

# Annual General Meeting 2021

**Tuesday 22 June 2021, 10am – 11.45am**

**Present:** 33 (28 members, 5 other attendees)

## 1. Welcome, introductions, and apologies

Afsheen Rashid, Chair of Community Energy England, opened the meeting and welcomed attendees.

Afsheen covered the meeting and voting guidelines for the meeting. The meeting was held through Zoom and its polling function was used for voting for Directors, approval of the 2020 financial accounts, approval of the 2020 minutes and a motion to approve an amendment to Community Energy England's Bye Laws

Afsheen gave an introduction to Community Energy England and reported on the organisation's new vision and mission, which had been updated to better reflect its new strategic priorities.

## 2. Minutes of the previous AGM

A Zoom poll was launched for approval of the minutes of the 2020 AGM. The minutes were approved, and no questions were raised.

## 3. Our Organisation

Afsheen gave attendees an update on the structure of the Community Energy England Board and executive team and its governance. She noted that the board committees finance, governance, and impact, were in place to help improve the operations and output of the organisation both internally and externally. Afsheen introduced board members and thanked outgoing board member Mark Billsborough for his hard work and commitment while working as part of the Community Energy England board.

Afsheen highlighted that there had been some changes within the executive team structure, with both Projects Officer Jeana and Communications Officer Jon Hall moving onto new roles, and the introduction of Projects and Advocacy Intern Flora. She then invited the executive team to present on activity and impact in 2020.

## 4. Our Activity and Impact in 2020

### Policy and Advocacy

Policy and Advocacy Manager Duncan Law gave key highlights from Community Energy England policy and advocacy activities in 2020. These highlights included the successful extension of the feed-in tariff twice, meeting with BEIS directors and presenting on community energy to 50 BEIS officials and responding to 17 policy consultations which included 10 government consultations. Duncan thanked members for all their work and contributions in increasing the voice and reach of community energy.

### Events and Communications

Projects and Communications Manager Philip updated attendees on key events in 2020. Community Energy England organised 9 online conferences and webinars and supported

numerous other events over the year. Due to social distancing measures, in 2020 Community Energy Fortnight was held online, leading to increased engagement on social media platforms, more case studies and blogs than in previous years. Community Energy England launched a Youtube channel in 2020 to further encourage and promote the dissemination of information and insight from events.

Key projects in 2020 were the State of the Sector Report 2020, the Community Energy 2030 Vision publication and the development of the How To pages on the Community Energy England website, which replaced the Community Energy Hub. Philip also noted the key projects that Community Energy England had supported in 2020, including supporting the REBUS project and the creation of *Transforming Energy: The power of local* toolkit, developed by Bristol Energy Network and Bristol City Council. He also highlighted the various panels and groups that benefitted from Community Energy England input in 2020. Philip encouraged members to feed back on the impacts of these key events, communications, and projects.

### **Membership**

Membership and Executive Support Officer Charlotte updated attendees on membership numbers and breakdown of membership by category in 2020. She reported that the collective voice of Community Energy England had grown, with membership at the time of the 2021 AGM at 273 total. Charlotte confirmed that membership of Community Energy England was open to any organisation that supports and promotes the development of community energy. Charlotte noted that Community Energy England regularly works with other membership bodies, networks and organisations to ensure that efforts are not duplicated, and the benefits of community energy are disseminated. Charlotte noted the importance of Community Energy England's Principal Supporter Members, who support the organisation with increased financial support, and its funders, with whose support Community Energy England was able to make its impact in 2020.

Afsheen, as Chair of the AGM, opened the floor to questions from attendees. A question was asked about the Local Electricity Bill; Duncan confirmed the bill did not get adopted as a ballot bill. Another question was asked on RIIO-ED2; Emma Bridge, Chief Executive of Community Energy England, confirmed that Community Energy England was engaging with Ofgem and thanked members for their support, as member expertise was key in these conversations.

No further questions were raised.

### **5. Financial Accounts**

Community Energy England Treasurer Mark Luntley introduced the draft accounts for the year ending December 2020, which had been prepared by Third Sector Accountancy. Mark highlighted that Community Energy England operates on a not-for-profit basis, and any surplus is added to member funds for the next financial year. Mark noted the challenges of being a sustainable organisation, but that Community Energy England had retained income due to reduced activities during the Covid-19 pandemic. Any retained income would be used for future activities to benefit the sector. At the year end of 2020 Community Energy England was solvent, however, Mark commented that it was important to note that grant funding was due to reduce in 2021. The Community Energy England board and executive team were exploring new funding avenues that did not put the organisation in competition with members.

Attendees were then offered the chance to ask questions. A question was raised regarding how Community Energy England had retained surplus in 2020. Emma confirmed that before the Covid-19 pandemic, Community Energy England spent a considerable amount on travelling to meet members, government officials and to speak at events on behalf of the sector; most of these activities had paused over 2020. In addition, there had been a further purposeful reduction in costs and sourcing of grant income to ensure a healthy buffer for future financial uncertainty as well as possible future support needs for the sector. Another question was raised, querying whether Community Energy England could increase income with consultancy work. Emma replied that while Community Energy England did already engage in some paid consultancy work, activities for members or that increased the visibility of the community energy sector were often carried out on a pro-bono basis. The executive team was seeking to ensure that Community Energy England was paid for any input provided, wherever possible, and that consultancy work did not compete with or detract from our members' activity and funding sources

A vote was put forward for approval of the draft accounts for the year ending December 2020 through Zoom's polling function, with only Community Energy England members having the opportunity to vote. The accounts were approved.

## **6. Voting for Appointment of Directors**

Emma Bridge, Chief Executive of Community Energy England, reported on Community Energy England's rules for numbers and nomination of directors in accordance with the organisation's Articles and Bye Laws. In line with Community Energy England's constitution a new director from any member category could be elected on to the board this year. The ballot was competitive, meaning that only one nominee could be elected.

Nominees Michaela Cryar, Tracy Ebbrell and Mary Gillie were present and were given the opportunity to give a brief overview of why they wanted to be on the board of Community Energy England. Gillian Hurding was not present, and Emma read her nomination statement on her behalf. Voting was carried out anonymously via Zoom's polling function, with only Community Energy England members having the opportunity to vote. Emma informed attendees that votes would be checked and the result would be reported later in the meeting.

## **7. Motion: Proposal of Amendment to Community Energy England's Bye Laws**

Emma put forward a motion to propose an amendment to Community Energy England's Bye Laws, to enable the board to meet online for all quarterly board meetings. The amendment would prepare Community Energy England for any future implications meaning the board could not meet in person and would mean that the board could be inclusive to members who may not be able to travel extensively.

A vote on the motion was put forward on Zoom's polling function, with only Community Energy England members having the opportunity to vote. The motion was approved.

## 8. Looking Ahead

Emma introduced Community Energy England's strategy for the next year and beyond. Community Energy England would be adapting to changes impacting the wider sector, while staying true to its vision and mission. She noted that even despite increasingly challenging times, community energy was still growing. Emma would be reaching out to members in the next few months to seek further views on how to continue to increase Community Energy England's impact and help to grow the sector even further.

### **Influencing policy and regulation**

Duncan briefed attendees on his plans for impact and input around policy in 2021 and beyond. He noted that the new COP26 post with Community Energy England would be key to linking the sector into wider activity around COP26. He concluded by noting the need to urge the government to put in place practical support for the sector. He then introduced Policy and Advocacy Intern Flora Robertson. Flora noted that Community Energy England's priorities for the next year were decided by analysing where we can deliver the most benefits to members through policy change.

### **Membership and partnership**

Charlotte stressed that membership was core to all of Community Energy England's activities and feedback from members directly feeds into plans and activities. She noted that a form was open all year round for members to give open and honest feedback. Charlotte concluded by informing attendees that membership was open to any organisation that supports the community energy movement.

### **Key projects, events and communications**

Philip gave an update on upcoming key projects with members and other partners in the sector. He asked for members to share any resources or case studies that could be published on the How To pages on Community Energy England's website. Philip also requested that members feed in any feedback to the State of the Sector Survey 2021 and asked for any ideas or collaboration requests on events.

Attendees were invited to ask any questions or give responses. Feedback was given on the complexity of completing the State of the Sector Survey 2021. Board member Rachel Hayes gave an update on recent COP26 that could be of interest to the sector. Attendees discussed possible issues with the Financial Conduct Authority ruling that new community energy organisations were not permitted to register as a co-operative, and potential implications for existing groups. Emma confirmed that she would engage directly with members on this topic.

## 9. Director Nomination Result

Emma confirmed that Mary Gillie was voted on to the Board. Emma thanked all nominees for putting themselves forward.

### **Any other business**

No other business was reported.

Afsheen thanked all members for their continued support and closed the meeting.