

Clean Local Energy

Bath & West Community Energy (BWCE) is a not-for-profit Community Benefit Society

- Established in June 2010, following discussions between members of local community groups, Transition Bath and Transition Corsham.
- Owned and run by our members (including members of this community) for the benefit of the community.
- Covering Bath & North East Somerset and parts of Wiltshire and South Gloucestershire that border B&NES (see map right).
- Developed enough community solar to match the annual demand from over 4,500 typical homes.
- Currently developing community energy projects in a number of parishes.

We're working to put people at the heart of the energy transition, placing ownership and control of energy in local hands via clean energy projects that involve and benefit communities in the Bath and surrounding area.

Our Community Energy Model

Clean Local Energy

We build renewable energy generating projects e.g. rooftop solar, ground mounted solar arrays.

Community Owned

We raise funds to build the projects through local people investing money in us and becoming members.

For Community Benefit

As a community benefit society we re-invest surplus income in community projects through our independent Community Fund.

'Community energy refers to the delivery of community-led renewable energy, energy demand reduction and energy supply projects, whether wholly owned and/or controlled by communities or through a partnership with commercial or public sector partners.'

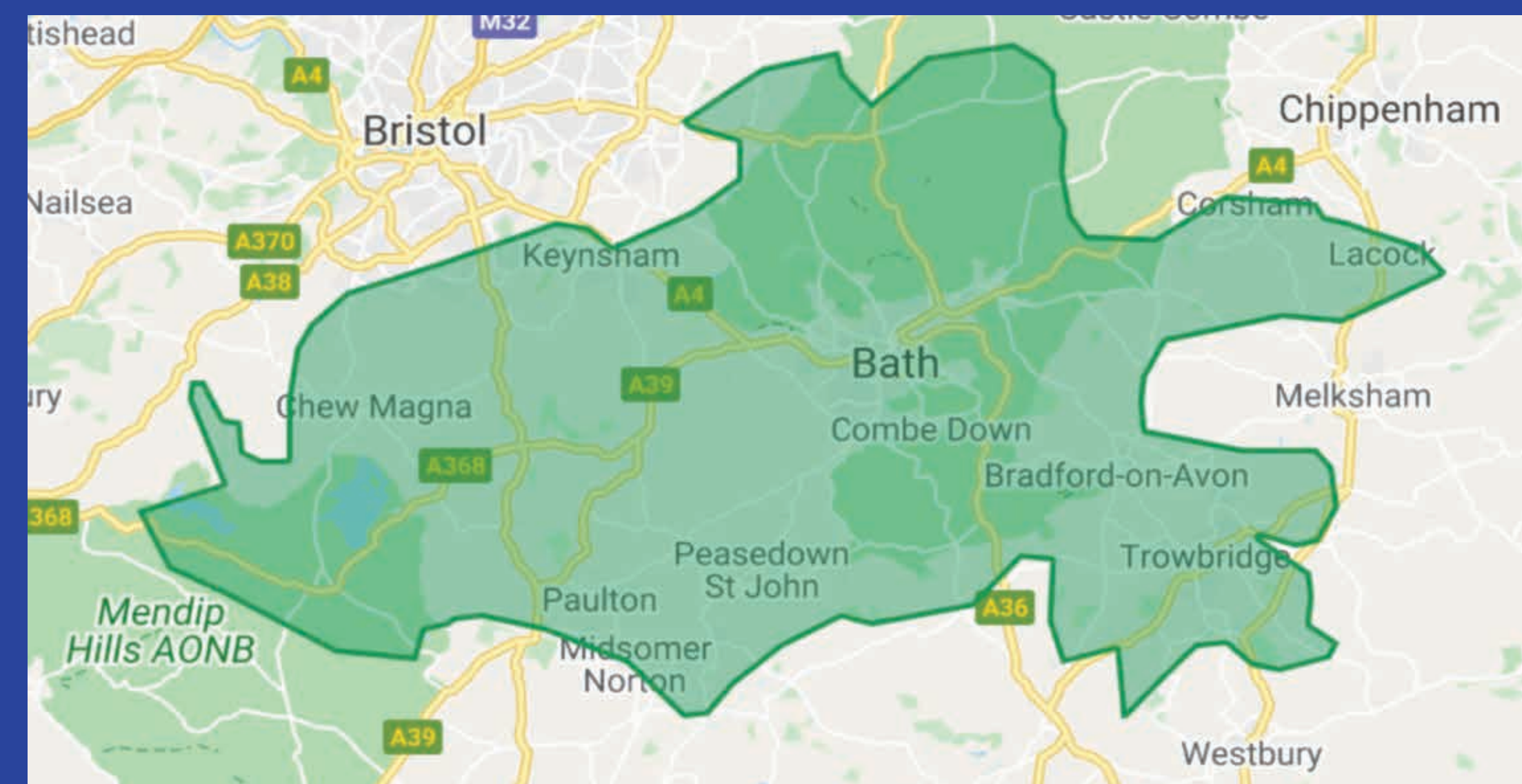
There are over 400 community energy organisations in the UK. BWCE is one of the most experienced



Jane Stephenson, our retired chair, runs the BWCE stall at the Keynsham Eco Festival

Our Structure

- As a Community Benefit Society we are primarily for the benefit of the community at large, rather than just for our members. For example, you don't need to be a member to apply to our Community Fund.
- Anyone over 16 can become a member through a minimum shareholding of £100.
- We have democratic decision-making through one member one vote.
- We pay interest on members' share capital, but cannot distribute surpluses to members in the form of dividends.
- We are governed by an experienced and highly skilled board of volunteer directors, elected from the membership, and a paid Managing Director.
- We are managed day to day by the Managing Director supported by a strong staff team.
- BWCE is registered with the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA). Our registration number is 30960R.



Our track record...

**We have raised
£22.5 million**
through community
finance and debt from
Triodos Bank



**We have installed
13.35MW**
of renewable energy...

**...enough to power
4,500 homes**

**We have donated
£380,000**
to the BWCE Fund for
distribution to community
projects



Fairy Hill Solar Project

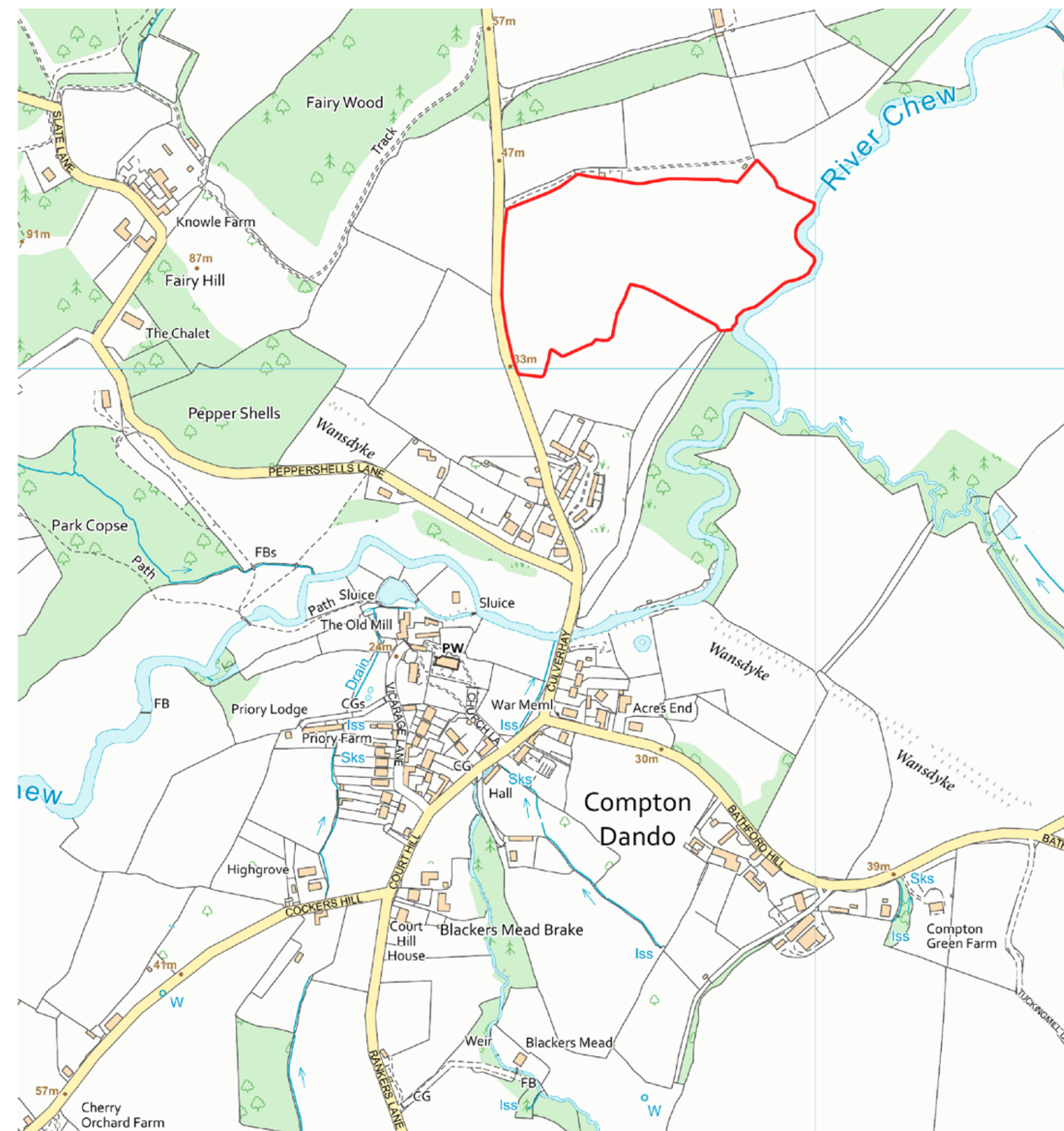


Bath & West Community Energy (BWCE) and Zero Carbon Compton are seeking community support for a proposed solar farm at Fairy Hill in Compton Dando.

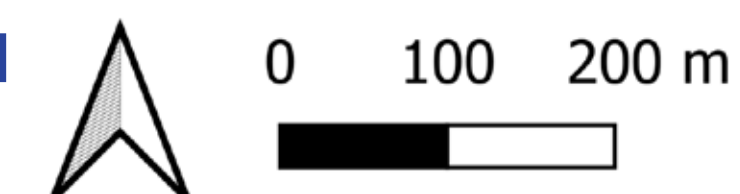
In addition to responding to the climate emergency the solar farm will bring significant benefits to the Compton Dando community, including:

- **Up to £5,000 per year community benefit funding** for local community projects reducing carbon emissions and fuel poverty.
- **26% biodiversity net gain** at the site (meaning an increase in natural habitat and ecological features) – 2.5 times planning requirements.
- **New permissive public access** to the field around the solar and improvements to biodiversity.

Where is the site?



The 4.5 acre site is within the field outlined in red to the north of Compton Dando



Who is involved?

If developed, the solar farm will be owned, managed and maintained by Bath & West Community Energy for and on behalf of the community.



zero carbon
COMPTON

The project has been developed in partnership with Zero Carbon Compton (ZCC) – working towards making Compton Dando a Zero Carbon village by 2030.



With support from Communities for Renewables CIC – helping communities develop, finance and manage their own renewable energy generation.




With the help of Rural Community Energy Fund (RCEF) funding from the South West Net Zero Hub, West of England Combined Authority (WECA) and Chelwood Community Fund.



Any questions about the consultation?
email: fairyhillsolar@bwce.coop

We propose a
2.1MW
solar farm
consisting of
4,264
solar panels

Cutting emissions by **508**
tonnes of CO₂ per year – that's
1,180 people's
annual driving
emissions



The area is roughly
4.5 acres...
26%
net gain

Generating
energy equivalent
to the annual
electricity demand of
580
homes

The Wider Benefits of Community Solar

Community solar generates clean energy, recycles money back into communities, improves biodiversity, creates new community amenities and enables local people to take greater control over energy, leading to greater local energy security.

A community response to the Climate Emergency

A massive increase in renewable energy generation is required to move our society away from reliance on fossil fuels. To achieve this in our local area community participation and support is vital. Community owned renewables projects in local communities make a significant contribution to our collective response to the climate emergency.

Energy owned and controlled by local people

BWCE offers a different way of doing business. We democratize energy and put local people in control. Local residents can invest to become members, giving them a vote in the organisation, annual interest payments and opportunities for further involvement (e.g. standing for election to the board)

Retaining money in the local economy

As a successful local community owned business we try to ensure that as much of our revenue as possible is retained in the local economy so that it recirculates and further benefits local businesses and communities. Community energy projects typically deliver more than 10 times the community funds proportionally compared to similar commercial schemes.



Surplus income from BWCE projects has helped community projects like Energy Sparks....



...Grow Batheaston...



...and Youth Connect South West...



... and Bath Share and Repair

The future – supplying local communities?

We want our community energy projects to supply clean energy direct to local homes and businesses. Technically the electrons meet demand closest to the site but currently, due to UK regulations and high set up costs, community energy enterprises are prevented from becoming suppliers and selling direct to domestic consumers. However, there is pressure on to change the regulations and we are exploring other ways to directly connect local generation to local supply.

Community & Environmental Benefits for Compton Dando

At BWCE, our community ownership model for renewable energy sets us apart. The value of our projects is managed for the benefit of our local communities.

An improvement in biodiversity

The development of a community solar project provides an excellent opportunity to improve conditions for wildlife on the site. We have undertaken ecological surveys and are confident we can develop the site to deliver at least 26% net gain in biodiversity meaning an overall increase in natural habitat and ecological features.



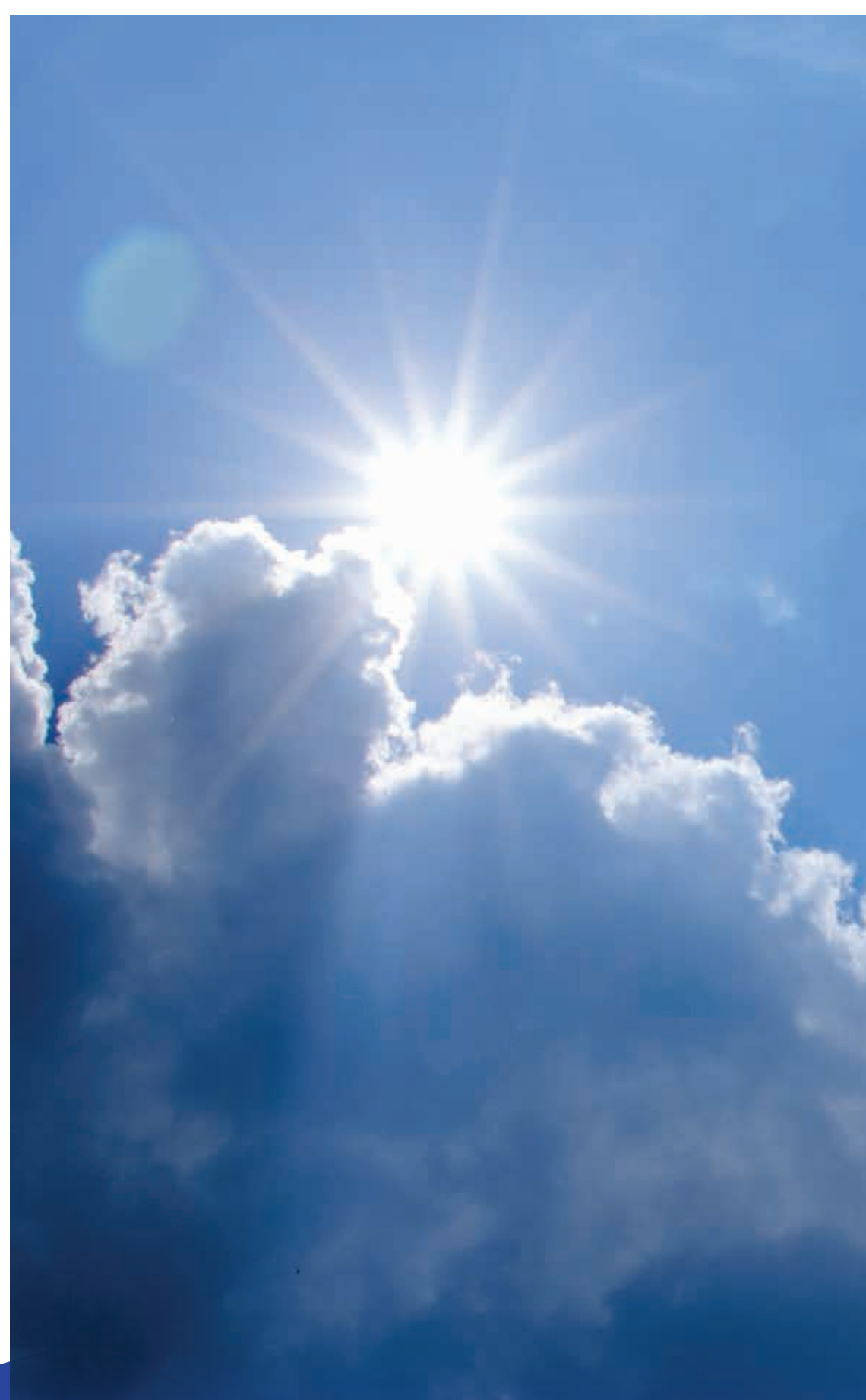
The creation of new community amenities

We develop our solar sites to bring maximum benefit to the local community, including new amenities.

These include 7.5 acres of new permissive access for the public to use for walks, education boards, sensory path and improvements to the biodiversity with new planting of habitats trees and shrubs

We are expecting the project to deliver £5,000 of community benefits each year via our community fund which we need local people to apply for. This is on top of the funds from the business rates which the project will bring in to the local community via taxation.

The new amenities include 7.5 acres of new permissive access for the public to use



Community benefit funding

We're set up as a Community Benefit Society, meaning that surplus from our generating projects is recycled back in the form of grants to support community projects that reduce carbon emissions. One form of decarbonisation pays for another!

So far we have donated £380,000 surplus to the BWCE Fund, which is set up as an independent charity with its own trustees and is administered by Quartet Community Foundation

Community groups in Compton Dando can apply for funding for projects such as:

- Local food and growing
- Energy efficiency in buildings
- Re-use and recycling
- Reducing fuel poverty
- Sustainable transport
- Water conservation
- Energy audits and advice
- Environmental education

Please tell us your ideas for how you would like to use the community fund in your area.

Development Process

BWCE have attempted to engage the local community and stakeholders to the best of our ability throughout the feasibility stage of the project and will continue this engagement throughout the planning application stage and construction and operational phases should the project be granted planning permission.

Between November 6-December 12 2021 a community consultation was carried out comprising of the following activities:

- A leaflet publicising the consultation was delivered door to door in Compton Dando village and the consultation was publicised by Zero Carbon Compton and Compton Dando Community Association.
- A consultation website and survey were launched on November 6 with December 12 as the deadline for responses (130 responded).
- A consultation preview meeting was held with Compton Dando Parish Council on November 8.
- Zero Carbon Compton ran a Youth consultation event on November 22 (13 attended).
- A drop in consultation was held on November 23 (47 attended).
- Three door knocking sessions were carried out on the Fairy Hill estate on November 6, November 30 and December 8. A total of 10 households were spoken to, some multiple times.



- BWCE sent out two newsletters addressing some of the concerns from the consultation from residents in December and then again in March.
- Following the consultation a site visit with members of the local community was held on August 11 2022 to explore ideas for the new permissive access (16 attended).
- A public meeting was also offered (in the December 17 newsletter).
- BWCE also secured two grants worth **£139,000** of funding to support the project from the Energy Hub Rural Community Energy Feasibility grant fund and a further grant of **£250,000** towards the capital costs from The West of England Combined Authority.

Consultation Survey Results

130 responses received.
70% support
or strongly support.

The following responses were received to the question 'How do you feel about our proposed plans for the Fairy Hill solar project?'

Strongly support	48%	63 responses
Support	22%	28 responses
Neither support or against	5%	7 responses
Against	4%	5 responses
Strongly against	21%	27 responses

What happens next?

If the Planning Application succeeds the project will proceed through the following stages:

Community Share Offer

We are keen for residents near to BWCE projects to have a stake in the organisation. You will have the opportunity to invest to help fund the construction of the project, with an annual interest payment on your investment. You will automatically become a BWCE member with a vote in the organisation.

Installation

If sufficient funds have been raised, we will contract an installer and schedule the installation of the solar array and any associated community amenities that have been agreed. In liaison with community partners, we will draw up a plan for management of the site during construction, including access, traffic, how we can minimise disturbances to residents and how any complaints are dealt with. We will also work with community partners to establish how any new community amenities on the site will be developed and managed.

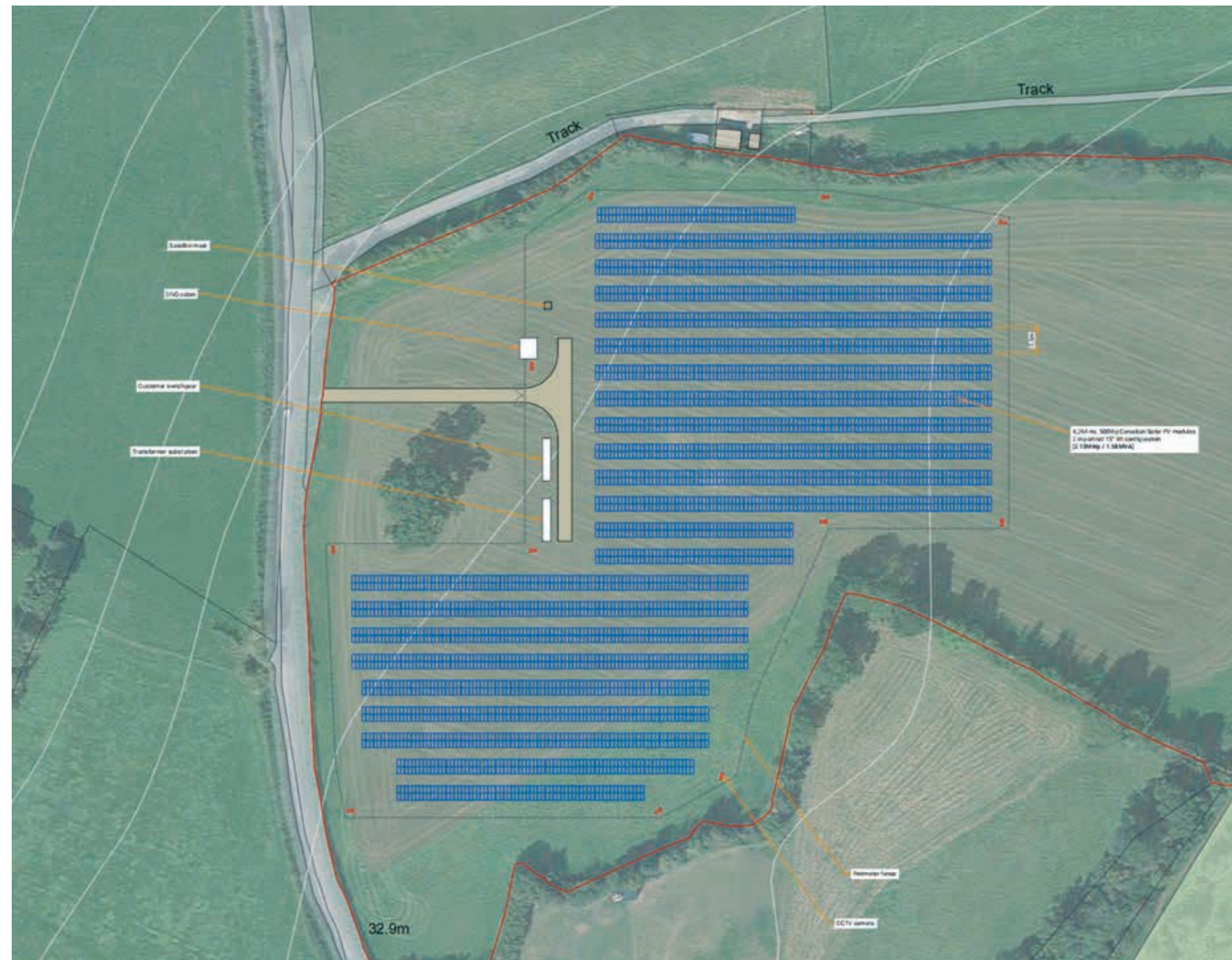
Community Fund application

The BWCE Community Fund opens annually for applications after the AGM following the end of the financial year, usually by the beginning of October. Decisions are usually made in December and funds made available shortly after.



Fairy Hill Community Solar Farm site plan

Original proposal



- Solar array moved in response to community feedback
- Reduced the visibility from the road and from long range views to the east
- New design increases space for planting and permissive access footpath
- Access route changed to provide additional protection for veteran oak tree
- More space for improvements to biodiversity

NEW PROPOSAL BASED ON COMMUNITY FEEDBACK



Fairy Hill Improved Ecology and Permissive Access

- Project substantially enhances the biodiversity with an additional 26% net gain, 2.5 times greater than the requirement for planning
- Enhanced species-rich grassland and restoration of hedge boundaries improving habitats;
- Pollinator strips to specifically support threatened bees and other insects
- New log piles to enhance habitats for grass snakes and amphibians
- Converting land to meadows will deliver significant biodiversity benefits and restore habitat that declined by over 97% in Britain since 1934
- Improvements in planting enhancing green corridor along the River Chew
- Permissive access footpath with educational boards around the site
- Veteran oak tree protected by buffer zone
- Long term Environmental management plan to monitor and maintain



Viewpoint visuals

From Two Rivers Way
(now)



From Two Rivers Way
with solar panels



From Two Rivers Way
with solar panels plus tree/hedge growth



From public right of way crossing
(now)



From public right of way crossing
with solar panels



From public right of way crossing
with solar panels plus tree/hedge growth



From public right of way adjacent to Bathford Hill
(now)



From public right of way adjacent to Bathford Hill
with solar panels



From public right of way adjacent to Bathford Hill
with solar panels plus tree/hedge growth

