



Community Energy

Did you know that communities across County Durham are playing a role in generating and using their own energy?

When we think about energy, we often picture large power stations, offshore wind farms, or energy companies far removed from our everyday lives. But energy can also be local, community owned and designed to benefit the people who live and work nearby, such as solar panels and battery storage in village halls or community buildings or electric vehicle charging points.

This is known as **community energy** and it is becoming an increasingly important part of County Durham's future to reduce bills, and tackle climate change.

Why does it matter?

County Durham is predominantly rural and most of our communities are facing high energy costs due to the older housing stock with some being off grid having limited access to the usual energy outlets like gas. Community energy can help people reduce bills, keep warm and protect important community spaces, giving local people a practical way to take part in climate action and build more resilient communities.

Getting started

Community Energy projects don't have to start big. Many begin with a conversation about local energy issues, from a small group of interested people, or a single building or idea.

Early steps might include talking to residents about energy costs, exploring how community buildings use energy, or identifying simple improvements that could make a difference. Whatever you choose, you don't need to do this alone. We work with communities across County Durham and can help you explore ideas, understand and connect you to opportunities and take your first steps.

What's happening locally?

Communities across County Durham are starting to take action and there are many examples such as [Horden Heat](#) in East Durham and [Weardale Renewables](#) developing projects in their communities. DCA brings local, regional and national organisations together that support, fund or deliver community energy projects in Durham via the County Durham Community Energy Network where they share ideas, learning and look for new opportunities.

We also run the Lottery funded [CAIRN](#) project in Durham in partnership with our Rural Design Centre, NICRE, and Community Action Northumberland colleagues which is helping more communities get started on their community energy journey. Through this work we are:

- Providing home energy advice to help residents lower their bills
- Supporting rural communities to develop a community carbon assessment and help them identify community energy options to reduce their carbon footprint

- Supporting the rollout of Durham Energy Association Ltd ([DEAL](#)): A Community Benefit Society installing solar panels and batteries on community buildings to help reduce energy costs
- Exploring local Community EV Charging and renewable energy options in Teesdale: [Teesdale's rural EV Network](#)

Get involved

Community energy starts small but can make a big difference, so if you'd like to find out more or get involved you can:

- Join our County Durham Community Energy Network to connect with others and share ideas and learning
- Read through a wealth of resources from our national and regional partners, such as [Community Energy England](#), [Centre for Sustainable Energy \(CSE\)](#), [Energy Saving Trust](#), [North East and North Yorkshire Net Zero Hub](#) and [Northern Powergrid](#).
- Sign up to our [newsletter](#) to stay up to date with opportunities and support
- Come along to our Community Energy event on the 7th July where we'll be sharing ideas and showcasing local projects: watch this space for more details.
- Email our community development team on info@durhamcommunityaction.org.uk or call 01388 742040