

Next Generation case study: the impact of people's involvement with Community Energy groups



Yealm Community Energy

Brighton Energy Co-op AGM

Summary of key points:

Research involving 205 members of three Community Energy organisations in the Next Generation programme found that:

- Most members are motivated by addressing climate change, not financial return.
- Membership of these groups can prompt members to adopt pro-environmental behaviours.
- Most members would like to invest in community energy again and – assuming that bank base rates remained low - don't expect a large return on their investment.
- Most members agree that their group is well run and communicates effectively.
- Membership of these three groups is currently fairly diverse in terms of income level, but less so in terms of gender and ethnicity.

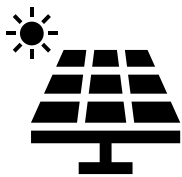
Learning from the Next Generation programme:

Research was undertaken with three organisations involved in the Next Generation programme: [Yealm Community Energy](#), [Brighton Energy Co-operative](#) and [Chester Community Energy](#). All three groups are structured as Community Benefit Societies. The Chester and Brighton Energy groups have already run share offers so many of those completing their surveys were investors. Yealm Community Energy has yet to run a share offer so their members were local supporters rather than investors.

Members of these three Community Energy organisations were surveyed between October 2020 and June 2021 to generate insight on the profile, attitudes and intentions of those who support Community

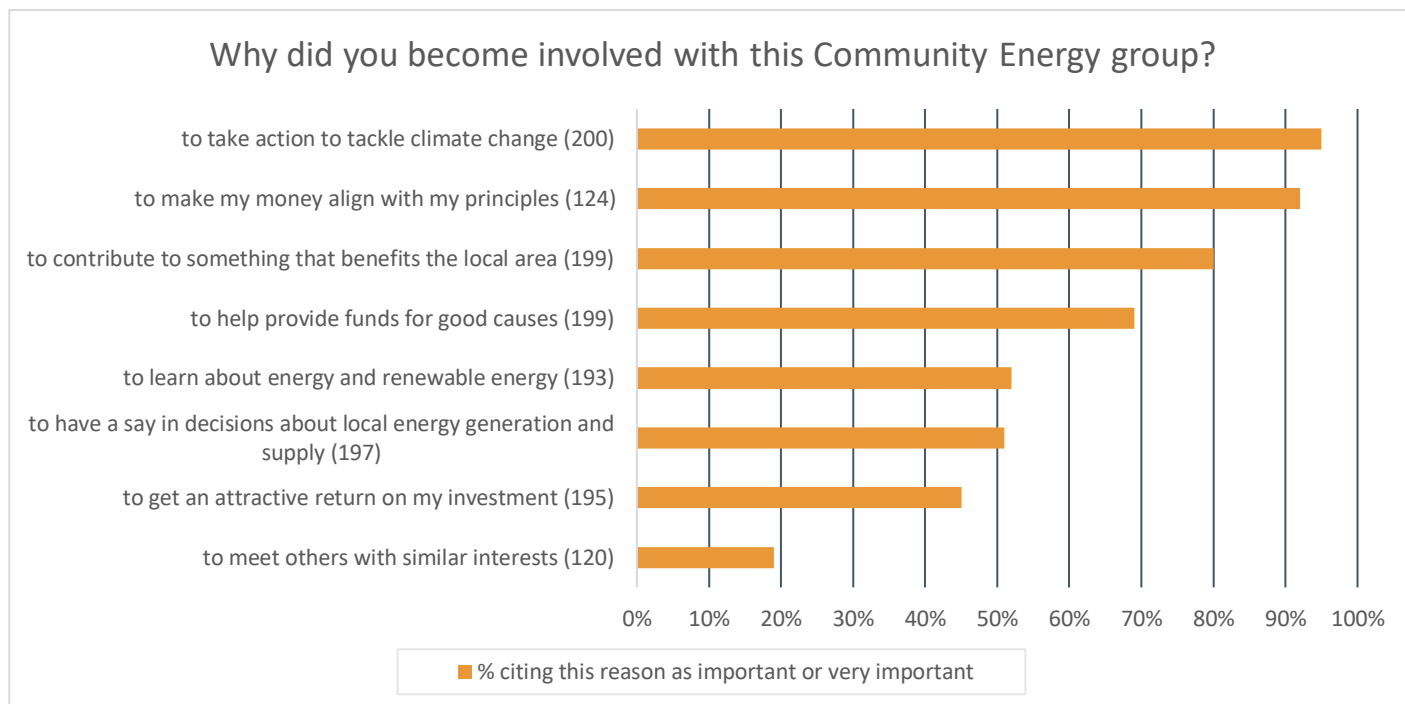
Energy and to understand the difference that involvement in Community Energy makes to their lives. A total of 205 members responded (a combined response rate of 24%).

Members are motivated by addressing climate change, not financial return



For 77% of respondents this was the first Community Energy organisation they had supported. The two most important reasons for members getting involved in community energy were a desire to act on climate change and wanting to ensure their money was invested in projects which aligned with their principles. Receiving an attractive return on investment was one of the least important motivations for

members.



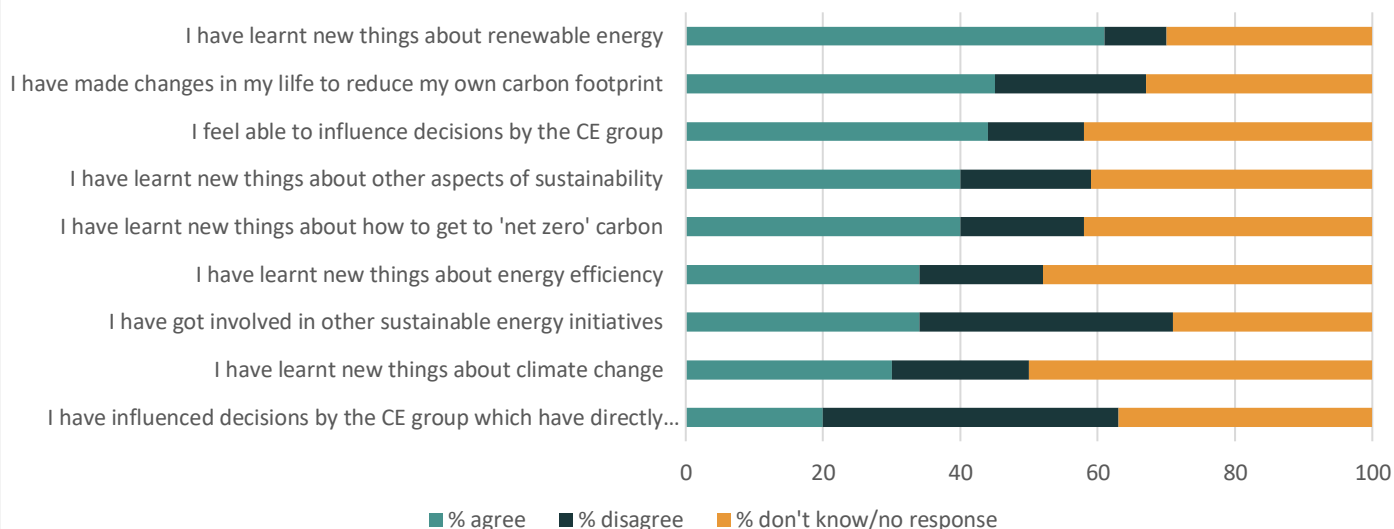
Membership can prompt other pro-environmental behaviours



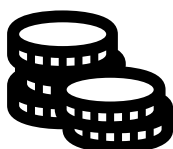
The most common changes reported by respondents as a result of their involvement were increased knowledge about renewable energy (61% of respondents agreed this had happened) and making changes to reduce their personal carbon footprint (45%). 40% of respondents had already invested in another carbon reduction project and a further 47% would be interested in doing so. Involvement in community energy may also be correlated¹ with behaviour change for installing some energy efficiency measures (LED bulbs and insulation) and considering other measures.

¹ The survey did not explore causation, but the influence of Community Energy organisations on such actions is being explored in subsequent member surveys for Community Energy England.

Influences of Community Energy group involvement...



Members wish to invest again and don't expect a large return



83% of respondents² indicated that, assuming the bank base rate remained low, they would be prepared to purchase additional shares in their Community Energy organisation (13% "I don't know" and 4% "no"). Of those who would be prepared to purchase shares again, over half (51%) would be prepared to have a return of 1-2%.

Members are satisfied with the service they receive



87% of members³ agreed their Community Energy organisation is well run and 88% agreed they are communicated with effectively. There was no disagreement with either statement.

Membership is predominantly local but comes from a fairly narrow demographic profile



72% of respondents lived or worked in the area covered by their Community Energy organisation, although this proportion was lower in Brighton (47%) because Brighton Energy Co-operative has attracted investors from outside the local area. 87% of members of the three organisations were over 50, 69% were male, 98% identified as White or White British. The level of the membership was more diverse with 51% of those indicating their income level having an annual personal income of £25,000 or less⁴.

To find out more:

A full report on the Yealm Community Energy, Brighton Energy-Cooperative and Chester Community Energy surveys is available from: Will Walker, Power to Change (will.walker@powertochange.org.uk)

² Brighton and Chester respondents only

³ Yealm and Chester respondents only

⁴ Brighton and Chester respondents only