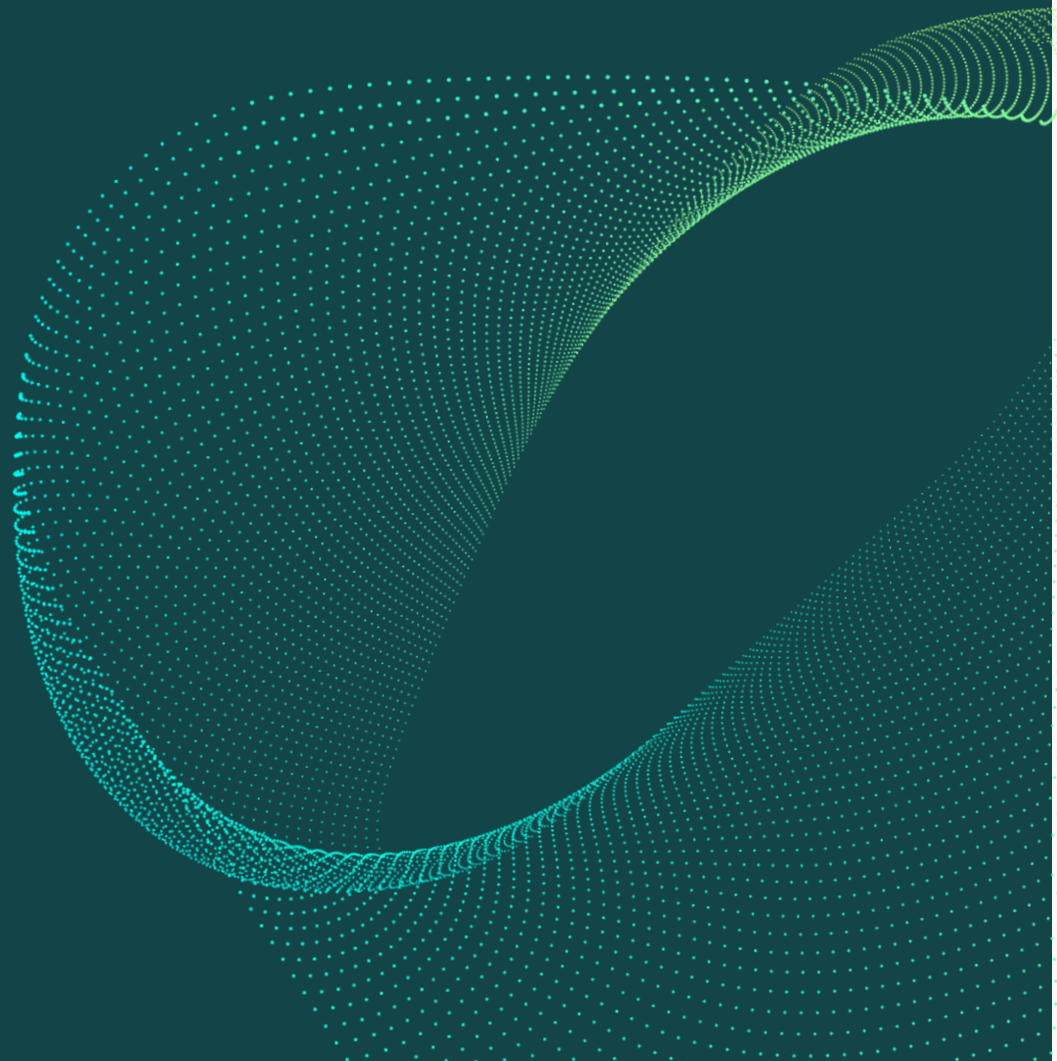


REGEN

NGED community energy case studies

*Staffordshire
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 Staffordshire Community Energy founder Mike Kinghan, whose knowledge and time was central to the development of this case study.

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Staffordshire Community Energy

Scaling community-owned solar to cut carbon and support local people

Factfile

- **Founded:** 2011
- **Location:** Staffordshire (West Midlands licence area)
- **Legal structure:** Community benefit society
- **Focus areas:** Rooftop solar PV, batteries, EV charging
- **Installed capacity:** 1.5 MW solar PV
- **Annual generation:** Over 1 million kWh
- **Core team members:** 8
- **Shareholders:** 180+
- **Website:** staffscommunityenergy.org.uk

Overview

Since 2011, Staffordshire Community Energy (SCE) has installed over 1.5 MW of rooftop solar on leisure centres, NHS buildings, community facilities and council-owned homes across the county, generating more than one million kWh of clean electricity each year.

Their model is simple and replicable: raise capital locally, install solar PV at no upfront cost to building owners, sell affordable renewable electricity to the host site and channel surpluses into community benefit funds. This approach has supported both community facilities and households in fuel poverty, and demonstrates how community energy projects can scale in a sustainable way.

“Our work is driven by a belief that community ownership can deliver both carbon savings and real social value – not one or the other.” - Mike Kinghan,
SCE

Journey

SCE began life as Whittington and Fisherwick Environment Group, set up by a group of residents seeking to take local action in response to the climate crisis. Early projects included household energy audits and group buying schemes for insulation and solar panels, as well as a lightbulb library for local residents to try LED lighting in their own homes.

They then started to focus on solar PV installations for local buildings, before joining forces with another local low-carbon group to form SCE. The first project involved raising £54,000 to install PV on the hospice and village hall roofs. Following this, an enquiry from Cannock Council about

the potential to install solar on some of its social housing led to SCE raising over £1m from community investors and a social loan to design, manage and successfully manage installations on 314 individual homes in 2015. A sister organisation, Chase Community Solar, was set up to undertake this project. It was closely followed by a 350 kW scheme on the roofs of the Royal Stoke and Stafford County hospitals. Joining forces with Beat the Cold, a local fuel poverty charity, the surplus funds from this scheme (known as Keep Warm, Keep Well) are channelled into supporting health service users with conditions that are likely to be exacerbated by cold or damp homes, with the hope of simultaneously reducing demand on hospital services.

National policy changes in the mid-2010s made it more challenging to deliver new solar projects, but SCE continued to build relationships and support local organisations, which enabled them to move quickly when new opportunities arose. Their latest project, a rooftop solar array at a new leisure centre in Lichfield, has recently been completed and is expected to generate nearly 150,000 kWh annually. Funded through a bridging loan from We Have The Power ahead of community investment, it's expected to generate around £25,000 a year in revenue and a community fund of over £150,000 during its 20-year lifetime.

Meanwhile, SCE's partnership with University Hospitals of North Midlands and Beat the Cold continues to develop. They are currently developing a plan for a further community-funded installation of 736 kW peak at the County Hospital in Stafford. This £660,00 is expected to generate a surplus of over £1/2mn over the 20-year life of the scheme, which will fund a significant expansion for Keep Warm Keep Well and provide support for 100s more households in fuel poverty.

Until two years ago, SCE relied almost entirely on volunteers, but funding from OFGEM's Energy Redress Fund and the Government Community Energy Fund has since enabled them to bring in professional support. This has allowed them to expand NHS-related work and launch the Staffordshire Energetic Communities project, which helps local communities across the county develop carbon-reduction plans.

“When it comes to working with councils or NHS trusts, you've got to find a champion. It boils down to that. You've got to find someone internally who's going to take it on and then they've got to get others enthused.” - Mike Kinghan, SCE

Achievements

- **Solar at scale:** More than 1.5 MW of rooftop PV installed across NHS buildings, community facilities and council housing.
- **Strong local finance:** More than £1 million raised through community share offers, bringing local people into the clean energy transition.

- **Consistent community benefit:** £200,000 granted to alleviate fuel poverty and £53,000 awarded to community organisations in their local area.
- **A resilient model:** Removing upfront costs for building owners, generating clean energy and redirecting surplus income back into the local community.
- **Recognition:** Named 2025 Community Energy Initiative at Regen’s Green Energy Awards, winner of the Solar and Storage Live 2025 Alan Clark Award for Community/Local Energy and winner of the Collaboration award at the 2025 Community Energy Awards.

Lessons for others

SCE’s experience offers clear lessons for groups developing renewable energy projects on public and community buildings:

- **Strong partnership working.** This is at the heart of their model is – particularly with councils, NHS bodies and local people. Building owners often want solar, but lack the capital or capacity to install it themselves and SCE’s offer of no upfront cost, affordable local electricity and ringfenced community benefit funding has proved compelling.
- **Persistence and timing.** Policy and funding landscapes shift, and projects may pause for years – maintaining relationships and a clear purpose allows groups to move quickly when opportunities reemerge.
- **Embedding social impact.** SCE’s work shows the value of embedding social impact as a core part of the business model. Their fuel poverty work has become a key driver of support from members and partners.

For groups starting out: Successful community energy projects rely on diverse skills.

Bringing in people with technical expertise, financial know-how and strong local connections helps create a well-rounded team from the outset. This mix of skills can support better early decision-making, improve project resilience and increase the likelihood of securing funding, building local trust and delivering a project that truly meets community needs.

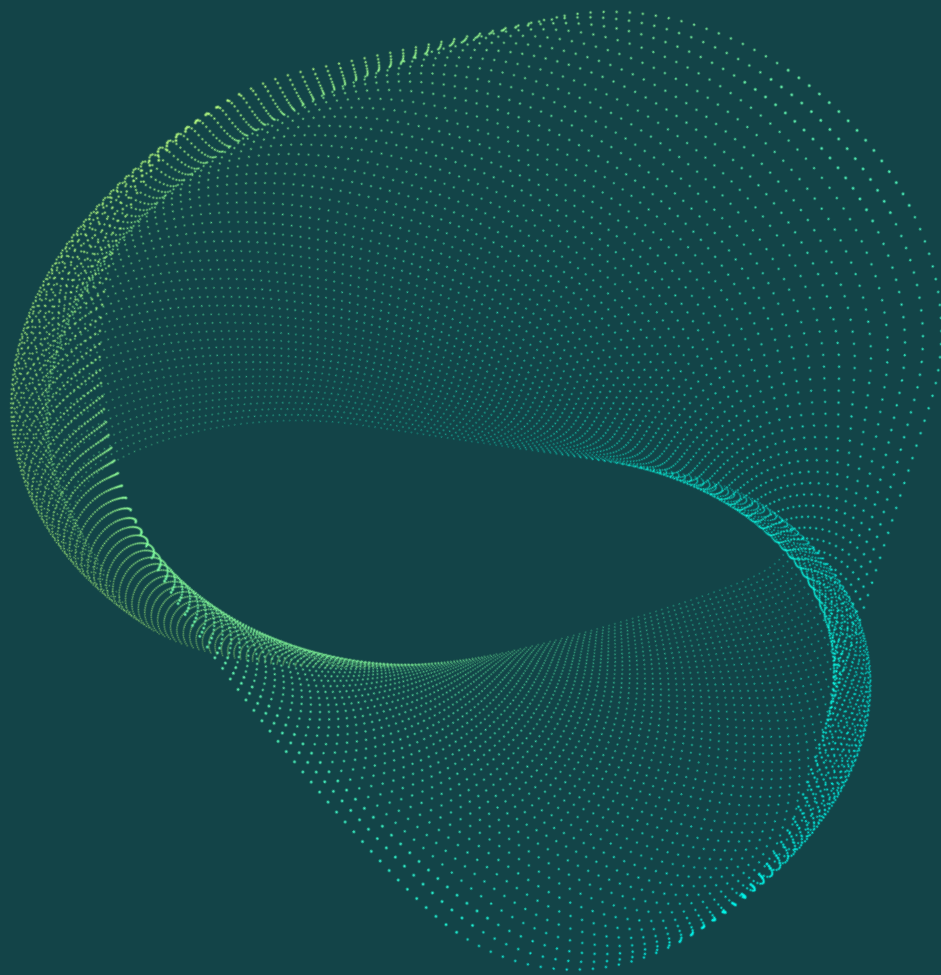
“If you’re not rooted in the place, it’s very hard to bring people with you.” -
Mike Kinghan, SCE

Looking ahead

SCE is exploring several areas of growth as it adapts to the changing energy landscape. These include assessing NHS buildings, schools and commercial sites for viable rooftop solar installations, as well as working closely with local communities to explore the potential for ground-mounted solar and wind turbines, alongside addressing fuel poverty and reducing energy demand via retrofit and improved energy efficiency. Their long-term ambition is to continue scaling community-owned renewables while supporting more households and organisations across Staffordshire.

Find out more

staffscommunityenergy.org.uk



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