

Next Generation case study: Brighton Energy Coop – testing a ‘PV plus EV’ business model for Community Energy



About Brighton Energy Coop:

Brighton Energy Coop (BEC) is a well-established community energy group with around 700 members and 80 solar PV arrays at 40 sites across the South East. BEC looked at electric vehicle (EV) charging as an additional way of generating revenue from solar panels, potentially adding to the viability of community-owned solar installations after the end of Feed in Tariff subsidies.

About this innovation project and its impact:

Funding from Power to Change's Next Generation programme enabled BEC to trial the addition of EV chargepoints to their existing solar PV arrays. BEC identified 10 sites where EV charging looked viable including workplaces (e.g. Brighton University, Shoreham Port), visitor attractions (e.g. Bolney Wine

Estate, Amberley Museum) and residential estates (e.g. Parkgate). BEC worked closely with the landowner at each site to install a total of 11 EV chargepoints (7 kW) offering 17 charging ports.

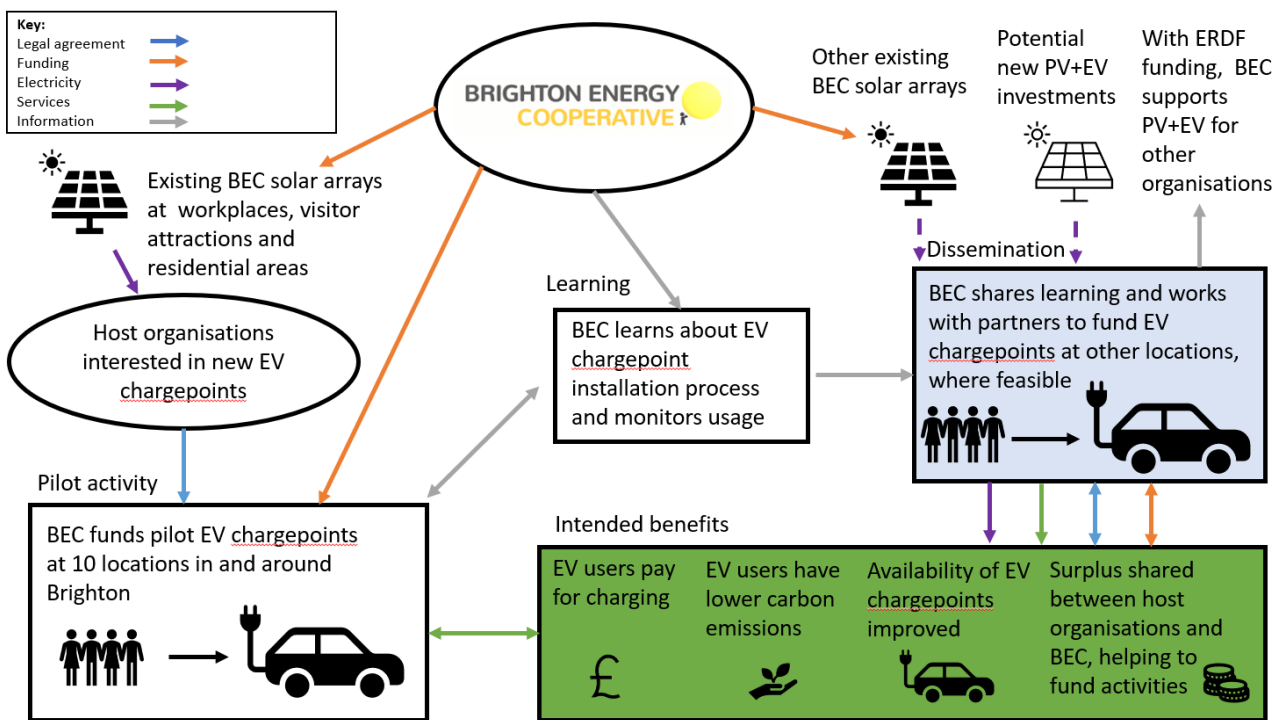
The most challenging aspects of the project were: identifying suitable sites for EV chargepoints; negotiating agreements with landowners; and assessing future trends in the EV market. BEC learning on this is shared below.

BEC undertook research with potential users in each chargepoint area. The chargepoints offer reasonably priced charging to users from low carbon community-owned energy. Benefits include:

- Regular users being able to charge their EV at work, in some cases more cheaply than at home
- EV users being more likely to visit certain attractions because they offer charging (from a renewable source)
- One residential area having its first publicly available chargepoint, enabling local people to consider EV usage.



Revenue from charging is shared between BEC and the landowner. BEC has learnt where EV chargepoints are most likely to add to the viability of solar PV investments. With this learning, and additional funding from ERDF, BEC is supporting wider roll-out of solar PV, including EV chargepoints where viable.



Advice for other groups considering this approach:

- Margins are tight: EV chargepoints may add to the viability of solar PV where installation costs are low (e.g. location is very close to an adequate power supply); where charging makes the most of cheap solar power during the day; and where chargepoints are regularly used for a few hours a day.
- Stay current: the EV marketplace is changing fast. Avoid locations likely to have strong competition from other chargepoint providers.
- In negotiating with landowners, tap into their sustainability goals. Use lease/licence templates to reduce legal and procurement overheads and be aware of hidden costs like site insurance.
- Select your hardware carefully, considering warranties, on-costs, support software and follow-up service. Consider running a tender if buying in volume.
- Publicise your chargepoints using mapping services (e.g. Zap Map, Plug Share).
- Promote the renewable and community benefits of your chargepoints.

If you want to know more:

- [Innovation Lab webinar](#) on the BEC project
- The project report, including more detail on lessons learnt, together with financial models and template agreements can be found at: <https://www.next-generation.org.uk/resources>