

Identifying synergies between your project and wider community concerns

This exercise is designed to get everyone in the audience to identify wider issues that concern them personally, or as a community. It will help you to clarify to people how developing a community renewable energy project could relate to concerns that they already have, and will also help you to realise what other priorities people have, so that you can be more realistic about what renewable energy projects you pursue, and how you communicate about them.

It links quite well with the exercise on 'Discussing what you might invest your profits in', and we suggest that you make sure you have a write-up of the results of this exercise to refer to when you run that exercise. You don't have to run them both in the same session.

Time needed

To complete this exercise you will need 55 minutes

- Stage 1) Grouping and brainstorming (15 minutes)
- Stage 2) Mapping the issues (20 minutes)
- Stage 3) Adding to the issues (5 minutes)
- Stage 4) Low carbon and renewable energy (10 minutes)
- Stage 5) Closing the exercise (5 minutes)

Films that accompany this exercise

'Community Led Planning' and 'Running a community consultation' - you don't need to show this in your event, but you do need to have watched it as a core group.

Number of people attending

The audience will be split into groups of 3-6 people.

Materials needed

1. At least 9 sheets of flipchart paper. Six of them are to be arranged in a big rectangle (see illustration overleaf). One is for writing the instructions on, and the other two are for recording the discussion.
2. Lots of post-it notes
3. At least one marker pen for each group

The instructions to mark up on one flipchart sheet are:

- *In your groups, discuss the issues that people in our community would raise if asked. For example,*

'speeding traffic', 'allotment allocation', 'community cohesion', 'cost of living' etc.

- *Use the post-it notes and marker pen provided to write these down.*
- *Write one per post-it note, and use big writing! You have 10 minutes for this task.*

Arranging the room

A series of six flipchart sheets on a wall visible to all, marked up with the axes shown in the diagram (and that is easy for people to walk up to). Nearby, hang the instruction sheet.

Let the groups either sit at tables if available, or they can pull their chairs close together for the group work part.

Running the exercise

Stage 1) Grouping and brainstorming

Explain to the attendees that they are to split into groups of between three and six. Once they have split themselves, hand each group a stack of post-it notes and a marker pen.

Then introduce the exercise, by explaining that this is an exercise designed to capture all of the issues that affect the community, and to ensure that, wherever possible, the renewable energy project that you aim to establish is linked to, and provides support for, existing community priorities.

Then unveil the instructions sheet and tell them they now have ten minutes to write down the issues as instructed. Give them a two-minute warning when they are running out of time.

This whole stage should take 15 minutes, including the explanation and instruction.

Stage 2) Mapping the issues

Unveil the large chart made of six flipchart sheets. Now pick one of the groups to give you one of their issues – take the post-it note and ask if any other groups had the same issue. Collect up all the post-its that are the same. Now ask the group where on the chart they think this

issue should go – does it get raised often? This will indicate how far along the bottom axis it goes. If there is disagreement about where something should go, write it again on another post-it note, mark both with an asterisk and position them in two different places on the chart. You need to be vigilant and to flag issues that do have a low-carbon element but which aren't recognised as such – for example, 'caring for our listed buildings' could have a low-carbon/renewable energy focus, because these homes are likely to be very inefficient and wasteful of heat.

Work your way through about six issues, allowing for whole-audience discussion of where each should go on the grid. Allow about 10 minutes for this stage.

Then, for the remaining issues on the post-it notes that they still have, ask them to discuss in their groups where they think they should go, and then come forward to the chart to position them. This can be a bit of a bottleneck, so allow 10 minutes for this.

Allow 20 minutes in total for this stage

Stage 3) Remaining issues

Now that all the issues are mapped onto the wall, ask everyone to spend five minutes looking at them, and to point out any they think are incorrectly positioned, or not there yet.

Allow 5 minutes for this stage.

Stage 4) Low-carbon and renewable energy issues

Now explain to the audience that you are especially interested in working on issues that arise in the top half of the chart, and that you want to get a renewable energy project off the ground, as well as looking at how that can support other low-carbon issues.

You will be using the results of this exercise to try to align your projects with other priorities raised in the exercise. Give people another chance to raise any issues that are specifically about low-carbon or renewable energy. Now look at the issues that are placed lower down – there may be some that don't currently appear to have a low-carbon link, but which could do, for example;

- Renovation of an existing community hall (or building a new one) - If this is something that people are interested in, have they considered how the building could be made more energy efficient and how renewable energy could be incorporated.
- Issues around cost of living – are fuel bills a big worry

for householders and organisations? Could energy efficiency and renewable energy projects help with this?

Allow 10 minutes for this stage

Stage 5) Bringing the exercise to a close

Stress again that you recognise that not everyone is motivated by strictly environmental concerns, or is mainly interested in renewable energy. Your aim as a group is to ensure wherever possible that the projects you develop tie in with and support the issues that concern the wider community. If you have planned to run it, explain that you have a further exercise that looks at how the profits from a renewable energy project could be invested locally, which builds on this one. Encourage attendees to come along to future events to help plan the renewable energy projects you will undertake.

Make sure that you identify anyone in the audience who is involved in the preparation of a wider community plan, such as a parish plan or the local authority's Local Development Framework (elected councillors at the parish and local authority level are likely to be there). Let them know that you will send them a write-up of the issues and the discussion, so that it can be fed into wider community planning processes.

Allow 5 minutes to close up the exercise.

Diagram: Affix 6-8 sheets of flip-chart paper to the wall in a big rectangle and label it as shown

