



THE LOW CARBON HUB'S

---

# COMMUNITY ENERGY CHAMPIONS GUIDE

---

Reduce energy consumption and create  
renewable energy in your community

# COMMUNITY ENERGY CHAMPIONS GUIDE

## Reduce energy consumption and create renewable energy in your local community

Do you want to make your community more sustainable? With your local knowledge and connections, you're best placed to be the catalyst for change within your community. We can help to amplify your work.

The Low Carbon Hub can offer practical support and grant funding to communities across Oxfordshire who want to reduce their carbon footprint, particularly working on energy. We also run, or are partners on, several programmes which you can get involved with as an individual or community.

This Community Energy Champions Guide outlines all the ways that you can get involved in your community to change Oxfordshire's energy system for the better, whether it's individual actions you can take or working with a community group in your local area.

*It's worth noting that we focus primarily on energy, and so the schemes, information, and support outlined in this guide are all about increasing energy efficiency, reducing energy demand, and increasing the generation of renewables. There are, of course, lots of other groups and organisations around Oxfordshire working on other areas or on sustainability more broadly - we recommend looking at CAG (Community Action Group) Oxfordshire for more information on this.*

## What's inside the Community Energy Champions Guide?

### Page 2-3: Individuals

- Page 2: Addressing energy in the home
- Page 3: Invest in the future energy system
- Page 3: People's Power Station

### Page 4-6: Community groups

- Page 4: Find or start a low carbon community group
- Page 5: Apply for a Low Carbon Hub grant
- Page 5: Nominate a community building for an energy audit
- Page 5: Work with local schools and businesses
- Page 6: Add local projects to People's Power Station
- Page 6: Become a Cosy Homes Oxfordshire community advocate group
- Page 6: Low Carbon Hub helpdesk
- Page 6: Other support and advice for community groups

### Page 7: Schools

- Page 7: Become a Low Carbon Hub solar school
- Page 7: Join the LESS CO<sub>2</sub> energy efficiency programme
- Page 7: Get an energy audit
- Page 8: Other support and advice for schools

### Page 9-10: Businesses

- Page 9: Host a Low Carbon Hub solar installation
- Page 9: Free energy audits and innovation funding - OxFutures
- Page 9: Other support and advice for businesses

### Page 11: Summary of resources available

# INDIVIDUALS

If you want to make your community more sustainable, a great place to start is with your own carbon footprint. By making changes in your own life you can become a role model for others around you.

In this section we cover actions that you can take as an individual to support the low carbon future of energy. This includes:

- Addressing energy in the home
- Invest in the future energy system
- The Low Carbon Hub helpdesk

## Addressing energy in the home

Home energy consumption accounts of around 30% of the UK's total energy use, and 20% of our total carbon emissions. Much of this is wasted. Addressing heat loss in the home through measures such as improved insulation and installing a thermostat can hugely increase your home energy efficiency, reducing carbon emissions and the cost of your energy bills!

### Cosy Homes Oxfordshire

Low Carbon Hub are working with National Energy Foundation and RetrofitWorks to deliver a one-stop home retrofit service in Oxfordshire. If you want to improve the energy efficiency of your home, Cosy Homes Oxfordshire is a great place to start.

Here's how the process works:

1. Register your home online or by phone
2. A Retrofit Coordinator will be assigned to you – they'll support you throughout your retrofit
3. Pay for your Whole House Plan (£75.00) and book a date for your home assessment
4. Home assessment takes place
5. Whole House Plan is delivered to you, based on findings from the home assessment. This includes recommended energy efficiency measures e.g. wall insulation, solar panel installation, double-glazing.
6. Choose which measures to go ahead with and your Retrofit Coordinator sources quotes from trusted suppliers to complete the work.
7. Contracts are agreed and works begin.
8. Once the works are complete, your Retrofit Coordinator will evaluate and approve the works .

cosyhomesoxfordshire.org | info@cosyhomesoxfordshire.org | 0300 303 1269

### Better Housing Better Health

[Better Housing Better Health](#) is a free service that makes it easy to access expert advice, support and funding to make improvements to your home, making it a warm and safe place to live, as well as reducing energy bills. The service is available to residents across Buckinghamshire (excluding Milton Keynes) and Oxfordshire. You can call the service for free on 0800 107 0044.

### Further information and resources

[Oxford City Council lists resources and funding opportunities](#) available for homeowners, landlords and private tenants on their website to improve the energy efficiency of their homes. Note that many of these funding pots will have specific application requirements.

The [Energy Saving Trust](#) has a wide range of practical advice on improving your home's energy efficiency on their website

[National Energy Foundation's Knowledge Hub](#) also offers a wide range of guidance and expertise.

## Invest in the future energy system

Each year we open our Community Energy Fund to investors, inviting individuals to invest in our vision of Oxfordshire's future energy system.

When you invest our Community Energy Fund your money is used to fund our renewable projects and installations. But it doesn't stop there. We've also created a powerful feedback loop which makes every pound you invest go further.

The installations also produce an ongoing cash surplus, which is reinvested in further installations and projects. Whether it's helping local businesses to cut their energy use, funding green innovation, backing people to install solar power, we make every pound of investment work hard to rapidly bring our vision of the future energy system to life.

With your investment we can make an energy system that works for all of us, and for the planet, a reality. Join us, and make it happen.

[www.lowcarbonhub.org/invest](http://www.lowcarbonhub.org/invest) | [members@lowcarbonhub.org](mailto:members@lowcarbonhub.org)

## Add your projects to People's Power Station

People's Power Station is a Low Carbon Hub project, mapping renewable generation and energy efficiency projects across Oxfordshire, showing how together we're consigning fossil fuels to history.

If you have made any energy-related changes to your home or know of a project in your local community, make sure you submit it to the [People's Power Station](#). It can be anything from changing to low energy lightbulbs to installing solar PV panels on your roof - it really helps to demonstrate the growing momentum of activity around low carbon energy.

# COMMUNITY GROUPS

Individual actions are important if we want to tackle the climate crisis, but working as a group can be incredibly powerful too. Oxfordshire is full of brilliant community groups working on sustainability and low carbon living. These groups include our 26 Low Carbon Hub Community Members, groups which have chosen to join the Low Carbon Hub Community Interest Company (CIC) as community shareholders.

In this section we cover how to find a community group near you or set one up if there isn't one in your local area – including how that new group can become a Low Carbon Hub Community Member - as well support and resources we can provide to local community groups.

## Finding (or starting) a low carbon community group

### Finding your local community group

To find your nearest Low Carbon Hub community group [head to our website](#), where you can find a full list of all the community groups which are part of the Low Carbon Hub. These are the groups who have chosen to join our Low Carbon Hub CIC as Community Members, who have a central focus on energy in their work.

There are also other groups in Oxfordshire who are working on other areas of sustainability, which are not included in the list on our website. Most of these are members of CAG (Community Action Group) Oxfordshire, so we recommend [taking a look at their map of environmental community groups for more information](#).

### Starting a low carbon community group

If there isn't a low carbon community group in your local area, or you have a specific idea for a group that you'd like to set up, we recommend contacting CAG Oxfordshire in the first instance. They are able to provide practical support for setting up a new group or organisation, as well as mentorship, funding, and training events. [They even have a 'quickstart guide' on setting up a new CAG.](#)

cagoxfordshire.org.uk | 07367810901 | [info@cagoxfordshire.org.uk](mailto:info@cagoxfordshire.org.uk)

### Becoming a Low Carbon Hub Community Member

Once you've set up your new group, you may wish to get in touch with us about becoming a Low Carbon Hub CIC Community Member. Your group needs to be working on low carbon and sustainability, with a key focus on energy (reducing demand or powering up with renewables).

The benefits of your group becoming a Community Member include:

- Having a shareholding in the Low Carbon Hub CIC, meaning you can ensure the work that we do is entirely transparent – including voting to elect one community member to our Board of Directors
- Access to Low Carbon Hub small grants (£500 per year for all groups) and large grants (an annual opportunity to receive a grant of up to £5000)
- Access to our expertise, advice, and support
- Joining a network of highly engaged community groups working on projects just like yours, who can share advice and learnings – including at networking events

To become a Low Carbon Hub CIC community member please [email Cathy Ryan, our Community Engagement Manager](#).

## Apply for a Low Carbon Hub grant

If you are part of a community group which has joined the Low Carbon Hub CIC as a Community Member, you have access to our grant funding.

We have two types of grant available:

- Small grants: every group which is a Low Carbon Hub CIC Community Member can apply for a £500 small grant once per year.
- Large grants: Community Members can apply for a grant of up to £5,000 once per year.

These grants can be used to fund activities that contribute to the Hub's aim: to cut Oxfordshire's carbon footprint and contribute to the creation of a decentralised and locally owned renewable energy system. We welcome applications for activities that encourage the reduction of energy use and fossil fuel consumption by:

- 'powering up': increasing renewable heat or electricity generation
- 'powering down': improved energy efficiency in homes and buildings
- supporting the shift to a low carbon transport system.

For more information, guidance notes, and application forms [please visit the Low Carbon Hub website](#).

#### Case study: Installing solar panels on Kirtlington Village Hall

In 2019 we awarded Low Carbon Hub community group Sustainable Kirtlington a large grant, to be put towards their Village Hall solar rooftop. The grant was used to pay for an initial feasibility study, needed to check that the Hall roof was suitable for solar installation. The remaining grant money went towards the purchase of a battery for storing excess electricity, meaning that they can store energy and export it to the grid – creating a small income for the Village Hall.

[Read the full case study](#)

## Nominate a community building for a free energy audit

Thanks to a grant from Westmill Solar Co-operative, we can offer fully funded energy audits for community buildings (worth £630). Energy audits are assessments of the energy efficiency of a building, identifying any areas where energy is being lost and offering recommendations of measures to improve efficiency – cutting the building's carbon footprint and the cost of energy bills. The audit, worth £630, will be carried out by the Environmental Information Exchange team (EiE) at Oxford Brookes University.

You can nominate any community building, such as a village hall, school, sports pavilion, youth club, community centre or faith building which you think would benefit from energy savings. All you need to do [is fill in our application](#) form and return it to us by email.

If you're a rural community, you can also apply for funding from the [Rural Community Energy Fund \(RCEF\)](#) to explore the feasibility of renewable projects, as well as business development and planning.

## Work with your local schools and businesses

As well as identifying community buildings for audits, you could also work with schools and businesses in your local area on energy savings, helping to support them and signpost them towards our services for schools and businesses – see sections 3 and 4 for more information on what's available.

## Add your projects to People's Power Station

People's Power Station is a Low Carbon Hub project, mapping renewable generation and energy efficiency projects across Oxfordshire, showing how together we're consigning fossil fuels to history.

If your community group has been working on an energy-related project, make sure you submit it to the [People's Power Station](#). It can be anything from changing to low energy lightbulbs to installing solar PV panels - it really helps to demonstrate the growing momentum of activity around low carbon energy.

## Become a Cosy Homes community advocate group

Cosy Homes Oxfordshire is a one-stop home retrofit service, aiming to improve the energy efficiency of homes across Oxfordshire (more information on page 2).

We've been working with our Low Carbon Hub community groups to promote the service to homeowners in their local area, which has been proving very successful. If you think that Cosy Homes Oxfordshire could be a good fit for your local homeowners, we'd love to work with you. We can provide:

- Marketing materials including leaflets, branded home thermometers, and more
- Events materials including branded stands
- Speakers for events in your community
- A monthly email roundup on the service, so you always have the latest information.

To become a Cosy Homes Oxfordshire community advocate group [please contact Cathy Ryan](#), our Community Engagement Manager.

## The Low Carbon Hub helpdesk

We're also able to offer support through our helpdesk, which allows us to share our experience, answer questions, or pass you on to someone else who is better placed to help. This includes queries on:

- Advice on setting up a renewable installation
- Information on our model for community-owned, decentralised energy
- Recommendations of suppliers e.g. solar panel installers

To use the helpdesk, simply fill in our [helpdesk enquiry form](#).

## Other support and advice for community groups

If you have any questions which aren't covered in this guide, you can [always contact our Community Engagement Manager, Cathy Ryan](#).

### Trust for Oxfordshire funding

[Trust for Oxfordshire](#) can offer funding to support communities in providing information encouraging householders to consider and adopt ways to reduce their energy demands. Funding could potentially support information boards and visible meters. Some advocacy/campaigning projects might also be supported.

### Thermal imaging

Thermal imaging is a great way to engage people in your local area, demonstrating in a visual way how energy is lost and wasted in buildings.

- [Charlbury Green Hub](#) have captured some interesting lessons learned from their experience of thermal imaging:
- CAG Project Oxfordshire have a guide to running a thermal imaging project available [on their website](#):
- Thermal imaging cameras are available to borrow for your community from CAG Project. To request to borrow a camera, contact the CAG Project on [info@cagoxfordshire.org.uk](mailto:info@cagoxfordshire.org.uk)

### Sustainable Neighbourhood Planning Support

[The Centre for Sustainable Energy](#) has a range of resources to help communities develop a low carbon, sustainable neighbourhood plan for their areas.

# SCHOOLS

## Become a Low Carbon Hub solar school

Your local school could generate their own clean electricity by having solar panels installed on their roof – benefitting from reduced energy bills, reducing their carbon emissions, and giving a valuable educational resource for teaching pupils about energy and the role of renewables.

We already have 27 Low Carbon Hub solar schools around Oxfordshire. [Take a look at the case studies on our website.](#)

To be viable for solar rooftop installation, a building must:

- Have high on-site energy usage (or in the locality)
- A directly owned, rather than leased, site
- The ability to enter a 20-year contract
- Have an organisational drive to be part of our local energy transition.

If you work at a school which would be interested in solar installation, [please email our Project Manager on james.ochiltree@lowcarbonhub.org](mailto:james.ochiltree@lowcarbonhub.org).

*“What was great about the Hub’s offer is they do the fundraising and installation costs, and all we do is get cheaper power and produce less carbon. We pay less and we are able to learn more about being responsible citizens, so it was an easy decision to make. With the children in the computer room we can look at how much electricity we’re generating, so talking about responsible energy use I can make it real and base it on our usage and production.” - Ed Finch, Teacher at Lark Rise School*

## Join the LESS CO<sub>2</sub> energy efficiency programme

[LESS CO<sub>2</sub>](#) is a free year-long programme for schools, empowering staff and pupils to make changes to improve energy usage in their school, cutting carbon emissions and saving money on energy bills. It’s delivered through four half-day workshops spread through the year, alongside peer mentoring, expert advice and free resources. On average, schools that participate save £2,600 and 10 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> in the first year.

The programme is delivered by the charity [Ashden](#), and we’re working with them at the Low Carbon Hub to deliver the programme to schools in Oxfordshire. The programme starts with each new academic year, but you can [register your interest in taking part at any time](#).

## Get an energy audit

An energy audit is a great place to start if you’d like to reduce energy usage in your school buildings. Energy audits are assessments of the energy efficiency of a building, identifying any areas where energy is being lost and offering recommendations of measures to improve efficiency – cutting the building’s carbon footprint and the cost of energy bills.

If your school joins the LESS CO<sub>2</sub> energy efficiency programme, it is eligible for a free energy audit through our partnership with the Environmental Information Exchange team (EiE) at Oxford Brookes University.

## Other support and advice for schools

Community Energy Champion Guide  
[www.lowcarbonhub.org](http://www.lowcarbonhub.org) | [@lowcarbonhub](https://twitter.com/lowcarbonhub)



## **Low Carbon Hub helpdesk**

We're also able to offer support to schools through our helpdesk, which allows us to share our experience, answer any adhoc questions, or pass you on to someone else who is better placed to help. To use the helpdesk, simply fill in our [helpdesk enquiry form](#).

## **Kids CAN – resources for teaching children about climate change**

Kids Climate Action Network (Kids CAN) offers a set of free fact-based, easy to understand and empowering climate change resources to help educate children about climate change. They can be used in schools by Key Stage 2 teachers.

The project was set up as a partnership between Oxfordshire community groups: [Low Carbon West Oxford](#) (LCWO), [Rose Hill & Iffley Low Carbon](#) (RHILC) and [Local Environmental Action Florence Park](#) (LEAF), and was part-funded by a Low Carbon Hub grant.

## **Educational resources: WeSET**

Westmill Sustainable Energy Trust (WeSET) offer on-site visits at Westmill Wind and Solar Farm suitable for a range of educational audiences ranging from KS1 to postgraduate audiences. There are five 80m high turbines and 21,600 solar panels. Their Education Officer is available to run classroom-based workshops on a number of related topics. For further information, downloadable classroom resources, and book a tour, [head to their website](#).

## **Duke of Edinburgh Awards: Energy Envoys**

Does your local secondary school offer Duke of Edinburgh? The [National Energy Foundation](#) has created 'Energy Envoys' a volunteering opportunity to enable DoE participants to complete their volunteering requirement by helping people in their local area to use energy more wisely, save money and help to save the planet. Current projects include running an energy audit, energy awareness campaign, energy saving competition or energy advice service.

# BUSINESSES

## Host a Low Carbon Hub solar rooftop installation

Local businesses can generate their own clean electricity by having solar panels installed on their roof – reducing carbon emissions and energy bills. If they choose to do this in partnership with Low Carbon Hub, they'll benefit from free project delivery and operations support for the lifetime of the project.

There are already several businesses around Oxfordshire with solar rooftops, owned and managed by Low Carbon Hub, which [you can view on our website](#).

To be viable for solar rooftop installation, a building must:

- Have high on-site energy usage (or in the locality)
- A directly owned, rather than leased, site
- The ability to enter a 20-year contract
- Have an organisational drive to be part of our local energy transition.

If you work at a business which would be interested in solar installation, [please email our Project Manager on james.ochiltree@lowcarbonhub.org](mailto:james.ochiltree@lowcarbonhub.org).

### Case study: Oxford Bus Company

Back in 2013, Oxford Bus Company became the first Oxfordshire business to work with us to install solar panels on their rooftop – a commitment which led to them being commended by the Prime Minister. We managed the project, installing 540 panels at no upfront cost to the business. These panels generate 500,000 kWh of clean electricity every year, meeting 20% of the company's needs.

[Read the full case study](#)

## Energy audits and innovation funding - OxFutures

[OxFutures](#) is a European Regional Development funded project to boost the low carbon economy in Oxfordshire, working with small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs), on which Low Carbon Hub are partners.

Through OxFutures any SME in Oxfordshire can apply for a free energy audit through OxFutures. Energy audits are assessments of the energy efficiency of a building, identifying any areas where energy is being lost and offering recommendations of measures to improve efficiency – cutting the building's carbon footprint and the cost of energy bills. [You can register your interest in an OxFutures energy audit here](#).

SMEs can then apply for follow-up grant funding to implement measures recommended by the energy audit, leading to reduced bills and carbon emissions. This is funding to cover up to a quarter of the cost of measures, up to £10,000. Several businesses have already benefitted from this funding, and [you can take a look at case studies on the OxFutures website](#).

**Please note: this phase of the OxFutures programme has now come to an end. To be notified if the programme is extended, please [sign up to the OxFutures mailing list](#).**

## Other support and advice for businesses

### **Low Carbon Hub helpdesk**

We're also able to offer support to businesses through our helpdesk, which allows us to share our experience, answer questions, or pass you on to someone else who is better placed to help. This includes queries on:

- Advice on setting up a renewable installation
- Information on our model for community-owned, decentralised energy
- Recommendations of suppliers e.g. solar panel installers

To use the helpdesk, simply fill in our [helpdesk enquiry form](#).

### **Carbon Trust Green Business Fund**

Following an energy audit, the [Carbon Trust Green Business Fund](#) will offer up to £5,000 to small and medium sized businesses towards the cost of buying energy equipment.

They also [run a series of technical webinars](#) covering topics such as understanding your energy bills, energy efficiency for charities, energy savings on small power and IT systems for SMEs.

### **Carbon Trust Energy Efficiency Guides**

Carbon Trust have [a series of free and impartial downloadable publications](#) for advice on reducing your organisation's carbon footprint, such as:

- Retail sector guide
- Hospitality sector guide
- Renewable energy sources
- How to be a good supplier
- Heating, ventilation and air conditioning guide.

# SUMMARY OF RESOURCES AVAILABLE

	<b>Renewable energy – ‘powering up’</b>	<b>Energy Saving – ‘powering down’</b>	<b>Other Support &amp; resources</b>	<b>Funding</b>
<b>Schools</b>	Low Carbon Hub’s ‘ <a href="#">Solar School</a> ’ programme	<a href="#">LESS CO2</a> –energy saving programme  Energy audit (Low Carbon Hub)	WeSET educational support  Duke of Edinburgh <a href="#">Energy Envovs</a>	Energy audit (Low Carbon Hub)
<b>Community Building</b>	<a href="#">Solar PV installation</a> (Low Carbon Hub)	Energy audit (Low Carbon Hub)		Energy audit (Low Carbon Hub)
<b>Businesses with under 250 staff</b>	<a href="#">Solar PV installation</a> (Low Carbon Hub)	Energy Audit: <a href="#">OxFutures</a>	Carbon Trust energy efficiency <a href="#">webinars</a> & <a href="#">energy efficiency guides</a>	Install energy saving measures: <a href="#">OxFutures – GreenFund</a>  <a href="#">Carbon Trust Green Business Fund</a>
<b>Large business</b>	<a href="#">Solar PV installation</a> (Low Carbon Hub)			
<b>House holders</b>	Solar PV installation	Cosy Homes Oxfordshire (Low Carbon Hub)	<a href="#">Energy Saving Trust</a>  <a href="#">National Energy Foundation</a>	<a href="#">Oxford City Council list of funding and resources for homeowners.</a>  <a href="#">Better Housing Better Health service</a>
<b>Low Carbon Community Groups</b>			<a href="#">CAG Resources</a>  <a href="#">CAG Energy Collaborate Group</a>  OCVA  CSE: <a href="#">Sustainable Neighbourhood Planning support</a>	Low Carbon Hub grants programme  <a href="#">CAG Funders list</a>  <a href="#">OCVA funders list</a>