

Secretary of State at BEIS, by email chasing the previous [letter](#) sent 21.02.2202

1 April 2022

Dear Secretary of State,

We appreciate that since we sent our letter (attached) 5 weeks ago the world has changed and you have been occupied with urgent matters.

However we are concerned that departmental work planning and budget decisions will be finalised with no provision "to support the long-term growth of community energy across the UK" as was recommended by the Environmental Audit Committee. This will mean the great Net Zero and Community Energy ships will be spoilt for a ha'porth of tar. Net Zero will not be achieved without the consent and active participation of the wider public. Community energy is the best way to get that deep, enduring engagement, alongside local net zero projects at scale and huge community benefit. It is a no-brainer investment of a few million pounds.

Your department repeatedly recommends we work closely with local authorities to access the national growth funds such as the Levelling Up Fund. The £23m grant to Glastonbury from the Towns Fund is often cited. The community energy segment of that is ~£2m, for which we are grateful. But our members repeatedly say, "we don't need capital funding - we just need some project development funding to make the case to our community to get them to invest".

Using the development funding to investment ratio of nearly 1:70 which I quoted in my letter, derived from the current RCEF pipeline in the NE of England, **that £2m going to Glastonbury community energy, if it had been invested through the Rural Community Energy Fund, could have mobilised £139,000,000 worth of renewable energy projects**, plus millions more in community and social benefit.

Surely that is where the government should be investing its money, for highest financial, carbon, social, public engagement and social entrepreneurship returns, many of which will have compounding benefits of enabling more projects down the line.

You and your department mobilised proactively to extend the Feed-in Tariff deadline when projects were threatened by Covid. We are asking you to show the same proaction and initiative and extend and expand the successful RCEF into a National Community Energy Fund which can build on the amazing expertise that the RCEF has developed in the regions. It will generate hundreds of millions worth of visible local decarbonisation projects which will rally local support for net zero because they deliver benefit and belong to the community.

In the new language we have had to learn in the last month it will mobilise and arm the local community leaders and their net zero 'militia' to win this war with the will and effort of the people.

I hope you will forgive passionate words - but the dedicated, passionate, enterprising, self-less people I am representing, - who want nothing more than minimal government support to deliver maximum climate and social benefit - deserve no less. I hope you will help them to fulfill community energy's huge potential to drive net zero forward. As Michael Gove inspiringly said, "This country won't achieve its full potential until every individual and community achieves everything of which they are capable. We need to fire up every resource we have."

Thank you for reading. If you need more convincing we are very keen to meet you as soon as possible.

Best regards
Duncan