



WORKERS EDUCATION ASSOCIATION NORTH EAST GREEN BRANCH: LOW CARBON LIVING ADVICE

OVERVIEW

From previous work, Workers Education Association NE Green Branch (WEA) identified that access to expert knowledge within communities in the region was a key barrier to developing community owned renewable energy projects in the North East.

SOLUTION

The group provided an independent one-stop shop of information and technical expertise to provide impartial advice and intensive support to groups seeking to develop community energy projects in the region. It was able to provide access to technical expertise and a Community Energy England approved facilitator. WEA also used its knowledge and connections to national projects to support its ability to advise and share information locally.

OUTCOMES

Eight groups benefited from WEA's programme, in the form of five low carbon engagement and awareness sessions tailored to the needs of the groups, 10 hours of technical expertise, and 40 hours of Community Energy England (CEE) approved facilitator time. The provision of contacts in the renewables and energy efficiency field, and the development of a support network for the groups was part of the support provided. The latter varied across the groups and included:

- a drop in session with a focus on energy was used as an initial engagement tool with centre staff and users at a women's club, and led to other energy project enquiries;
- a detailed audit was produced for a sports club, identifying

energy efficiency options and the potential for solar thermal. The audit will be used as an example of good practice for groups that may be commissioning or completing one in the future;

- support was provided to a groups working collaboratively to develop a solar park at an ex landfill site in West Gateshead. Support from the CEE facilitator was particularly beneficial in ensuring good communication between the community group and the developers; the scheme is now seeking funding from the Rural Community Energy Fund to take it to the next stage.

The project has increased the confidence of individuals and organisations to discuss and investigate energy options available to them.

OBJECTIVES

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MORE DETAILS

Project title:	Low Carbon Living Advice
Group name:	Workers Education Association NE Green Branch
Theme:	Reducing and managing energy use
Area of benefit:	North East England
Date:	Dec 2014-Dec 2015
Contact info:	ne.wea.org.uk/get-involved/green-branch

A PIECE OF ADVICE

A key challenge was the lack of qualified skilled renewables individuals and professional experts able to work with local community organisations. This meant that there was a long lead in time to having energy audits carried out. The wide range of requests for support across a wide geographical area was also challenge and required a diverse knowledge base amongst the advisers.

The project enabled connections to be made between different actors in the area of renewable generation and energy efficiency, that otherwise may not have been made. It has shown that having trusted and impartial community engagement and development expertise working alongside technical expertise is a particularly powerful tool.