

Notes from small group discussions

Session 1: 2017 Plans

Groups got together around themes to discuss the following questions:

1. *What are the different approaches groups are using?*
2. *What can we learn from each other?*
3. *What skills or resources do we need?*
4. *How can we collaborate with each other and support each other?*

Group 1 - Community resilience and less fuel poverty

1. What are the different approaches groups are using?

Use seasons, meetings, and advice. Word of mouth referrals help. Phone contact, 'surgeries' home visits. Contact asthma sufferers. Get features in community magazines. Work with other agencies. Take part in Eco school programme.

2. What can we learn from each other?
Offer a meal to get people together.

3. What skills or resources do we need?
Funds for projects versus core work
Share CSE resource sheets
Get access to utilities' insulation schemes

4. How can we collaborate with each other and support each other?
Link to themes in the city's Resilience Strategy
Link to Health and Well being agenda (Public Health)
Make this agenda a priority for the Mayor to link to his manifesto promises.

Group 2 - Understanding energy and behaviour

'Making it visible' really helps to encourage change - talking particularly about CHEESE approach: Plymouth Uni research using thermal imaging shows that using visual support to advice results in more change.

Good follow-up activity is also important:

'CHEESE box' - loan of energy meters, eco-house manual, thermometers, appliance monitors - all to provide detailed feedback and more advice on what measures to take
1 month and 1 year follow-ups to see what action has been taken

Learning by doing and learning from each other is key to making changes

Discussed smart meters, whether they provide enough detail, implementation strategies, scope for new aps, how do we know which ones are best?

Group 3 - Energy efficiency and low carbon technology

1. What are the different approaches groups are using?
 - action learning – learning by doing – e.g. put solar PV on rooftops to find out how to do it
 - practical brainstorming – we have so many different groups and approaches
 - community engagement – meeting directly with communities to explore needs
 - thought leadership – creating events with thought leaders
 - startouts and startups – different approaches to forming ventures

2. What can we learn from each other?

- from experts – e.g. Bristol Power co-op started via a trip to a German solar wholesaler
- networks – international (Hannover summit) national (CEE) regional (Regen SW) local (BEN)
- research – participating in research projects that monitor community initiatives
- policy and lobbying – Green Deal, Feed in Tariffs etc have been crucial to bootstrap learning
- shared visioning – e.g. the process that led to the Community Strategy for Energy

3. What skills or resources do we need

- Innovation – green deal and FITs gone – new business models needed
- Marketing – create an offer covering energy efficiency, reduced bills, renewables
- Integration – bring together all players to create less fragmentation of resources
- Scaling – efforts so far are exploratory – now we need to aim for zero carbon / 100% renewables
- Finance – small scale community finance may not be enough to transform our entire energy system

4. How can we collaborate with each other and support each other?

- Facilitation – e.g. recent 'Art of Hosting' training to help people learn collaboration skills
- Shared Visioning – e.g. Zero Carbon Bristol and Future of Energy events bringing people together
- Create Win-Win – Future of Energy event was world cafe style, looking at creating benefits for all parties
- Business Planning – revisit Community Strategy for Energy (and solar city vision) and create funded plans
- Synergise – my plan plus your plan is better than either plan alone – nearly always.

Group 4 - Renewable energy

1. What are the different approaches groups are using?

Very different approaches - one was Bristol Energy Cooperative who have completed community solar/ share offers and have successfully run a number of projects, the other was a small pre-school/ community building in Somerset who is looking at exploring ways to make their building more energy efficiency and also have an interest in renewable energy but not sure how to go about progressing a project and haven't yet started.

2. What can we learn from each other?

Ways to approach a project, in particular the process for how to check the feasibility and suitability of renewable energy for a building. Help understanding broader areas that can impact or stall a project e.g. how building ownership can affect a project and may result in having to extend a lease on a building due to the longevity of a solar system. How to get over project hurdles, understanding the planning process etc.

3. What skills or resources do we need?

Examples of similar organisations who have completed projects, or groups who have similar buildings and are on the same kind of journey. Best practise guides showing project stages and how to get started i.e. is it best to explore the simple energy efficiency wins before looking into renewable energy. Sharing good news stories to inspire groups to undertake a project.

4. How can we collaborate with each other and support each other?

Ways of getting in touch with individuals or groups who would be willing to explain their experiences. Helping to put together guides to help people not make the same mistakes and set realistic goals. Sharing information on ways to obtain funding for

community solar projects - i.e. the share offer model/ community buy in, local grants to support projects or feasibilities, potential to look at planning applications for any community benefit etc.

Group 5 - Local Economic Development

We considered this to include the development of enterprise (particularly social enterprise), skills and jobs.

1. What are the different approaches groups are using?

We talked about different approaches to funding that members are using - grants, share offers, contracts, referral fees from the Bristol Energy Co-op, and aspirations to seek European funding (while still available). It was noted that this was mainly capital funding. EU funding needed match funding and there was onerous bureaucracy.

Skills development approaches included gaining work experience placements for people on projects or with local businesses and internships, some of which had led to jobs.

The network included social enterprises with various models e.g. Co-ops, CICs.

2. What can we learn from each other?

Many Bristol projects / pilots had been successful, and the network had good stories to tell. It would be good to disseminate these stories to a wider audience, both within and outside the city.

3. What skills or resources do we need?

Resources needed - paid staff at BEN (of course!). Skills needed:

- Co-ordination
- Funding expertise
- Business experience
- Business Modelling
- Systems engineers
- Promotion / Communications

Also the ability to get local politicians on board, tailoring the messages according to their particular views, in order to gain 'official' support and potentially funding.

Energy Champions were also needed to help with practical projects such as retrofit / draught proofing.

4. How can we collaborate with each other and support each other?

Linking the BEN strategy with the Community Energy Strategy and showing alignment with the latest government Industrial Strategy (and BEIS initiatives) was seen as important. This provided leverage for effective lobbying.

A stronger partnership with Bristol City Council was needed, based on non-political lines. There needed to be a uniting vision.

Regular networking events such as this one were seen as useful.

Session 2: BEN's new draft strategy for 2017-2020

Group 1

- Vision - we felt this could be more ambitious, with BEN taking a leading or pioneering role. All communities should have a stake.
- Energy efficiency needed to be referenced somehow.
- Mission - should also include holding power to account on energy issues, being the 'go to' organisation on community energy and a voice that could not be ignored.
- Values - perhaps include the term 'forum'

Group 2

- Vision doesn't mean anything. Should be clear and meaningful, rooted in common language. Just and fair means the same thing – affordable. Sustainable – climate change. Take part in rather than 'stake'.

Group 3

- Link in with major strategy and other strategies
- Scope – everyone in Bristol area?
- Values – care about future?

Group 4

- Mission – add 'enable and encourage collaboration and foster partnership'. Move the sentence beginning “This means that all people...” to the vision and add “and a stake in managing energy, understand it”

Group 5

- For work delivered by BEN or BEN members?
- Should/ could these be separated into value and action to capture aim and how we will achieve it? Eg 'ensuring everyone has a chance to play a part in designing and carrying out the work' = value 'actively working to create an energy movement that reflects the diversity of Bristol communities' = action.