



make money do good

Case Study:

How blended finance enabled a local energy transition in Barnsley



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Tackling fuel poverty and cutting carbon through impact investing

In Barnsley, a market town in South Yorkshire, rising energy costs and the urgent need to reduce carbon emissions created a dual challenge, one that particularly affected low-income and elderly residents living in council-owned homes. Energise Barnsley, a local community energy Cooperative, worked with Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council and CO2Sense to develop an inclusive clean energy solution rooted in the needs of the community.

In order to achieve this, they needed a financial model that could align public investment with institutional support. That's where Ethex came in.



Blending finance for greater impact



At Ethex, we believe that money should be a tool for good, and this project shows what's possible when different sources of capital work together to drive real positive social and environmental impact.



Energise Barnsley had an ambitious vision to install solar panels and smart battery systems across more than 1,320 council-owned homes and public buildings. Delivering this at scale meant finding a funding model that de-risked early investment while opening the door for wider participation.

CO2Sense, a social enterprise focused on accelerating the just transition, provided early-stage catalytic funding to unlock the project's potential. This was paired with the launch of two Energise Barnsley Solar Bonds on the Ethex platform, inviting individuals from across the UK to invest directly to support the project from just £50, targeting returns of 4 - 6% over the 5-year term.

The two bond offers **raised over £4.5 million**, with £200,000 of match funding provided by CO2Sense.

Lisa Ashford, CEO of Ethex, said:

"Energise Barnsley is a perfect example of how blended finance can unlock the power of community energy. By giving individuals the chance to co-invest alongside institutions and local authorities, we're helping to put financial and literal power in the hands of communities, delivering meaningful social, environmental and economic outcomes."

Positive outcomes for people and planet

This blended finance approach enabled Energise Barnsley to roll out their rooftop solar project that delivered measurable local benefits:



Over 11,500 MWh
of clean energy generated so far



24,196 tonnes of CO2 emissions
avoided over the lifetime of the project



£278,844
in total bill savings for council tenants



150 smart batteries installed,
enabling a further £300,000 in savings



£79,000+ in surplus income
channelled into local community initiatives

For residents, the impact is real. One tenant reported seeing lower energy bills within weeks, even while cooking Christmas dinner for her family. At a local community centre, solar panels now help power laundry facilities, saving money and supporting services relied on by the community.



A replicable model for local authorities

This project offers a proven model for local councils looking to deliver inclusive climate action. By combining public backing with institutional and individual investment, it demonstrates how our net-zero goals can be met in a way that puts people and communities first.

Paul Castle, Service Director, Environment & Transport, Growth & Sustainability, Barnsley Council, said:

“Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council is proud to help demonstrate how local authorities can enable community ownership in clean energy, through our partnership with Energise Barnsley.

Combining our leadership with matched funding support from CO2Sense – connecting it to people in South Yorkshire and across the UK with investment through the positive impact platform Ethex – the Energise Barnsley Solar Bond raises show what’s possible when public backing helps unlock community-led climate action.

It’s a practical example of our commitment to a just transition and to achieving net zero through inclusive, place-based solutions.”

Hugh Goulbourne, Director, CO2Sense, said:

“Blended finance is essential to ensuring that local communities are not left behind in the transition to net zero. This project shows how catalytic capital can unlock both private and community investment, while delivering real social and environmental value. CO2Sense is focused on building financial models that channel resources into local economies, support energy resilience and give people greater control over their future.”

Energise Barnsley continues to reinvest surplus income through its Community Energy Fund, supporting further sustainability projects across the region.

Andy Heald, Director, Energise Barnsley said:

“This project proves what’s possible when communities are empowered to lead. It allowed us to deliver at scale, reach those most affected by fuel poverty and ensure the value stays in Barnsley. It’s local energy, owned by local people, for local benefit.”

At Ethex, we’re proud to have helped make this project possible by enabling people-powered finance to deliver real-world results. It’s a compelling example of what can happen when we move money for good – and a reminder that inclusive investment models are essential to a just transition.





Interested in raising investment for your project?

Get in touch here:

<https://www.ethex.org.uk/user/fundraiser>

Email us:

info@ethex.org.uk



Don't invest unless you're prepared to lose all the money you invest. The investments listed on Ethex are high - risk investments and you are unlikely to be protected if something goes wrong.

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