



South Somerset Community Energy Society Chairman's Report - 2025

1. Introduction

South Somerset Community Energy Society in 2024/25 has continued to act in the best interests of the stakeholders. The Directors and I wish to thank you for your continued support and trust during the transition to explore a new business model for 2025/26, potentially working with new partners and innovative projects. The Society focus remains committed to shareholders and community projects, strengthening our business plan and the overview financial performance for the past year and into the new financial year.

I was appointed to the board in June 2024 and in November 2024 Mr John Christmas stood down as Director. South Somerset Community Energy Society wish to thank Mr Christmas for his commitment and support, holding the chairmanship and bringing a wealth of knowledge and expertise to the Society during his term. In September 2024, appointed Mr Oliver Patrick to the board and noted his experience within the public sector.

The society welcome individuals who have an interest in a role on the board and have had interest to ensure the voice of the customer or in a director role such as Chair, Treasury or building relationships with current and future projects.

The Current Board members and vacancies are

- Chair – Sue Shelbourn-Barrow Director
- Secretary – John Clark Director
- Treasurer – Rob Cotterill (standing down) Vacancy
- Customer and Relationship – Oliver Patrick Director
- Christopher Adcock – Director
- Peter Chapman – Director

Voice of the Customer

- Iwona Kostrzewa
- Alan Judge

Staff (freelance and Volunteers)

- Alison Baker - Administration
- Zoe Godden – Accountant
- Esté Cann Social Media – Volunteer



2. Current Initiatives

In 2024 the community projects and initiatives experienced less than planned outputs which have impacted on the decisions in 2024 and into 2025.

The projects currently are

- Westfield Academy, Yeovil,
- Abbey Manor Community Association,
- Holyrood Academy, Chard, roof work completed, new layout for solar panels is on-going,
- Stanchester Academy, East Stoke,
- River Cale Café, Wincanton in 2025

3. Operational Highlights

- A new installation at River Cale Café, Wincanton,
- Membership of Community Energy England to gain access to community societies similar to South Somerset and share and gain knowledge and build relationships,
- Met with community energy societies in the southwest to explore and capture learning to evolve South Somerset Community Energy market analysis, vision and strategy for 2025 and beyond,
- Secured a volunteer for campaigns and on a range of social media platforms,
- Identify clients to hold director posts within the board, enabling the voice of the customer to be heard,
- Developing the governance infrastructure with a risk and issue log, Board report template for absence directors,
- Scoping the share dividends percentage as part of our business planning and modelling,
- Securing a maintenance agreement for the Solar Projects,
- Working with SolarSense for a number of the projects,
- Exploring opportunities to work with housing projects.

4. Challenges and Risks

- There continues to be operational challenges, related to solar panels situated on school roofs, that require a reset to enable reporting and will enable the predicted financial plan for the site to be achieved.
- Securing a maintenance contract to then develop a plan for each array to be completed, and a forward plan for works developed,



- Develop a longer-term strategy for the society, considering new business models, working in partnership or collaboration, risks and issues log to overcome obstacles.
- Operational staff, the society does not have employed staff, this at times places is a risk which should be considered in future years.

5. Recommend 4% interest on shareholders' residual shareholdings

The Society has maintained the 5% - 6% target interest rate for every year since our inception in 2015, despite long periods of very low national interest rates. However, this year, we are recommending a lower figure for the following exceptional reasons

- We are anticipating significant solar panel reconfiguration costs at Holyrood Academy as a result of roof access improvements.
- Related to this work, we have had a drop in generation due to inverter failure at Holyrood which we have been unable to rectify due to these access problems on the roof. We are actively pursuing measures to rectify these issues as quickly as possible. (We are also setting in motion plans to improve our generation generally on all sites.)
- We would like to retain a significant sum of money for our community fund, in line with our objective to support renewable energy projects in South Somerset, and for the relief of fuel poverty.

6. Future Outlook

- Clarifying and share a potential vision and goals once the model has been tested for the upcoming year and beyond. Recognising the opportunities with a new government grant in development and securing Directors with different skills and knowledge to move the society forward.

Chairperson of South Somerset Community Energy Society