

Lunchtime webinar: Seeing is Believing (North East and Yorkshire)

John Taylor, Head of Capacity Building & Strategic Development, Community Energy England

De-risking community energy projects: Strengthening collaborations with local authorities

Speakers:

- **Sonya Bedford**, renewable energy lawyer
- **Peter Parker**, Wrigleys Solicitors LLP
- **Andy Dean**, Chief Executive, Community Action Northumberland

Seeing is Believing



- Funded by the **North East and Yorkshire Net Zero Hub**, delivered with CEE, Ashden, and CSE.
- Delivered to show the art of the possible for CE.
- Sharing inspiring stories in the region (involving tours / site visits, networking, events, match-making and community engagement).
- Connects CE organisations with LAs and other stakeholders in the area.



Sonya Bedford

De-risking community energy
projects





De-risking Community Energy Projects with Local Authorities

- Local authorities as asset owners
- Typical Legal Structures
- Key Legal Considerations
- Managing the risk
- Myth Busting
- Examples



Local Authorities as Asset Owners

- Local authority estates often include assets suitable for energy projects:
- public buildings (leisure centres, offices, schools)
- land holdings and brownfield sites
- car parks
- housing estates
- district heating anchor loads
- bare land and agricultural land

These assets can enable solar generation, wind, storage, and heat networks.



Typical Legal Structures

- **Roof lease + Power Purchase Agreement (PPA)**
Community group installs solar and sells electricity to the building.
- **Land lease for solar development**
Council receives rental income while enabling generation.
- **Joint venture arrangements**
Council and community organisation collaborate on development.
- **Energy services / concession models**
Used for heat networks and complex infrastructure.



Key Legal Considerations for Councils

- Key areas include:

Local Government Act powers (ability to dispose or lease land)

Best consideration requirements (Section 123 LGA 1972)

Procurement obligations under the Procurement Act 2023

Subsidy control compliance

Planning and property constraints



Managing the Risk of the Energy Project

Contracts typically address:
ownership of infrastructure
maintenance responsibilities

Insurance

performance risk
building sale or redevelopment
decommissioning obligations



Myth Busting for Community Energy and Local Authority Renewable Energy Projects



Additional work for the Council



We can't lease assets to Communities



Procurement Rules make it impossible



Too much risk



Community Projects are unusual







TURBINE SITE, AVONMOUTH
115m diameter wingspan





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WEST

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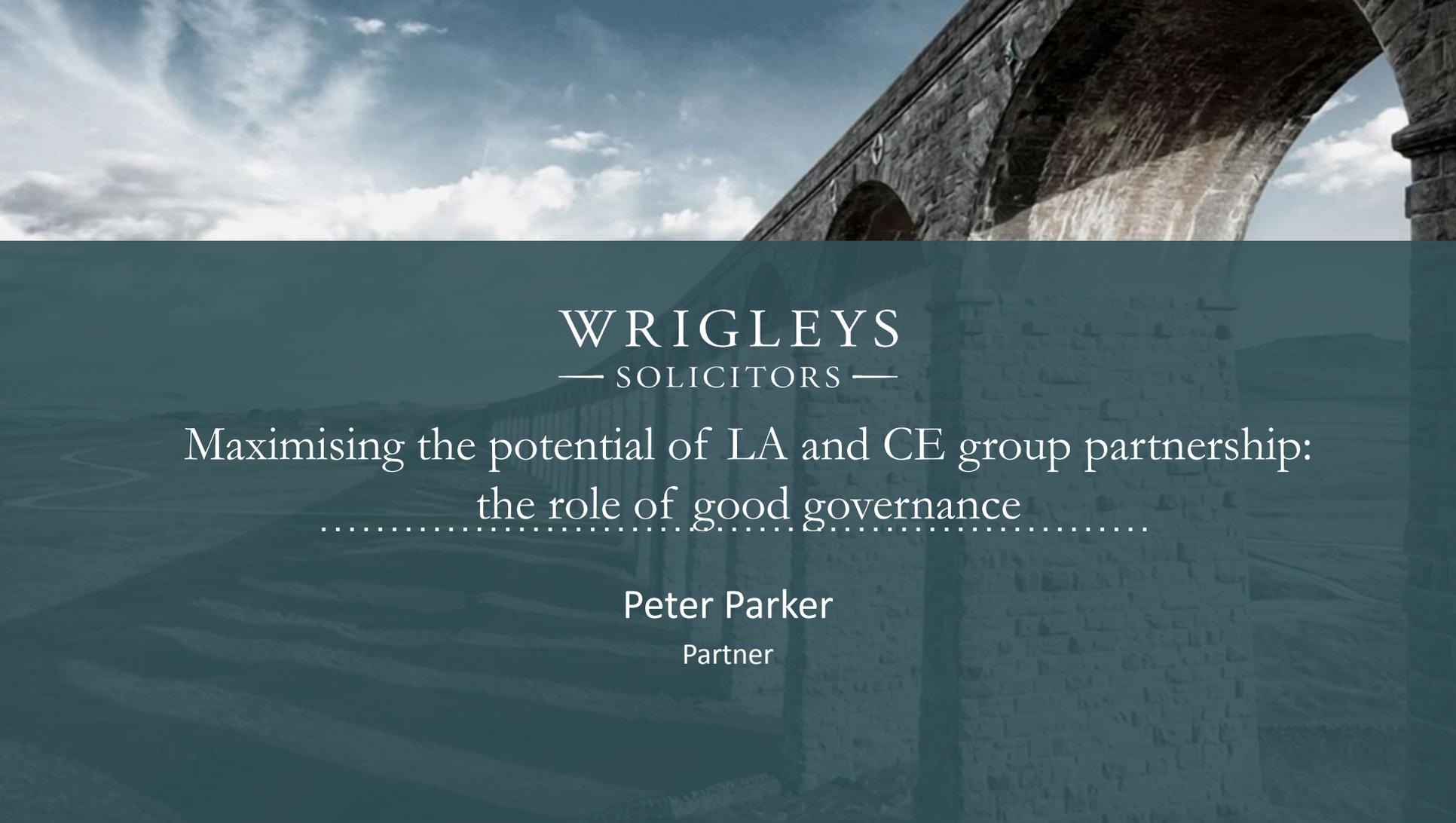
Advisor - Carbon Copy

Director - Bath & West Community Energy

Director – Isles of Scilly Community Venture

Director Avalon Community Energy





WRIGLEYS
— SOLICITORS —

Maximising the potential of LA and CE group partnership:
the role of good governance
.....

Peter Parker

Partner

Case study: Energise Barnsley (EB) and Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council (BMBC)

EB:

- Largest joint local authority and community energy solar PV and battery storage project in UK
- installed and now manages solar assets on around 320 LA owned homes in Barnsley, under terms of 2015 concession agreement
- EB is a CBS and BMBC is a member and “custodian”

Custodian



Designed to benefit the community by supporting the governance of EB



EB's rules – powers in favour of BMBC:

- to ensure that EB's community fund is spent in a way which has maximum benefit for the community
- to appoint and remove one director to/from EB board
- to veto certain rule amendments (including changes to objects and dissolution provisions)

Scaling up and expansion (project)



- 2024 – EB and BMBC enter into new arrangement, seeing EB finance, install and manage solar assets on over 1,000 more homes



- To facilitate that arrangement, existing concession is expanded and EB and BMBC use that as opportunity to review nature of their relationship and governance

Scaling up and expansion (governance)

EB members afford additional rights to BMBC (as custodian):

- the role of overseeing governance of EB
- right to receive copies of board papers
- right to examine EB's records and to require EB to undertake governance audit or review (where concerns arise)
- right to report to EB board (and members at AGM) on adequacy of governance arrangements of EB, and to identify any proposed measures or reviews
- right to be consulted in advance as to identity of any proposed director
- right to suspend a director for limited period (where concerns around fulfilment of statutory and fiduciary duties arise)

Additional governance measures...

Corporate governance statement

Conflicts of interest policy

Membership policy

Public information (mutual register filings)



Northumberland Ordnance Survey General Map



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Community Action Northumberland



Established
1951



Part of the
ACRE Network



acre network

ACTION WITH COMMUNITIES IN RURAL ENGLAND

- Reducing energy costs
- Increasing resilience
- Reducing environmental impact





North East Combined Authority | Kim McGuinness North East Mayor

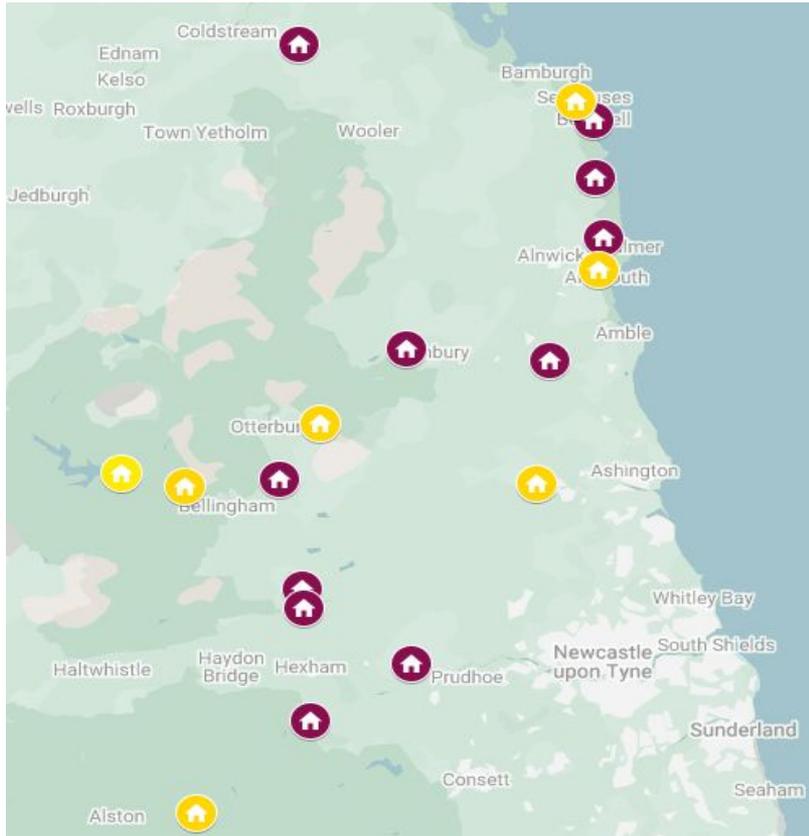
Homewise Advice ▾ Grants and funding About [Get in touch](#)

North East Warm Homes

Want to upgrade your home and save energy? Get free, personalised advice today.







Installed community buildings

- 🏠 Corsenside Parish Hall
- 🏠 Longhoughton Community & Sports Centre
- 🏠 Barrasford Village Hall
- 🏠 Whitley Chapel Parish Hall
- 🏠 Humshaugh Village Hall
- 🏠 Creighton Memorial Hall
- 🏠 Thropton
- 🏠 Felton Village Hall
- 🏠 Crookham Village Hall
- 🏠 Newton & Bywell Community Hall
- 🏠 Beadnell Women's Institute

Proposed installations 2026

- 🏠 Seahouses Hostel
- 🏠 Lesbury Village Hall
- 🏠 Tarsset Village Hall
- 🏠 Falstone
- 🏠 Carrshield Village Hall, Arts & Crafts Centre
- 🏠 Mitford village hall
- 🏠 Elsdon Village Hall
- 🏠 St Paul's Church, North Sunderland

Local
authority
interaction

Climate action &
regeneration teams

Regulation
(planning, fire)

Process (funding,
legal, data sharing)



Regulation

Planning

- Prior approvals / full permissions, designations, ecology, capacity . . .
- Listening, targeting, engaging

Fire

- Risk, risk, risk
- Discussion, resources, safety

Safe battery installation - NICRE



Process

Funding

- Complexity, timeframe, subsidy control, payments
- Support, cashflow resources, dialogue

Legal

- Complexity, timeframe, cost
- Due diligence checks, funding, planning

Data sharing

- A nut still to be cracked . . .



Thank you for
listening!



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Any questions for our
speakers?



Upcoming Seeing is Believing events



- Online event, 18 March, 13:00-15:30
- Online match-making: 26 March, 12:00-13:00

Many thanks to the North East and Yorkshire Net Zero Hub for funding this project



Feedback

Please take a couple of minutes to give us your feedback...

And thank you for coming!

