

# energise

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Tackling the threat of climate change and ending the misery of cold homes



## DECC's Community Energy Strategy

Is this when we go from 'in spite of' to 'because of'? asks Simon Roberts

PHOTO: CHRIS FREVIN

It's been a truism of community energy for many years that what we've achieved has been 'in spite of' the policies and regulations which shape the UK's energy system rather than 'because of'.

So is the publication of the Government's long-awaited Community Energy Strategy when all this starts to change? Will we finally see policy interventions which enable and support community action on energy?

There are welcome signs in the strategy that this is the case. Sort of.

As one might expect, the document (and associated ministerial comment) oozes positivity and encouragement, and the

Government is proposing various forms of assistance that will undoubtedly help. That's new, different and welcome.

The strategy also promises extra resources to enable more to happen, such as the £10 million Urban Community Energy Fund and a 'one-stop-shop' information access point for support and advice. And it commits the Government to listen to the recommendations of various barrier-busting working groups it has established, including on planning and permitting, grid connection, and access to finance.

Overall, the Coalition Government should be applauded for acknowledging

what previous administrations have ignored: that a more people-facing, community-engaging, diverse-ownership approach to energy system development and governance adds vital resilience and responsiveness.

But ... and there was always going to be a but ... the strategy stops short of the shift in thinking required. In fact, it doesn't even get close to tackling the policies, institutional arrangements, market models and regulatory frameworks which continue to ensure our energy system is dominated by large commercial interests.

This isn't surprising or necessarily downheartening at this stage, given the lack of attention to community energy in the past. So let's think of this strategy as merely a start, the first tentative steps – some welcome 'because of' interventions – towards a more significant transformation of the country's energy system.

The next step will be to challenge more explicitly and thoroughly these systemic 'in spite of' elements.

This will require a far clearer articulation of that transformation and some insightful unpicking of DECC's world view. And it will demand a far wider coalition of interests to push it forwards.

This was always too much to expect of the UK's first ever Community Energy Strategy. But it isn't too much to expect of what could happen next, and we at CSE look forward to building on the momentum that this strategy has created.

Simon Roberts OBE is CSE's Chief Executive.

A longer version of this opinion piece can be found at [www.cse.org.uk/sort-of](http://www.cse.org.uk/sort-of)

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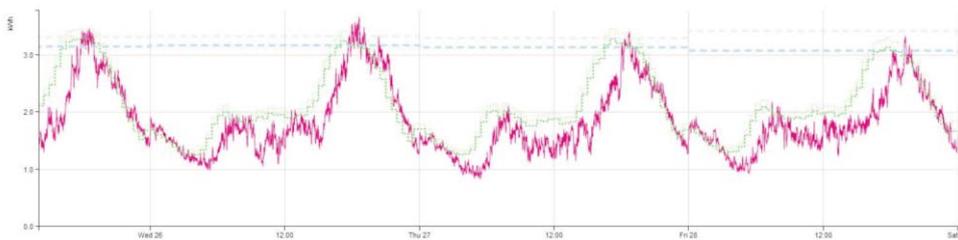
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Leveling out the peaks ... One initial aim is to lower the peak of actual use (pink) to below the blue line

# Can we cut electricity demand by rewarding communities?

Website shows electricity demand at selected substations in 'real-time'

**C**SE launched an innovative new project in January that offers cash incentives to communities that reduce their energy consumption and level out the 'peaks and troughs' of their energy demand.

The funder is Western Power Distribution who, like other network operators, face continually upgrading their substations to cope with ever higher power demands. WPD is working through a network of energy advice charities, led by CSE, to help ten selected 'communities' (in this case the households connected to particular electricity substations) reduce their electricity demand, especially at peak times.

We're calling the project 'Less is More' and we're confident that in the long run this approach could create savings for everyone, with lower bills and reduced upgrade costs. For this pilot, the participating communities

can earn up to £5,000 each, to be spent on improvements and events in the local area.

As the lead charity partner, CSE carried out the research to select and monitor substations in ten communities, and we've created the project's interactive website: [www.lessismore.org.uk](http://www.lessismore.org.uk). It uses live graphs to show the communities how much electricity they're using against their target, and how much prize money they're currently earning.

We're also providing energy advice and support to the participating communities in Easton (Bristol) and the Bournville Estate (Weston-Super-Mare).

CSE's Rachel Coxcoon said: "We're very excited that WPD has invited us to partner with them to design and deliver this innovative demand reduction project. We hope it will show that, working directly with householders to make them more aware of times of high demand, we can make their energy supply more secure. We're also hoping that householders will make changes to reduce their overall consumption, leading to lower bills."

Substations are not the most exciting link in the energy distribution chain, but they do offer the chance to work with small groups of householders (around 200 homes) and to monitor their collective energy usage minute by minute



PHOTO: PETER VAN DEN BOSCH



This community shop was insulated with a grant from the Community Chest

## The Community Chest is back

The grant scheme that offers £1,000 grants to make community buildings lean and green is open for Round 3 ...

**L**ocal groups in the Midlands, the South West and South Wales can now apply for grants of up to £1,000 to help reduce energy use in their community buildings.

The WPD Community Chest is a grant scheme funded by Western Power Distribution (WPD) and administered by CSE. A total of £50,000 is up for grabs. The aim is to help community groups carry out simple but effective energy efficiency improvements in village halls and community buildings, after carrying out their own energy audits. The maximum award per group will be £1,000, but you can apply for less than this.

This is the third time we have run the Community Chest. In the last round, 66 village halls, scout huts and other similar community buildings were awarded grants to enable them to carry out simple but effective energy efficiency improvements.

For example, the Mount Batten Centre in Plymouth, a not-for-profit watersports and activities centre, received funding to install occupancy sensors in the showers, changing rooms and toilets so that the lights weren't being left on.

The Community Chest is open for applications until 30 May 2014, or until the grant pot runs out. It's first come, first served, so get your application in soon. Read more and download the application forms from [www.cse.org.uk/wpdcc](http://www.cse.org.uk/wpdcc)

## 'Coping with cold' event illustrates need to work in partnership to tackle fuel poverty

“The event opened my eyes, increased my awareness of what a cold home means - isolation, health costs to NHS, forcing families into one room, etc.”

“[I'm] very keen to learn how to work better together in order to identify and find socially isolated older people living in fuel poverty.”

These are two comments from the overwhelmingly positive feedback we received at the close of our fuel poverty 'insight-sharing and networking' event in early December 2013 at M Shed, Bristol.

The aim of the free half-day event was to share some of our policy understanding and the lessons we've learned from delivering fuel poverty projects – including developing analytical tools, running insulation schemes, and doing targeted outreach work with older people, young families and minority ethnic groups.

Around 60 people attended, mainly drawn from housing associations, councils and local health and welfare organisations. Our hope is that by working in partnership with local agencies

like these, we will all be more successful at finding solutions to fuel poverty and the misery of cold homes.

Two lively roundtable discussion sessions reinforced the fact that fuel poverty lies at the heart of many social ills, not least health problems.

“The ability of the poorest in our society to stay healthily warm has moved to the top of the political agenda,” said CSE's Simon Roberts. “Cold homes and the risk of debt caused by fuel poverty are exacerbating factors in many health and social problems. If we want to address these problems, we need to work together to tackle fuel poverty.”

To view the presentations as a PDF (some slides removed for copyright reasons) go to [www.cse.org.uk/coping2014](http://www.cse.org.uk/coping2014)



'Coping with Cold' is also the name of a series of four short films made by CSE designed to help people working in health, welfare, housing and similar sectors understand the issues around fuel poverty | [www.youtube.com/csebristol](http://www.youtube.com/csebristol)

## ECO developments prompt scheme expansion

### CSE's insulation offer is now open to all in Bristol, Somerset, Devon and South Gloucestershire

The Energy Company Obligation is changing. From April, the part of the funding which covers insulation for solid walls and hard-to-treat cavities (CERO) will also cover simpler measures like loft and cavity wall insulation.

Previously, energy supplier funding for these measures had only been available to low income householders, but now it will be available across the board.

CSE has been monitoring the situation and we've lined up an extension to our Home Energy Upgrade insulation scheme to help people take advantage of these changes.

Working with Domestic and General Insulation Ltd, we can offer cavity wall insulation to any householder in our patch (see below) for a standard price of £49 or £99 (depending on their circumstances),

Could you benefit? Call 0800 082 2234 to find out. More on the scheme at [www.cse.org.uk/homeenergyupgrade](http://www.cse.org.uk/homeenergyupgrade)

with the remainder provided by ECO funding. They can get loft insulation installed, too, for another £99, or just have loft insulation fitted on its own for £11 per m<sup>2</sup>. All these prices are subject to survey and available funding.

A Green Deal Advice Report will be completed by Domestic and General Insulation at no cost to the customer.

As these changes to ECO develop, we'll keep monitoring the situation to make sure this offer is still a competitive one. With cavity wall and loft insulation usually costing about £500 each, we hope this offer will inspire lots of west country residents who still haven't insulated their homes properly to take action and stay warmer at home.

You're in 'our patch' if you live in one of the following local authority areas: Bristol, Bath & North East Somerset, Taunton Deane, Mendip, North Somerset, West Somerset, South Somerset, Sedgemoor, and South Gloucestershire. The scheme also runs in Devon





## Pioneering resources for the Somali community

**C**SE has produced two energy advice videos in Somali, thanks to Big Lottery funding. They are professionally made and subtitled in English, and we think they're the best of their kind out there.

The two films are *'How to avoid damp and mould'* and *'How to pay for your gas and electricity'* and are narrated by Yusuf Salah, our Somali-born energy advisor.

Many people in Bristol's Somali community have arrived as refugees. Coming to the UK from a very different climate and culture can result in a number of difficulties, and we

often see energy-related issues seriously impacting on Somali householders' quality of life. With a lack of information in their native language, this community is at risk of damp homes, confusion about energy bills and fuel debt.

CSE has been working with this community for several years (see [www.cse.org.uk/wbc](http://www.cse.org.uk/wbc)).

We'll be using the videos at workshops and advice surgeries, and we encourage other advice agencies across the UK to make use of them too.

View them on YouTube at [www.youtube.com/csebristol](http://www.youtube.com/csebristol) or request a DVD from [kate.thomas@cse.org.uk](mailto:kate.thomas@cse.org.uk).



### CSE staff scarf selfies

CSE was an enthusiastic participant in **Cold Homes Week** (3-7 Feb), the national campaign to draw attention to the plight of those living in fuel poverty. Supporters were asked to express support by sharing pictures of themselves ('selfies' in the parlance de nos jours) wearing a scarf. Several members of the CSE staff joined in. Here are Kieran and Heather, Kat, Ian and Mark. See [www.cse.org.uk/coldhomesweek](http://www.cse.org.uk/coldhomesweek) for more.



PHOTO: ADAM MULLIGAN

## Energy demand: helping DECC see the bigger picture

Department of Energy & Climate Change has commissioned CSE to review how their models address **demand side measures**

**D**emand side measures (i.e. actions taken to reduce energy demand rather than increase supply) are widely considered vital to the UK achieving its energy policy objectives of a secure, affordable and low carbon energy system.

Examples of these may include cutting energy demand by insulating buildings and installing more efficient equipment; stimulating shifts in the timing of energy use to reduce peaks and make the most of intermittent renewables; or using more distributed sources of energy to create power or heat nearer the user.

Now the Department of Energy & Climate Change (DECC) has commissioned CSE to review how the various energy-systems models that DECC uses to help set priorities and design and/or test policy

proposals take account of demand side measures.

For this two-month project CSE is examining the structure and content of DECC's 'whole-system' models and their interaction with other policy- or sector-specific models to see how demand side measures are currently represented. And we'll be looking at the sorts of questions which are typically being asked of the models by DECC and how the answers inform policy and programme design and implementation.

Joshua Thumim, CSE's Head of Research and Analysis, is leading the project: "We're looking forward to working with DECC to understand how these key policy-making tools work, how they are currently being used, and what improvements could potentially be made."

## Off-gas postcodes: We publish complete list for England, Scotland, and Wales

CSE has published a complete list of GB postcodes that are not connected to the mains gas grid (correct to 2013). We've also added the census area and the co-ordinates of the centre of each postcode on the list.

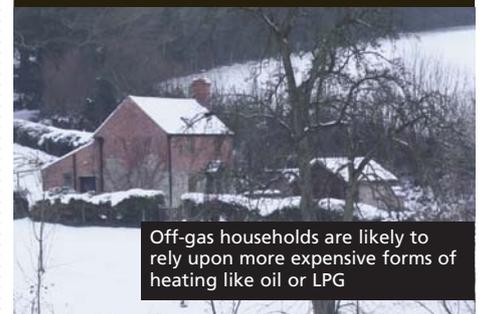
The households in these areas do not have access to mains gas for heating or cooking, and are likely to be reliant upon more expensive forms of heating.

Zoe Redgrove of CSE's Research & Analysis team said: "We're always being approached by people asking us for this information. Until now the data we had was almost ten years old so it's good to be able to provide an up-to-date resource."

News about the data was widely shared on social media, and to date over 1,100 people have visited the page on our website where the data is held.

[www.cse.org.uk/off-gas-postcodes](http://www.cse.org.uk/off-gas-postcodes)

The off-gas postcodes dataset is presented in a spreadsheet (.xlsx file) which contains 412,696 postcodes. Be aware that conversion to other file formats such as .xls may result in loss of data, because not all spreadsheets support a sufficient number of rows.



Off-gas households are likely to rely upon more expensive forms of heating like oil or LPG



## Free that data ...

A reminder to readers of Energise that our key research and sustainable energy data (see list, right) is available for download by researchers, policy-makers, community activists and all those working in the field of sustainable energy.

Our Open Data Collaboration Initiative is funded by the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation [www.cse.org.uk/opendata](http://www.cse.org.uk/opendata)

- 1) Display Energy Certificate data
- 2) Lower Super Output Area data
- 3) Fuel poverty data
- 4) Energy Company Obligation data in a usable format
- 5) Energy consumption data (domestic)
- 6) Heating and housing census data
- 7) GB household emissions dataset
- 8) GB postcodes off the mains gas grid

# Renewable energy in the rural landscape

## Engaging sixth formers with renewable energy issues

PHOTO: WESTMILL SOLAR FARM

**C**SE has developed a new suite of educational resources for schools, helping sixth formers to understand and engage with the debates around renewable energy.

Funded by the Ernest Cook Trust, the four lesson plans tie in with the Geography A-Level syllabus and equip teachers to introduce renewable energy and get sixth formers thinking about the issues behind energy developments. They cover:

- 1) An introduction to renewable energy
- 2) Assessing the impacts and benefits of renewable energy
- 3) The impacts of large structures on the landscape
- 4) A renewable energy planning scenario, where students play the roles of 'pros', 'antis' and 'planners'.

CSE's Morgan Kuivala piloted these workshops in four schools in our local area, with very positive feedback. She took along our PlanLoCaL scale model (picture, right), which shows the impact of different renewable energy developments on a typical landscape. (It's not essential to the workshops, but you can hire it – details from

morgan.kuivala@cse.org.uk.)

Here are some of the comments from teachers:

*"Many thanks for organising and running the presentation today, it was absolutely brilliant! What a fantastic model! It was just what was needed to get the students enthused and up and running."* [Minehead Middle School]

*"I loved the model and Morgan's presentation of the ideas... Many thanks for coming in - we will be able to capitalise on your input when we start our work on sustainable energy"* [Backwell School]

*"If you ever have any other sessions you wish to try out... you are always welcome at Wadham!"* [Wadham School]

Morgan says: "Young people (16-25) are less than half as likely as older people (50-74) to take part in civic consultations about renewable energy developments and therefore have less say in decisions – about the building of a wind farm, for example – even though they're the ones who'll live with the outcome the longest. It's important to encourage every age group to engage in

these local planning issues.

"It's been great to see how keen the students are to learn about renewable energy, and to get stuck into the planning debate. Lots of interesting ideas and thoughts came up during the lessons."



The PlanLoCaL model with local sixth formers

You can download **Renewable Energy in the Rural Landscape** free from [www.cse.org.uk/thefsource](http://www.cse.org.uk/thefsource)

If you're a teacher who would like to know more, please contact Morgan Kuivala on 0117 934 1454.

## CSE hosts a gathering for European biomass project



In February, CSE played host to an international gathering - a meet-up for all the research teams involved in the ROKWOOD project. This is a three-year study being conducted by a number of UK and European partners looking at the sustainable production and use of woody energy crops.

The aim is to better understand the obstacles and barriers that face the sector and propose policy options that could help the industry gain momentum. There are six research-driven clusters from different European countries; the UK cluster is made up of CSE, Dorset County Council and Crops for Energy Ltd.

The seminar was chaired by CSE's Chief Executive Simon Roberts, and Bristol's mayor, George Ferguson, welcomed the project partners, speaking about his vision for Bristol and the local relevance of the project.

Find out more at [www.rokwood.eu](http://www.rokwood.eu)

## Workshops for pre-payment meter users

Universal Credit and monthly budgeting offer opportunities for lowering the energy bills of the poorest households

Our Home Energy Team is running a series of workshops in Bristol to help people who would like to switch from their key or card meter and start paying for their energy monthly instead.

Over six million households in the UK pay for their electricity or gas by topping up a pre-payment meter. It's often the easiest way to pay if you're on a weekly budget (typical for people on benefits), but is also

the most expensive way to buy gas or electricity. So people on the lowest incomes often pay the highest rates.

The new benefits system, Universal Credit, will be paid to claimants once a month into their personal bank account. This will be an opportunity for a lot of people to start paying for their energy by monthly direct debit, meaning they can take advantage of better offers and tariffs.

We are offering free support to social housing tenants with pre-payment meters who would like to make the switch to standard meters. The workshops will:

- Help tenants understand Universal Credit
- Introduce monthly budgeting
- Assist with opening bank accounts and help understanding direct debits
- Explain the benefits of switching to a standard meter for gas and electricity
- Give further advice on saving energy

The workshops will take place across Bristol between 25 March and 17 May. For details, see [www.cse.org.uk/ppm](http://www.cse.org.uk/ppm)



PHOTO: LUDIA SHINGIBRIGHTLY

## New CSE caseworkers for Somerset

WISH (Warmer Improved Somerset Homes) is our much-loved fuel poverty programme that has been helping vulnerable people in Somerset since 2006. For the next three years, we're making the service even better with the introduction of two dedicated WISH caseworkers.

CSE's long history of providing home energy advice has taught us that people are more likely to take action if they receive face-to-face advice (especially during a home visit) from a known and trusted source.

That's why our caseworkers are now on hand to speak to people in Somerset, and are based at local partner organisations. They are Liz Dagger, based at Somerset Care & Repair in Shepton Mallet, and Isobel White, based at the Community Council for Somerset in Taunton.

They'll provide an in-depth advice service through home visits, case work, client follow-up, and events, and they'll be supported by a team of trained local volunteers.

More at [www.cse.org.uk/wish](http://www.cse.org.uk/wish)

## Small victory against fuel poverty as we help over 100 Bristol council tenants apply for the Warm Homes Discount

In January our Home Energy Team advisors convened a meeting of Bristol City Council tenants to tell them about the Warm Homes Discount and help people apply.

The Warm Homes Discount is a £135 rebate on your electricity bill, which the larger energy companies are obliged to offer. People who receive the Guarantee Credit element of Pension Credit receive the discount automatically, but a broader group of low-income customers have to apply. In reality, many people who are struggling to pay their energy bills may be eligible for the discount without realising it.

We ran this session with Bristol City Council to alert people to the scheme and help them contact their supplier.

The session was a storming success. "A huge number of people arrived at the meeting, and we had to ask the CSE office to send extra staff," said Sonia Pruzinski (pictured). "It was a stark reminder of how worried people are about energy bills."

We took CSE's laptops down to the meeting so that we could help people apply online there and then – and we helped over 100 council tenants to fill out an application, almost all of whom are likely to be eligible. That's over £13,000 off electricity bills for some of Bristol's most vulnerable residents, and a little bit of progress made against fuel poverty.



Yusuf (standing) and Sonia (seated by lap-top) helped over 100 Bristol Council tenants apply for the Warm Homes Discount

CSE is currently running a special service for tenants of Bristol City Council which offers an enhanced service from our Home Energy Team, including phone advice, home visits, training on how to use heating systems, etc. We call it 'Bristol TEA' - Bristol Tenants Energy Advice. More at [www.cse.org.uk/bristoltea](http://www.cse.org.uk/bristoltea)

**And the winner is ... PlanLoCaL**

Wowzer! Our resource pack for community groups, 'PlanLoCaL: energy efficiency and the Green Deal' won the Sustainability Communicator prize at the ENDS Green



Economy Awards. The pack is a comprehensive guide to planning, setting up and running a community energy efficiency scheme. You can check it out at [www.planlocal.org.uk](http://www.planlocal.org.uk).

CSE's Bridget Newbery said "I'm delighted that the hard work of so many of us at CSE has been recognised, and hope this will encourage more people to use the materials we produced."

**Chair of Trustees steps down**

After 14 years as our Chair of Trustees, Peter Lipman stepped down in January. We'd like to thank him for all his hard work over such a long time and the huge contribution he made to the development and governance of the organisation. We are in the process of appointing up to three new Trustees and existing board member Anne Obey has taken over as Chair for the time being.



**CSE videos**

We produce videos as part of various projects, and they (plus the odd 'webinar') all get uploaded to our YouTube channel. We're on about 55,000 views in total. See what you think at [www.youtube.com/csebristol](http://www.youtube.com/csebristol)

**Bristol: European Green Capital 2015**

CSE is looking forward to next year and the many activities that will take place in Bristol following the city's elevation to European Green Capital 2015. Expect more creativity, culture and innovation! In particular we'll be focussed on supporting the rolling out of £140m in an energy investment programme to make Bristol an exemplar in energy efficiency. More information, and the great 'floating island' graphic at [www.bristolgreencapital.org](http://www.bristolgreencapital.org)



Our vision is a world where sustainability is second nature, carbon emissions have been cut to safe levels and fuel poverty has been replaced by energy justice.

Why not join the 4,150 people who receive our fortnightly enews? Sign up at [cse.org.uk/enews](http://cse.org.uk/enews). Or the 4,350 people who follow one of our three Twitter accounts: [@cse\\_bristol](https://twitter.com/cse_bristol), [@cse\\_communities](https://twitter.com/cse_communities) or [@cse\\_HomeEnergy](https://twitter.com/cse_HomeEnergy)

**Energise** is produced a couple of times a year and distributed free. To request a copy, or ask to be put on the mailing list, email us at [newsletter@cse.org.uk](mailto:newsletter@cse.org.uk), or download copies from [cse.org.uk/energise](http://cse.org.uk/energise)

# energise

**Centre for Sustainable Energy**

We are an independent national charity that shares our knowledge and experience to help people change the way they think and act on energy.

*Switched on since 1979*



**Who's who at CSE**

**Chief Executive**

Simon Roberts OBE

**Household Energy Services**

Ian Preston Head of Household Energy Services | Dom Busher Intern | Liz Dagger WISH Caseworker | Lisa Evans Senior Energy Advisor | Justin Lee-Gammage Senior Energy Advisor | Michael McClelland Scheme Manager | Sonia Pruzinsky Senior Energy Advisor | Yusuf Salah Energy Advisor | Verity Saunders Senior Project Manager | Karen Smith Intern | Natalie Spollin Senior Energy Advisor | Kate Thomas Senior Project Manager | Mark Tyler Energy Advisor | Jamie Walters Energy Advice Project Manager | Isobel White WISH Caseworker | Paul Winney Project Officer

**Local & Community Empowerment**

Rachel Coxoon Head of Local & Community Empowerment | Kieran Highman Low Carbon Localism Project Manager | Heather Crane Senior Project Worker | Morgan Kuivala Project Officer | Joe McMullen Intern | Bridget Newbery Senior Community Projects Manager | James Watt Senior Project Worker | Anna Watts Lead Trainer | Harriet White Senior Project Worker

**Research & Analysis**

Joshua Thumim Head of Research & Analysis | Kat Blacklaws Intern | Dr Toby Bridgeman Researcher | Dr Tom Hinton Software Developer | Martin Holley Senior Technical Project Manager | Annette Lamley Research Project Worker | Zoe Redgrove Researcher | Glenn Searby Junior Software Developer | Richard Tiffin Senior Software Developer | Vicki White Researcher

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