food still remains central, and the large kitchen provides food for centre users and for delivery to those unable to leave their home. At full operation, WAC volunteers and users produce over 100 meals a day.

WAC's current manager, Simone, applied for an EfT grant of £39,269 in 2024. This provided the organisation with a solar PV system and battery storage, to replace the existing domestic array without battery. The grant also meant WAC could purchase a second e-bike to increase its delivery capacity.

In practical terms, the grant has meant WAC can run its electricity-hungry kitchen at a much-reduced cost. This, according to Simone, has halved the previous £200 monthly bill. In addition, WAC now receives income from exporting solar power to the grid; this reached £262 in the month of July alone. The money saved can be spent on providing more meals. As for the additional e-bike, this is essential for reaching people in their homes, not only with meals, but with the ingredients to prepare food as they follow WAC's video 'cook-alongs'. The bike has increased the number of families who can participate in WAC's video 'cook-alongs' to 20 per session.

> **We still have solar panels on the roof... we're still generating electricity... the batteries are going to help our community for decades... it's made a real impact.**

> **It's definitely been a success... it's reduced our electricity bills, which means we can feed that back into our free meals.**

Strengthening community groups

EfT's grants and support have enabled organisations to invest in new facilities and establish new groups.

These organisations felt that, without the EfT funding, they would have struggled to get their projects off the ground, and the backing of a large corporate helped them unlock further funding.

EfT also strengthened existing organisations in the following ways:

- Energy solutions and advice has enabled them to become more financially viable due to reduced costs and increased revenue through greater usage of their facilities and selling energy back to the grid. Organisations also benefited from more predictable energy costs, which made it easier for them to manage tight budgets. This increased organisational confidence and encouraged them to plan further ahead;
- Facilities upgrades helped raise the profile of organisations and their provision; and
- EfT funding helped convey a positive message to stakeholders and the wider community about the future of the organisation.

> **The project demonstrated to local residents, partners, and stakeholders that Boomerang Cardiff is committed to sustainable, forward-thinking solutions to poverty and material deprivation. The integration of renewable energy into our operations has increased confidence among community groups, housing partners and referrers that the organisation is investing in infrastructure that protects services for the long term.**
>
> **Boomerang**

> **It's still early days, but our first funded project has given us additional credibility, showing that we can take on ambitious projects and get them resourced. The project is also very action-based and is helping to demonstrate that our organisation is moving beyond talking and into hands-on action in the community that is very visible to local people and organisations. It's helping us to build trusting relationships and professionalise our reputation.**
>
> **Isle of Wight Biosphere**

Case study:

Be the Change: Developing a space and support for young people

Be the Change is a youth project in Bolton led by its founder, Daniel Sukula. They reach a diverse cohort of young people, aged 8 to 25 years old, in one of the most deprived areas of the country.

When the project outgrew its original home, it acquired a derelict building with a view to transforming it into a new space. There are no other youth services within five miles, making it a perfect location, but the building needed a lot of work. Daniel and his team secured £55,000 from EfT to install rooftop solar panels with batteries and a heat pump, so they can generate their own cheap and clean renewable energy.

EfT employees assisted during the building's transformation – providing technical, practical and even emotional support. Centrica volunteers helped with painting the building, while the EfT team helped Daniel navigate the various challenges of managing a complex building project. Daniel plans to make more use of EfT volunteers in the future, inviting Centrica staff to come in and speak to young people about employment and training opportunities, as well as supporting them with life skills such as budgeting and, of course, energy efficiency.

Be the Change moved into the new building in September 2025. The young people now have a brand new, purpose-built space with gaming room, tuck shop, kitchen, IT facilities and, most importantly, a safe place to be with friends and meet new people. The EfT grant was a fundamental part of this success and the project has attracted many new faces – so many that Daniel is already thinking they might need an even bigger space soon!

The money saved from generating their own energy means that the team can offer more services to more young people and the club is now open three nights a week. The plan is to increase the opening to five nights a week for the young people and to offer community drop-ins during the day, where local people can come along for advice and support.

The EfT project has strengthened community pride in the centre, increased engagement with environmental issues, and improved access to high-quality, sustainable community facilities.

The upgraded building has increased community reach, as more young people and partners now use the centre regularly due to improved facilities and reliability of heating and power. Volunteers and staff benefit from better working conditions, and the community benefits from longer opening hours and more consistent service delivery.

Helping community groups on their journey to net zero

The support received from EfT and Centrica volunteers was critical for all projects in helping them meet their project goals. Without it many would have struggled to raise the funds needed to upgrade facilities that were in serious need of refurbishment.

In addition, the funded organisations were often voluntarily run and lacked the expertise and capacity to manage large-scale construction or refurbishment projects. For many organisations, this was their first attempt to reduce carbon emissions. Others with experience of running projects also found it challenging as they were often investing in technologies new to them, such as biomass log boilers for the Isle of Eigg's community hub.

Successful completion of the EfT projects proved transformative for many organisations. It gave them the experience, networks, processes and confidence to take the next step in their journey to net zero. And, once they had begun, organisations were able to see opportunities to cut carbon and energy costs further, and to eventually meet their net zero commitments.

The success of the projects, with tangible returns in reduced emissions or social impact in the form of expanded services, also made it easier to secure grants from other funders. Many organisations felt, however, that it would be difficult to secure funding and support comparable to that received by EfT and, therefore, that the next meaningful step towards net zero would be difficult to achieve.

> **The EfT project has shown what is achievable when retrofitting an old, inefficient building and has shown our club to be forward thinking and aware of the impact of energy efficiency for the long-term viability of the organisation and the climate emergency.**
>
> **Yeovil Athletics Club**

> **The EfT project had a catalytic effect. The success of the first electric van enabled us to secure funding for two additional electric vehicles from elsewhere, because we were able to demonstrate the impact that it was having. Having three EVs amplified the benefits across our operations and embedded a more sustainable, resilient approach to hospice transport.**
>
> **Overgate Hospice**

Case study:

Yorkshire North and East Methodist District: A critical first step in the push for net zero

Seven Yorkshire Methodist churches successfully applied for funding from EfT to install solar panels and invest in battery storage.

The Methodist District had set itself a target of reaching net zero by 2040 and this was the first large-scale project designed to cut carbon emissions. Following the install, the seven churches have reduced their carbon emissions by over 21 tonnes – the equivalent of making over 4m cups of tea.

The energy transition project has gained momentum, thanks to trusted suppliers and a highly experienced project manager who works with Methodist churches across the district, as well as other denominations. The District has secured funding for two more projects and has become more ambitious in its scope, as EfT demonstrated the savings that could be gained by managing carbon-reduction projects across multiple sites.

The District is also looking at how the community can more directly benefit from the project. Churches in Hull, for example, are looking at how they could provide low-cost energy, generated by their solar panels, to the local community, via an intermediary CIC energy partner.

> **You need the big fund like EfT in place before you can approach smaller funders to contribute. So, without EfT funding, the project just wouldn't have happened, and we wouldn't have had the courage to go for other bigger projects later on. It kickstarted the whole process.**

Engaging the wider community in net zero

The EfT projects have helped put renewable energy projects in the heart of communities.

Investment in much-loved and well-used facilities presents the opportunity to convey a positive message about net zero, as the benefits for the community have been more direct, immediate and visible than other environmental projects. However, project communications were not always explicit about the link with the net zero agenda as the focus and main motivation was the improved facilities and cost savings.

Many projects have become a discussion point for users of the facilities with some organisations taking the opportunity to inform users about the benefits of carbon-saving measures, and the steps they could take in their own households. This was achieved through informal discussions, information boards, screens giving live updates on energy saved, events, energy saving materials and equipment, and educational programmes. These efforts were, however, often dependent on organisations' capacity and the project leads' passion for the environmental aspect of the project.

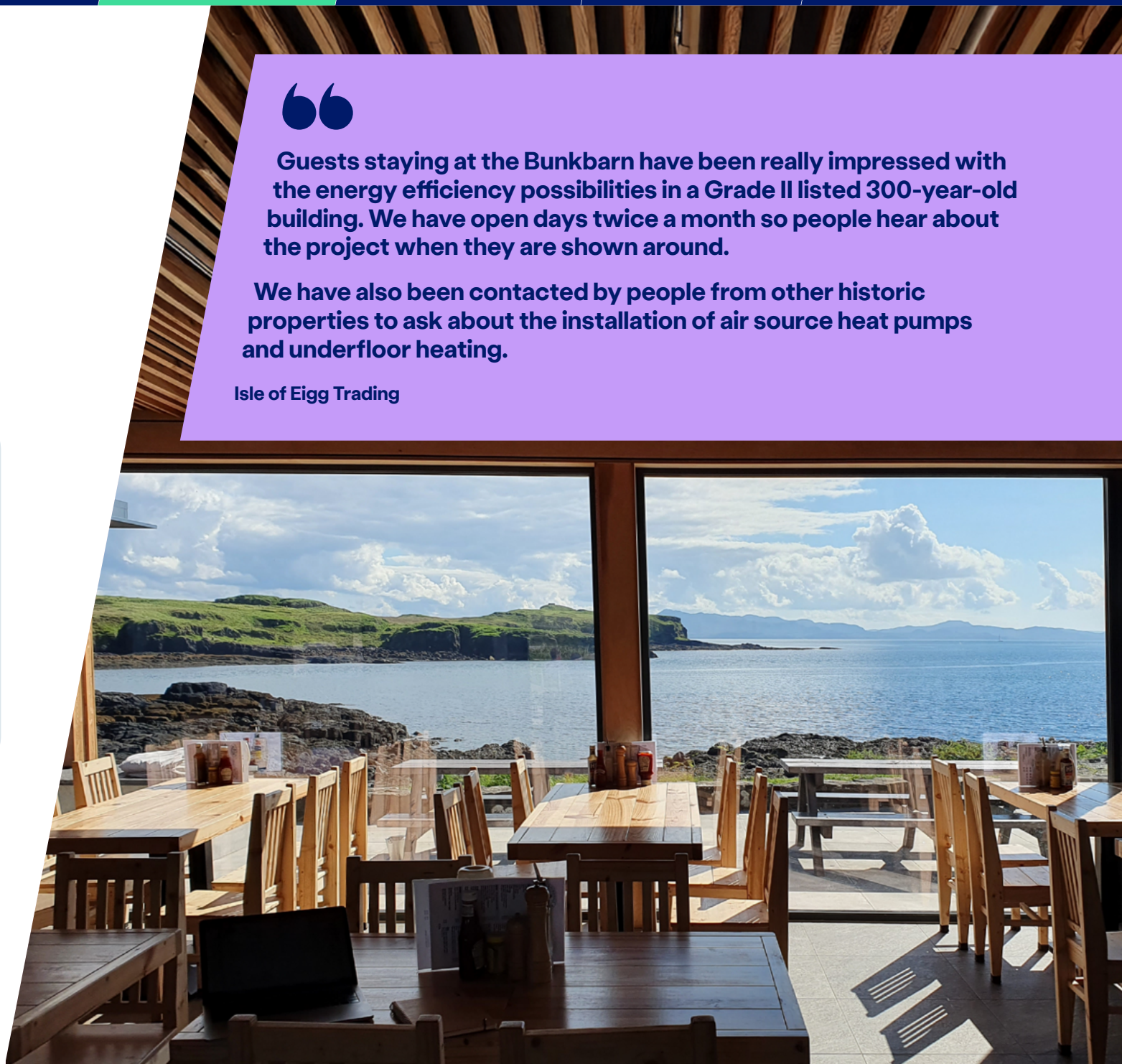
> **The project has raised awareness of renewable energy and climate responsibility among young people. Many participants have expressed increased interest in sustainability and environmental issues after learning how the solar panels and heat pump operate. In this way, we are helping to achieve long-term positive behaviour change alongside immediate social impact.**
>
> **Be the Change youth project**

> **They have been able to see what improvements can be made to an old, poorly insulated building, and understand through a real example, the benefits of a retrofit project on the comfort levels and energy performance of a building.**
>
> **Yeovil Athletics Club**

Some organisations also reported real interest among other groups in their community or wider network who were keen to learn how to successfully deliver a carbon reduction project. EfT projects helped to demonstrate the benefits that could be realised, as well as how projects of this type should be undertaken as the Isle of Eigg example (see right) shows. Other organisations, however, were frustrated at the lack of interest shown by their wider networks and external stakeholders.

A model for decarbonisation

The Isle of Eigg project introduced the island's first district heat network, supplying heat and hot water to multiple community buildings. It has enabled the decarbonisation of community buildings and serves as a model for further decarbonisation efforts, through switching to a more sustainable heating source. This will help the island's ambition to become net zero by 2030.



“Guests staying at the Bunkbarn have been really impressed with the energy efficiency possibilities in a Grade II listed 300-year-old building. We have open days twice a month so people hear about the project when they are shown around.

We have also been contacted by people from other historic properties to ask about the installation of air source heat pumps and underfloor heating.

Isle of Eigg Trading

Case study:

Kent County Scout Council: Cleaner air, greener energy and an education programme

When Kent Scouts acquired Lower Grange Farm in 2009 it was a four-acre site with old, derelict buildings. It's now a 40-acre outdoor centre.

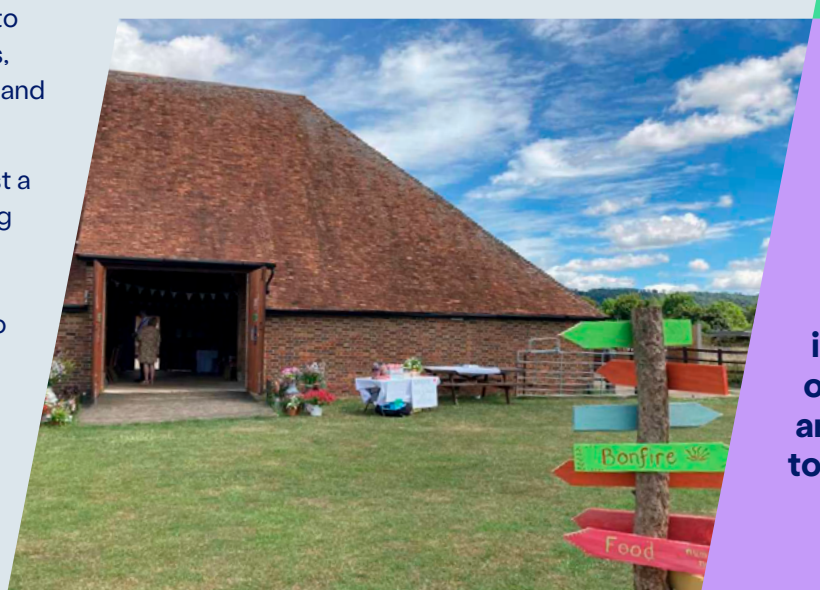
The Centre has overnight accommodation as well as 130 different activities – from axe throwing to pond dipping, for schools and community organisations across the country. Prices are kept low and any surplus is ploughed back into the centre.

Des Harris, the chair of Kent Scouts, applied to EfT for a £75,000 grant to install a solar energy system comprising 105 solar panels and 30kw of battery storage. Installed just before Christmas in 2025, the system supplies electricity for heating and lighting, with any excess being sold to the national grid. The savings are expected to be substantial and Des hopes that, with lower costs, the centre can spend more on facilities, equipment and keeping the costs to users down.

The panels have already generated 2,500kWh in just a couple of winter months and the old oil-fired heating system in the barn has been replaced with electric heaters – also bought using the EfT grant – giving the site cleaner air and greener energy. Des has also been inspired to expand the benefits of renewable energy to the whole site, including the camping areas and lake house, which currently have no power connections.

The local community has been kept informed throughout and is very supportive of the improvements. The community is encouraged to use the site and, on one day each year, children and families are welcomed in to use the facilities for free.

Now that the solar set-up is operational, Des is working closely with EfT staff to develop an education programme. This will work as the basis for a badge for scouts and guides, but is also aimed at the schools and general public who use the centre, so that they don't just notice the solar panels, but truly understand how solar generation and other energy saving activities can make a real difference, both to Lower Grange Farm and to the environment.



> **We want them to go away with something, a certificate or badge, so they feel they've achieved something. But also something that reminds them, when they get home, to turn the lights off, don't boil the kettle that many times.**

> **The money that we save on our electric, we want to plough some of that money back into the educational programme. That's the whole point of it. Our next major challenge is to make our outside camping areas net zero and our bunkhouse accommodation totally self-sufficient.**

Overview of the Sports Overhaul Programme

The Sports Overhaul Programme followed the Regional Programme in 2025 and is designed to help UK community sports clubs become more energy-efficient, financially resilient, and socially impactful. Additionally, projects have been supported by athlete involvement through the British Gas partnership with Team GB and ParalympicsGB.

In a change of approach from the Regional Programme, to encourage additional community participation and engagement, the Sports Overhaul Programme requires sports clubs to raise money via community crowdfunding which EfT then matches to the tune of £2 or £3 for every £1 raised. The EfT team supports the clubs to meet their crowdfunding goals and volunteers support with the communications plans and technical advice, often giving the project team new digital and communications skills.

The programme committed an initial investment of £1m over five years, to upgrade community facilities, reduce energy costs and increase sustainability.

In the 2025 pilot, the programme funded five pilot projects:

- Hartlepool Rugby Football Club
- Helensburgh Rugby & Cricket Club
- The Skate Farm CIC
- Didsbury Lawn Tennis
- Ashton-Under-Lyne Cricket and Bowls Club

The funding has been awarded for upgrades such as LED lighting, insulation, heat pumps, and solar installations. The total amounts raised by the clubs range from around £8,000 to £60,000, and all clubs have surpassed their initial fundraising goals.

Together, these projects have attracted 858 crowd-funding supporters, benefited from 19 volunteering days, and generated £141,298 via crowdfunding (+£2,820 Gift Aid) against £88,300 EfT investment.

£1m ***Investment in communities over five years – the plan is to support 8–12 projects each year out to 2028***

Case study:

Atherton Cricket Club: Generating a warm and welcoming community hub

Founded in 1872, Atherton Cricket Club prides itself on offering a facility for everyone to participate in cricket regardless of age, ability or gender.

During the season, the club is busy with families and friends socialising on Friday evenings and after weekend matches. It also acts as a valuable community hub in a location that has areas of high deprivation: providing twice-weekly coffee mornings for older people, a monthly church bingo evening and free venue hire for community events such as charity fundraising evenings.

Prior to the EfT grant funding, the club closed between October and March, as it was not financially viable to heat the clubhouse or power the appliances needed to keep the bar and kitchen running. The £80,700 grant funding from EfT was transformative, enabling the club to install solar panels and battery storage, and to replace an old LPG boiler with two heat pumps.

Tony Gredecki, the club's Chairman, explained that the energy output from the panels has allowed the club to drastically reduce its energy costs, with a total estimated saving of £7,925 since the equipment was installed in 2023. In the summer months, it has even generated surplus electricity, which is then sold to Atherton Football Club next door, bringing in additional income of around £200 per month.

As a registered charity, the club ploughs the savings straight back into its facilities, enabling it to buy items such as practice nets and an artificial wicket for the girls' teams. These improvements help the club to attract new members and this in turn generates further income in the form of membership fees and bar takings.

The EfT project has also helped to raise the profile of the club, with Centrica arranging a visit from local MP Jo Platt and press coverage. Contact with her parliamentary aide led to further funding toward the new artificial wicket.

> **The price of everything else has gone up, but the solar panels and heat pump have enabled us to offset that, so now we can keep the club solvent throughout the winter and keep it open for the community.**
>
> **Tony Gredecki, Club Chairman**

> **Since we've had the heat pumps installed, I've noticed when it gets chilly in the evenings, the parents and grandparents will come into the clubhouse to have a chat, and they'll stay for a drink, which helps to bring in money for the club. So it's been a good asset for us, it really has.**
>
> **Club volunteer**

The role and impact of EfT volunteers and expert support

Centrica employees supported community organisations with their projects and with their existing services and development plans.

Employees are given two days paid time off each year for volunteering and many used this for working on EfT projects. This allowed them to harness work-related skills and experience, whilst providing a valuable extra pair of hands.

Direct project support involved:

- Helping with the applications and assessment process;
- Supporting crowdfunding initiatives;
- Arranging feasibility surveys, as well as providing advice, guidance and technical support for the installation of low carbon technologies; and
- Offering marketing and communications advice.

Alongside the EfT funded project, support for organisations involved:

- Mentoring;
- Schools outreach;
- Refurbishing community spaces; and
- Sourcing and wrapping gifts for families experiencing hardship.

The volunteer support has helped community organisations secure and make the most of the grant, something that many would have struggled to do due to a lack of experience and capacity to manage projects of this type. It has also enabled organisations to raise their profile, extend their reach and enhance their community facilities and support.

1,250+

Hours volunteered by Centrica colleagues to support Energy for Tomorrow projects

> **It's always humbling to be able to go and visit all of these organisations, and understand how they work and the challenges that they're facing. I can also see the impact that we're making and how we're benefiting local communities.**
>
> **Centrica volunteer**

Centrica volunteers reported significant personal and professional benefits from their involvement. Their experience helped them to 'get closer to our customers and the communities that we serve', providing insights that they were able to draw on in their work. Colleagues who volunteer are more highly engaged with their work, with volunteers scoring 0.4 points higher than non-volunteers on Centrica's 10-point engagement scale.

Volunteering alongside members of their regular work team added a different dimension and further benefits.

> **It's really important to hear those testimonials directly from the community, so that when I'm talking to our policy team, I can bring it into their thinking.**
>
> **Centrica volunteer**

> **I found the more I volunteered, the easier it was to work with different people and not necessarily just being a follower, being a bit of a leader as well.**
>
> **Centrica volunteer**

> **Having that opportunity to get together on a less formal basis breaks down some of those barriers, so once we're back in the work environment, there's a bit more sharing of best practice and helping each other out.**
>
> **Centrica volunteer**

In common with many other community organisations, some of the projects funded by EfT face barriers when recruiting volunteers to support their work.

Centrica's two-day-per-year volunteering allowance enables colleagues to offer their time and skills during working hours, as part of the wider People & Planet Plan goal to deliver 100,000 days of volunteering in local communities by 2030.

An increasing number of companies have similar policies, creating a significant pool of volunteering time that could make a real difference to grassroots community organisations. However, a 2025 study by Royal Voluntary Service (RVS) showed that this time is not always taken up; they estimated that 140m corporate volunteering hours went unused in the previous year.

To help bridge the gap between the real needs of community projects and people with access to paid volunteering leave, RVS has launched the GoVo marketplace. This digital volunteering platform aims to be the largest community of its kind, linking employees to flexible volunteering roles that fit around other commitments. Centrica is a proud to be founding member of the platform, helping to mobilise more volunteers and increase its collective impact.

Case study:

Engaging young people in the energy transition: Schools outreach

Anne-Marie, a Centrica site manager, says her EfT volunteering experience gave her 'a real buzz'.

Together with other colleagues, she delivered five sessions on green energy at an outdoor education centre run by the National Communities Resources Centre, which provides community-based training and support around sustainability. She spoke to pupils from three to four schools at each of the sessions, which combined explanation, role-play (pretending to be solar panels and wind turbines) and Q&A on topics ranging from renewables and practical energy-saving actions to employability skills for older pupils.

She described the sessions as inclusive and lively, with many children participating in the discussion. Teachers also questioned assumptions, and pupils thought through problems rather than giving rote responses. It was clear they had taken her messages on board.

> ***When we posed questions to them, you could see them actually thinking about it, you could see what knowledge they'd actually absorbed.***

Anne-Marie feels she got a lot out of the experience herself, commenting that it was refreshing to see things from a child's perspective again:

> ***It was really good to get their understanding and to put myself in a child's point of view. I felt like every time I went, I learned something new. It was fun. I enjoyed it, and I came away feeling better and happier every time I went. I felt a sense of satisfaction when kids came up to us at the end of it and said, 'thank you for that, I enjoyed it'.***

She added that she developed her own confidence and presentation skills through these sessions:

> ***I never would have envisaged me five years ago standing up in front of a group of 40 kids and talking. I've learned that I actually have to be myself no matter what I'm presenting.***

Anne-Marie,
Centrica site manager

Case study:

Using new and existing skills: From fundraising to boiler installation

Chris works for Scottish Gas as a service and repair engineer.

He has been part of the Helensburgh Rugby and Cricket Club for many years and was involved in coaching youth teams at the club when he first became aware of the EfT programme. Chris played a key role in applying for a £51,000 grant to install solar panels, battery storage, new hot-water cylinders and boiler, insulation, and LED floodlighting at the club. The funding agreement comprised a large crowdfunding element. To support this, Chris spent his volunteering time sourcing items and experiences from local businesses to raise funds from the public, which were then matched by Scottish Gas. With the support of EfT, the club surpassed the original crowdfunding target.

> ***I was really engaged. It was fascinating getting that buzz and that hype going, pitching this to the community saying, 'Come on, let's get as much money as we can!'***

Chris didn't stop at fundraising. He has since coordinated two volunteer days, during which colleagues from his Scottish Gas team will install the new cylinders and boiler, and electricians will fit additional LED lighting. This collective effort from skilled tradespeople helped the club free up funds for further improvements. The club staff and users are thrilled, and the project has become a standout example of how volunteering can be combined to deliver lasting community impact. Chris is delighted with the end result.

> ***It's the satisfaction of doing something that's going to benefit so many people in the club, because the savings that we make mean we can open for longer hours.***

Chris also developed his sales skills through the crowdfunding process, as well as his IT skills.

> ***It challenged me a bit, there was some growth in skills there.***

Chris,
Scottish Gas Service and Repair Engineer

The future opportunity for Energy for Tomorrow

EfT has demonstrated the potential to change community energy use. This uniquely sustained, supportive programme gives community organisations the funding, confidence and expertise to engage in the drive towards net zero.

EfT can become an even stronger advocate for, and effective facilitator of, the community energy transition through a more explicit, clearly communicated commitment.

By taking a longer-term approach, EfT can strengthen its role as a stable, trusted partner in an increasingly uncertain political and financial landscape. This means enabling more community groups to take the crucial first step towards net zero, while helping existing partners progress to the next stage of their sustainability journey. EfT can also draw more deliberately on its extensive experience – broadening its reach and positioning itself as a credible voice that supports and influences organisations beyond those it directly funds, by sharing practical learnings, specialist expertise and evidence of the social and environmental benefits that community-led net zero programmes deliver.

Key learnings

Supporting communities with the energy transition can deliver strong social returns and exemplify the connection between people, places and planet – and the cash in pockets. EfT is playing an important role in giving community organisations the confidence to make their first move towards net zero by offering funding and committed support from the EfT project team. It also gives access, via the wider Centrica business, to mentoring and expertise across the energy system and a workforce of volunteers.

We have identified six key learnings to drive the success of EfT:

1 Take care that the net zero message is not lost

The environmental gains from projects were often overshadowed by more visible and immediate returns in the form of improved facilities, expanded services and greater organisational resilience. The net zero benefits could be communicated more effectively, starting with – and learning from – the projects that have done it well. As well as offering displays showing savings and resources for projects and volunteers to draw on when running events or sessions in the community, EfT could develop communications guidance that helps organisations align their projects more explicitly and consistently with the net zero agenda. This would help frame net zero more positively in people's minds. Using the projects to develop a community of learning would also enable others to share innovative ideas for engaging and encouraging people to take action to change their own energy use. As the UK Government looks to encourage more homes to decarbonise through the Warm Homes Plan and the related Warm Homes Agency, EfT could share the learnings from projects that have successfully reached the wider community through net zero engagement.

2 Maintain support

In many of the funded projects, EfT and its volunteers were able to provide a great deal of support to help community groups take the first step on their journey to net zero or to trial a low carbon technology. This was resource intensive, but also the right approach as it ensured success for organisations that would otherwise have struggled to cut their carbon through a project of this type and complexity. It also gave them the confidence and momentum to go further. These projects may need continuing support from EfT and others over time, as those next steps and the funding required can be difficult to identify. Retaining them in an EfT supported network could help give communities the confidence and strategies to progress further on their journeys to net zero.

3 Enable systematic monitoring to demonstrate impact

Community engagement could also be strengthened through capturing and communicating the impact of the projects more systematically. A clear narrative around the combined social and environmental returns, and perhaps suggestions for KPIs or other measurement tools, would help to build support for future projects.

4 Look at how the wider community could directly benefit more from the energy transition

As well as energy saving advice and education, EfT could look for ways projects could extend the financial benefits of the energy transition to households who might otherwise struggle to benefit from low carbon technologies. This could be done in the form of cheaper energy generated by EfT organisations, energy saving equipment and fuel poverty funds. This will help build broader support for the net zero agenda.

5 Make it easier for non-funded organisations to learn from EfT projects

The extent of funding and support provided by EfT made it difficult for other organisations, inspired by EfT projects in their community, to replicate the approach taken by projects. To support wider impact in the community, EfT could provide written guidance about the steps involved in delivering community energy transition projects and examples of good practice, as well as signposting to other funding sources. These actions would also benefit future EfT projects and free up more EfT resources to support organisations to engage the wider community in net zero.

6 Encourage others to support community groups on their net zero journey

Influencing and sharing learning is critical in enabling more community energy transition projects. The EfT Regional Programme showed that there is no established way of supporting community groups to make the transition and that these groups can face significant barriers due to bureaucracy, institutional inertia or a lack of systems at a local level. Drawing on its experience, EfT could speak to local authorities about the support that community groups need to take that first step towards net zero. EfT is also in a good position to support community groups in its network to talk to local authorities about the challenges they face and how the energy transition could be better supported at a local level.

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