

April 2024

National Grid Community Energy Newsletter

Welcome to the quarterly National Grid Electricity Distribution (NGED) community energy newsletter.



Welcome to the National Grid Electricity Distribution (NGED) Community Energy Newsletter. This is an update for community energy organisations across our distribution network and includes news, resources, events and funding.

It was great to see so many of you at our first event of the year; a webinar on grid connections and the world of energy markets. We were delighted to welcome over 80 attendees, from community energy practitioners, to local authorities, climate action groups and more.

One thing I am delighted to see is that the level and diversity of engagement and advocacy remain very strong. All of your input and feedback at these events are very valuable and will be used to tailor our programme of support for Community Energy.

Following feedback from previous years, we understand that you value detail, help and openness in the area of connections.

This is why we now ensure all events include attendance from representatives of different National Grid teams, and we will continue this throughout 2024.

At NGED, we are keen to maintain an open and honest dialogue and challenge any barriers.

I look forward to working with you all to continue making National Grid a key contributor to the clean energy transition and also ensure a great experience for you as both our customers and our community.

As part of our commitment to the delivery of net zero, we have recently started an innovation project with Leicestershire County Council, funded by Innovate UK.

Soon, we will be able to offer another opportunity to participate in an innovation project with us through our Rural Energy and Community Heat (REACH) project.

We held the kick-off workshop at the end of March, and we will publish more information about the project as it develops.

We will also be publishing a guide to support community energy organisations to access, understand and use data from National Grid to support their own work. We will share this with you via this newsletter, on our website, and on Regen's website when it is available.

I hope it is clear that we have put a spotlight on how we accelerate our processes based on our experience over the past year. We endeavour to put our customers first and prioritise quicker responses as we continue to increase our focus on delivering for you in the year ahead.

I look forward to seeing you at the events throughout 2024 and, as always, please contact me at fchanda@nationalgrid.co.uk if you have any questions.

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Dates for your diaries

National Grid Net Zero Communities Forums in 2024

We know that our events are most successful when we listen to what you need. Our first event of this year was built on previous requests for a connections session, and we will continue to spotlight areas outlined and requested by event attendees.

Therefore, if you have comments or answers to any of the following, please answer this **short Typeform survey**:

- Have you seen an inspiring community energy organisation that you would love to learn more about?
- Are you struggling with a specific topic such as planning, connections or funding that you would like to discuss? The more specific your answer, the better we can support you.
- Do you have any style of session that you think would be particularly beneficial to yourself or organisations you know?

We will be hosting in-person forums in each of our four licence areas, in addition to two online sessions. Sign up using the links below.

- Exeter – 14 June – sign up [here](#).
- East Midlands (location TBC) – 28 June – sign up [here](#).
- Online – 12 September – sign up [here](#).
- Birmingham – 8 November — sign up [here](#).
- South Wales – 22 November– sign up [here](#).

Our energy markets and connections webinar occurred on 7 March. The event focused on the significance of the ongoing Review of Electricity Market Arrangements (REMA) consultation in a session presented by Regen's Ellie Brundrett, as well as opportunities and challenges in local energy markets and potential options for local supply presented by Dr Jeff Hardy.

NGED's Head of Connections, Kester Jones, also took the attendees on a deep dive into the current connections reform process and all speakers fielded challenging and thought-provoking questions from the participants. See the slides from the session [here](#) and watch the recording on Regen's YouTube channel [here](#). You can also find our speakers' answers to the questions that we did not get to within the session [here](#).

See the post event blog here for more information as to what was discussed.



Community Energy England monthly member call Monthly, 12pm – 1pm

Community Energy England hosts calls every month to bring its members access to a wide range of informative speakers and knowledge sharing.

You can sign up for the next calls [here](#).

Free guidance on grid for community energy organisations – Roadnight Taylor

Monthly, 4pm- 5am

Nikki Pillinger from Roadnight Taylor, a specialist grid consultant, is providing a monthly 'Community Energy Hour' where she provides free signposting and guidance on how best to navigate the complex and ever-changing world of grid connections. Nikki holds four free 15-minute sessions per month via telephone or Teams. Find out more and sign up [here](#).



Guides and updates

Our 2024 plans

Every year we renew our commitment to community energy and publish our commitments for the year ahead. These are always based on what you have told us you would like our support with, and this year was no different.

Some key commitments for 2024 include:

- Writing an accessible planning guide to help community organisations understand specific topics in the energy system.
- Publish a guide on open data to assist in accessing data and understanding changes to connecting to the grid.
- Delivering effective and engaging events in each of our four licence areas, as well as online.
- Helping communities have a voice in national policy development through advocating for community energy within our own work and more widely.
- Supporting communities to participate in bespoke network innovation projects.



Briefing note for community energy organisations and local authorities: REMA

We recently sponsored a briefing note for communities on the REMA consultation, helping to demystify a complex subject matter. Ellie Brundrett, who leads Regen's energy markets work, has developed a from-the-ground-up guide to the reforms and also delivered a presentation on the subject at our first event of the year.

The guide covers:

- The current GB market arrangements, including New Electricity Trading Arrangements, the Balancing Mechanism and Electricity Market Reform.
- The reform options being proposed, including split markets, Green Power Pools and Contracts for Difference reform.

The second REMA consultation has also just been released and this is an important opportunity to further engage with the process. Regen has plenty of information on the consultation and ways you can input your views through their events, including [a session](#) in London on 22 April.

Kickstarting low-carbon community heat projects – New guide published

In case you missed it, NGED produced a beginners community heat guide late last year. The guide focuses on groups starting from scratch or looking to expand their community energy work, and aims to make navigating the landscape of community-owned low-carbon heating a little bit easier.

The guide takes the reader through the initial stages of getting to grips with low-carbon heating technology as well as understanding the types of heat project that communities have established before.

There is also extensive advice around how to engage with and understand your local community and more generally how to get your project started.

Furthermore, the guide details further technical steps required to develop projects and a whole host of useful case studies and valuable resources. Read the guide [here](#).

Funding

£10 million Community Energy Fund still running

The £10 million Community Energy Fund is continuing to run through rounds of funding aimed at supporting new community energy projects in England, including electricity generation, storage, heat networks, Electric Vehicle charging and fuel poverty alleviation. The funding has replaced the Urban and Rural Community Energy Funds and will be delivered in the same way, through Local Net Zero Hubs. Community Energy England has a dedicated webpage [here](#) and you can watch the introductory webinar [here](#).

The second round closed on 8 April 2024. Keep your eye on the Net Zero hub's webpages to see when the next round is announced.

Organisations in the South West can find out more [here](#).

Organisations in the Midlands can find out more [here](#).

National Grid: Affordable Warmth

Our Affordable Warmth project connects customers with various regional partners running fuel poverty projects.

These local initiatives can help customers cut energy costs.

For more information, contact **Tracey Cullen**, our social obligations officer, on **01332 827644** or at tcullen@nationalgrid.co.uk.

For more funding opportunities, look at the funding pages on Community Energy England's website [here](#).

News

Green Energy Awards winners announced

Regen has announced the winners of the Green Energy Awards 2024, with a strong community presence amongst the nominees. For the past 20 years, the Green Energy Awards have been platforming forward-looking clean energy schemes and organisations, and this year was no different. There were four strong candidates for the 'Community Energy Initiative' award, and a community organisation up for the 'Clean Energy Scheme':

Community Energy Initiative

- **Power Up North London** – The retrofit and decarbonisation of Caxton House Community Centre has developed a blueprint on decarbonisation for other community buildings across the borough and further afield.
- **Exeter Community Energy** – The Healthy Homes for Wellbeing service provides free advice to low-income residents living in cold homes with the aims of tackling fuel poverty, cutting carbon emissions and contributing to Devon's net zero targets.
- **Bristol Energy Cooperative** – A solar project with the Bristol Beacon, which is a rare example of a partnership between a community-owned renewable energy developer and a building contractor, enabling the volume of installed renewables to quadruple.
- **Ambition Community Energy CIC** – Ambition's community-owned 4.2 MW wind turbine is the largest onshore wind turbine in England, commissioned in a very restrictive regulatory environment and producing enough low-carbon electricity to power 3,500 homes.

Clean Energy Scheme

- **Hazelmead and Water Lilies community microgrid scheme** – Two first-of-their-kind co-developed housing microgrids in the UK, comprising 88 homes, 333 kWp of domestic rooftop solar and 2,050 kWh battery storage.



Bristol Energy Cooperative were crowned as winners of the **Community Energy Initiative** category and Hazelmead and Water Lilies just missed out to Bristol Heat Network in the **Clean Energy Scheme Award**.

Read the full list of winners [here](#).

Rural Energy and Community Heat (REACH)

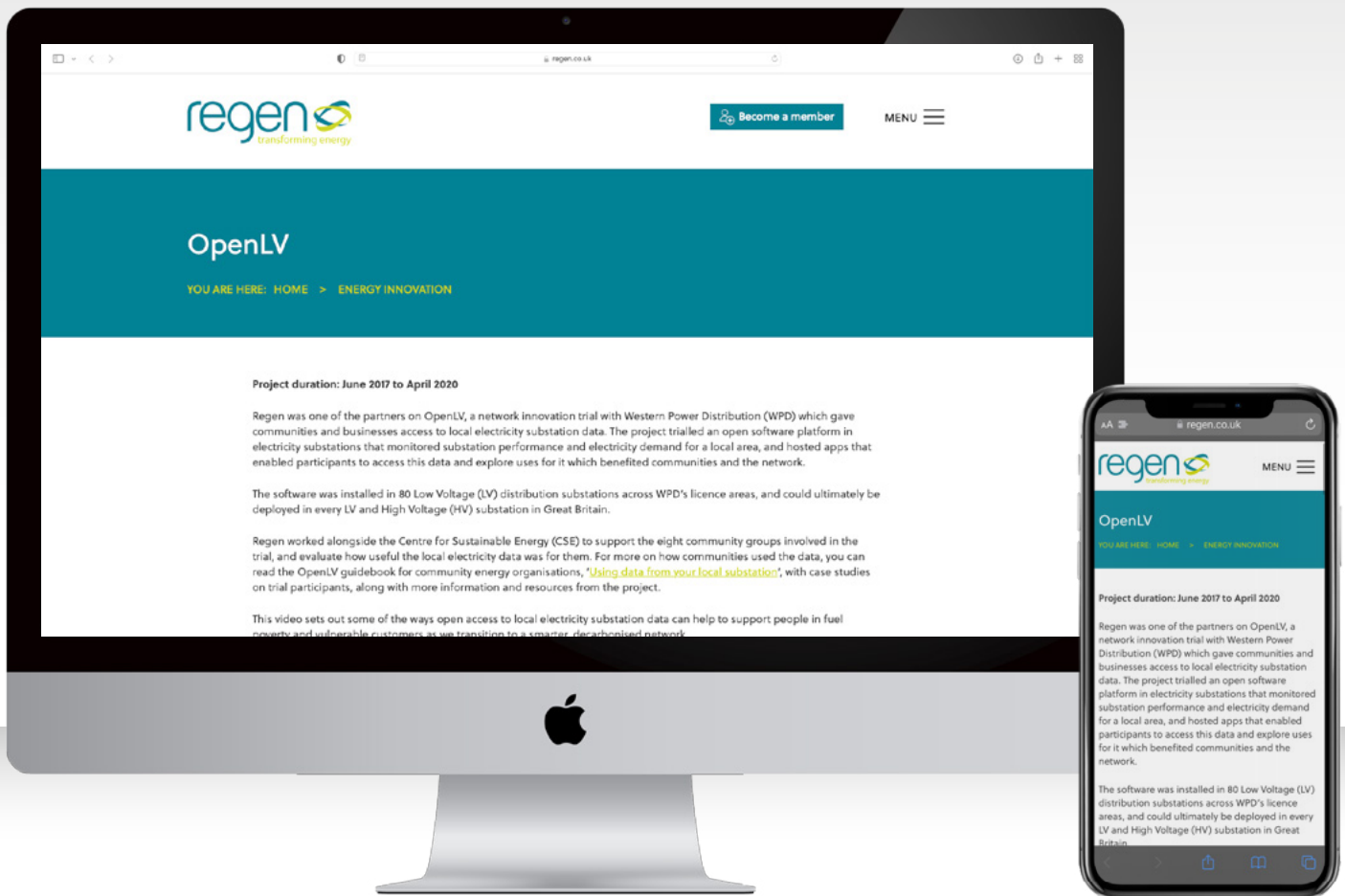
NGED is working with Regen on an innovation project focused on the decarbonisation of rural areas. The project, Rural Energy and Community Heat (REACH) has been funded under the Strategic Innovation Fund, an Ofgem programme managed in partnership with UKRI.

Rural areas face unique challenges on their decarbonisation journey, including electricity network constraints.

If you are a rural community, or an organisation that represents one, that is interested in developing low-carbon projects, then please **sign up to our workshop**.



From the archive



We have produced a lot of resources for the community energy sector over the past eight years and want to make sure we continue to share these around and promote those that might be useful to you.

For this newsletter, we want to showcase Open LV, an innovation project we undertook that used an open software platform to monitor substation performance and electricity demand.

The OpenLV project took place from 2017 to 2020 and involved eight community energy organisations across the Midlands, South West and South Wales who helped evaluate how useful the open data from the substations was. Opening up the data would:

- Provide community organisations with information to develop their own renewable energy projects.
- Help customers lower their energy bills by exploiting more flexible tariffs.
- Help electricity network operators understand more about local energy use, including the growing demand from low-carbon technologies.

The project saw success across several community organisations; Exeter Community Energy developed a prototype smart phone app designed to provide users with information about energy usage at their local substation, Owen Square Community Energy used OpenLV data to support its funding bid for a community heat project in Easton, Bristol and Marshfield Energy Group used the data from its local substations to develop a village-wide energy strategy.

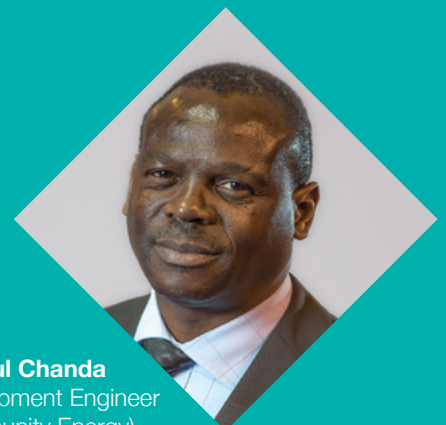
Members of our data team are working on an Aggregated Smart Meter data project, but in the meantime, you are interested in working with us in your region and in using specific data, please get in touch with nged.data@nationalgrid.co.uk.

Read more about the OpenLV trial [here](#).

Booking an appointment

You can find more useful information and resources on our [community energy page](#) including how to **book an appointment** with one of our network planners to discuss your community energy project.

If you have any community energy news you would like to share through this newsletter, please email fchanda@nationalgrid.co.uk, and you can get in touch if your community is hosting an energy-themed event and would like your Distribution Network Operator there.



Faithful Chanda
Development Engineer
(Community Energy)