Question one summary: 'How do you define community energy? What are the key components that we need to protect when scaling up the role of the sector?'

Overall the key components that were identified as the characteristics to protect when scaling up the role of the sector were, democratic control and diverse ownership, benefits to local communities, and the local roots and activism that community energy originates from.

The main debates and responses centred around three topics; benefits to the community, net zero carbon, and a sense of place. In relation to the first topic, there were discussions about community energy being a regenerative culture, a platform for delivering social and environmental improvements. It is inclusive, equitable, collaborative and increases community resilience. However, attendants thought that community energy needs to define the value they bring to communities, it's not just about generation and profit, but also about the skills generated and giving power to people. There were a number of mentions about how community energy is more than ownership – it is about the community and energy equity.

Another related discussion took place about what community means in community energy, and people debated about it as a sense of place which can be defined however each local organisation sees fit. Questions were raised around how community energy engages people who don't have a strong sense of place or are disenfranchised with their local area. Community is about place and identity, but should not only exist within a physical place. This was raised as an important point as it may deter members of the community who aren't settled/staying in an area.

The net-zero discussion stated that community energy is about the transition to a net-zero carbon society and that for many people that was the top motivation for getting involved in community energy, which should not be forgotten.

There was also a conversation around fuel poverty and whether community energy should or should not address it, but it was agreed that this is something that doesn't need a national approach and each local community energy group should be able to take their own stance on this.

Question two summary: 'How might community energy grow in the next ten years? What do we want it to achieve? What would success look like?'

The largest conversation in response to this question was about the current political landscape. The climate emergency declarations provide an opportunity for community energy. As a sector, it should get involved as part of the action plans that local authorities will need to implement. Attendees also discussed whether community energy needs more resources and support in councils, BEIS and national government. One person mentioned how there used to be a strategy, sustainability officers and a willingness to work with community energy. Whereas now delegates felt that practitioners are expected to compete with commercial energy generation without the support and the government should accept that community energy needs targeted support.

There were many comments surrounding engagement and representation. There is a desire for community energy to become a system that anyone can engage with and reap benefits from. The 2019 State of the Sector demographic data shows that the sector is dominated by a certain few demographics. Practitioners don't want to cut out any type of group from engaging with community energy, and that organisations need to be aware that there are more ways for the community to participate in projects other than investing. Appetite to be more inclusive in the future.

There was a small conversation about the opportunity of peer to peer trading and wanting to utilise blockchain. There was a general consensus that community energy needs to take advantage of new technology in the next ten years.

The last big discussion was about decarbonising heat. Government regulations make it hard for anyone other than local authorities to own heat networks and there should be more collaboration on these projects but more information is needed on what makes it hard for community energy to engage.

Question three summary: 'Who are the key stakeholders and why? What are the barriers to partnerships?'

In response to question three, there was dialogue around the usual players. Community energy practitioners highlighted that they see national and local government, regulators, local energy system and technology firms as potential stakeholders. This showcases where there has been past difficulty in establishing useful and easy collaborations, and the need for certain expertise and support.

There were also several responses about community energy engaging more with local campaigning and activism groups, especially Extinction Rebellion as they are already having conversations with local councils regarding the action plans for climate emergency and would gladly get community energy on the agenda. This shows community energy's ambition to step out of the silos that it can sometimes exist within and join the overarching movements and engage with more of its community.

A few responses that mention engaging wider public sector, such as the NHS and schools, etc. which some community energy groups do work with already. However, there are difficulties to these partnerships and so ideas from practitioners on how to overcome barriers to the partnership would be helpful.

Several individual responses that are new to the discourse were media outlets, partners in Europe, people who want to start up new community energy groups and the beneficiaries of community energy and community energy organisation members. Beneficiaries of community energy are important to think about as it can help a community energy group identify why and who they are doing projects for and if those beneficiaries are receiving the benefit. Media is important for portraying the story behind community energy projects are they are always people based.