

# Appendix 1: Power to Change Community Business Climate Action Programme Scoping Study Literature Review

## Introduction

This literature review takes a wide perspective of available data to provide an overview of development needs/opportunities, funding and support gaps for community businesses in addressing the climate emergency to inform the Community Business Climate Action Programme scoping study for Power to Change. It is focused on issues relevant to community businesses in England.

In undertaking this literature review, there is limited literature/data specifically on community business action and activities to address climate change as a broad sector. Indeed, Power to Change are leading the way in compiling data on this in delivering their mission to *strengthen community business to tackle some of society's biggest challenges at a local level*, having identified that the two greatest challenges facing society (social inequalities and the climate crisis) are inextricably linked in their causes, impacts and solutions. (Power to Change 2021a).

The literature review considers the constituent parts of the community business sector and also wider data/perspectives. The review includes - for example - literature on both community organisations and SMEs, because almost all community businesses are small (Power to Change 2021b) so will face some similar challenges and opportunities to SMEs. Where data exists on issues relevant to climate action, the review also considers literature relating to some of the sub sectors within the broad community business community. In terms of opportunities, needs and potential partners/funders, the review focuses on the short to medium term, aligned with the planned timescale of the proposed Green Fund.

This literature review was undertaken at the start of the scoping study and has been updated as the study progressed to incorporate contributions from stakeholders and ongoing thinking within Power to Change as the study informs how it can best support community businesses in taking action on climate change, aligned to its Climate Action Strategy (Power to Change 2021a). One aspect of this has been the name of this programme which has changed from a 'Green Fund' to support community businesses in taking action on climate change to become a 'Community Business Climate Action Programme'. This reflects consideration of a more holistic approach to the support needs of community businesses in taking climate action and also how this might be embedded within wider Power to Change programmes. Another is the priority impact areas the programme might focus on.

## Summary of key issues emerging

### Impacts of Covid-19

The pandemic has had a massive impact on the way we live and work. As with many businesses, the Covid-19 pandemic has had an impact on community businesses. Whilst community businesses in general have been resilient in the face of the Covid-19 pandemic, with many increasing or expanding the services they provide and their methods of delivery, there have been a small number of community businesses that have had to close. There is a mix of optimism and concern of community businesses about their post pandemic future. On the positive side a large number of community businesses expect to open up a new line of trading activity or diversify their products and services when the pandemic ends (Power to Change 2021b). This could present opportunities for them to take positive action on climate change. However, this is combined with concern of community businesses about the future financial outlook, with 73% being less confident about their financial future (ibid.).

### Opportunities

There are a number of potential opportunities for community businesses identified in the review across a range of activities including community assets, transport, community energy, energy efficiency. Some of the evidence for this is described below:

- Community businesses have an appetite to take positive action to address the climate emergency across a range of areas, including energy and buildings, waste and consumption, education and awareness raising and organisational policy strategy development/delivery (Power to Change 2021e).
- Research shows that there is a strong desire for people to be able to continue to work remotely in a post pandemic world and that they also expect to continue to spend more in their local community (Demos and Legal and General 2021). Revitalisation of town centres and neighbourhoods offers opportunities for community businesses to take assets into community ownership and undertake low carbon/energy efficient renovations as part of this. This could provide new opportunities for community businesses to provide flexible work space for remote working and other local amenities.
- The adoption of the '15 minute neighbourhood' concept by neighbourhoods and towns across the country (ibid.) and the Government focus on active travel – in part to address the climate emergency (Department for Transport 2020) presents new opportunities for community business to expand existing or develop new services in a post pandemic world. This could make a positive contribution to climate action through reduced vehicular/increased active travel, development of local supply chains, e.g. food and increasing the circulation of money within a local economy.

### Support needed

Given the concern of community businesses about their future financial outlook, consideration needs to be given to providing the best financial and policy levers to enable them to survive, thrive and make a positive contribution to action on climate change.

This could include:

- Funders pooling their investments– ensuring they co-ordinate their grants and loans to recipients.
- Councils having dedicated policies to support ‘anchor’ community business organisations, (Power to Change 2020a) such as Calderdale Council’s Community Anchor Policy (Calderdale Council 2016).
- Ring-fencing of a proportion of existing public funds committed for local economic development (e.g. the Shared Prosperity Fund, any future rounds of the Future High Street Fund/Towns Fund, and funding for Local Enterprise Partnerships [and Combined Authorities] to be spent on community business development (Plunkett Foundation 2020).

Power to Change have recognised that community businesses need support as they begin work on developing or growing their organisations and has recently launched a Powering Up programme. This aims to help community businesses plan for the in the key areas of digital growth, zero carbon and sustainability, and financial resilience, with a cross cutting theme of diversity, equity and inclusion. They will shortly be launching a capacity strengthening programme to address this. The support will be funding for a combination of support, including an unrestricted grant to be spent on support determined by each business, development support funding to pay providers to meet a community business’ specific needs and funding for professional development and wellbeing support (Power to Change 2021c).

## Literature review

### What is Community Business?

Power to Change recognises that community businesses come in many shapes and sizes. They have identified four values that enable people to make a positive impact in their communities and support community businesses/organisations that share these values. They are:

- *locally rooted - a business started by local people that will benefit the community around it.*
- *accountable to the community - The local community have a genuine say in how the business is run.*
- *trading for community benefit - Community businesses sell services and products in and around their local area.*
- *creating broad community impact - Community businesses engage with a variety of different groups in their community and address different community needs. They may have a specific focus on a disadvantaged group, or support the local community more widely.’ (Power to Change 2021d)*

These values have been used to frame the literature review in terms of what a community business is.

### An overview of the Community Business sector (pre-Covid)

In early 2020, an estimated 11,300 community businesses operated in England, an increase of 2,300 to the 2019 survey estimate. Of these, 74% operated in urban and 26% in rural areas. In terms of the primary function of the community businesses, 5,000 (44%) businesses were as community hubs (2,300 - an increase from 2,000 in the 2019 survey estimate) or village halls

(2,700), 1,200 (11%) mainly delivered business and employment support, guidance and training services, an increase of 300 from the 2019 survey estimate. This is thought to be a reflection of provision by community businesses of services formerly provided by, or aligned with, the public sector (Power to Change 2021b). An estimated 700 community businesses mostly provided health, social care and wellbeing services (an increase of 300 from 2019), 600 offering sports and leisure services and 400 libraries.

**Table 1: Summary of main business activity of community businesses prior to February 2020 (ibid.):**

Main business activity of community business (early 2020)	Percentage of community businesses in England
Venue	29
Public facing support services	24
Retail (inc. cafe)	16
Art & Culture	13
Economic/business services	8
Manufacturing/production	6
Other	5

The three main self-reported impacts of community businesses were:

- improving health and wellbeing (83%)
- reducing social isolation (82%)
- improving community cohesion (75%)

Pre-Covid, the community business market appeared to be relatively buoyant (Power to Change 2021b; Plunket 2020a) with the estimated size of several aspects of the community business market increasing, the largest estimated increases were:

- the estimated number of community hubs increased by 300 to 2,300
- business support, employment, information advice and guidance (IAG), and training and education – up 300 to 1,200
- health, social care and wellbeing – increasing by 300 to 700.

### Policy context

There are few England-wide government policies specifically for community businesses. However, there are policies that can apply to community businesses and research and sources providing reflections on policy changes, opportunities and needs.

For example, over the last 15 years there has been a shift in public policy as regards asset transfer and development from a ‘demand pull’ by community organisations for transfer of ownership and control of assets to a ‘supply push’ by the public sector to transfer assets to community organisations. This is driven by dwindling public sector budgets, concerns about increased running costs and a desire for assets to be under local control and for community

benefit. (Development Trusts Association 2010). This offers opportunities for community businesses to take on local assets for the benefit of the local community.

In 2021 the UK Government launched the Community Ownership Fund. This is a 4-year £150 million fund to support voluntary and community groups in the UK take ownership of assets and amenities at risk of being lost to be run for the benefit of the local community (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government 2021a).

There is also a Right to Regenerate policy being considered by central Government that would require councils and public sector bodies to sell unused land and assets. (Ministry of Housing Community and Local Government 2021b). It is not clear whether these could be sold to individuals or community organisations and if they would be required to use them for community benefit. There was a public consultation on this in early 2021, but no further detail has been published on this.

In 2020 the Government produced a report that sets out plans to increase active travel to improve air quality, combat climate change, improve health and wellbeing, address inequalities and tackling traffic congestion (Department of Transport 2020). At a local level, councils are required to produce Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans. These will produce plans for networks for walking and cycling, with prioritised programme of infrastructure improvements. The government committed to spend £2bn in England during 2020-25 on improving cycling and walking routes and infrastructure. This increase in active travel presents opportunities for community businesses to expand existing or develop new services to support active travel in their communities.

The policy landscape is identified as the main barrier to the community energy sector contributing to a just transition to net zero carbon (Community Energy England 2021), with the UK government's Energy White Paper mentioning community energy just once (Department for Business Energy and Industrial Strategy 2020). However, the 2021 inquiry into Technological innovations and climate change by the Environmental Audit Committee urges the Government to support community energy development through:

- Removing barriers to the development of community energy
- Emphasising the importance and vital role of community energy in achieving net zero in the forthcoming Net Zero Strategy
- Resourcing "practical support measures to harness the potential of community energy." (Environmental Audit Committee (2021); Community Energy England 2021)

### **Community Businesses are already taking action on climate change**

For the first time questions were included on environmental improvements and impacts in the 2021 Community Business Market Survey. Initial survey findings show that community businesses are already aiming to undertake a range of environmental improvement activities, with the largest responses being on food growing and improving/protecting the natural environment, see Table 2. However, the total number of respondents answering this question was only slightly more than half of the total number of survey respondents, so there are a lot of

community business currently not undertaking environmental improvement activities. (Power to Change 2021e).

**Table 2**

<b>Do the activities of your community business aim to improve the environment in any of the following ways?</b>		
<b>Improving buildings (e.g. renovating buildings; energy efficiency)</b>	44	34.4 %
<b>Energy collection or supply (e.g. measure to generate or store renewable energy locally)</b>	17	13.3 %
<b>Improving or protecting the natural environment (e.g. biodiversity conservation, land use/management, connecting with the natural world)</b>	48	37.5 %
<b>Transportation (e.g. active travel, public or community transport, electric vehicles, last mile delivery)</b>	9	7.0 %
<b>Waste management and/or resource consumption (e.g. recycling, composting, food waste, repair and reuse, retail and consumerism)</b>	37	28.9 %
<b>Food growing, provision or education (e.g. community food growing and provision, diet and education, farming)</b>	49	38.3 %
<b>Other</b>	5	3.9 %

There was also a question on whether community businesses could demonstrate impacts across a range of environmental activities. Again, there were responses across a wide range of environmental outcomes, the largest response jointly on improving buildings (e.g. renovating buildings, energy efficiency) - which is unsurprising given the large proportion of community businesses that are responsible for buildings - and on improving or protecting the natural environment (e.g. biodiversity conservation, land use/management, connecting with the natural world), see Table 3. The number of responses to this question was even lower, with fewer than half of the total survey respondents answering that their community business could demonstrate environmental impact in these areas. (ibid.). It is possible that this is due to a lack of resources or knowledge on how to measure, monitor and report on these impacts.

**Table 3**

<b>Can your business demonstrate impact in any of the following environmental outcomes your community business is working towards?</b>		
<b>Improving buildings (e.g. renovating buildings; energy efficiency)</b>	36	33.3 %
<b>Energy collection or supply (e.g. measure to generate or store renewable energy locally)</b>	15	13.9 %
<b>Improving or protecting the natural environment (e.g. biodiversity conservation, land use/management, connecting with the natural world)</b>	36	33.3 %
<b>Transportation (e.g. active travel, public or community transport, electric vehicles, last mile delivery)</b>	4	3.7 %

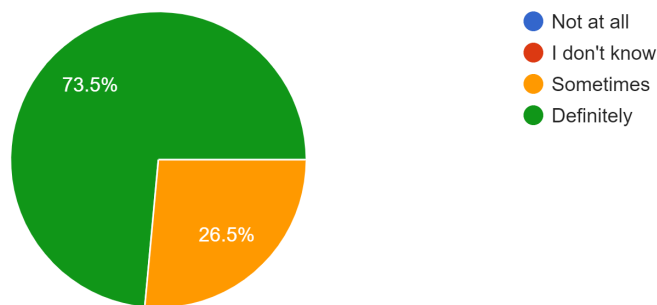
<b>Waste management and/or resource consumption (e.g. recycling, composting, food waste, repair and reuse, retail and consumerism)</b>	34	31.5 %
<b>Food growing, provision or education (e.g. community food growing and provision, diet and education, farming)</b>	32	29.6 %
<b>Other</b>	2	1.9 %

Whilst the questions asked in the survey did not specifically reference climate action, it is likely that many of the environmental improvements and outcomes will have a positive climate action impact.

The responses above show there is already significant work being undertaken by community businesses on environmental activities. The Power to Change AimHi pre-course survey of community businesses also suggests that there is significant interest from community businesses in addressing climate change action and opportunities to develop this further in their businesses. Whilst the number of completed surveys is small, the pre-course survey gives a useful insight into existing activities that fit within the taxonomy of Power to Change grant recipient actions on climate and ecology (Power to Change 2021e). The data shows that: 85.7% of respondents consider themselves activists on the climate and nature crisis; 89.3% consider that it is a very big problem and 73.5% think that community actions can make a significant positive difference in the climate and nature crisis (see figure 1).

**Figure 1**

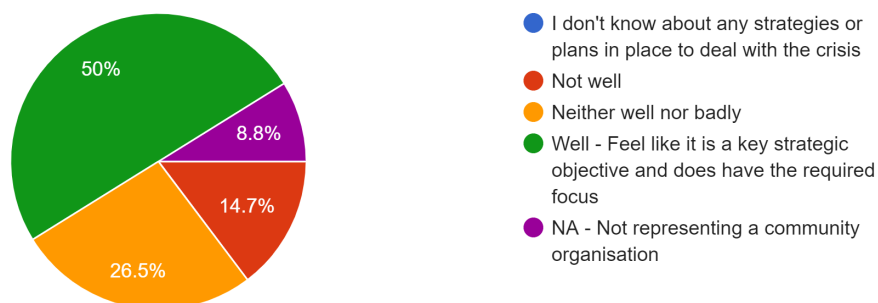
Do you believe community actions can make a significant positive difference in the climate and nature crisis?  
34 responses



However, the response to the question 'How well do you think your community organisation is addressing the climate and nature crisis?' shows that 50% of the community organisations feel they are doing this well – i.e. that they 'feel like it is a key strategic objective and does have the required focus'. (ibid.) – see Figure 2.

**Figure 2**

How well do you think your community organisation is addressing the climate and nature crisis?  
34 responses



The community organisations did show interest in what they could do when answering the question 'What one thing do you think your community organisation could do to make a significant positive difference to the climate and nature crisis?', with 79.4% providing a response. This demonstrates an appetite for improving what they already do, or developing a new area of work. There was a broad range of responses to this question, these have been split into broad categories, using the main categories from the taxonomy of climate activities of projects funded where possible. (ibid.)<sup>1</sup>, percentages given are of the total number of responses to this question, responses may fit within more than one category:

- Energy/Buildings: 14.8%
- Waste and consumption: 11.1%
- Education/awareness raising: 40.7%
- Organisational policy/strategy: 11.1%
- Expand project delivery: 18.5%
- Other: 11.1%

### Inequalities and climate change

Research shows that people living in poverty suffer disproportionately more from the adverse effects of climate change than the rich through:

- increase in the exposure to climate hazards,
- increase in the susceptibility to damage caused by climate hazards
- decrease in the ability to cope with and recover from the damage.

Having their own resources is the most important determinant of the ability of households to cope with and recover from damages due to climate change. However, common property resources shared by the community can be an important part of coping and recovery strategy of people affected by climate change (Islam and Winkel 2017).

<sup>1</sup> Includes survey responses to 17.10.21



This shows the importance of community owned assets/resources in community climate resilience, which could present opportunities for community businesses. Consideration needs to be given in the Green Fund Scoping Study as to whether support for community businesses to take action on climate change through a Green Fund should address poverty/disadvantage/vulnerability to reduce the impacts of climate change on these groups (adaptation & potential mitigation), or whether the focus should be on climate mitigation as the priority. Other considerations are whether funding should be targeted to areas experiencing higher levels of deprivation. Research shows that Power to Change already provides most funding to areas experiencing the highest levels of deprivation that is Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) rankings 1-3 (Power to Change 2021e).

### Impacts of Covid-19

The Covid-19 pandemic has had an unprecedented impact on the way we live and work. This has presented both opportunities and challenges for community businesses, which need to be understood when considering opportunities and support needs for community businesses in taking action on climate change.

Research undertaken in 2020 found that the *'rural community business sector was relatively buoyant prior to Covid-19 and although it has faced unprecedented challenges during this pandemic, the resilience and adaptability shown since March should point to a healthy future.'* (Plunkett 2020a). Also undertaken in 2020, the Power to Change Community Business Markets survey showed that by early summer 2020, almost 90% of community businesses had adapted or changed services in response to the pandemic, with 55% expecting to open up a new line of trading activity or diversify their products and services when the pandemic ends (Power to Change 2021b).

There were, however, some community business casualties in the pandemic, with 1% of surveyed businesses ceasing operations and likely not to re-open, and other challenges identified that will need to be considered when formulating future support for community businesses. For example, 65% of operating businesses reported a reduction in business activity levels by June 2020 and 73% were less confident about their future financial outlook (ibid).

There were a range of financial support mechanisms for businesses introduced by the UK Government, in response to the pandemic, that community businesses could access. The Government also introduced specific measures for social enterprises and charities, such as the Resilience and Recovery Loan Fund for social enterprises and charities who experienced disruption to normal business as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic and making the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan scheme more easily accessible for charities and social enterprises (Power to Change 2020b). 79% of community businesses reported that they had received financial support during the pandemic (Power to Change 2021b).

As we emerge from the pandemic, there are also opportunities that community businesses could be at the heart of. Primary research, undertaken in late 2020, of over 20,000 people shows

that there is a strong desire to be able to continue to work remotely in a post pandemic world and that people expect to continue to spend more in their local community, as well as having developed a much greater appreciation of the quality of their local environment (Demos and Legal and General 2021). Recommendations that could be opportunities for community businesses are included in the Business Opportunities section below.

### Priority impact areas

Alongside this literature review an opportunities analysis was undertaken to consider opportunities the Community Business Climate Action Programme might focus on. It was necessary to identify what the priority impact areas might be for the programme in order to do this. An initial list of four was agreed with Power to Change as follows:

- Social justice
- Carbon emission savings
- Viable business models/plans
- Resilience

Consideration of these was a key element of the first stakeholder workshop held during the study. Two new priority impact areas were proposed – systems change and behaviour change and empowerment. A ranking poll was undertaken, that showed participants thought that social justice should be the most important impact area for the programme, closely followed by carbon emissions savings and systems change as the joint second most important impact areas. Further project team discussions identified that these should be considered the three priority impact areas in developing the programme. Descriptions of what these could encompass, below:

- Social Justice is described by the UN as an ‘underlying principle for peaceful and prosperous coexistence within and among nations’. We uphold the principles of social justice when we promote gender equality, or the rights of indigenous peoples and migrants. We advance social justice when we remove barriers that people face because of gender, age, race, ethnicity, religion, culture or disability.’ (United Nations 2020). In simple terms, social justice is about working towards a more equal society.
- Carbon emission reduction for the purposes of this report aligns with the reporting of reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, measured in CO<sub>2</sub>e (carbon dioxide equivalents) used by the UK Government and United Nations.
- Systems Change ‘aims to bring about lasting change by altering underlying structures and supporting mechanisms which make the system operate in a particular way. These can include policies, routines, relationships, resources, power structures and values’ (NPC 2015; Foster-Fishman, 2002)

Recognising that there is no blueprint for bringing about systems change and that it is not an easy thing to do, in addressing social problems, it is useful to consider suggestions of things that funders can do to support this (NPC 2015). These are arguably relevant here given the interconnected nature of climate change impacts and disadvantage discussed earlier. They are:

- Going beyond one-to-one grantee relationships. The chances of effecting systems change are greatly increased by finding ways to pool resources and thinking bigger – working in partnership with other funders and organisations. This supports the approach that Power to Change is taking in this scoping study by seeking views and potential co-funding/partnership opportunities.
- Funding in a way that doesn't constrain. Systems change takes time and does not align well with restrictive, short-term funding with excessive monitoring regimes, suggesting that three years funding may not be enough. Careful consideration will need to be given to how systems change can be meaningfully addressed by Power to Change if this is a three-year programme.
- Building the field. It is important to consider the 'glue' between organisations that enable them to deliver, as well as the organisations themselves. Consideration needs to be given to infrastructure and connections between organisations in encouraging systems change. Suggested ways of doing this include: 'using convening power to help grantees create networks, funding collaborative work, or supporting good quality research about what works rather than spending small sums on individual evaluations.'. This approach aligns well with views expressed during interviews undertaken in this study (described in the main report).
- Learning. Given the position of power and influence that funders have, they are well placed to promote learning and could also fund generation/spread of knowledge and good practice. It is important for funders to use monitoring information and to support their own ongoing learning so that their funding is evidence based.

## Opportunities

The 2020 Plunkett Foundation State of Rural Community Business report identifies a number of opportunities in the long term for rural community businesses including playing a key role in a cleaner, greener economy (Plunkett Foundation 2020).

There are potential new opportunities for community businesses as we emerge from the Covid-19 pandemic, such as provision of flexible workspace for remote working and other local amenities, such as outdoor public spaces to achieve a goal of '15-minute neighbourhoods' (Demos and Legal and General 2021). As established earlier, community hubs and village halls form the largest proportion of community businesses in England. If they are able to provide flexible workspace in an energy efficient building, this has the potential to reduce carbon emissions from commuting and provide an income stream for community businesses. If other local amenities can be delivered by community business as part of a '15-minute neighbourhood' approach with a focus on active travel, this can also contribute to reduced vehicular travel and associated carbon emissions.

The 20 minute neighbourhood and 15 minute cities terms have been in use for some time, with the city of Melbourne pioneering the 20 minute neighbourhood approach (Victoria State Government 2021). Whilst the detail of approaches vary at a local level, essentially they all aim to

promote the ability for people to meet most of their daily needs within a 20 or 15 minute walk from home, with access to safe cycling and local transport options. The term 15 minute neighbourhood is used here as has been referred to in recent literature as playing a role in reducing carbon emissions (Hernandez, 2021; However this can be used interchangeably with 20 minute neighbourhoods or 15 minute cities (C40 cities and Arup, 2021).

This echoes the findings described earlier that more than half of community businesses surveyed in the Power to Change Community Business Markets Survey 2020 post Covid-19 pandemic expect to open up a new line of business activity or diversify their products and services (Power to Change 2020b).

### **Community assets**

The Power to Change Community Business Market in 2020 and taxonomy of climate activities delivered through Power to Change grants shows that the majority of community businesses are venues – community hubs and village halls (Power to Change 2021b; Power to Change 2021e). Given that buildings in the UK contribute 23% of the total UK greenhouse gas emissions (Climate Change Committee 2020), as these all have a physical buildings base, it is possible that the biggest single impact on climate change mitigation for community businesses would be for grant or loan funding to be provided to retrofit these buildings for energy efficiency, including low carbon heating systems. In addition to the direct carbon savings, it is also possible that this would have co-benefits in the form of revenue cost savings for heating/lighting and improved comfort/lighting for building users etc. However, the tenure of buildings that community businesses operate in may have an impact on their ability to instal measures, or enjoy resulting cost savings over a long period.

Given this, the opportunities identified above in the post Covid recovery and for the recovery of high streets and town centres across the country (Demos and Legal and General 2021) and the appetite of community businesses to pursue environmental improvements (Power to Change 2021e), this offers an opportunity for community businesses to have buildings and assets transferred into community ownership, so they can deliver services for the benefit of the community, whilst revitalising parts of the town's centre.

In doing this there needs to be funding and support systems in place, both to support the asset transfer, and also to enable energy efficient renovations/retrofitting to be undertaken as part of bringing buildings and assets back into use, which will be a positive community business climate action. Projects delivering energy efficiency improvements for community buildings have already received the fourth largest amount of Power to Change grant funding (Power to Change (2021d), so will be an important consideration as to whether this type of activity should be funded through the Green Fund, or if it can be funded from other sources within the organisation.

Consideration should also be given as to how councils can ease the asset transfer process to support greater community ownership. This could include supporting the 'meanwhile use' of

buildings and management leases of high street assets such as markets, public spaces, libraries and community hubs, directly to trusted community businesses. They could also look at providing secure leases or leases which scale up giving community businesses space and time to become financial sustainable. (Power to Change 2020).

There are also good examples of councils having dedicated policies to support 'anchor' community business organisations, such as Calderdale Council's Community Anchor Policy. (Calderdale Council 2016). Community Anchor organisations are place-based, locally-led multi-purpose organisations, which are deeply rooted in their neighbourhoods. *'They respond flexibly to local need and therefore come in all different shapes and sizes. What unites them, however, is a sense of ambition for their places, an enterprising approach to finding local solutions to local problems, and a clear sense that this activity should be community-led and based on self-determination.'* (Locality 2018).

In addition, consideration should be given to a range of financial and funding improvements to enable a smooth transfer of assets into community ownership, such as:

- Funders pooling their investments in this field – ensuring they co-ordinate their grants and loans to recipients.
- Given the size, capacity and financial fragility of many community owned assets there is a continuing role for grants from central and local government, but more could be done by public bodies to provide low cost finance where appropriate (e.g. by using the Public Works Loan Board) (Plunkett Foundation 2020).
- Funders could explore more blended finance or low cost loan options, although some 'market-making' would be required to build demand from those small asset owners who have to date shown little appetite in this area, and who might benefit from support to build understanding and internal capacity to manage the implications of loan/blended finance.
- There are also opportunities to enhance the protections for community owned assets that face financial difficulties – both in terms of funding but also the administrative processes of regulation and compliance. Stronger protections could also be provided against other threats to community ownership, like privatisation e.g. the Right to Buy housing and leasehold enfranchisement.
- Excluding community asset owners from the proposed caps to ground rent in the Leasehold Reform (Ground Rent) Bill (Great Britain, Parliament, House of Commons, 2021) could also protect revenues. (Power to Change 2019).

## Community energy

Whilst community businesses delivering energy services/projects comprise a relatively small proportion of community businesses in England at only 2% (Power to Change 2021b), as a sub sector they make a positive contribution to climate action. Across England there are 275 community energy organisations employing 207 FTE employees working with 1,521 volunteers

who engaged around 138,000 people. Approximately two thirds of community energy organisations in England are working on energy efficiency, heat and low carbon transport projects (Community Energy England 2021).

Through the Next Generation programme, Power to Change has already sought to 'empower community energy organisations to take ownership of local renewable energy assets and develop innovative business models', providing funding and access to expertise under three key headings:

**Innovation:** New business models for existing community energy groups

**Community solar:** Renewable energy asset transfer from the private sector to the community sector

**Learning and Impact:** For the community energy sector

The Next Generation programme (Power to Change 2021g) provides examples of community energy groups providing funding and other support for climate action by community businesses. For example, several groups (from both the CORE and innovation streams of the Next Generation programme) use surplus funds from their renewable generation assets to grant fund energy efficiency improvements and low carbon heating in community buildings, to support fuel poverty initiatives and to support environmental/climate education initiatives in their communities. Such grants are consistent with the climate action and social benefit objectives of many community energy groups. Specific examples of other approaches from the innovation programme are:

- The Chester Community Energy group is attempting to obtain Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) accreditation for a 'pay as you save' scheme which would provide loan rather than grant funding to other local community businesses for lighting and wider energy efficiency improvements.
- CREW Energy is developing a business model for the installation of heat pumps in community buildings in London. It has managed the installation of a heat pump system in the Devas community building, used for youth club activities, supported by the Next Generation programme and the non-domestic Renewable Heat Incentive.

The Next Generation experience suggests that existing community energy groups could provide support and advice services on climate action for other community businesses in their area, with financial support from Power to Change or other funders.

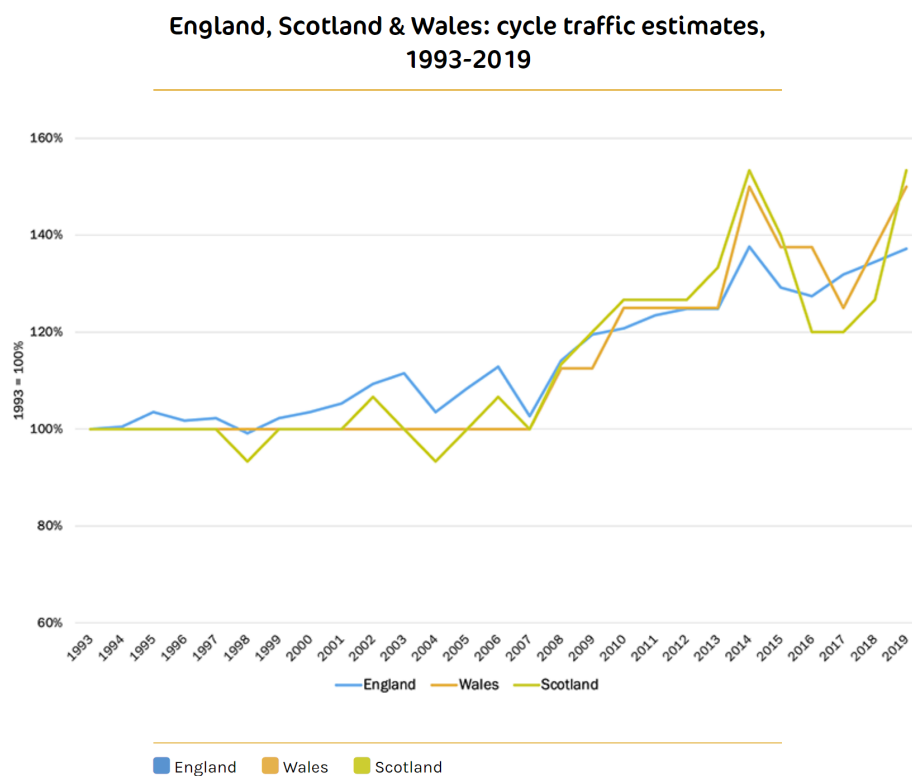
However, since Power to Change has already provided significant support through the Next Generation programme, consideration will need to be given as to whether community energy could be a priority for funding through the Green Fund in terms of community business action on climate change. Given the rapid and planned decarbonisation of the National Grid (Electricity System Operator Limited 2021), the carbon savings delivered through community electricity

projects energy may on their own not be significant. However the co-benefits such as recirculation of money within a local economy, local job creation and development of skills, knowledge and capacity could make a significant contribution to developing community resilience.

## Transport

As with community energy, the proportion of existing community businesses whose main activity is transport is small at only 2% (Power to Change 2021b). However, research has shown that changes in active travel can have significant lifecycle carbon emissions benefits (Brand, C. et al 2021; Sustrans 2021). Given the opportunity to create community resilience through the adoption of the 15-minute neighbourhood principle described earlier and the steady increase in cycling that has been seen across England over recent years (see Figure 3), this presents opportunities for community businesses to either expand existing or develop new business activities.

**Figure 3.** (Cycling UK, 2021)



A good example of a community enterprise that is supporting increased cycling, with co-benefits in terms of skills and enterprise development is Route 1 coffee house in Redcar. Route 1 is a café that supports the local cycling community by providing a customer bike stop so customers can park their bikes safely and keep an eye on them whilst in the café and also offers maintenance services. The workshop that provides the maintenance services to customers is run by adults

with learning disabilities and they also recycle old bikes, offering them back into the community at a reasonable price. (Route 1 Coffee House (no date))

Another example of a community enterprise supporting low carbon transport is the Tisbury Electric Car Club pioneered by Nadder Community Energy (Power to Change 2021g). This community-led car club uses electric vehicles (EV) which are lower carbon than conventional combustion-engine vehicles, improving local people's access to transport in a rural town that would not normally support a commercially-run car club. While the EV car club model is not yet proven to be fully financially viable, some other rural community groups have expressed interest in following Nadder CE's lead. This might potentially lead to improved viability through sharing of certain overhead costs across several community-owned rural car clubs.

### Energy efficiency

The majority of community businesses are small or medium sized businesses (Power to Change 2021b) and as such they will face many of the same challenges wider SME businesses face. For example, research to inform the BEIS Boosting Access for SMEs to Energy Efficiency (BASEE), showed that there were the following barriers to SMEs in the take up of energy efficiency measures (Department for Business Energy and Industrial Strategy 2019).

- SMEs hard to engage in energy efficiency (e.g. limited knowledge or capacity)
- Time/resource burden for SMEs
- Lack of coordination between energy efficiency providers
- Lack of trust by SMEs in providers
- Poor quality of data on the benefits of potential solutions
- High upfront capital costs/ external finance rates
- High transaction costs/ lack of economies of scale for energy efficiency providers serving SMEs
- Payback uncertainty for investments by SMEs

However, research also shows that addressing such barriers to implementing energy efficiency is only part of the challenge, as most organisations do not invest in energy efficiency even when it makes sense to do so, described as the "energy efficiency gap". The evidence is that energy efficiency happens when it is strategically important, or "salient", i.e. that organisations will only take action on energy efficiency when they feel that there is something in it for them (Mallaburn 2018).

Community businesses are concerned about the climate emergency and have shown interest in addressing climate change and opportunities to develop this further in their businesses. (Power to Change 2021e), so the 'what's in it for them' issue may be of less relevance than to the wider business community. However, this is something that can be explored through this study. Given the large proportion of community businesses that have physical premises (Power to Change 2021b), this will be an important consideration, as will seeking to understand the tenures of community business premises and the opportunities and challenges in delivering energy efficiency and other low carbon measures.



As mentioned earlier, Power to Change already provides a significant level of grant funding for energy efficiency in community buildings (Power to Change 2021e). If this were to become a priority area for Green Fund support, it may be useful in the fund design stage to interrogate the data for these funded projects to identify any funding gaps or obstacles that community businesses face in making energy efficiency improvements. Many of these barriers are also likely to apply to community businesses (e.g. limited knowledge or capacity on energy efficiency; lack of time and resource to engage with energy efficiency; lack of trust in potential providers). In designing the Green Fund, Power to Change will need to consider how to overcome the barriers experienced by community businesses in relation to energy efficiency and wider climate action.

There are also existing sources of information for organisations in tackling energy efficiency improvements, that could be considered in designing the fund if this was a priority area for support for the Green Fund, such as the Centre for Sustainable Energy's guide to improving energy efficiency in community buildings (Centre for Sustainable Energy (no date)).

Also, as outlined in the community energy section above, there would be scope to consider the role of existing community energy businesses in helping to inform and support action by other community businesses in their area. In particular, community energy businesses may be able to act as 'trusted intermediaries' to help support engagement with the climate agenda amongst other local community businesses, provided that their 'intermediary' role is financially sustainable.

### **Support needed**

Social justice has been identified as at the heart of delivering local economic resilience, where tackling disadvantage and supporting environmental sustainability is central to economic success at a local level (Locality 2018). Given the values of community businesses outlined earlier (Power to Change 2021d), they are well placed to play a key role in delivering this, but will need support to enable them to do this.

The Centre for Sustainable Energy suggest that the 'strength and impact of community-led climate action is as much driven by its ability to engage, enthuse and educate as it is about reducing emissions.' However, they also recognise that community-led climate action does need to be measurable, giving measuring carbon impacts/savings as an example of a common support need by community organisations. This will also help community organisations to communicate and validate their own impacts to local and national decision makers (Centre for Sustainable Energy 2021). Therefore, providing support to develop monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) skills should be a consideration in developing the Green Fund.

Community business will need funding and support to develop appropriate structures and systems to enable them to deliver new or expanded services that can make a positive contribution to climate action. The following were identified as essential requirements for

community businesses in relation to taking on physical assets, but are also relevant for the development of other new business activities:

- Ability to demonstrate financial sustainability, with a robust (and commercially viable) business plan to take on and maintain an asset –
- Ensure they have ‘fit-for-purpose’ governance to manage an asset [or others activity], with the necessary capacity and skills.
- Capacity to use community shares as a means of securing community involvement through pooled commitment and investment.
- Ability to build connections with local authorities and other statutory agencies, helping to make themselves relevant to the priorities and core activities of a council/ strategic body(ies) and in doing so, access a greater range of funding sources. (Power to Change 2020)

### Funding/finance

Unsurprisingly, funding is identified by community businesses as one of their most important support needs. When community businesses were asked about the most important types of support they needed as part of research undertaken during the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020, 77% placed ‘flexible grants or cash injections’ in their top three (Power to Change 2021b).

The issues described in the community buildings section earlier highlight what is needed in terms of financial support to enable the growth of community owned buildings as a means of delivering services for the benefit of the community and to revitalise town centres and neighbourhoods (Power to Change 2019). These are also relevant to other types of community business activity. For example, funders pooling their investments/co-ordinating grants and loans to community businesses.

In addition the ring-fencing for community business enterprises of a proportion of existing public funds committed for local economic development should be explored (e.g. the Shared Prosperity Fund, any future round of the Future High Street Fund, the Towns Fund, and funding for Local Enterprise Partnerships [and Combined Authorities] to be spent on community business development (Plunkett Foundation 2020).

In addition, consideration should be given to how to provide short-term funding for community businesses in the development phase to support planning applications, business plans and ensuring future sustainability. Other funding such as grants, bridging loans and co-investment opportunities may be needed to overcome early stage financing problems (Power to Change 2020a).

Power to Change has recognised that community businesses need support as they begin work on developing or growing their organisations and have recently launched Powering Up programme. This aims to help community business plan for the in the key areas of digital growth, zero carbon and sustainability, and financial resilience, with a cross cutting theme of diversity, equity and inclusion. They will shortly be launching a capacity strengthening programme to address this. The support will be funding for a combination of support, including

an unrestricted grant to be spent on support determined by each business, development support funding to pay providers to meet a community business' specific needs and funding for professional development and wellbeing support (Power to Change 2021c).

Power to Change also deliver other funding programmes to support community businesses developing share offers such as Community Business ReBoost - to support community businesses to raise community shares capital to aid their recovery from Covid-19 and Community Shares Booster - Supporting community businesses to launch a community share offer with grants and match funding (Power to Change 2021f).

There are a number of issues identified throughout this literature review for Power to Change to consider in the design of the Community Business Climate Action Programme, such as those detailed in the system change section. In addition, when The National Lottery launched its Climate Action Fund programme in 2020, it identified nine key tensions during the Round 1 application stage to help them “prioritise what ‘good’ looks like, and how to shape the programme”. The Climate Action Fund supports community led climate action, so there are likely to be some comparisons to the Community Business Climate Action Programme. Some of these are explored elsewhere in the literature review, e.g. prioritising one beneficiary group over another in the inequalities and climate change section. The nine key tensions identified are:

- The balance be between climate adaptation and carbon mitigation
- The balance be between overall climate impact, and community engagement
- Balancing the overall scale of a project's carbon reduction potential with its ability to be replicable in communities across the UK (and beyond)
- What level of importance should we place on the ability to accurately measure the overall carbon reduction — and hence, climate impact
- Prioritising tried-and-tested projects that are immediately ready to go
- Prioritising one beneficiary group(s) over another
- What does ‘good’...climate action look like, and what is most appropriate for us to support
- How to tackle the difficult balancing act of raising awareness, and raising climate anxiety (Gardner, 2021)

## Leadership

Power to Change has identified the important role that leadership plays in the successful development and operation of community businesses. To support the development of successful community business leaders, Power to Change will shortly be launching a leadership programme for community enterprise leaders in the North East of England and Yorkshire and Humber to build confidence, skills and networks.

This will include an inspirational talk about climate and sustainability leadership to help participants to better understand their leadership in the context of the climate emergency and to identify ways to build their organisations' and communities' resilience to the impact of climate

change. In addition, Power to Change are also supporting a climate and sustainability leadership training course for community businesses , delivered by AimHi Earth (AimHi Earth 2021)

### Potential partners/funders

There are a number of potential funding partners that Power to Change could discuss possible collaborations with in developing the expanded Green Fund from 2023. One of the challenges is that a number of these operate at a sub national level in England, so consideration may need to be given to making the fund flexible to take advantage of regional/local opportunities.

For example, Distribution Network Operators (DNOs) are shifting to become Distribution Systems Operators (DSOs) to support a more distributed electricity system, in part to deliver UK carbon budget and net zero carbon targets (Western Power Distribution (no date); Electricity North West Ltd. 2018). They are currently preparing their business plans for their next price control period 2023-28 and as part of this will be setting out their plans for decarbonisation of the electricity network (Ofgem no date). It is likely that this will include support for development of community and local energy projects, so the DNOs/DSOs could be potential partners in an expanded Green Fund. However, support for such schemes may vary across the DNOs/DSOs, so an expanded Green Fund may need to build in the flexibility to partner with the DNO's/DSOs on this.

On a national level there are a number for potential partners or funders, as outlined below. The National Lottery launched its 10 year Climate Action Fund in 2020. This is an ambitious £100m 10-year programme to help reduce the carbon footprint of communities and support community-led movements take action on climate change. (The National Lottery 2021). Opportunities for collaboration on a Green Fund as a partner or co-funder should be considered. There are a range of other national organisations whose organisational aims may be aligned with a Green Fund and could be potential partners on this; sources of some of these are cited in this review. These include: Ashden - the 'climate change charity', the Centre for Sustainable Energy, the Plunkett Foundation and Locality.

As identified in the assets and funding sections, other organisations that could be potential funding partners in a Green Fund include Combined Authorities, LEPs and Government departments, such as BEIS and MHCLG.

Power to Change are the third largest funder of climate action grants. The other funders in the top four are the Esmée Fairburn Foundation, City Bridge Trust and the Garfield Weston Foundation Power to Change (2021d). Discussions with these other grant making bodies could be explored to investigate potential co-funding/partnership roles in the Green Fund to identify potential synergies.

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