



SSCES AGM 2023 Chairman's Report

SSCES continues to achieve its main aims providing savings to the schools and the community centre and giving a good return to our shareholders. In addition, during 2022, we transferred some of our reserve funds from the bank to Great Western Credit Union. GWCU covers the Bristol and Bath area, much of Somerset and part of Dorset. This is acting as another community benefit, we are providing, but it is also paying us a small amount of interest.

Poll Results

Thank you to all those who responded to our recent poll and to all those who agreed with both resolutions. We had 5 members oppose the 1st resolution and 4 oppose the 2nd resolution. Of those, three members sent in comments, and I have replied to them, and hopefully, I have at least diminished their concerns with further explanation.

Repayment Policy

Our original repayment plan copied that of Plymouth Energy Co-op and PEC have since had to revise their repayment policy. The change we made last year would ease the administrative load, but it will still leave all members with odd amounts of shares with each planned repayment, and those with small shareholdings at the outset would have had their shares reduced to amounts where the costs to administer them would outweigh their value. After the 20 years, all members would have been repaid and there would be no members left to deal with any residual business. Potentially few, if any, members would have been happy with this.

We intend to continue the repayment policy giving priority to the requests of deceased's estates to refund or to make transfers as instructed. Any other requests for full or partial refunds we shall do our best to meet those requests. We have met all such requests to date. For large amounts we may need to spread them over a number of instalments to maintain the financial stability of the Society, so the Board will need to retain the right to use their discretion. We would hope to keep everyone happy with this plan.

Health and Safety Regulations

Since the H&S regulations were tightened, I am sorry to say that we have failed to get the problem resolved of having access to the roofs at Holyrood and Westfield Academies without having perimeter guardrails and fixed ladders installed, or alternatively having scaffolding erected each time access is required. The Site Manager at Holyrood said they will instal guardrails at some stage, but this is yet to happen. As a result, we have not had access to the 2 smashed panels I reported on last year at Holyrood nor to replace a faulty inverter that is housed with water tanks on the roof. These have reduced the returns to the Society as well as the electricity savings for the school.

I have recently been informed by the Site Manager at Holyrood that rodents have chewed away a section of protective tubing and some insulation on the cables just below roof level on the Sports Hall. I hope the contractors will have made the necessary repairs before our AGM.

At Westfield Academy we have just been informed that they have a leaking roof beneath some of our panels on one of our arrays. We have agreed to meet the cost to have the necessary panels and frame removed and then for it to be reinstated following the repairs.

Stanchester Academy

Our Solarweb connection at Holyrood stopped working (the system the inverters use to communicate through the internet, enabling remote monitoring). We have been informed by the Site Manager that all the inverters seem to be working normally. We suspected that the school had made some change to their internet connection, and we have recently been informed that they have changed their password. Their IT person needs to follow the instructions from Fronius support to rectify the problem, but we are still waiting.

Potential New Projects

South Somerset Partnership Schools and Yeovil Community Church which I mentioned last year as potential new projects have not followed up with their enquiries.

However, we have two new promising projects, but both are at an early stage requiring further discussion to see if we can reach a mutually beneficial agreement. One is for a possible 20kW solar p.v. project on a community centre in Yeovil and the other is for an 85kW ground mounted array in a village a few miles from Yeovil. The village Community Land Trust own the field and they already have planning permission for the array. The CLT are also a Community Benefit Society like SSCES. We are proposing to form a local energy club, copying Local Energy Bridport.

I have suggested that for the new projects we should 'match fund' so that SSCES put in half the required funds and the other party put in the other half. The aim of this is to achieve mutual commitment so both parties will want it to succeed, and also to recruit new local members to SSCES.

For fund raising for any new projects, we are considering having a different class of share from the previous share offers to allow us to 'ringfence' the interests of the original shareholders.

Interest Payments

I am pleased to announce that our FIT payments and Export Income have increased, as well as our charge rates to the premises also going up in line with inflation, so we have decided to propose paying interest at our target 6% for 2022 as a resolution at the AGM.

Directors

Chris Adcock, one of our founder Directors will be taking a backseat on the Board and standing down as our Treasurer, due to other commitments and John Clark has agreed to take over from him.

As we now hold all our Board meetings via Zoom, we would like to encourage Members who have any relevant experience to put themselves forward to join the Board, as their geographical location is now of less importance, and we would appreciate their assistance.

As in past years, I do not intend to read out my report at the AGM to save time, but I will answer questions on it. Also, anyone who wishes to send in questions in advance to Alison on admin@sscom.energy I will answer them at the AGM, time permitting or subsequently.

I wish to thank the team for their time and work through the year.

John Christmas