



exeter community energy

**Exeter Community Energy
Annual Report**

1 February 2020 – 31 January 2021

INTRODUCTION

When the COVID-19 pandemic struck in early 2020, like everyone else we were concerned about its effects. We were about to install two new solar generation arrays at Westbank and The Beacon Community Centre. Completing them in time was only possible thanks to the commitment of our installer, SOL Electrical. Our Healthy Homes for Wellbeing project relied heavily on meeting people in person to offer advice. We couldn't continue that approach while avoiding the risk of infection.



Figure 1: Outgoing ECOE Chair Andy Extance (centre front) and O&M Co-ordinator Margaret Pickering (left) with SOL Electrical Director Simon Lord (centre rear) and Westbank's Operations Manager Justin Milton (right) celebrating installation at a safe social distance.

As the year progressed, we struggled to work and stay healthy and sane in lockdown. Yet it soon became clear how strong ECOE's community foundation is, and how valuable our services are. Providing low-cost electricity to our partner sites helped them to keep running costs down when finances were tight. At a time when fuel poverty issues became more pressing, the Healthy Homes team moved swiftly to provide advice by telephone. And our Community Fund again provided grants to local groups, helping them through difficult times.

ECOE has emerged stronger from the challenges of 2020. We have reviewed our business plan and implemented systems to build resilience. We have redesigned our website, with further tweaks to follow. We have been supported in this work by volunteers Rosie Rees and Ben Talbot and we thank them for their help. ECOE's bookkeeper, Fiona Silvester, and operations and maintenance coordinator, Margaret Pickering, have also done excellent work in keeping the organisation running, working for a combined time equivalent to just 0.1 full time employee.

We recorded another financial surplus, helping to reduce further the deficit arising from the original installation cost of solar panels. Our deficit has fallen to the level that we had planned to reach by 2024 in our initial business plan. ECOE is in good financial health.

Our progress is visible in how our team has evolved. In July, our outgoing chair, Tara Bowers, took over the role of Healthy Homes project manager from Gill Wyatt, who remained on the team as Home Energy Advisor and Community Liaison Officer. We recruited new two Home Energy Advisors, Charlene Battams and Julie Glover, during the summer. We recruited Vickie Mogford as an in-house Benefits Advisor in January 2021, while Chris Walford left the team. Healthy Homes now supports eight contractors. Together the amount of time they work equates to five people in full time roles.

In June we co-opted Rory McNeile, an associate tutor with the University of Exeter Graduate School of Education, as a director. Rory previously led the project to build a new energy-efficient community centre in Belmont Park. For ECOE he has been developing a retrofit service to help people reduce their bills and carbon emissions. Sadly he is soon to move out of the area and will stand down at the 2021 AGM.

In August we co-opted Dr Stacia Ryder, an environmental sociologist and post-doctoral researcher at the University of Exeter, to our board of directors. She brings to the board strengths including the skills to assess the social impact of activities like the Healthy Homes project. She will stand for election at the 2021 AGM.

Since 31 January 2021, one of our founding directors, Hertha Wood, has found herself with more personal and work commitments and will stand down at the 2021 AGM. Lee Cramer, our finance director at the start of the financial year, stood down in February 2021 due to increased demand for support from his employers Bush and Co from companies affected by the pandemic. We are delighted to have co-opted Trevor Crawford, a finance manager at South West Water, to take up this role. We have also co-opted Lenka Hill, an auditor at the European Court of Auditors, as an external independent director. Lenka is taking responsibility for our community fund. She also brings financial expertise and will work closely with Trevor. Trevor and Lenka will both stand for election at the 2021 AGM.

Now, as some degree of normality returns, ECOE is poised to push ahead with more plans to fight climate change and fuel poverty. We have promising prospects for new solar generation sites and we are well advanced in developing our retrofit home efficiency service. It has been a historic year for the wrong reasons. But at ECOE we look forward to a promising one, for the right reasons.

PROJECTS

Solar Power Generation

Solar PV 1 and 2

A remarkably sunny May produced record monthly generation.

			Annual Energy Generated kWh					Host's Usage kWh	
		Predicted Generation					2020 Carbon Saving kgs	Host's Usage %	
Site	Capacity kWp	kWh pa	2017	2018	2019	2020			Predicted
PV 1 & 2									
Exeter Library (comb.)	29	27,600	25,681	25,016	26,300	18,191	4,241	99%	95%
Great Moor House	100	92,652	79,823	84,815	82,027	83,971	19,577	88%	95%
Shillingford 25kw	25	25,000	24,422	22,810	24,787	24,888	5,802	47%	60%
Shillingford 14 kw	14.5	14,500	13,590	12,790	14,019	14,073	3,281	97%	60%
Wonford CLC	20.5	19,540	17,735	18,196	16,815	18,645	4,347	30%	50%
Exeter College	150	138,737	128,441	117,677	101,242	109,487	25,526	46%	65%
Pinhoe Rd BC	19.96	17,299	17,267	18,030	17,439	17,600	4,103	14%	30%
Glasshouse	20.14	17,646	19,372	19,086	21,454	19,597	4,569	41%	70%
Beehive	29	24,431	23,204	24,565	23,599	25,528	5,952	41%	50%
Total PV 1 & 2		377,405	349,535	342,985	327,681	331,980	77,398		
PV3									
Beacon (part year)	30	24,467				16,374	3,817	45%	50%
Westbank (part year)	46	38,302				31,751	7,402	40%	50%
Total PV3						48,125	11,220		
Total for all solar PV						380,105	88,618		

Note: The carbon saving is less than last year because the grid's carbon intensity is reducing as it uses less coal.

Table 1: Solar PV 1 and 2 site performance data 2017–2020

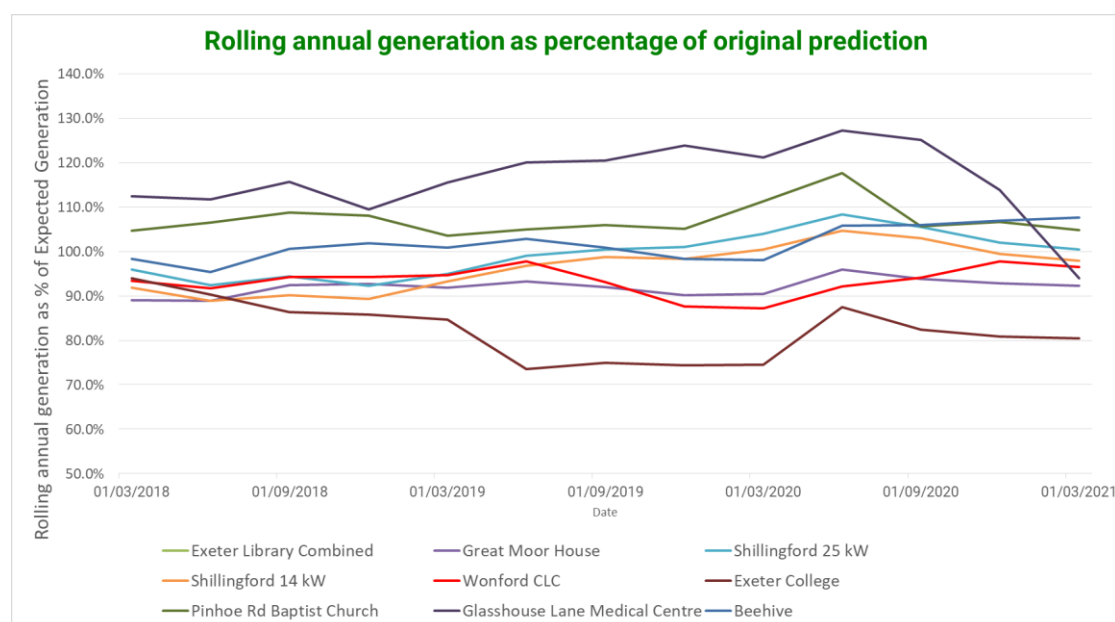


Figure 1: Rolling Annual Generation

Exeter College

Exeter College's performance continues to give some concern as it is our largest solar PV generator. Six optimisers, which help ensure the panels operate at maximum output, have failed. However, the replacement costs are disproportionately high compared with the loss of 2.8% of generation capacity so we do not plan to address this during 2021. We have done further panel cleaning and hope that this will boost performance.

Exeter Library

The larger, newer, system performed poorly over the winter and failed completely in February. This was found to be a consequence of flooding on the flat roof at the top section of the library. COVID-19 restrictions hampered remedial work by the library. Service was eventually restored in June. We have received £1,494 compensation from Libraries Unlimited, which is responsible for appropriate maintenance of the roof under the terms of our lease. The smaller, older, system failed in June and the inverter was replaced under warranty in October.

Glasshouse Lane Medical Centre

The inverter at Glasshouse Lane Medical Centre failed in October. It was replaced under warranty in January, however problems within the centre itself are preventing restoration of generation. As of June 2021, we had agreed with Glasshouse Lane Medical Practice that they would rectify the issue, which is within their control, in early July.

Solar PV3

We received the formal installation certificate for the 29.9kW project at The Beacon Community Centre on 12 February 2020 and the certificate for the 45.9kW project at Westbank on 12 March 2020. The formal completion of the installation work was achieved on 5 June 2020. Legal work for Westbank was finally completed on 18 June. Both sites have performed well. We need a licence to sublet the roof at The Beacon as our lease is with tenants of Devon County Council. Devon County Council is yet to provide this as it is busy dealing with the COVID-19 crisis. However we continue to work on this and have received assurances that Devon County Council won't let it cause us problems.

Host usage and the impact of COVID-19 on PV operations

The coronavirus restrictions have slowed our ability to address some maintenance issues, notably at Exeter Library. COVID-19 restrictions also impacted host usage and PPA income. As the following table shows, Exeter College, Pinhoe Road Baptist Church and The Beehive were the most significantly affected.

Site PV1 & 2	Predicted	2020 usage	2019 usage	Change
Exeter Library (comb.)	95%	99%	96%	3%
Great Moor House	95%	88%	89%	-1%
Shillingford 25kw	60%	47%	37%	10%
Shillingford 14 kw	60%	97%	94%	3%
Wonford CLC	50%	30%	34%	-4%
Exeter College	65%	46%	65%	-19%
Pinhoe Rd BC	30%	14%	25%	-11%
Glasshouse	70%	41%	40%	1%
Beehive	50%	41%	80%	-39%
PV3				
Beacon (part year)	50%	45%		
Westbank (part year)	50%	40%		

Table 2: Usage 2019 compared to 2020

Healthy Homes For Wellbeing

This year, despite the challenges of COVID-19, our Healthy Homes project continued to thrive and we were able to provide energy advice and other support services to vulnerable residents throughout the year. Our work is delivered across Exeter, Mid Devon, East Devon, Teignbridge and Torbay by a dedicated team.

Team News

On 1st July 2020, Tara Bowers took on the role of Project Manager from Gill Wyatt, who remained on the team as Home Energy Advisor and Community Liaison Officer.

The team has grown during this year. Two new Home Energy Advisors, Charlene Battams and Julie Glover, joined us during the summer, and were among the first advisors countrywide to study for the City and Guilds Energy Advice qualification via e-learning. Charlene and Julie did all their training from behind a desk and despite the disadvantage of not being able to learn the role 'in the field' they have both excelled.

This year for the first time we have elected to reward our best performing advisors by creating two awards. Charlene Battams has been awarded Home Energy Advisor of the Year Award and Julie Glover receives a Special Award for her amazing efforts during her first year.

We were fortunate also to recruit Vickie Mogford as our in-house Benefits Advisor in January 2021. Vickie had previously worked in this role for Age UK Mid Devon. Margaret Pickering, ECOE's Operations and Maintenance contractor for our solar PV sites, also began supporting the Healthy Homes team with her IT skills. Chris Walford left the team during the summer. We thank Chris for his efforts during his time with the Healthy Homes project.

As at 31st January 2021 the team comprises:

- Tara Bowers, Project Manager
- Gill Wyatt, Community Liaison Officer
- Matthew Axe, Home Energy Advisor
- Paul Whittall, Home Energy Advisor
- Charlene Battams, Home Energy Advisor
- Julie Glover, Home Energy Advisor
- Vickie Mogford, Benefits Advisor
- Margaret Pickering, IT Support

COVID-19

The impact of the pandemic on our project was evident immediately. Home Visits of course stopped in March 2020, and with this being the basis of our work we had to quickly find new ways of working.

During the first lockdown we switched to a telephone-based service and proactively contacted people already on our database offering a new kind of support. Alongside the usual energy advice, we also offered to do shopping, collect medical supplies, signposted to key Covid support services and for some people we became 'befrienders', making weekly or monthly telephone calls as needed.

We were conscious that many of our vulnerable clients would be very isolated during the lockdown and we were surprised how many told us that we were the first organisation to call them, and that they were appreciative of our call even if they needed no support. So many vulnerable people do not have access to the internet and our telephone service was therefore an ideal way to help them stay connected.

It was harder to deliver our energy advice. Home Visits help us 'see' the problems, and some work became almost impossible via the telephone. Helping to set heating controls, sorting out meter or billing issues, and even just working out the type of lightbulbs a client has, became the hardest part. Many energy suppliers closed their call centres for all but supply emergencies. It was difficult to do three-way calls with residents and suppliers. Even when the resident had authorised us to talk to the supplier to resolve issues, we found communicating with them extremely difficult. Casework for clients has increased as a result, with many issues needing three or four calls to resolve problems which before Covid could be resolved during a home visit.

For clients who we have been unable to reach by telephone, we posted letters offering support to last known addresses. A combination of telephone support, sending photos by email or on smartphones, or bills and paperwork by post helped us to continue to provide support. We became very versatile, and credit must go to the entire team for their tenacity in solving issues. It is sad that some charities have gone under during the pandemic, and key services in some districts have not yet been replaced. The fact that our Healthy Homes project has not only grown but is also thriving in what continues to be difficult times is testament to the resilience and dedication of our team, as well as the directors.

Local Energy Advice Partnership (LEAP), our key partner, was closed from the end of March to the end of August 2020. This impacted our income levels, as well as reducing the services we could offer. LEAP offers a number of schemes, including a broken boiler replacement scheme and a home appliance replacement scheme. During the first lockdown we saw an unprecedented level of requests for support with broken heating systems and appliances. This was due to other services being closed. Charity shops were closed. Heating contractors were closed. Some repair services were not doing home visits. The COVID-19 effect was evident across our entire region.

We worked closely with district councils who responded well to the crisis. Hardship funds were available across the region, as well as our own fund, and we were able to support many of the requests we received during that time.

LEAP reopened at the end of August with a new-look service. Instead of home visits, LEAP launched a hybrid offering of telephone advice calls with easy measures like lightbulbs and draughtproofing supplied by post, with the possibility of a short follow up visit for those who needed one. The short visits enable us to do the things that are impossible to do by phone. That could be setting heating controls, taking meter readings, calling energy suppliers with the resident or inspecting loft spaces to determine if more insulation is needed. The new system was plagued by technical difficulties in the first few months. LEAP also had staff shortages as employees had to follow guidelines around self-isolation. It was a tough few months, when patience was needed by us all.

We were able to support local households via the LEAP hybrid telephone/short visit scheme between end of August and December until the subsequent lockdown stopped all home visits again, and we reverted to telephone/email based service again in January 2021.

With many groups across the country being affected by COVID-19, LEAP asked our experienced team to cover their telephone advice calls for other regions including Manchester and Yorkshire. This helped increase our income levels again.

Covid support calls/Aftercare calls	804
New enquiries – telephone assessments	179
New enquiries – face to face at clinics	27
LEAP – Full Home Visits (pre COVID-19)	137
LEAP – Telephone Assessments	354
LEAP – Short Home Visits	169
Short Home Visits (non-LEAP)	17
Benefits Advice Sessions	13
No contact mailings	713
Total Interactions	2,413

NB This does not include any follow up calls, or third-party calls to solve issues or research solutions.

Table 3: Healthy Homes Interactions

Database

Until this year we were using an Excel spreadsheet to collate our work. With over 1,500 households, it was time to manage the data differently. Tara and Margaret spent a few months across the summer to develop a new database system for the project, using the platform Airtable. We now have a system that helps us analyse our work more easily, monitor outstanding cases closely and flag clients who need future help.

We are now able to provide detailed outcome statistics for councils and other partners and going forward the database will help us to accurately analyse our impact.

HEALTHY HOMES DELIVERABLE TYPE	TOTAL COUNT	TOTAL ESTIMATED FINANCIAL BENEFIT (£)
Appliance Supply * (appliances delivered under LEAP's HEART scheme)	148	31,720
Behaviour changes (eg dry clothes outside instead of tumble dry, turn off appliances instead of standby)	502	18,036
Hardship grants and fuel vouchers	461	37,283
Heating/Insulation referrals * (replacement boilers, insulation upgrades)	284	367,095
In house Benefits work (value will increase as referrals complete)	20	7738
Easy Measures supplied by Healthy Homes *	1	84
LEAP Easy Measures fitted on home visits *	438	20,358
LEAP Posted Easy Measures *	256	12,172
Money issue (includes referrals for benefits check, and water discounts)	377	187,336
Priority Service Register Sign ups	607	-
Retrofit referrals and enquiries * (incl to DCC's Local Area Delivery project, outcome figure will increase as referrals complete)	48	11,700
Tariffs/Billing/Meters (includes switching savings and all meter or billing issues)	598	21,761
Smart Thermostat supply *	4	1,276
Wellbeing Referrals (includes Fire service, health and hazard referrals)	69	0
Warm Home Discount	512	38,500
Total		755059

* Financial benefit is measured as the total of energy efficiency savings, grants towards the measure, or physical cost of the measure.

Note: The bulk of these outcomes were produced during the periods February to March 2020 and September 2020 to January 2021, as LEAP and other services and contractors were closed from March to August 2020.

Table 4: Healthy Homes Outcomes and Benefits

Events and Clinics

Naturally our programme of clinics and events was cancelled and Zoom became a friend. All of our team meetings, partner meetings, talks and frontline worker trainings took place on-line. Our reach in this area has been much lower than in previous years. Many organisations were closed, groups were not meeting, and

partner teams were already stretched to capacity with little time to join us online for training.

We trialled a new idea of online energy cafes. These were not successful, and it was clear that we were not reaching our target vulnerable audience via this method. We participated in Exeter City Council's 'Renting Minefield' series of webinars for landlords and did manage to hold a drop-in clinic in Axminster across the autumn.

In November 2020, we held a webinar for Fuel Poverty Awareness Day, organised by National Energy Action. Our aim was to highlight fuel poverty issues and to discuss the ways in which government and policy could do more to address the inequalities we see in our daily work. We were delighted to be joined by Ben Bradshaw, MP for Exeter, for this event. We forged new links with some councils following this webinar which are helping us to take the project forward in 2021.

Event Type	Number Feb & Mar 2020	Number April 20–Jan 21
Front line Worker Training	2	5
Drop in Clinics	24	2
Talks to groups	5	2
Other events	4	2
Online Energy cafes		3
Total	35	14

Table 5: Healthy Homes Events

Winter Warmth

We ran our Winter Warmth Campaign again from September 2020 to raise funds for our Hardship Fund. The campaign asks people to donate their Winter Fuel Payments to the Healthy Homes Hardship fund if they do not require it themselves. We also take donations from other kind residents throughout the year and we are grateful for their support.

The 2020/21 campaign raised just over £5,150, which has provided 25 grants totalling £3,856 in this financial year. These grants have paid for prepayment meter top ups, food vouchers, fridges, cookers, washing machines, carpets and small house repairs. Our publicity for this campaign featured in *One Magazine* and *Express and Echo*.

Funding

None of our work could have taken place without grants. We were fortunate to receive funding from:

- Western Power Distribution (WPD)
- Big Energy Savings Network (BESN)
- People's Postcode Lottery (PPL)

- Exeter City Council (ECC)
- Tesco
- Involve (Mid Devon)
- Devon Community Foundation (DCF)

Our income was supplemented by the services we provide to LEAP, Plymouth Energy Community in a project funded by WPD and Smart Energy GB.

During the autumn and into 2021 we have also worked with Devon County Council on their Green Homes Grant Local Authority Delivery project. This scheme provides 'free' measures to low income, low EPC rated homes. We hope to help 40 homes improve their homes with new windows and doors, insulation upgrades and solar PV. As this project will not conclude until August 2021, we will report the outcomes of this project next year.

We are thrilled to have been nominated by Agility Eco, as Regional Vulnerable Customer Support Campaigner of the Year in the Energy Efficiency Awards 2020/21. By the time we get to the AGM we will know whether we have won!

Social Impact Study

We are excited to launch a new Social Impact Study into our work. Our Director Stacia Ryder has supported Tara in the development of this and we look forward to sharing the results of this study in due course.

In late 2020, ECOE conducted a review of the information collected from Healthy Homes for Wellbeing (HH) clients. The goal was to explore opportunities for collecting additional data to better identify and meet needs of communities using HH services and improve the measurement of the impact on clients and the community.

Impact includes direct economic benefits to clients plus non-economic benefits, such as improvements in quality of life, health and wellbeing, ability to meet other household needs and achieve housing stability.

We believe the expansion of data collection will help us to better serve the community by identifying energy poverty and understanding how it intersects with other household poverty issues such as food insecurity. In addition, our ability to demonstrate our impact in the community across a range of metrics is a crucial to securing future grant funding. We expect to begin administering household surveys during autumn 2021.

COMMUNICATIONS

Amid the COVID-19 pandemic, communications became more important than ever.

Local website developers, Sound In Theory, have redesigned ECOE's website. We thank them for their hard work.

Prior to the pandemic, Andy Extance spoke at a Transition Exeter Passivhaus/Retrofit meeting on February 27th.

We held three webinars: Wise Up About Solar Power, Wise Up About Green Retrofit and Wise Up About Fuel Poverty, the last of which was a discussion with Exeter MP Ben Bradshaw. Each achieved good impact in the local community, with more than half the registrants and attendees being non-members. The webinar recordings are now available on the [YouTube channel](#) ECOE set up this year.

We have issued press releases to highlight our activities which have been picked up by local publications, including One Magazine and the Express and Echo.

The Healthy Homes project was shortlisted in 373 Group awards in the Social Impact category. Although we did not win, the project was recognised for its tremendous achievements.

We intensified our recruitment of directors and contractors, which has led to significant successes in building our current strong team.

Throughout the year we issued twelve emails, including a notification of interest payments to members, an increase from nine in the previous period. 682 people receive our main newsletter, up slightly from 680 last year. On social media, our Twitter follower count is now 1,870, up from 1,775 last year. A tweet about our Winter Warmth campaign earned nearly 200,000 impressions. Our Facebook page has 914 followers, up from 891 last year. We now have 309 LinkedIn followers, up from 256 last year.

SUMMARY FINANCIAL POSITION AT 31 JANUARY 2021

The accounts for the financial year to 31 January 2021 show a surplus of £13,249 reducing the total accumulated deficit from £17,290 to £4,041. This is after taking account of the proposed 5% interest payment on members' shares and the payment to the Community Fund of £3,500 agreed at the 2020 AGM.

This is third successive year in which ECOE has made a surplus. There has been a decrease in turnover in the year of 15%, reducing the total net turnover excluding grants and donations from £154,188 to £130,727. This was driven by the Healthy Homes for Wellbeing project which saw a decrease in home visits by 48%, partly offset by solar PV generation, which saw increased turnover of 18%.

When considering the current year's performance and surplus, it should be noted that grants are received over the winter period, with most of the grant income being accounted for on receipt in accordance with accounting regulations, whereas the project's expenditure will continue throughout the year. Consequently, if we were to look at the figures in a few months' time, part of that surplus will have been spent.

ECOE's cashflow remained positive during the year, allowing repayment of £25,500 of members' share capital. For the current year, ECOE will seek to use surplus funds to repay further share capital and medium terms loan investments where requested. As we repay more of our loan and share investments, interest payments will reduce and surpluses will increase. This year we raised new medium-term loans to fund the solar PV 3 project. We also retained an interest-free benefactor loan to develop potential new solar PV projects.

On the strength of the results and the financial projections going forward, the Directors will recommend to members at the AGM that a transfer is made to the Community Fund of £3,500 this year based on the surplus generated and anticipated future income from Solar PV and Healthy Homes for Wellbeing projects. This may be supplemented by donations from members.

COMMUNITY FUND

The Community Fund is more important than ever in these difficult times. We draw on the income from our ten solar power sites, contributions from the Heathy Homes project and members' donations to fund qualifying activities in and near Exeter. In total, we expect the Community Fund to make in excess of £170,000 available over the 20-year lifespan of our solar panels.

For the 2020 allocation, the Community Fund had a total of £6,990 available. We made awards to four groups. Two are new recipients: Transition Exeter and Hospiscare. Two are repeat recipients: TRIP Community Transport and SEADREAM. However, we did not fully utilise the available funds. The Community Fund therefore remains open to applications on a rolling basis.

Name of organisation	Purpose	Amount (£)
Hospiscare	LED fittings at the nursing team's office in Exmouth.	640
Transition Exeter	Seed funding for a Community Emergency Centre in Exeter city centre.	1,000
TRIP Community Transport Association	Deposit for electric van.	1,000
SEADREAM	School sessions on saving energy. Detailed help available should there be signs of fuel poverty. The project will benefit 6-8 cohorts of around 25 children, families and teachers in schools belonging to the Exeter Learning Academy Trust.	920

Table 6: Community fund recipients 2020/21

Update since the 2019 allocation event

In the 2019/2020 community fund round we awarded £6,235 to 11 groups. While many projects have already been successfully delivered, the pandemic has delayed some which we are following up.

As an example of a completed project, SEADREAM used its funding to run three classes across two Exeter schools over the pandemic period. This provided a fun and educational workshop at a time when reassurance is needed that efforts to combat climate change are continuing, and that individual actions really do count.

We also helped to keep TRIP Community Transport operating during this difficult period. Deputy Manager Sharon Thorne said *'The grant from ECOE could not have*

come at a more important time for TRIP. The money has helped us keep the “doors open” and help the Community during the current pandemic. The money was invaluable in helping towards supporting over 400 community support requests. Thank you!’

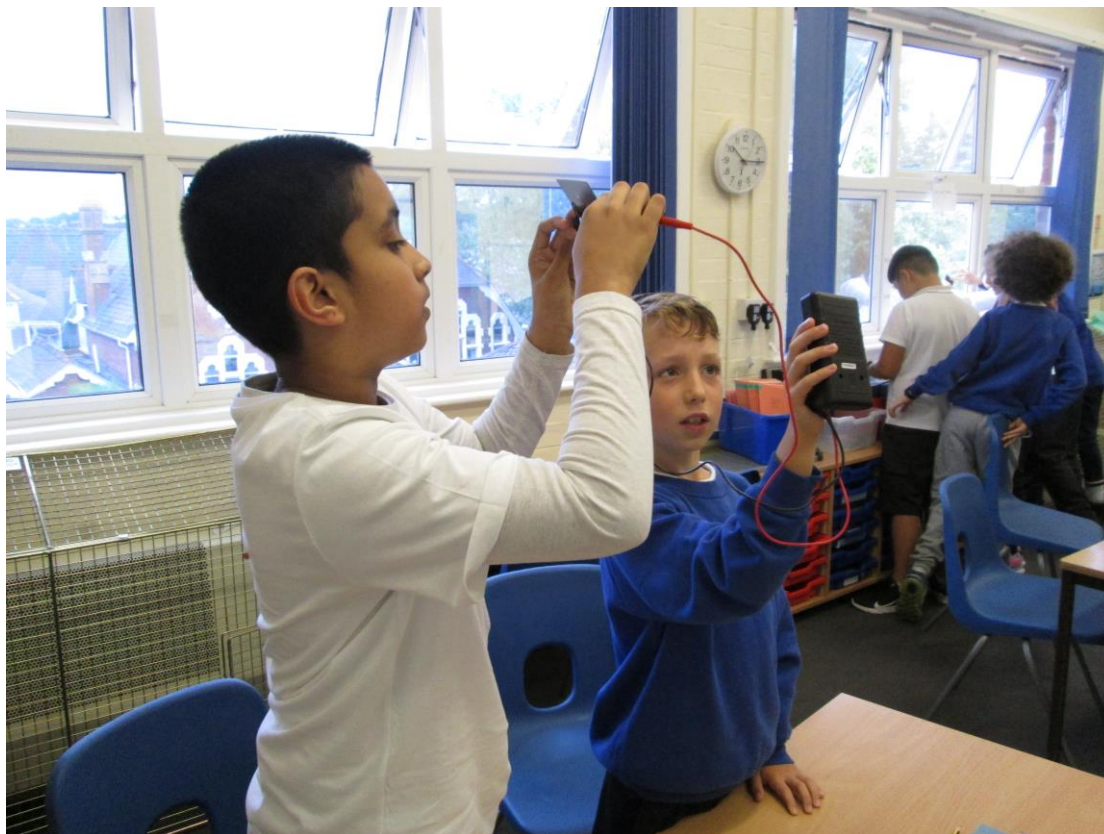


Figure 2: School pupils testing solar cells as part of the SEADREAM sessions funded by ECOE's community fund

Update since 31st January 2021

The director who was responsible for the Community Fund, Patrick Devine-Wright, has stepped away from the community fund, although he remains an ECOE director. He will now focus more on his work at the University of Exeter, and on the Devon Climate Plan and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. We have recruited a new director, Lenka Hill, to take the Community Fund forward.

GOVERNMENT POLICY UPDATE

The past year saw more movement in government policy and funding towards a Net Zero future than we have seen previously. In relation to ECOE's solar projects, Healthy Homes and retrofit projects the following aspects are helpful.

The Energy White Paper set out to mobilise £12 billion of government investment, and potentially three times as much from the private sector, to create and support up to 250,000 green jobs. ECOE supports this ambition. However the paper lacked specifics for community energy and commitment to solar and on-shore wind which are key technologies that community energy groups can deploy.

In its Consultation on Enabling a high renewable, net zero electricity system, the government is seeking views on how the industry is approaching the financing and deployment of renewable technologies and how this may change. Although community energy as a way of financing deployment of renewable technologies was not a key feature, there is hope of some future incentive for funding opportunities for further renewable generation.

In our view, the government is missing a trick by not making community energy more central to its policy and consultations on renewable energy and energy efficiency. The Committee on Climate Change Net Zero report was clear: *"It will not be possible to get close to meeting a net-zero target without engaging with people or by pursuing an approach that focuses only on supply-side changes [which] will only be possible if people are engaged in a societal effort to reach net-zero emissions and understand the choices and constraints...There is currently no government strategy to engage the public in the transition to a low-carbon economy. This will need to change."*

ECOE director Sonya Bedford has put together a detailed summary of all relevant policy changes over the past year, [which you can access on the ECOE website here](#).

FUTURE STRATEGY



Figure 3: Some of the ECOE directors at our most recent strategy day - in a chilly open-sided barn to allow adequate ventilation

Solar PV4

ECOE is currently talking with a Devon-based educational institution about new solar PV installations at three sites. Each array would be relatively large by ECOE standards, in the 80-90kW peak output range. This would be a significant achievement, as our first sites without Feed-in-Tariff subsidies. As such, most of our income will come from selling electricity directly to the host. This brings extra challenges, and some or all of the sites may not be viable under this model. We should know more about whether the project will progress by this year's AGM.

Devon Energy

The community energy groups in Devon have combined to set up an umbrella organisation looking at setting up renewable projects larger than we usually undertake individually. The organization is called [Devon Energy](#), and ECOE is a shareholder. It is planning to set up renewable projects across the county with 100MW of generation capacity. Members of community energy groups nearest each site will get the opportunity to invest, and the nearby groups will get income from any surplus generated. The lead project is currently a large wind farm south of Dartmoor called [Clayworks](#). Devon Energy is also exploring a number of ground-mounted solar sites near Exeter from which ECOE would ultimately benefit.

Retrofit

ECOE plans to develop a retrofit advisory and support service to encourage homeowners to improve the energy efficiency of their homes, reducing their energy bills and CO2 output. This initiative recognises the urgent need to develop initiatives to reduce our carbon footprint and move our city and community towards net zero carbon by 2030.

The approach of retrofit is improvement of 'fabric first' to reduce the energy requirement of homes and subsequently to consider renewable energy inputs. With the government Green Homes Grant introduced last year, significant interest was generated but challenges have also become clear. The premature closure of that grant scheme also sends conflicting messages. The prospect of a replacement scheme emerging from the autumn spending review offers hope.

Several ECOE directors have been developing their understanding of retrofit and how an advisory service might be developed through discussion among Retrofit-in-Devon consultation group members, sharing best practice and developing momentum. A franchise arrangement with Manchester-based Carbon Co-op is currently in negotiation. This will provide a framework and quality assurance process for the roll out of retrofit in Exeter and across Devon.

Subject to the necessary start-up funding, we intend to qualify several Domestic Energy Assessors (DEAs) from within the current ECOE team with appropriate knowledge of the retrofit process. Some initial funding is likely through the DCC Green Homes grant Local Authority Delivery Scheme.

DEAs will support homeowners in identifying the specific energy efficiency requirements of their home, introduce them to a suitably qualified architect/designer to develop the best solutions and then connect them with accredited builders/installers. We hope to offer a full retrofit co-ordination service at a competitive price to encourage wider engagement with domestic retrofit, an essential element of broader climate-change mitigation strategy at a local and national level. During the past year, ECOE directors have already contributed to webinars offering initial advice on retrofit, including to local landlords as part of the city council sponsored 'Rental Minefield' series.

We are grateful to Rob Rickey, a Passivhaus-qualified architect, who has been advising ECOE in the development of our Retrofit offering. Rob retrofitted his own house in 2011. The project included installing 180mm of graphite polystyrene insulation and triple glazed windows. The cost of heating by gas and oil was reduced by over 75%. More details are on Rob's blog <http://harperolocito.blogspot.com/>.



Figure 4: Rob Rickey's retrofit work on his own home in Redlands. Photo courtesy of Rob Rickey.