

## Greenprint Forum visit to Power 4 KcC, Kelsale

17 June 2024



We were delighted to be invited to visit the community-owned energy cooperative Power 4 KcC (registered as Kelsale-cum-Carlton Community Energy Ltd, or KCCE) one sunny afternoon a few days before the summer solstice. 15 attended, coming from a diverse background of interests and professions within both local and regional communities.



### **Background to Power 4 KcC**

The history of this cooperative starts over a decade ago in 2012 when a bid for £62,000 under the LEAF program was approved. However, there was only six weeks granted to spend this funding, to which studies were conducted and financed in this time. Initial ideas such as placing the panels on the village hall proved unviable due to the building's Grade Two status. Instead, the plot of land behind the village hall proved to be a viable option instead.

2014 saw a share prospective raise £16.6k for the project where members of the community invested in the project as shareholders. Installation of the two rows of 32 panels, totalling capacity of 8 kW, were then set up that same year. Since then, feed-in tariffs have now earned over £10,000 – more than half of the investment cost.

The cooperative was awarded the Greenest Country Award in the category for Renewable Energy category in 2015, and has recently marked its tenth anniversary of operation.

Attendees had the opportunity to ask questions and gain insight about the project. Below are some of the key questions and takeaways.

### **What community elements benefit from this project?**

Two trenches feed the panel's cables into meters within the local social club. One row of panels feeds energy to the Village Hall – this energy is free for them. The other row feeds energy to the Social Club which is charged a rate approximately half that which competing energy suppliers charge. Not only does this energy provide crucial economic relief to these vital community buildings, but it encapsulates an environmental justification too.

### **Was planning permission needed and if so, did it prove to be a political barrier?**

Yes, planning permission was needed for the project. However, it did not prove to be a political challenge – there were no local objections to the project. Overall, the approval of the project was a rather smooth endeavour.



### How often do the panels need cleaning?

The panels were cleaned recently before the group visit to the project. However, there is no strict schedule or requirement to have them cleaned. The angled nature of the panels has meant they're somewhat self-cleaning, in that debris tends to slide just off or is washed off with rainfall.

### Could shareholders sell their shares, and why was it only £20 a share?

One share for the project was £20, it was set at this price point to make the community project financially accessible for the entire local population. Of course, investors could buy much more than one share if they so desired. There was a clause in the agreement that 4% of shares could be sold each year, although there are ongoing discussions about raising this to 10%.

### What were the largest problems with regards to the project?

The two largest problems were bureaucracy and people organisation. Bureaucratic problems revolved around Ofgem (Office of Gas and Electricity Markets). There were issues securing feed-tariffs with the organisation. People + organisational problems centred around the board. Getting the board to set-up and maintain it proved challenging. Half of the board members resigned at one point, so filling those voluntary gaps added to this organisational problem.

Some smaller problems included difficulty in paying VAT. HMRC only accepted Direct Debit for taxation has proved a difficult method to pay. Scottish Power's new parent company has also generated some bureaucratic difficulties.

### Are there records of all relevant documents?

Yes. There are two large binders of physical copies of all relevant documents (ranging from planning permission, to bills, to taxes), and a digital copy on google docs.

With thanks to our hosts Keith Dickerson and Toby May (two of the Directors of KCCE).

If you would like to find out more about this project, their website, including their contact details, can be found here:

<https://www.power4kcc.org/>



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