COMMUNITY ENERGY PATHWAYS

APSE – Community Solar on Council Assets and Community Readiness

Ollie Pendered – Executive Chair

THE KING'S AWARDS FOR ENTERPRISE
2025
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT



A little about Community Energy Pathways

We are a social enterprise that is enabling communities across the UK to play a central role in delivering a fair, inclusive, and locally driven transition to a resilient, clean energy economy.

We work with community energy groups, renewable energy developers, local authorities and industry partners to deliver renewable energy and energy efficiency projects that have local leadership and tangible local benefits.

Our vision is for a resilient UK energy system in which every community shapes, owns, and benefits from clean, local energy generation and energy efficiency.

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Our Reach

50 +
Community Energy Groups

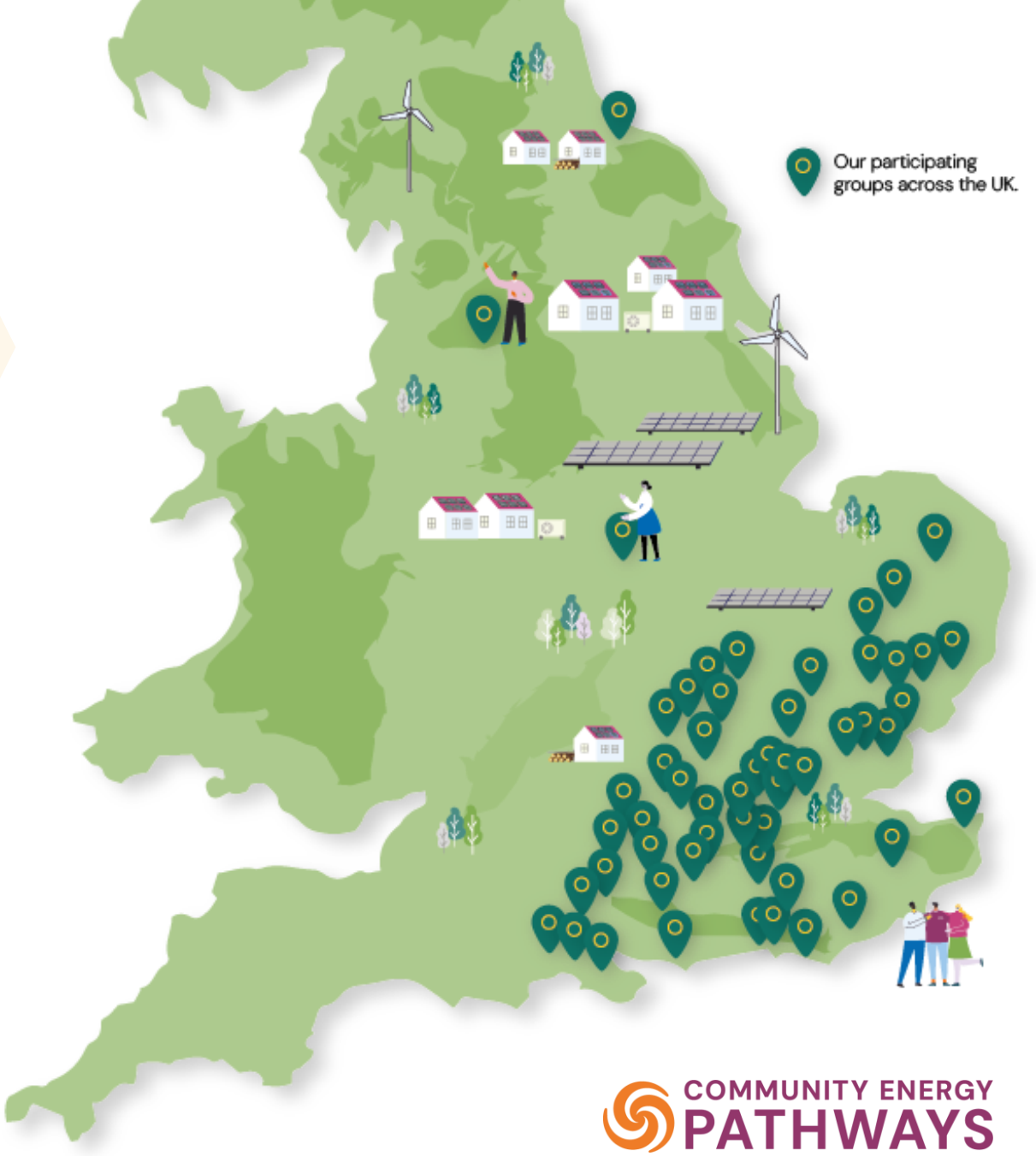
20
Local authorities

130+
Champions trained

25,000 advice sessions in past 18 months in community events, **1,200** home visits

130 local energy champions trained in 12 months

£2.5m funding secured and distributed for groups in the last two years



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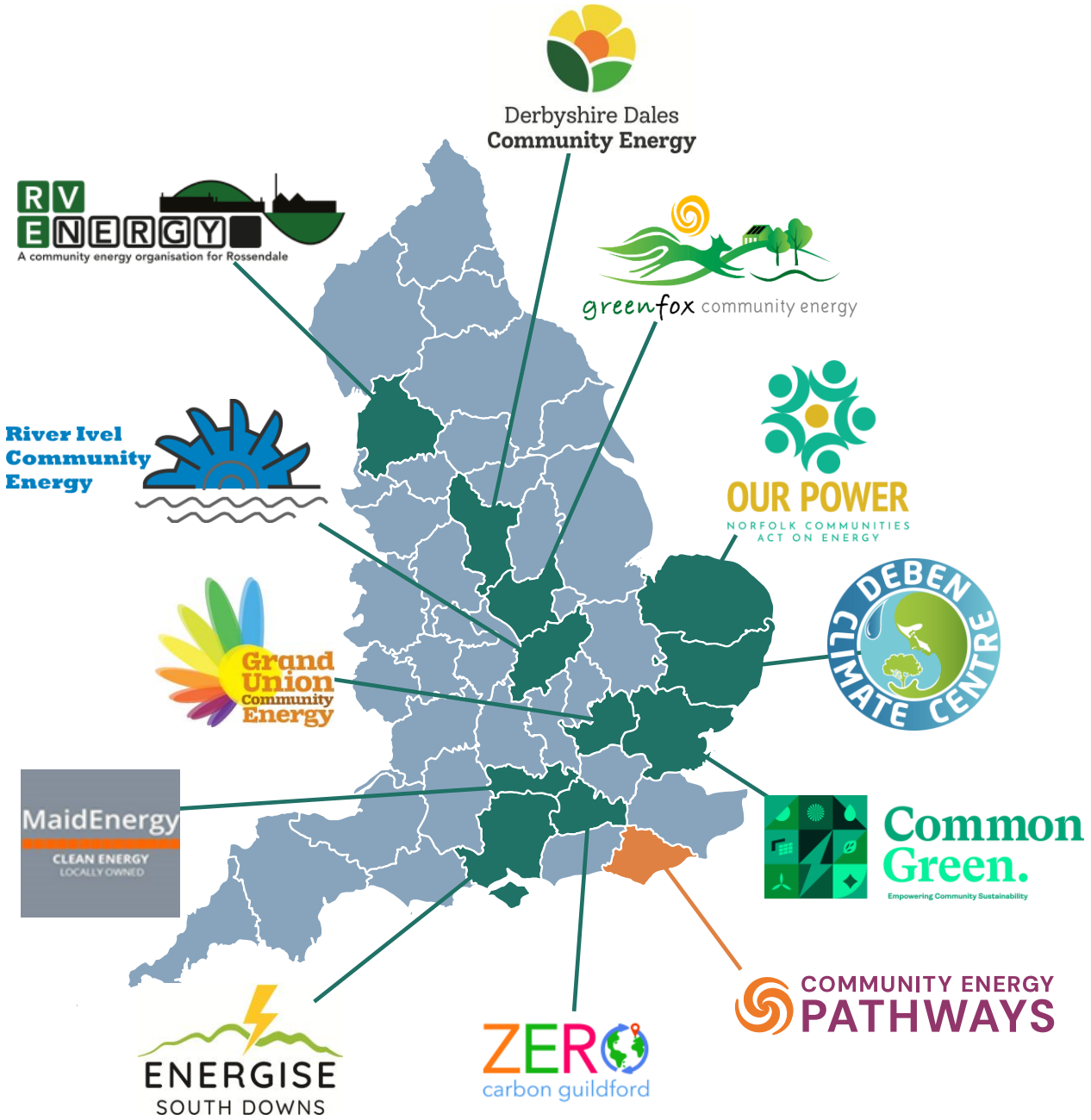
- **Community Energy People** – UK Wide Capability building funded by the Lottery
- **Shared Ownership** Solar Farms Portfolio – East Anglia, Southern Region, Derbyshire. (DESNZ & GBEnergy)
- **Innovation** – CommuniPower/CommuniHeat; Neighbourhood Watts; Wayl_Ease; Energy Efficiency Pilots; Riding Sunbeams (Solar to Rail)
- **Energy Advice and Planning**
  - UKPN LNOB; SGN; Parish/Neighbourhood Energy Plans
  - Service platform
- **Capacity Building**
  - Leicestershire; Suffolk; Essex; Central Bedfordshire; Surrey; Sussex; Ashford; Tonbridge; New Forest; Berkshire

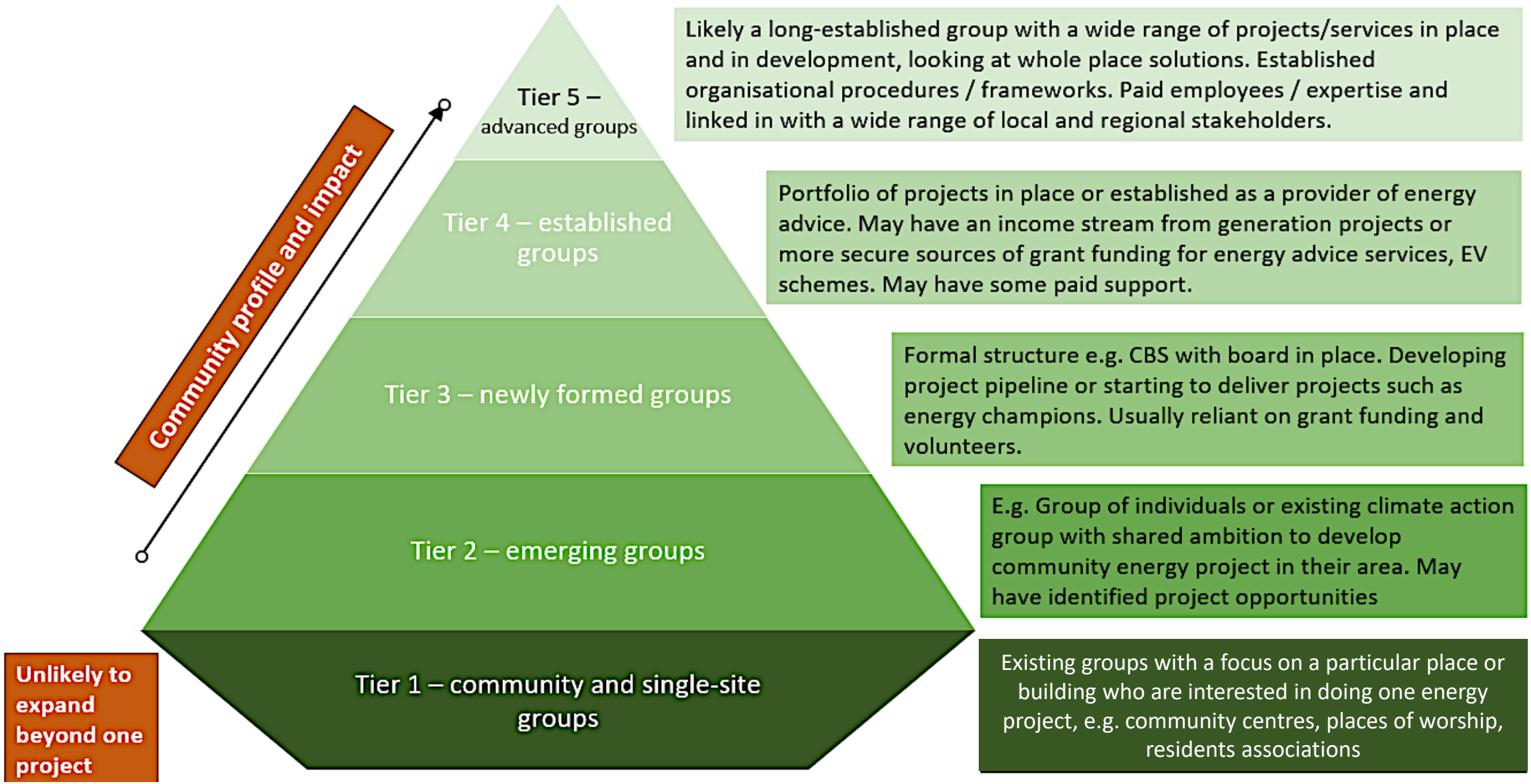




CASE STUDY: Ouse Valley Energy Services Coop

- Harveys Brewery (2010) – rooftop PV 98kW
- Sunny Solar Schools – 12 Schools
- Ouse Valley Solar Farm – 17 MW with no subsidy!
- Meadow Blue Solar Farm (2015) – 5MW
- Get Bikery – electric cargo bike hire/delivery
- 2m Climate Action Fund
- Energy advice reaching 2000 homes/yr
- High street Energy & Climate Advice

OVESCO


Tier 5 – advanced groups
Likely a long-established group with a wide range of projects/services in place and in development, looking at whole place solutions. Established organisational procedures / frameworks. Paid employees / expertise and linked in with a wide range of local and regional stakeholders.
Tier 4 – established groups
Portfolio of projects in place or established as a provider of energy advice. May have an income stream from generation projects or more secure sources of grant funding for energy advice services, EV schemes. May have some paid support.
Tier 3 – newly formed groups
Formal structure e.g. CBS with board in place. Developing project pipeline or starting to deliver projects such as energy champions. Usually reliant on grant funding and volunteers.
Tier 2 – emerging groups
E.g. Group of individuals or existing climate action group with shared ambition to develop community energy project in their area. May have identified project opportunities
Tier 1 – community and single-site groups
Existing groups with a focus on a particular place or building who are interested in doing one energy project, e.g. community centres, places of worship, residents associations
Community profile and impact
Unlikely to expand beyond one project

Community energy is a strategic priority for Government, Ofgem and GB Energy

Ofgem Chair Mark McAllister, alongside members of the Ofgem team, visited **Community Energy Pathways** in Newhaven, Sussex.



"We were impressed by the work being done at the grassroots level to drive the energy transition and support local communities.

Community energy plays a vital role in:

- Supporting those most in need
- Championing the energy transition in local areas
- Boosting local economies through home-grown renewables

We congratulate Community Energy Pathways for their trailblazing efforts and commitment to a fairer, greener energy future“ Mark McAllister



The energy transition is moving to the neighbourhood

What's changing

- Heat pumps, EVs and local renewables mean the transition happens street by street
- **GB Energy Local Power Plan:** an ambition to reach 1,000 communities and more, at pace
- **Warm Homes Plan:** delivery that reaches and supports vulnerable households
- **Ofgem ED3 Build and Flex:** network ambitions achieved alongside the community energy sector

The gap

- 15 years' experience shows light-touch engagement isn't enough
- Not every place is equally positioned to take part
- Towns, parishes and neighbourhoods need the capacity, motivation and system support to participate
- Community readiness is how we measure that, and build it

DEFINITION

“Community readiness is how prepared a community is to organise itself to tackle an energy challenge and successfully develop local energy projects.”

Capacity

Does the community have the skills and resources to act?

Motivation

Does the community want to act?

System preparedness

Is the wider local system ready to support community action?

Why it matters: readiness depends on aligning everyone in a place. A readiness framework shows strengths, gaps and development pathways, so communities aren’t excluded for lacking previous project experience.

Value of Community Readiness across the local energy system

Communities

Demonstrate their capacity for new opportunities, and aren't excluded for lacking prior project experience

Local authorities

See whether the foundations for community-led delivery are in place, and target resources effectively

Network operators

Define and capture place-based network benefits, and the social value behind them, in Community Collaboration Plans

Government and funders

Evidence that values the sector properly and helps target and simplify funding

The Guide to Community Solar on Council Assets

Overcoming barriers to local authority and community energy partnerships

Written by Dr. Rachel Coxcoon of Climate Guide, in partnership with Community Energy Pathways, UK100 and Community Energy England and funded by the Greater South East Net Zero Hub.

Greater South East Net Zero Hub

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climateguide

UK100

Community Energy England

Project Team Backround

Greater South East Net Zero Hub funded project to develop resources that build local authority capacity to support community energy activity.

Specific focus on supporting rollout of community owned solar PV on council assets.

Series of workshops and webinars to inform development.

Project Partners

- Community Energy Pathways – *Overall project management, LA capability reviews, event design and management.*
- Climate Guide – ***Toolkit research and development, event design and management.***
- UK100 – *LA liaison, event promotion, dissemination*
- Community Energy England – *sector dissemination*

Pathways for different users

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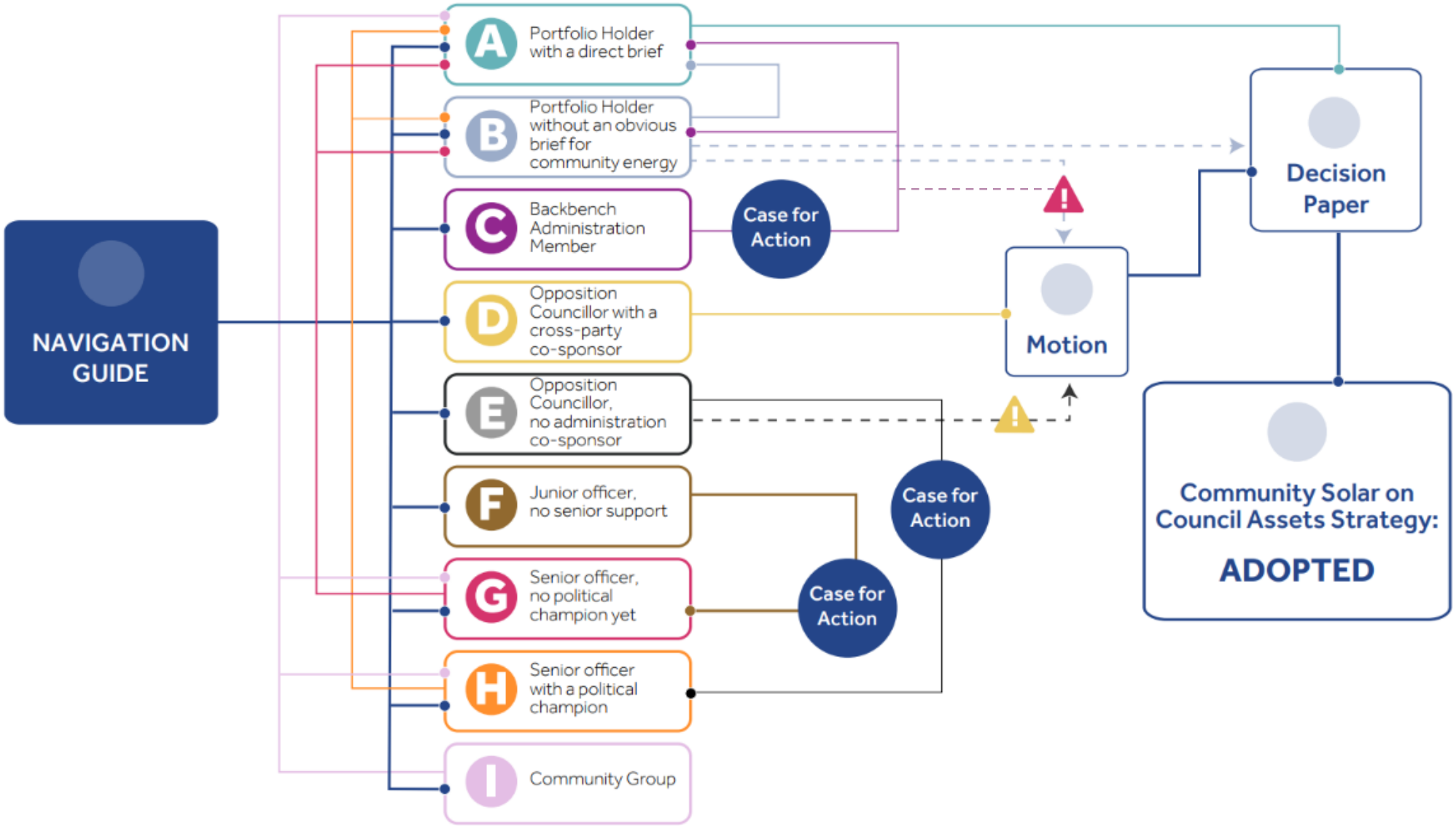

Guide assumes local authority users will be officers (both junior and senior) or councillors (both administration and opposition).

Example – Decision Paper

Uses Treasury Five-Case business model to create a Strategic Outline Case to be presented at Cabinet/Full Council, to get a Community Solar on Council Assets Strategy adopted.

Pre-populated (approx. 80% of text and argument already made, local details to be added)

Covers Strategic Case, Economic Case, Commercial Case, Financial Case, Management Case

2.2.1. National policy environment and funding for community energy

Great British Energy (GBE) was established by the Great British Energy Act 2025. Its Local Power Plan (published February 2026) commits up to £1 billion to support over 1,000 local and community energy projects by 2030. The Local Power Plan explicitly identifies local authorities as delivery partners and creates a formal Expression of Interest process for councils and community groups wishing to participate and access funding through their proposed 'Partnership Fund', which is specifically designed to support joint working between Local Authorities and Community Energy Groups (CEGs). (ADD DETAIL HERE IN JUNE WHEN ELIGIBILITY AND GRANT SIZE IS PUBLISHED).

Councils that have adopted a proactive strategy, completed an asset assessment, and identified a community energy partner will be best positioned to access the GBE funding when it launches. By contrast, councils without an adopted strategy are likely to be at a material disadvantage.

2.2.2. Statutory powers of the council to enter into relationships with community energy groups

The council has the power to enter into the arrangements proposed in this Decision Paper under the following provisions:

- **Section 2, Local Government Act 2000 (Well-being power)**[7]: Provides a broad power to do anything the council considers likely to promote or improve the economic, social or environmental well-being of its area. Granting a lease to a community energy group and entering into a PPA falls within this power.
- **Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011, (General Power of Competence)**[8]: Gives the Council the power to do anything an individual can do, subject to any statutory constraints on the Council's powers. The recommendations in this report are in keeping with the General Power.
- **Section 123, Local Government Act 1972** [9]: Governs disposal of land. While a peppercorn lease to a community energy group may constitute disposal below best consideration, the additional provisions of the **General Disposal Consent (2003)**[10] permits this where the undervalue does not exceed £2m AND where the disposal can be shown to contribute to area well-being. A Red Book (RICS) valuation should be obtained for each site to confirm that any undervalue does not exceed £2m, and the community benefit should be well documented and justified.
- **Great British Energy Act 2025, Section 3**[11]: This Act establishes Great British Energy (GBE), a government body whose statutory objects include facilitating and encouraging the production of clean energy through projects involving or benefiting local communities. The Local Power

[7] https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/22/section/2/enacted
[8] https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2011/20/section/1
[9] https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1972/70/section/123
[10] https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/disposal-of-land-for-less-than-the-best-consideration-that-can-reasonably-be-obtained-circular-06-2003
[11] https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2025/16/section/3

Community Solar on Council Assets - reference

This guide can be found on Net Zero Go and also visit the Community Energy England website with you-tube explanations

[The Guide to Community Solar on Council Assets - Community Energy England]

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People participation in the future of energy

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