

Notes of Transition Horsham Meeting on 23rd June 2011

At this meeting we reviewed events that have taken place over the last few months and had feedback from those involved:

Public Liability Insurance This has been renewed for a further year.

Green Movies In May we all enjoyed a Green Movies evening at Sedgwick Park watching "Findhorn" and "The Story of Stuff". Another Movies evening is planned for a later date to watch "Home Planet" (now fixed for Thursday, 28th July at Friends Meeting House).

Green Readers Book Group This is going well with members catching up on old and new fiction and non-fiction.

Green Drinks Green Drinks will continue through the summer at The Crown on the second Wednesday of each month.

Community Garden in Horsham Park The official opening of the garden was on the 18th May when TH was there with their stand. Despite really awful weather and problems with erecting the gazebo the afternoon went well.

Horsham 100 Solar Energy The challenge to find 100 households interested in investing in solar panels before the current feed-in tariff deadline in April.

Craft Group is held at the Fusion Cafe at 10.00a.m. on Friday mornings. This is an opportunity for people to make crafts and sell them.

FEEDBACK FROM WORKING GROUPS

Housing

It was important to inform people not to be too ambitious when starting a project but to begin with small ideas that are achievable. For instance new glazing can be put back into old frames instead of a full replacement.

Transport

Proposal to run a Bike Day - with challenges and prizes.

EasitCrawley is a different way to tackling business-related transport issues. EasitCrawley is designed around building solutions to transport problems that work for businesses based on what employees and employers are prepared to do and think will work. Southern Rail are offering discounts on southern routes.

There are car share web sites where you can register to share your journeys with other people.

There is now an electric car charging point at Park House.

Energy

Greening Horsham will be running an Eco-fair on the 22nd October at County Hall North where TH will have a stall. Local companies have been approached and there has already

been a good response. The aim is to have a combination of people selling and people telling others about their own experiences of home energy, metering, insulation etc. This will be a good way of taking the mystery out of dealing with “home energy” issues and make it easier to understand.

Seed Swap Wakehurst Place will be holding their Seed Swap at the Millennium Seed Bank at Ardingly on Saturday 17th September and TH have been invited to have a stall. Any seeds that anyone could donate to the stall would be very welcome.

Steering Group

A suggestion was that we have fewer formal meetings at the Friends Meeting House and more film nights and events.

Community Solar Power A talk on the way forward for community organisations to install solar power plants on the roofs of local public buildings- see the Appendix below.

Eco Products – A suggestion that we have a coffee morning, in conjunction with the Quakers, and at the same time use it as an opportunity to offer a “refill for eco-products”. The eco-products can be purchased in bulk from Infinity Foods.

Polytunnel talk – an offer to give a talk on experience of erecting a polytunnel, the snags to look out for and how to use it to his best advantage in growing organic food.

Swap Shop - Several Transition Towns have run a Swap Shop and this is something we could do. It is a way of enabling people to bring something that they don't want anymore and exchanging it for something that they do want and can make use of. There is no money involved and it is a very good way to avoid “stuff” going into the landfill.

APPENDIX

Ten steps for community organisations to install solar power plants on the roofs of local public buildings

Introduction

David Cameron's concept of the Big Society is being implemented in a variety of new government legislation

recently passed and in the pipeline, including the Social Enterprise Bill, the Localism Bill and the Consultation on a Micro-generation Strategy – which means that the opportunity for local communities

in the UK to emulate a major success story in Germany is coming ever closer.

Community solar power plants or “Buegersolar” as they are known in Germany, have helped many local German communities on the way to implementing their own local carbon reduction strategies with

the aim of becoming self-sufficient in renewable energy. There are numerous case studies of successful

German community PV projects managed by locally formed organisations.

The UK government's view is that local authorities have a vital role to play in tackling climate change,

especially through action on their own estates and operations. The government is encouraging local authorities

to develop their leadership role on this agenda by working with partners on community scale renewable energy schemes which can be supported by feed-in tariffs.

“Buergersolar” is a tried and tested public sector concept in Germany that can be replicated in the UK. Local authorities can play their part by putting the roofs of appropriate public buildings at

the disposal of community organisations in their locality.

By offering their roofs for local residents to invest in community solar power plants, local authorities

will not only be delivering government policy, they will also be:

- contributing to carbon reduction targets in their locality
- contributing to the aim of making their locality self-sufficient in renewable energy
- turning local residents into long-term investors in their community
- contributing to the creation and maintenance of jobs in local SMEs
- increasing commercial activities and wealth in their locality
- achieving a financial return for their authority in terms of a rent for the roof and/or receiving cheap or free electricity
- promoting a positive change in local public perception towards renewable energy
- promoting the green credentials of the local authority

A community solar project requires the active participation and support of numerous individuals.

The

planning and project management effort is therefore somewhat greater than that required of a domestic

PV plant. However, we are confident that a community organisation like Transition Horsham could take the lead in implementing community solar power, provided local authorities are prepared to allow

the roofs of their public buildings to be used for this purpose.

This aim of this paper is to give a brief overview of the steps involved in the successful implementation of a community solar project.

Delivering Community Solar Power

The principle behind community solar plants is that proactive citizens club together in order to arrange the installation of PV system on the roofs of public buildings in an effort to contribute to their towns becoming self-sufficient in renewable energy production. The roofs are provided by the council at small or no cost in order to support the local initiative.

Community solar plants are the results of projects embarked upon by residents taking their own initiative. They promote the use of renewable energy and contribute to the decentralised, local supply of energy.

Local residents become entrepreneurs and investors, having an economic interest in the success their long-term project.

In addition to their positive effect on carbon reduction, community PV plants are likely to be significant in terms of the local economy by providing work for local businesses, especially SMEs. This should be taken into account when letting contracts for the plant, although the decisive factor is really the expertise of the company, the quality of components and service and their responsiveness.

PV systems have the advantage that they can be installed in small, decentralised units and with relatively little financial investment without negatively affecting the building on which they are installed. They require little maintenance and do not affect the environment in which they operate. They are an excellent example of sustainable development in a local environment. In the not too distant future they are likely to increase in significance as solar electricity becomes cost competitive with conventional electricity.

A community solar project is normally implemented in the following way:

Step 1 – Locate a suitable roof

The project initiators first need to “acquire” an appropriate “public” roof from their local authority or other public organisation which they can then offer to local people for them to participate in the project.

Step 2 – Locate local investors

Step 3 – Agree legal and commercial framework and allocate responsibilities

Step 4 – Calculate revenue and profitability and secure finance

Step 5 – Obtain the required official approvals and agreements

Step 6 – Obtain offers from MCS accredited installers and let the installation contract

Step 7 – Install the PV plant and connect it to the Grid

Step 8 – Inform the central accreditation and registration system

Step 9 – Inform HM Revenue and Customs

Step 10 – Contract management over 25 years or more

Conclusion

David Cameron’s concept of the Big Society brings with it massive opportunities for local communities to participate in the delivery of their own local renewable energy solutions. As a tried and test method of implementing local PV solutions in aid of carbon reduction and self-sufficiency in renewable energy, we believe that the German concept of “Buergersolar” or community solar power, is ripe for implementing in the UK.

The most appropriate organisation to deliver community solar power projects in Horsham is Transition Horsham. The strategy to make their local communities carbon neutral and self-sufficient in locally produced renewable energy is after all one of the corner-stones of the raison d’etre of Transition Towns.

However, first we need to persuade Horsham District Council to agree to provide us with a south-facing roof on a local public building on which to install a solar PV plant.

Having agreed in principal that Transition Horsham would be prepared to lead on the development of a community solar power project, we have now approached Helen Peacock, Sustainability Officer at Horsham District Council, with the request for a suitable roof on a local public building. We await her response with interest.

Brigitte Schnieders and Tom Kinally 30th June 2011