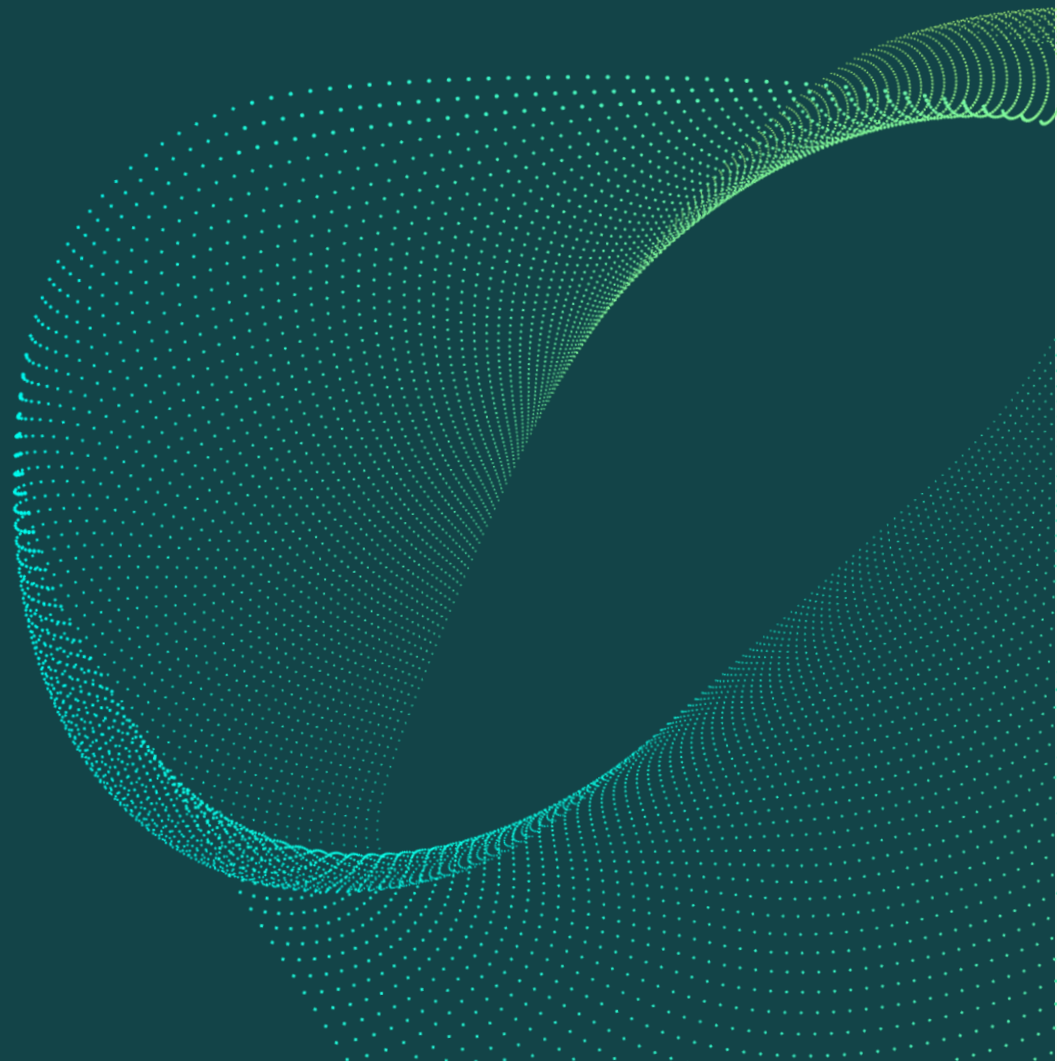


REGEN

NGED community energy case studies

*Green Fox
Community
Energy*

DECEMBER 2025 – FINAL VERSION





About this document

This case study has been prepared by Regen for National Grid Electricity Distribution to showcase some of the different community energy organisations operating within its licence areas. It is one of ten such case studies that demonstrate the vital contribution of community organisations in tackling climate change, addressing social challenges and delivering innovative energy solutions. Each pulls out insights and lessons for other organisations at different stages on their journey.

About Regen

Regen provides independent, evidence-led insight and advice in support of our mission to transform the UK's energy system for a net zero future. We focus on analysing the systemic challenges of decarbonising power, heat and transport. We know that a transformation of this scale will require engaging the whole of society in a just transition.

Acknowledgements

We would like to express our sincere appreciation to Ben Dodd, whose knowledge and time was central to the development of this case study.

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Green Fox Community Energy

From voluntary beginnings to pioneering a new model for net zero schools.

Factfile

- **Founded:** 2012
- **Location:** Leicester and Leicestershire (East Midlands licence area)
- **Legal structure:** Community Benefit Society
- **Focus areas:** Rooftop solar (including on schools), heat projects, community car clubs, shared ownership development
- **Installed capacity:** 80 kW peak solar array and an electric car club with 2 EVs and charge points
- **Core team members:** 7
- **Shareholders:** 42
- **Website:** greenfoxcommunityenergy.org

Overview

Green Fox Community Energy began in 2012, rooted in the net zero transition movement and driven by a desire to put energy generation and carbon reduction into the hands of local people. Their early work focused on practical projects that delivered immediate benefit, including a large biomass system for a school and a series of small-scale rooftop installations.

Over time, they have expanded their role in the region, working alongside Leicestershire County Council, the Motability Foundation, local community groups and national stakeholders to deliver a diverse portfolio of projects. Their recent work on the county's first net zero school has created a unique community ownership model that enables the capital spend on solar panels to be recycled into future school decarbonisation.

Green Fox now supports a wider network of emerging community energy organisations across Leicester and Leicestershire, helping build local capacity for long-term climate action.

Journey

The group was formed by local environmentalists committed to practical solutions. Their first major project, completed in 2013, replaced an oil heating system with a biomass system, raising almost £1 million through a community share offer. This established their reputation for delivering technically and financially complex projects.

Over the years, Green Fox explored a range of small, low-carbon interventions, including LED lighting replacement programmes in schools and the development of Leicestershire's first

electric car club. Each project strengthened relationships with local authorities, funders and community groups.

Their most distinctive achievement is the Hollycroft School net zero model, where the county council built the school and installed solar panels, and Green Fox purchased the PV system through a community share offer. This purchase raised funds that the council can reinvest in decarbonising future schools. Developing this required extensive work across the council's legal, procurement, education, and estates teams, resulting in a new, repeatable model now embedded in the county's wider decarbonisation plans.

“The net zero schools model is a really interesting one that I would that I would encourage other community energy organisations to consider. It does take time and works best when there's a champion within the council who can help navigate the complexities of local authority decision-making. By working in this way, Green Fox was able to secure a Lease and Power Purchase Agreement for the new school and these legal documents can now be used as templates for future school installations.”– Ben Dodd, Green Fox Community Energy

The group has also partnered with Community Energy South to establish new community energy organisations across Leicestershire, enabling broader local engagement and supporting councils' climate declarations. Through forums and shared resources, Green Fox now plays a strategic role in growing capacity across the region.

“Our aim is to grow the capacity for community energy across Leicester and Leicestershire to maximise delivery linked to local, regional and national strategies. Within the space of two years, we have seen capacity grow from one organisation, i.e. Green Fox, to a further seven community groups delivering community energy and have securing more than £800,000 to support this process”– Ben Dodd, Green Fox Community Energy

Achievements

- **Community-owned biomass:** Delivered a £1 million community-owned biomass system for a local school.
- **Solar and efficiency at scale:** Installed small-scale solar and energy efficiency upgrades across several sites.
- **Innovative transport:** Worked alongside local communities to launch Leicestershire's first electric car club, which is now being rolled out across the county.
- **Net zero school leadership:** Created the UK's first community-ownership model for a new net zero school (Hollycroft Primary School).
- **Strong partnerships:** Built a strong, long-term partnership with Leicestershire County Council.

- **Capacity building:** Helped set up multiple new community energy groups in Leicester and Leicestershire.
- **Local energy planning:** Worked in partnership with local stakeholders to help shape the elements of the county's Local Area Energy Plan. Green Fox is now delivering key elements of the Plan.
- **Direct local employment:** Currently employs three staff.

Lessons for others

Green Fox's experience offers clear lessons for groups looking to build community energy capacity and develop new renewable energy projects in their own areas:

- **Start with what builds trust.** Early, achievable projects – like energy efficiency or rooftop solar – help establish credibility before taking on complex infrastructure.
- **Invest time in relationships with councils.** Meaningful partnerships involve legal, procurement, estates and education teams, and take years to build.
- **Build a broad skills base.** Environmental motivation is essential, but business skills, legal support and communications capacity are also critical to delivering real projects.
- **Create space for other groups to grow.** Helping establish new community energy groups strengthens regional capacity and spreads opportunity.
- **Use funding windows to build capacity.** Innovate UK and similar programmes can unlock staff time, technical work and new partnerships.

For groups starting out: Build a team with motivation, environmental awareness and a commitment to practical change. Complement this with legal understanding, business acumen, and strong communications skills – even if some of these are outsourced or supported by volunteers. A focused, skilled team helps turn ideas into deliverable projects.

Looking ahead

Green Fox is working with partners on two major strands of future activity:

Leicestershire Solar Schools: Supporting 116 schools through feasibility work and early-stage project development, building on the model pioneered at Hollycroft Primary School.

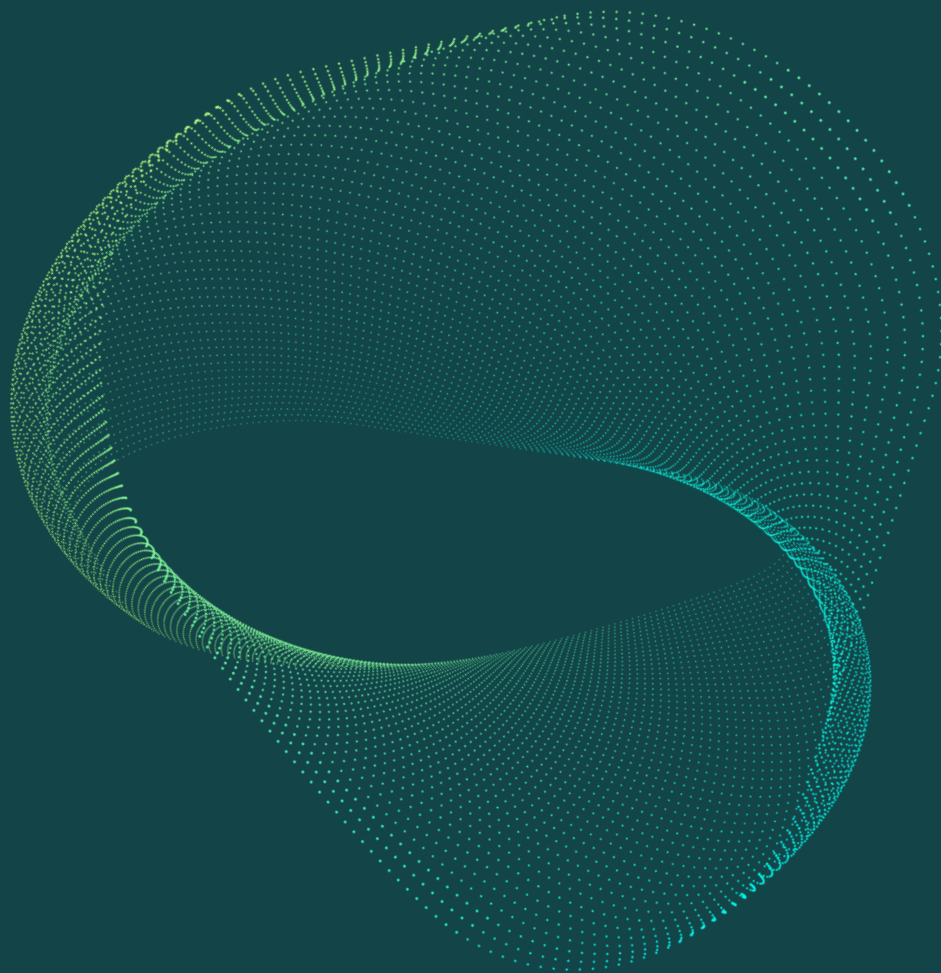
Shared ownership opportunities: Exploring participation in large-scale solar farms across the county, positioning community energy to play a meaningful role as national policy on shared ownership evolves.

“When the government's shared ownership strategy comes out we want to strategically be in the right place where that happens and some of the developers also want to be in that place, so they can show good practice in what's gone on.” – Ben Dodd, Green Fox Community Energy

The group's ambition is to deepen its relationship with local authorities, support emerging community energy organisations and build long-term community benefit from both rooftop and ground-mounted solar. Their work demonstrates how a small, volunteer-led organisation can evolve into a regional catalyst for low-carbon innovation.

Find out more

greenfoxcommunityenergy.org



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