

South Somerset Community Energy Society Limited

AGM, 30th July 2026

Operational report for period to 31st December 2025 (v3)

This report separates operational progress on our existing installations from work on future projects.

Note. Although the report technically only covers the year to 31st December 2025, matters in the intervening months since are included, for the information of Members and to invite their opinion and questions at the AGM.

Existing installations

Our existing installations are listed below with the date of commissioning.

Installation	Date of commissioning
Westfield Academy	December 2015
Abbey Manor community hall	December 2015
Stanchester Academy, Stoke-sub-Hamdon	September 2016
Holyrood Academy, Chard	September 2016
River Cale Café, Wincanton	July 2024

It may be noticed that the first four of these installations are halfway through their contract life of 20 years, after which the systems may be bought by the host buildings for £1.

Abbey Manor and Stanchester continue to perform without significant problems.

Many panels are now in need of cleaning, badly in some cases, and we are selecting the best cleaning suppliers to carry this out as soon as possible. Holyrood has already been cleaned. In future we plan to clean panels every 2-4 years, depending on condition.

As previously reported, there has been a major generation issue at Holyrood. The main school system was not generating, but the latest Health & Safety requirements prevented access to the inverters mounted in a shed on top of the roof for diagnosis and repair. The school has now installed a safety walkway around the building which required us under our lease to pay for the removal and replacement of panels. However there was insufficient space to replace them. After considerable toing and froing, SSCES agreed to share the additional cost of the scaffolding, and to have fewer, but newer and more powerful panels fitted, to restore the original power capacity. This is now happily complete and fully functioning, making us well placed for the remaining 10 years on the contract. Unfortunately the saga has left the society with a temporary cash shortage, hence the Resolution at the AGM to ask the members to wait a month or two if necessary for their interest for last year.

There has also been a series of problems at Westfield Lower School, plus a recent failure at Westfield Upper School, so original installers Solarsense carried out a technical visit on 10th July this year. A recent failure of one inverter on the upper school was discovered, which we will replace as soon as possible. Westfield Lower is performing correctly in the dry weather, but is prone to failure in wet conditions. A very useful discussion with the installer's Head of Engineering will lead to a quote to shield all dc connectors and cables from rain, replace plastic cable ties with metal ones and test every panel and string. We intend to carry this work out in the winter subject to affordability.

New installations planned

The Society is planning its next phase of investment. We have decided to stay with our area of expertise (ie. rooftop solar on schools), we have identified three suitable schools in South Somerset, and we have carried out several months of feasibility work and preparation towards fitment, originally aimed at late summer or early autumn this year. The three schools are all run by the same multi-academy trust (MAT), who are experienced in working with community energy societies, which should have made the contracts for roof lease and power purchase relatively simple. However the MAT has experienced problems on their previous arrangements and are unsure whether the savings are worth the staff overhead, so we are being innovative in matters of invoicing and billing, and have offered to price in the risk of panel removal and replacement (see Holyrood above). The MAT has authorised structural surveys for the preferred bidders, but have not made a decision to proceed yet on allowing grid connection applications or negotiation of terms.

On July 16th, the Department for Education issued a new strategy for the installation of rooftop solar on all schools. We are absorbing the implications of this to our projects, and are liaising with Bath & West Community Energy, Avalon Community Energy, Solar for Schools, and Community Energy for England (CEE) to share information and work out the best response.

The Society has so far achieved the following, with an additional outlay of less than £2,000: -

- Major national survey of other community groups to learn what works and what doesn't.
- Competitive tender of 4 reputable local installers, detailed analysis of quotes, and appointment of preferred bidders for each of the three schools
 - During the tender it was decided to focus on the sports halls as their roofs are newer as well as simpler, and to specify 'SolarEdge' technology which is superior in safety, performance and built-in monitoring.
- Retained the same legal adviser that Bath & West CE used with the same MAT.
- Developed comprehensive financial forecasting for the three schools, building on all the experience we have had in the last ten years.
- Renewed the strong relationship with ethical share issuer Ethex, in preparation for the share offer to fund the projects.
- Investigated what approvals are required from head lessor Somerset Council.
- Investigated two sources of grant for non-recurring costs including legal fees (for us and the clients), graphic design of the share offer, down-payment to Ethex, and other professional advice. The grant situation looks encouraging at the moment.
- Received preliminary indication from grid supplier SSE that two of the schools should have sufficient grid connection for export (no info on the third school).

Still to do before finalising the installations are: -

- Complete the remaining two structural surveys.
- Apply for and receive detailed contract offers from SSE for all three schools.
- Understand and comply with the latest Department of Education requirements (see above).
- Negotiate the Heads of Terms, and then the full contract documents with the MAT.
- Obtain necessary permitted development and sub-lease approvals from Somerset Council.
- Launch share offer (around £425,000) to include installation prices, share offer costs, and contingency.
- Place detail orders with the preferred bidders (current bids are valid to 31st August).

- Set up export payment with selected licensee.
- Commission projects.

Other projects are being followed up as and when enquiries come in.

The government has announced that GB Energy will financially support Community Energy groups with environmental projects. We are following this closely with the Net Zero South West Hub.

Members at the AGM are asked to note this report and are invited to ask questions.

John Clark, Director