



Glasgow Community Energy

Vision for a People Powered Future
Business Plan Summary

March 2024

Introduction



Glasgow Community Energy is a renewable energy co-operative working to deliver community owned energy projects and to ensure that our transition to net-zero is rooted in climate and social justice. We want communities to play a central role in meeting the region's net-zero ambitions, to put community ownership at the heart of the just transition, and help to tackle broader social and climate issues through generating income for local community projects.

The co-operative currently owns two solar panel installations on Glasgow schools, funded by local people, that generate funds for community projects. We want to significantly upscale our projects and this document lays out how we'll do it. We are seeking feedback on our plans before going out to funders to pay for staff to deliver it.

Complete the feedback questionnaire [here](#).

Why community energy?

Glasgow City Council has set a target of achieving net-zero emissions by 2030, which presents significant challenges as well as opportunities.

Challenges

- Relatively low deployment of renewables
- Dependency on petrol and diesel vehicles
- Outdated public transport system
- Poor levels of energy efficiency in buildings
- Fuel poverty
- Inequalities along lines of class, race, gender, disability and sexual orientation

Opportunities

- Natural resources: sunlight, wind, waterways
- Buildings suitable for renewables
- Large users of energy
- Innovative science & technology sector
- Vibrant climate action community
- Diversity and representation

We believe that communities are uniquely placed to play a significant role in contributing to this target while simultaneously working to address climate and social justice. We can bring the energy and diversity of our communities together to drive change from the bottom up and to ensure that our transition is directed by and for the people of Glasgow.

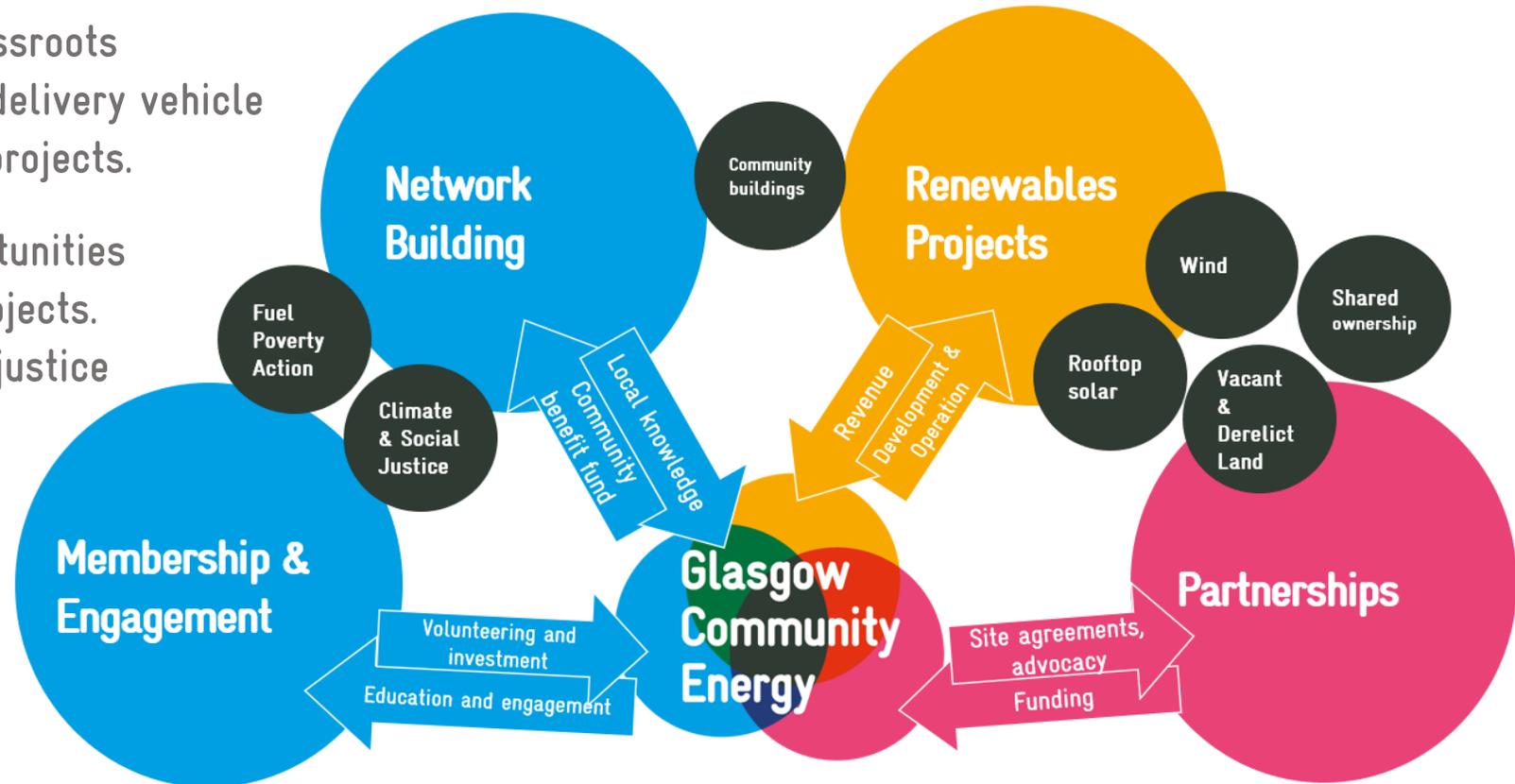
Our draft business plan is based on four areas of growth and development over the next 2-5 years:

Renewables Projects: Major opportunities for community-owned renewables in rooftop solar, wind, heat in buildings, and district heat.

Network Building: Develop a network of grassroots organisations across the city to become the delivery vehicle through which they can take on renewables projects.

Membership and Engagement: Create opportunities to volunteer, participate and invest in our projects. Address fuel poverty and social and climate justice through our community activism fund.

Partnerships: Develop relationships with government, funders and local business to realise ambitious projects, draw in funding and advocate for communities in local decision making.



Our vision

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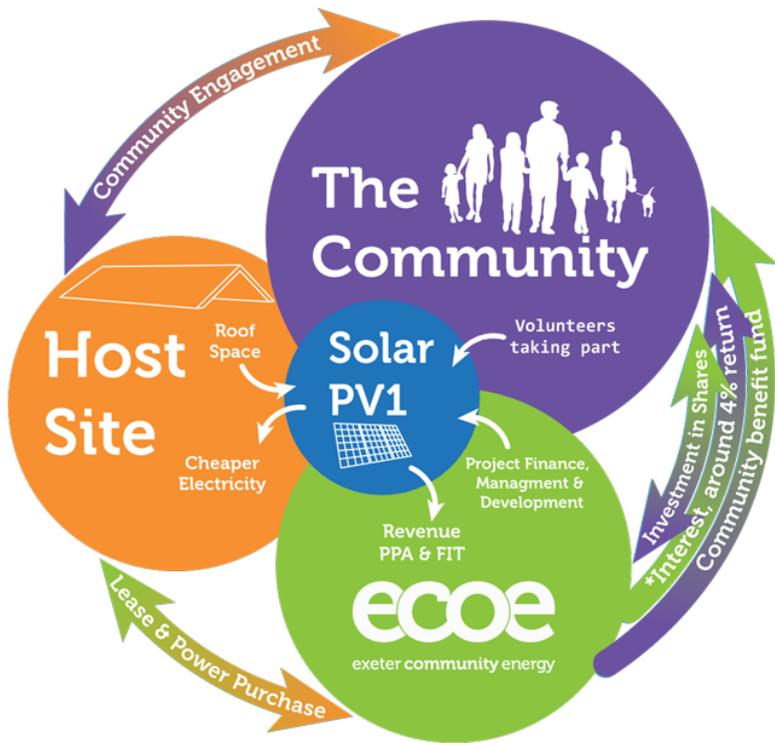


Renewable Generation: Where are we now?

Our primary objective is to develop as much community-owned renewable energy generation as possible. This is key to delivering the broader impacts we want to facilitate, and we need to significantly upscale our existing operational projects if this is to be a success.

GCE currently owns and operates two solar PV installations at Ashton Secondary School and Glendale Primary School. The installations were completed in 2020 following a volunteer-led process to carry out technical feasibility, secure permissions from the Council, obtain grid connections and Feed-in Tariff subsidies, and raise more than £30,000 investment through a community share offer. We also received a capital grant of £77,149.95 from Scottish Power Energy Networks and a development loan of £30,000 from the Scottish Government's Community and Renewable Energy Scheme (CARES), who also provided invaluable project development support. The total installed capacity across these two sites is 91 kWp, generating approximately 67,000 kWh of electricity per year, and a revenue of around £12,000 a year.

Community rooftop solar is a well-established business model in the UK and has benefits for the community and the host buildings, as shown in this image from Exeter Community Energy.



Renewable Generation: Where are we going?

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More
Rooftop
Solar PV

This remains our primary focus and the most well evidenced and tried and tested business model for urban community energy. A high-level desktop review in 2022 identified a shortlist of 77 new sites with a total estimated potential installed capacity of 5-6 MW, mainly owned by Glasgow City Council and Glasgow Life, as well as community buildings, colleges and local businesses. We have continued to identify new potential sites since then, and want to achieve a total of 1-2 MW of community owned PV by engaging and progressing as many of these sites as possible.

We are also looking at the following potential projects which are all in the early development stage:

Community
Buildings

Support for and possible co-ownership of renewables on community buildings that could work alongside funding from the Community and Renewable Energy Scheme to unlock huge potential in Glasgow.

VDL

The council have indicated that potential heat and power projects on Vacant & Derelict Land (VDL) will be the primary focus of their Community Renewable Energy Framework (CREF) which is currently under development and we await to see what opportunities emerge from this process.

Renewable Generation: Where are we going?

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Large scale
renewables

There are opportunities for medium and large-scale wind and solar projects in and around Glasgow where a suitable business model or a nearby large energy consumer can be identified. This includes potential partnerships with organisations such as Scottish Water, and the potential for community owned wind projects on Cathkin Braes.

Shared
Ownership

We are working with West Dunbartonshire Council and local Community Councils to support a community ownership stake in this proposed 70 MW wind farm due for completion in 2031.

E-bike hubs

We operate a solar powered community e-bike charging hub in Chryston and would like to identify more opportunities for rolling this out in other areas.

Innovation

In the future we want to be in a position to look at innovative community energy models that could unlock the potential of, for example, supplying local residents with reduced cost electricity, localised district heat networks and energy storage.

Network Building: Where are we now?

In order to develop genuine community-led projects we build partnerships with embedded community organisations in the areas we work. This helps us to understand and integrate the priorities of local people in our projects, and gives us legitimacy when talking to funders, local government and potential project partners. It also gives local community organisations the opportunity to take part in more ambitious energy projects that could create an income for the essential work they do locally.

There are currently 28 member organisations who own shares in GCE. These organisations cover a good geographical spread of the city and include prominent climate and energy focused community organisations across Glasgow, as well as others focusing on local social justice and economic development issues.

We run events to support community organisations with energy projects continue, and continue to develop new relationships with a particular focus on making our network more diverse and representative.



Cathy McCormack Community Activism Fund

Cathy McCormack was a community activist from Easterhouse who helped to secure funding for the pioneering solar heating project on the Easthall housing scheme. The Cathy McCormack Community Activism Fund aims to ensure that Cathy's legacy lives on in Glasgow. To date we have generated £10,000 for this fund and for the first 5 years of our operations this is being allocated to local organisations around our two existing solar PV sites. In the future we hope to expand this alongside new generation projects and open it up to a wider range of organisations, in consultation with our members and the broader community.

Network Building: Where are we going?

We want to become the delivery body for community-owned renewable energy projects in Glasgow, working in partnership with local community organisations across the city. In order to play this role effectively and with buy-in from the broader community sector we need to diversify, energise and formalise our network.

Diversify

We do not have any formal links with organisations who are specifically run by and in the interests of ethnic minorities, people with disabilities, the LGBTQ community, or other minorities and marginalised groups. We believe that EDI is central to climate justice and incorporating a much more diverse range of voices into our network is central to what we want to achieve.



Energise

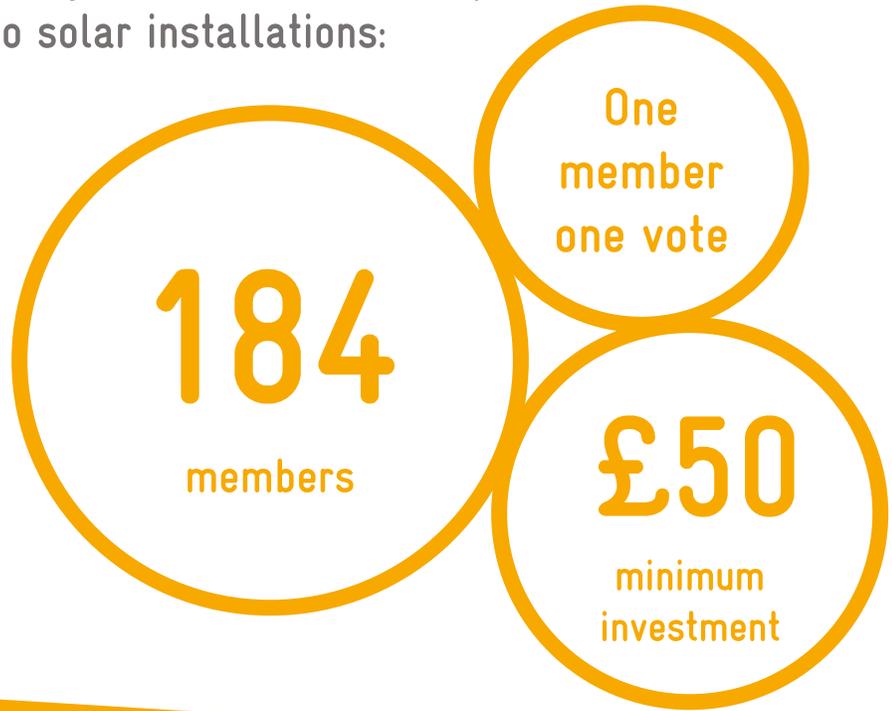
With the right resources there is more we can do to facilitate the active involvement of community organisations in our operations, for example by using their local knowledge to identify sites, co-develop renewables projects, engage volunteers and take part in our events.

Formalise

We would like to look at options for establishing a formalised network that facilitates GCE to drive renewable energy projects on behalf of and for the benefit of community organisations across the city. We would like to investigate potential options in collaboration with the community sector as a whole to ensure the approach taken is mutually beneficial and unlocks the greatest amount of potential.

Direct engagement with and leadership of people across Glasgow is essential to delivering genuine community energy projects. This involves active involvement of a diverse range of people in defining and developing our projects, and helps build momentum, visibility and active support for delivering them.

GCE is formally constituted as a Community Benefit Society with members who purchased shares in our first two solar installations:



We carry out broader community engagement as much as we can with our current resources:



Engagement & Membership: Where are we now?





Participation

We will develop an active volunteer and Director recruitment and management programme. This will help deliver our planned work while also engaging and upskilling members of the community. This will be done in tandem with an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion review of our business plan.

Governance

The standard rules of a BenCom require members to purchase shares and therefore excludes those not financially able to invest, which we believe goes against our founding principles of democratic participation. We will review our options for making GCE membership open to anyone who wants to be involved.

Communications

We will further develop and refresh our website and social media channels, develop new content and materials, establish a regular newsletter and host regular engagement events.

Engagement & Membership: Where are we going?



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Partnerships

To develop renewable energy projects we need sites to develop them on, people to sell the energy to, consents to build and connect projects to the grid, and funding. This means we need strong partnerships with building owners and landowners, energy users, local government, funders and other industry and public sector bodies.

Where are we now?

We have an active and productive working relationship with officers and elected councillors in Glasgow and are developing relationships with neighbouring local authorities. We are members of the Sustainable Glasgow Green Infrastructure and Transport Hub and sit on the board of University of Glasgow's GALLANT project.

We have a funding track record including from Local Energy Scotland and Scottish Power Energy Networks.

We actively engage with the community energy sector and wider renewable industry through attending events and network meetings, and are starting to develop links with local businesses.

Where are we going?

We need to further develop our partnership with GCC and other authorities to take advantage of various opportunities, while building support for community ownership and our role in delivering it. We need to proactively engage with local businesses and other organisations and to identify and develop more potential sites for rooftop solar and other potential projects.

We need to take a more proactive role in conversations happening at all levels of government and business on Glasgow's just transition, and in the community energy sector and wider renewables industry.

The above will also build our profile and legitimacy and support relationships with funding bodies and future funding applications.

How do we get there?

We will not be able to deliver the work outlined in our business plan by continuing to rely on volunteer capacity or small ad-hoc funding. We need to employ staff, and for that we need to draw in core funding over at least a 2-5 year period, with a need for additional funding for specialist project development work around legal agreements, technical feasibility work, and finance.

We have identified two core roles that could deliver this work: a part-time Engagement Manager to develop our community network, develop our governance and manage community engagement, and a part-time Project Development Manager to develop new renewable energy projects and grow partnerships with government and business, with close collaboration and support between the two roles.



We are in the process of developing a budget for these roles, additional specialist support and other core costs. Feedback on our business plan will help to refine this before we then go out to seek funding and put our plans into action.

Please complete our [feedback questionnaire](#) to help us develop these plans.