



Report from the Chair

I am John Christmas. I was handed the chairmanship in January when Niall Clifford resigned. Since then I have been on a big learning curve.

During this time, we have been improving the efficiency of our meter reading thanks to Melissa, our administrator, though more is to be done on this issue.

Ofgem Audit

We had our first Ofgem audit on 11th March, at Stanchester Academy. I met the inspector there and we were taken round for the audit by the school site manager. I did our meter reading at the same time. Several questions were raised by the inspector that have incurred time, trouble and expense to answer, in particular for John Clark and our contractors, Solarsense. I will leave it to John Clark to provide further details on that. The Ofgem auditors appointed by the Government are Black and Veatch in Glasgow. The audit involved the inspector flying down from Glasgow, picking up a hire car and driving to Stanchester. Not good for their carbon footprint and to a degree, negating our saving of Co 2. I consider the Ofgem audit could have been done online.

Government Feed In Tariff [FIT]

The Government Feed In Tariff [FIT] scheme finished at the end of March. Groups such as ours could get schemes 'pre-accredited' whereby those agreed and accepted would have had a further year in which to be installed and working and to have been eligible for the final rate of FIT payments. David Rabone investigated two possible sites and I investigated a further three sites. For various reasons we failed to get any of these concluded, such as their not being suitable or viable sites. During this process we found out that Somerset County Council had imposed a ban on further P.V. installations on all its schools in Somerset. Our neighbours, Avalon Community Energy [ACE] who cover the region around Glastonbury, Shepton Mallet and Wells discovered the "school stop policy" at virtually the same time. It took time to find out why this policy was imposed, which appears to have been because officials were mis-informed about how community energy societies work for the benefit of all involved. During this time the FIT scheme ended so there have been no further P.V. installations on Somerset schools since.

Somerset Community Energy

We have been holding meetings with five other community energy groups in Somerset - Bath and West Community Energy, Low Carbon Gordano, Avalon Community Energy, Green Wedmore and Frome Renewable Energy Cooperative [FRECo] to see how we can all collaborate on renewable energy schemes in Somerset. A steering group was formed after a first meeting held in Glastonbury and a number of meetings have been held since with steady progress being made. Devon have already done this with I believe 27 groups involved and Dorset Community Energy already are county wide.



South Somerset Community Energy Society Ltd

We will probably retain our independence [though I understand a couple of other groups in Somerset may merge] but we will be networking and collaborating with the aims of achieving projects of greater scale than previously and throughout the county, with recourse to many more experienced and knowledgeable people and we should have greater ability to fund raise for such schemes. A first meeting has just been held with officials at County Hall in Taunton setting out our aims, seeking ways of working together and seeking “pump prime” funding.

Westfield Academy , Yeovil

We were recently informed that one of the buildings at the school is to have its roof replaced during the summer school holiday. We have a P.V. array on this roof which is going to have to be removed and re-placed when the roof work is completed. This will inevitably incur expense for us and loss of income which will become clear later in the year though details are yet to be agreed.

Publicity

Rob Cotterill has recently represented us at Stanchester for their festival to promote us and to show how much SSCES has saved them. Rob, Judith Rabone and Melissa have been working on improving our publicity for all our installations, especially at the Academies to make it clear to them the savings they have from us.

Crewkerne Solar Farm

There has been no progress made with SSCES buying a share in the Crewkerne solar farm from Bath and West Community Energy, though it has been raised by us a number of times through the year both with their MD and their chairperson. They have a loan from Triodos Bank charging 3% on their share of the array and as I understand it they do not see any benefit in us taking a share of it.

Community Fund

There have been no disbursements yet. It seemed sensible to retain funds to finance possible schemes for the previously mentioned “pre- accreditation schemes”, which then failed to materialise.

New board Members

Following last years AGM resolution 3 ,to help recruit more local board members, we hope to appoint three new board members at the forthcoming AGM.

Thanks to all our team for their continued efforts.

I hope you will be able to attend our AGM and to meet you then.

John Christmas