

# Boris forgets to invest in people and communities contributing to net-zero in his 10 point plan.

Community Energy England response to Boris Johnson's speech and 'Ten Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution'

Read the full plan [here](#)

As in his Conference speech<sup>1</sup> the Prime Minister forgot, in his Ten Point Plan<sup>2</sup>, to invest in the 'extraordinary powers of invention'<sup>3</sup> in the community to deliver local recovery and net-zero solutions. Instead he chooses to invest in big-cheque, corporate solutions many of which look dangerously like 'unicorns', which may not scale in time or ever.

The Committee on Climate Change Net Zero report<sup>4</sup> was clear: "It will not be possible to get close to meeting a net-zero target without engaging with people or by pursuing an approach that focuses only on supply-side changes" This "will only be possible if people are engaged in a societal effort to reach net-zero emissions and understand the choices and constraints...There is currently no government strategy to engage the public in the transition to a low-carbon economy. This will need to change."

Community energy is essential to that engagement, and yet has been disabled by policy changes since 2015<sup>5</sup>. This will need to change. But those changes are nowhere in this 10 point plan.

Green peer Natalie Bennett said, "*Boris missed a vital element of delivering Net Zero in the 10 Point Plan - involving the people. If he doesn't he will fail. The government must put people and communities front and centre of policy in the Energy White Paper and the Nationally Determined Contributions for COP26. A big focus on community energy - harnessing existing knowledge, skills and passion in groups that have been working on the energy transition for many years is crucial. That will also ensure the public's consent and active participation.*"

That the consent and participation of people and communities are essential to achieving net zero is

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<https://www.cityam.com/in-full-pm-boris-johnsons-tory-conference-speech-in-full/>

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<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/pm-outlines-his-ten-point-plan-for-a-green-industrial-revolution-for-250000-jobs>

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<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/prime-ministers-article-in-the-financial-times-18-november-2020> He attributes 'extraordinary powers of invention' to science and industry, forgetting people and communities' contribution to inventing local solutions including those that reduce demand for energy.

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<https://www.theccc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Net-Zero-The-UKs-contribution-to-stopping-Global-warming.pdf> p12,33,193

5

This includes the removal of ROCs, the Feed-in Tariff, Export Tariff, the Urban Community Energy Fund and Tax Relief, punitive business rates on roof-top solar, planning constraints on on-shore wind and increasing VAT on solar panels, batteries and 'energy saving measures' from 5% to 20%.

reinforced by the Climate Assembly report<sup>6</sup> and increasingly by ministers. Alok Sharma, Secretary of State for Business Energy and Industrial Strategy said<sup>7</sup> *“The Committee on Climate Change estimates 62% of emissions reductions involves some form of behaviour change from each of us<sup>8</sup>.... How do we encourage those changes in a way that is fair and ultimately acceptable to the public. A large part of the answer is... involve the public.”* Decentralisation and Decarbonisation needs Democratisation.

The government must correct this omission by putting people and communities front and centre of policy in the Energy White Paper, the Comprehensive Spending Review, the ‘world-leading’ Nationally Determined Contributions for COP26 and by instituting a new community energy strategy to enable the sector to double in size every year as it did between 2014 and 2017. This must be backed up by boosting support community energy such as reinstating the Urban Community Energy Fund to accompany the Rural Community Energy Fund, reinstating Social Investment Tax Relief for community energy, reducing VAT on Energy Saving Measures, including solar panels and batteries, to zero, proper funding for community energy to play a central role in Local Area Energy Planning and for the local energy collaboration projects that arise from that process.

We support ending the sale of petrol and diesel vehicles by 2030, the investment in EVs and in public transport, walking and cycling, the additional funding for building retrofit but people have got to want the change or it will fail.

We welcome the extension of the Green Homes Grant for one more year but experience of it to date has shown we need to invest more and in long-term capacity-building to realise the huge and compounding savings from energy efficiency that must be the foundation of the transition to net zero.

Offshore wind is a success story but without investing in demand reduction and management the target of meeting all electricity demand including from heating and transport from offshore wind is a vain one. Demand reduction is essentially local and community energy is key to engaging people on this, alleviating fuel poverty and delivering huge social cost saving from improved health and wellbeing at the same time. Onshore wind and solar, despite being the cheapest sources of renewable energy, are not mentioned. There needs to be support for small and community projects in the current Contracts for Difference and planning reforms.

The future of the power system is ‘decentralised’, local - again where community energy is embedded, able to create local collaborations and synergies and turn problems into solutions. These activities involving local people make the community more committed to making the net-zero transition work.

Community energy stimulates community investment in the energy transition - money that without these local projects would probably have gone elsewhere. It is highly efficient, translating

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<https://www.climateassembly.uk/report/>

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<https://youtu.be/SnuF5KmdkWo?t=554>

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<https://www.theccc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Net-Zero-The-UKs-contribution-to-stopping-Global-warming.pdf> fig 5.6

development funding into patient capital at a ratio of around 20:1. Energy efficiency projects have shown social returns on investment of 24:1 which also means large social cost savings to the government.

Supporting community energy would be 'smart' in a way that complements and amplifies the Prime Minister's 'tech-smart' proposals. This would be a key innovation to show-case at COP2.

The coming Energy White Paper, the Comprehensive Spending Review and the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) for COP26 must put people and communities (and community energy) at the heart of the societal and systemic changes we need to avoid catastrophic climate change.

Emma Bridge, Chief Executive of Community Energy England said, *“Community energy is essential to achieving net zero. It engages people and communities in coming up with and committing to their local solutions. It is ready to scale if the government will put in place policies and mechanisms that will enable the thousands of grass-roots energy experts to get active in support of the urgent energy transition.”*

## *Notes to Editors*

### **Notes to editors**

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### **About Community Energy England**

Community Energy England (CEE) is a not for profit organisation that represents and supports those committed to the community energy sector. CEE was established by the sector to provide a voice for community energy and to help create the conditions within which it can flourish. This is done by increasing the profile of community energy, sharing good practice and by advocating for supportive policies at national and local levels. Membership consists of over 250 organisations working to support the growth of community energy.