

LONDON BOROUGH OF HAMMERSMITH & FULHAM

Report to: Climate Change and Ecology Policy and Accountability Committee

Date: 18/07/2023

Subject: Solar energy and net zero in H&F

Report of: Councillor Wesley Harcourt, Cabinet Member for the Environment

Report author: Hinesh Mehta, Head of Climate and Ecology

Responsible Director: Bram Kainth, Strategic Director of Environment

SUMMARY

The attached slide deck gives a comprehensive overview of the council's work on solar power and community energy, and the role it plays in delivering the council's target of net zero greenhouse gas emissions in the borough by 2030.

About 80% of the borough's emissions come from energy used in buildings, and most of this is due to heating buildings with gas boilers. While our most urgent priority should therefore be to retrofit buildings and decarbonise heat, solar energy should also be a priority as it is relatively simple to install, cost-effective, and a visible indicator of decarbonisation – and therefore has the possibility to galvanise the population and motivate further action. However, roof space in H&F is not sufficient to provide all the Council or borough's electricity requirements.

A short part of the report covers a national first, relating to ongoing work to develop policy around "re-use". Re-use is needed when solar panels are replaced with newer units before their end-of-life, a practice at risk of becoming commonplace as the decade progresses.

Solar energy can be financed in various ways, including from capital budgets, repayable loans, and community finance. This report focusses on H&F's partnership with Repowering London to establish the borough's first community energy group, Hammersmith & Fulham Community Energy (HFCE), which enables residents to become involved in solar schemes across the borough.

These community energy schemes stretch beyond reducing carbon emissions, with examples from elsewhere in England showing they can tackle fuel poverty, generate wider interest in climate action, and build resilience by strengthening the sense of community among residents.

As well as responding to a global crisis, tackling the climate emergency in H&F will bring benefits for residents and the borough that deliver on the council's other values and objectives. These include a thriving green economy; a clean public realm

LONDON BOROUGH OF HAMMERSMITH & FULHAM

bringing improved health and wellbeing; a revival of biodiversity; and a locus for shared community involvement.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Climate Change and Ecology Policy and Accountability Committee:

1. Note and comment on progress on the report.
 2. Give feedback on the strategy, progress, and priorities.
-

Wards Affected: All

Our Values	Summary of how this report aligns to the H&F Values
Building shared prosperity	The council is supporting local businesses and residents to invest in solar PV to mutually benefit from the profit whilst helping to decarbonise the borough.
Creating a compassionate council	The impacts of the climate emergency fall unequally on different groups. Actions to mitigate and adapt to climate change by decarbonising our buildings aim to reduce this inequality and help residents manage the cost-of-living crisis, including initiatives to generate clean energy and tackle fuel poverty.
Doing things with local residents, not to them	HFCE will provide a continuous programme of events and engagement with groups and locations around the borough. The aim of community energy is to develop a community-owned project, to drive action on climate change, create stronger community ties across the borough and share the proceeds of clean energy.
Being ruthlessly financially efficient	H&F has won various external grants, including for housing retrofit, corporate building retrofit, and local energy planning. Capital planning for carbon reduction is maximising opportunities for energy efficiency and maintenance cost savings as well as revenue generation from solar energy. Actions also aim to bring co-benefits for system-wide cost savings, including preventative health

LONDON BOROUGH OF HAMMERSMITH & FULHAM

	and fuel poverty.
Taking pride in H&F	This community energy group will not only provide an ethical investment for the community but will also help people to connect with their community and take joint action towards energy resilience and sovereignty amid an energy crisis. It will also bring climate action and education to the community.
Rising to the challenge of the climate and ecological emergency	HFCE and the overall encouragement of solar energy installations will contribute positively to achieving Climate Change targets by reducing carbon emissions.

Background Papers Used in Preparing This Report

None.

DETAILED ANALYSIS

1. The slide deck presents an overview of the council's progress and current stance on solar PV and community energy.
2. The council is working hard to decarbonise its own estate by 2030, and to use its local powers and influence to support the borough to achieve the same.
3. The council has made important first steps towards decarbonising its operations. Most significantly this includes the retrofit of the civic campus, initiating the development of retrofit strategies for its corporate and council housing-built assets (which together represent 95% of its emissions, excluding procurement), and transitioning 15% of its fleets to electric vehicles.
4. To maintain this carbon reduction towards 2030, the council will accelerate its programme of retrofitting its assets. Four initial pipeline projects plus the flagship retrofit of the civic campus are underway in corporate properties, and five hybrid heat pump systems are due to be installed in council housing blocks by late 2022. Significant obstacles are being managed, including costs, eligibility for external funding, competing operational requirements for buildings and fleet, and capacity of the market to deliver projects.
5. Loft insulation, heating controls and draught proofing are the most cost-effective ways to make our buildings more energy efficient. However, solar energy pays back in under 10 years at current energy prices and is easily achievable on H&F building stock. There are two main types of solar energy.

LONDON BOROUGH OF HAMMERSMITH & FULHAM

6. Solar Photovoltaics (PV) produce electricity and are often paired with battery storage. Panels vary in types and quality but are improving all the time.
7. Solar thermal panels are less common and can only produce heat. However, they are smaller and cheaper and therefore better than solar PV in some applications.
8. Hammersmith and Fulham is part of the GLA Solar Together joint buying programme which has led to over 100 installations on houses and small businesses in the borough. However, there are currently supplier issues, and the scheme is on hold.
9. The council is working together with retrofit contractors from the GLA REFIT framework to conduct solar surveys on our corporate buildings and schools. In total £800k of opportunities have been identified in the first 17 buildings and schools surveyed, 21 more to come in the near-term pipeline.
10. Hammersmith and Fulham Council has secured funding from the London Community Energy Fund to deliver solar on five potential sites across the borough. It has worked together with Repowering London to establish Hammersmith and Fulham Community Energy group.
11. Community energy projects have a distinct advantage in promoting awareness about fuel poverty and effective strategies to combat it. It has the power to alleviate two of the main factors causing fuel poverty – household energy requirements and fuel prices. Predating the current ongoing energy crisis, in Hammersmith & Fulham, 9.5% of households were in fuel poverty under the government definition – this compares to 13.2% nationally, and 11.5% across London¹. With their strong local ties, community energy projects possess the unique ability to influence behaviour change and encourage the adoption of energy-efficient measures within households. As a result, they are well-positioned to provide educational initiatives and actively address the issue of fuel poverty.
12. Repowering London currently has eight established Community Energy co-operatives across London involving more than 650 investors and 60 local volunteers and directors reaching hundreds of children and young adults each year. They also offer training, mentoring and work experience opportunities that empower the residents of London to become active and engaged citizens. Thus, they are helping to build both an energy and a social infrastructure.

LIST OF APPENDICES

¹ Government sub-regional fuel poverty statistics - [Sub-regional fuel poverty 2022 - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/sub-regional-fuel-poverty-2022) (www.gov.uk)