

**The Schools' Energy Co-operative
Minutes of the Annual General Meeting**

**Held via Zoom Video Conference
On Tuesday 1st October 2024 at 6.30pm**

Present:

Directors of the Board: Mike Smyth (Chair), Eilish Kavanagh, Andy Rolfe, Laura Moreno, Rob Kay and Alan Simpson.

Energy4All Ltd: Jessica Dunning

Members: 34

Apologies:

Directors of the Board: Richard Watson

1. Welcome and Introductions

Mike Smyth (Chair) welcomed members to the Schools' Energy Co-operative AGM. Mike then went on to introduce the Board and outline the agenda.

Mike explained that Energy4All is a co-operative of 35 independent community energy co-operatives (including The Schools' Energy Co-operative) which co-operate to deliver a shared mission and meet operational and administrative needs, develop and share expertise, deliver future community energy through a shared development team, and deliver representation. Energy4All is self-financing and non-profit distributing. Mike, on behalf of The Schools' Energy Co-Operative (the Co-op), thanked Energy4All for their support to grow the Co-op to its present scale and is pleased the Co-op is now able to support other co-ops in the Energy4All family to develop.

Energy4All reports some exciting developments; firstly, this week Dundee Solar Farm was commissioned following several years of project development. Secondly, Energy4All is part of a consortium with Nadara (previously Falck) and BlueFloat Energy to deliver social and technical innovation in offshore wind at three sites in the Scottish North Sea. It is planned there will be Community Turbine at each site costing about £50 million per site.

The Co-op has supported two other Energy4All co-ops to deliver projects in the last year. Last Autumn, Wey Valley Solar Schools' Energy Co-Operative was able to deliver just over 160kWp extension at Godalming College on two buildings thanks to a loan from the Co-op, and North Lincolnshire Community Energy has grown to deliver solar on 18 sites with a total capacity of over 1.48MWp. NLCE is also supported by a loan from the Co-op.

Energy4All successfully delivered 4 share offers in 2023/2024:

- North Lincolnshire Community Energy raised £600,000
- Dundee Renewable Energy Society raised £2.8 million
- Reading Community Energy Society raised £100,000
- Drumlin Wind Energy Co-Operative raised £930,769.

Energy4All share offers expected in 2024/2025:

- North Lincolnshire Community Energy - further offer
- Drumlin Wind Energy Co-Operative – follow on bond
- Edinburgh Community Solar Co-Operative
- Westmill Solar Co-Operative
- Wey Valley Solar Schools' Energy Co-Operative
- Reading Community Energy Society- further offer
- Energise South Society
- Staffordshire Community Energy
- Schools' Energy Co-operative

2. Overview of the year

Andy started by saying that usually at this point he goes through our achievements in the financial year but will take a different approach this year as it has been a landmark year for the Co-op. 10 years ago last month, our first site Glenleigh started generating carbon-free solar electricity. And by December last year (2023), we had installed solar PV system on our 100th building, Bridport Leisure Centre.

So, in 10 years, we have installed solar PV systems on more than 100 buildings, saving nearly 7,000 tones carbon dioxide (compared to generation by gas) – after all, saving carbon dioxide emissions is the primary objective of the Coop. And to cap it all, the last coal fired power station in the UK closed yesterday. I think we can all feel proud that we played an (admittedly very small) part in achieving that! Also, the UK have just had 3 consecutive quarters with more than 50% of its electricity sourced from renewables.

Note that we talk about sites and buildings. In the Co-op's early days, especially with a lot of primary schools, these were the same thing. However, recently, we have been installing on "sites" with many "buildings" – for example, Wiltshire College has 10 buildings across 3 campus sites.

We have achieved all this with over three and one third million pounds raised from you, our members. The interest that we pay is better than any 5-year savings account I could find, and we have met all member requests for repayment of capital. Installations have also been supported by £200,000 in grants – mainly LCEF (for London sites), where we have been successful in all seven rounds so far, but also through an Ealing Carbon Offset fund grant. If members agree to the proposed resolution six later on, then since 2014 we will have distributed dividends of over £150,000 to our member schools.

Glenleigh was our biggest site at 150 kW for many years, until January 22 when Sutton Community Academy was installed at size of 165kW. This remains our biggest single system, however, Wiltshire College's Lackham Campus is now our biggest site at 226 kW across six buildings. There is 444 kW across all three Wiltshire College campuses. At the other end of the spectrum, our smallest system is 7.5 kW at Drayton Green Primary (Ealing), but this is not the smallest site as there are two systems on that site. The smallest installation is at an International School in London, 9.15kW on their sports pavilion.

So, coming to the number for the financial year, total generation was just over three and a third gigawatt hours, equivalent to the annual electricity consumption of more than 1,300 average UK households; interestingly this is more than the number of you, our members, who have funded the installations. So, we could say that all member's electricity consumption is carbon neutral. Carbon dioxide savings in the year were just over 1,100 tonnes.

Performance during the year was below expectations, unusually for us, at 98%. This was largely due to grid connection issues at Wiltshire College's Lackham campus, which have since been resolved. Cumulative performance to date is still 101% of expectations.

It is difficult to estimate how much the schools save on electricity, as we don't know their up-to-date grid electricity costs, but our best guess is that they collectively saved at least half a million pounds in the last year.

Andy then went through the recent installations, and described the cumulative capacity by year. Please refer to the slides for details of this part of the presentation.

3. Future opportunities

Jess provided an overview of the Co-op's current near-term opportunities, including:

- Multi-Academy Trust in Wiltshire – 5 Primary Schools awaiting legal agreement and DfE consent
- Multi-Academy Trust in North Somerset – Up to 23 schools in advanced agreement stages with decision makers
- Partnership with Community Energy South to support the development of local groups delivering projects including Community Energy New Forest - Agreement in principle with 3 sites, 2 more in development

- Supporting local group in Cumbria – Brampton2Zero – seeking final agreement for 3 sites
- Supporting local group in Kingston – Kingston Environment Forum Solar Subgroup - developing new leads
- Awaiting the outcome of a tender for a 220kWp school in Hertfordshire

4. Operations & Maintenance

Summary across financial year:

- Energy4All recruited Sam Stevens as full-time roof top solar operations/maintenance manager from November 2023.
- Most of the Co-ops solar panel arrays did well over the year.
- Maintenance efforts were focused on sites which generate less than 85% of their anticipated output. There are about 10 sites which fell below this threshold on average over the year.
- Notable offline periods were observed for Wiltshire College’s Brandon and Tractor workshops, October 2023 to April 2024, due to the solar installer’s electrician encountering a serious fault with the electrical infrastructure at the incoming supply point. SSEN (the utility) were involved in resolving this which took a while to finish.
- Another downtime of note was at Beck Row, where the solar system was deemed at fault of causing leaks, Sam negotiated a reinstatement of the panels which was completed in August 2024.

5. Accounts

Eilish Kavanagh presented the accounts.

Financial performance in 2023/24 represents a full year of trading from 91 sites. We also had some limited generation – varying from 8 months to 1 month - from sites commissioned in 2023/2024. Aggregate generation during the financial year was 98% of our projections.

Revenue from sales of electricity, export, feed in tariff and grant income was 15.8 % above last year (2022/23: 15.5%). The surplus before interest to members and dividends to schools of £217,001 is just over 20% above that for the previous year. This surplus is sufficient to fund the interest payment to members, plus an increased dividend to schools.

Interest payable to members for 2023/24

The Board proposes that approximately £151,000 be paid as interest to members, representing an interest rate of 5% on shares issued under our first three share offers, a rate of 4.5% on shares issued under the fourth, fifth and sixth share offers, as described in the terms of those offers.

Distribution of interest and dividends is determined by members at the annual general meeting. A resolution to pay interest as described above will be put to members. If members pass the resolution, we anticipate that interest will be paid in October.

We also propose that £55,000 (2022/23: £40,000) is paid as a dividend to our school members and the balance of our surplus is retained to provide us with working capital, additional reserves to deal with the uncertainties we face, particularly as a result of volatile energy prices, and to support the development of the Co-op. The dividend will be allocated between schools broadly in proportion to their contribution towards that sum. The sum proposed to be retained is less than in the previous few years as we have substantial cash reserves waiting for investment so have less need to retain the surplus.

6. Resolutions

Resolution 1: To approve minutes of AGM held on the 19th September 2023.

Proposer: Mike Smyth

Secunder: Anthony Oakden

Results of voting as below:

Votes Cast	At AGM	Online/Postal	Chair	Total
<i>In Favour</i>	18	52	60	130
<i>Abstain</i>	2	10	0	12
<i>Against</i>	0	0	0	0
<i>Resolution carried</i>				

Resolution 2: To receive and adopt the Report of the Directors and the unaudited financial statements for the year ended 31st March 2024, together with the report of the accountants thereon.

Proposer: Mike Smyth

Secunder: Alan Simpson

Results of voting as below:

Votes Cast	At AGM	Online/Postal	Chair	Total
<i>In Favour</i>	19	61	60	140
<i>Abstain</i>	1	1	0	2
<i>Against</i>	0	0	0	0
<i>Resolution carried</i>				

Resolution 3: To apply the surplus of the Co-operative arising in the year ended 31st March 2024 (after adding back the dividend paid to schools in respect of the 2022/3 financial year of the Co-operative) as follows: to apply approximately £10,951 (being the balance of the surplus after allocation of the surplus towards the proposed sum of interest and dividends) to a general reserve for the continuation and development of the Co-operative and the furtherance of its objectives; to apply approximately £151,050 of the Co-operative's surplus by way of share interest, to be paid at an interest rate of 5% on shares subscribed under the first three share offers and at an interest rate of 4.5% on shares subscribed under the fourth, fifth and sixth share offers; and to apply £55,000 of the surplus as a dividend to be paid to some of the Co-operative's school members in the proportions determined by the Directors.

Proposer: Mike Smyth

Secunder: Andy Rolfe

Results of voting as below:

Votes Cast	At AGM	Online/Postal	Chair	Total
<i>In Favour</i>	20	61	60	141
<i>Abstain</i>	0	0	0	0
<i>Against</i>	0	1	0	1
<i>Resolution carried</i>				

Resolution 4: To disapply the obligation of the Co-operative to appoint auditors pursuant to Section 84 of the Co-operative and Community Benefit Societies Act 2014 so that an audit of the accounts of the Co-operative shall not take place for the Co-operative's year of account ending 31st March 2025.

Proposer: Mike Smyth

Secunder: Wendi Lethbridge

Results of voting as below:

Votes Cast	At AGM	Online/Postal	Chair	Total
<i>In Favour</i>	17	54	60	131
<i>Abstain</i>	3	5	0	8
<i>Against</i>	0	3	0	3
<i>Resolution carried</i>				

Resolution 5: To reappoint the firm of Melville & Co, Chartered Accountants, as the appropriate person to make a report on the accounts and balance sheet of the Co-operative for the Co-operative's year of account ending 31st March 2025 at a fee to be agreed by the Board.

Proposer: Mike Smyth

Seconder: Anthony Oakden

Results of voting as below:

Votes Cast	At AGM	Online/Postal	Chair	Total
<i>In Favour</i>	19	60	60	139
<i>Abstain</i>	1	1	0	2
<i>Against</i>	0	1	0	1
<i>Resolution carried</i>				

Resolution 6: To re-elect Andy Rolfe as a director of the Co-operative.

Proposer: Mike Smyth

Seconder: Anne Ford

Results of voting as below:

Votes Cast	At AGM	Online/Postal	Chair	Total
<i>In Favour</i>	20	61	60	141
<i>Abstain</i>	0	1	0	1
<i>Against</i>	0	0	0	0
<i>Resolution carried</i>				

Resolution 7: To re-elect Eilish Kavanagh as a director of the Co-operative.

Proposer: Mike Smyth

Seconder: Lyn Curtis

Results of voting as below:

Votes Cast	At AGM	Online/Postal	Chair	Total
<i>In Favour</i>	20	61	60	141
<i>Abstain</i>	0	1	0	1
<i>Against</i>	0	0	0	0
<i>Resolution carried</i>				

Questions and Discussion

Question: Transferring shares to children/grandchildren

Answer: Shares in the co-operative are not transferrable. However, the Co-op can accommodate this in other ways such as the member writing to request a withdrawal of their shares and the relative of the member applying for shares. The Co-op would help facilitate this by honouring the original interest rate and not requiring any movement of capital.

Question: Bridport could be considered to be the heartland of Dorset Community Energy. They have put solar on many buildings there. How come Schools Energy implemented PV on the Leisure Centre and not DCE?

Answer: When the enquiry was received, SEC contacted Dorset Community Energy Group to see if they would like to take the project, however, they did not have capacity at the time, so SEC continued. Mike confirmed that wherever SEC are aware of a more local community energy group we do try to engage them on the project as we understand local delivery is important.

Question: How is the dividend to schools calculated

Answer: In principle the dividend to each school represents their contribution to our surplus. So, we start with the P&L by school, including maintenance costs, depreciation and member interest. We also take account of any grants, and apportion overheads. Some sites do not qualify for the profit share, and we hold back the dividend to any schools that owe us money until they have paid us.

Question: For any faulty panels - is there any way to recycle them yet?

Answer: The majority of the panel components are recyclable: aluminium, copper (from cables) and the silicon too. They have to be taken by the panel manufacturer who are responsible for the recycling process (at least in the EU since 2012).

Question: Have you had birds nesting under the roof panels?

Answer: Yes, this has happened. It is most common on pitched roofs, so we now install bird proofing as standard on pitched roof systems and on flat roof systems if access for retrofitting bird proofing is difficult.

Mike thanked all members for their support and attending and participating in the meeting.

Meeting closed at 7:40pm.

Mike Smyth (Chair)
The Schools' Energy Co-operative