



## Community Energy England and Community Energy Wales proudly present 2018 Community Renewable Energy Project Award Winner The Schools Energy Cooperative Ltd



*Mike Smith MA, Chair of The Schools Energy Cooperative Ltd with Mark Bilsborough, Director of Community Energy England*

The winners of the Community Renewable Energy Project Award which looks for the most outstanding renewable electricity generation project undertaken by a community group, was The Schools' Energy Co-operative.

The Co-operative was launched in 2014 to provide community sourced funding for and community engagement in solar panel systems on schools throughout England. Their mission is to enable all schools to have solar panels if they wish.

Their flagship project was a 150kW solar array on Glenleigh Park Primary, East Sussex. Since then, the Co-operative has gone on to install panels on 37 of 42 schools, including 16 in the past 17 months, totalling over 1.5MW of generation, with many more installations under development.

Working with schools located from the South coast to the North East of England, the Cooperative works in close partnership with local environmental groups, parents' associations, local authorities and multi-academy trusts, and is actively supported by schools' professional building advisors. It offers a community funded alternative to all schools to the commercial sector, and through its co-operative model (all schools are members) is dedicated to supporting the work of its school members. It enables local community groups to deliver solar panels on their schools without themselves undertaking the 20-year commitment to manage the installation. It operates as a

successful business but with a very different ethos from the commercial sector. It is currently working closely with London Boroughs of Ealing and Harrow.

Electricity from the arrays is supplied to the host schools at rates which are materially lower than electricity from their electricity supplier and is sold at a fixed price throughout the term of the agreement (unlike many commercial providers of solar arrays to schools which offer a discounted price for electricity but then link the price to RPI). After paying interest at a fair and capped rate to its funding members, the Cooperative then distributes its entire surplus to its member schools.

The Co-op trades successfully and profitably. Interest has been paid to members, in accordance with the indications in the share offers, for the past 3 years and dividends have been paid to schools in each of those years. Projects are financed through share offers which are locally promoted whenever possible. The Co-op engages many volunteers and is professionally managed by Energy4All.

Community Energy England and Community Energy Wales congratulate them on everything they have achieved to date and wish them the best of success with future endeavours.

Ahead of the ceremony in Bristol an expert panel of judges selected winners in each of the seven categories following an open application process. Mark Billsborough, Head of Renewables and Hedging at Co-op Energy and one of the Community Energy Awards 2018 judging panel, said: "It's been an honour to judge the Community Energy Awards 2018. I can honestly say that making the final decisions was incredibly difficult. From domestic heat loss surveys, to creating large-scale wind farms owned by the community, it's clear that the impact of groups across England and Wales means more people are able to access the benefits of community energy and make a change for the better in our bid to become a more energy efficient society."

**Community Energy England and Community Energy Wales announced the winners of the 2018 Community Energy Awards at the Arnolfini, Bristol on Friday 19th October. The awards were sponsored by Bristol City Council and Co-op Energy.**

#### **About Community Energy England**

Community Energy England (CEE) represents and supports those committed to the community energy sector. Our mission is to support and accelerate the transition to a fair, low carbon and community-led energy system. To do this, we:

- Provide a single unified voice for the Community Energy sector to government, industry and press.
- Share good practice from the sector and work with innovators to support the development of new ideas.
- Bring communities, businesses, local authorities and experts together and promote partnership working.
- Work with local hubs to facilitate a supportive environment in which community energy projects can flourish.

Membership is open to any organisation which shares the association's objectives for the development of the community energy sector. Further details can be found on the CEE website [www.communityenergyengland.org](http://www.communityenergyengland.org)

**About Community Energy Wales**

Community Energy Wales (CEW) wants to put sustainable energy schemes at the heart of communities in Wales. Communities can become stronger, more resilient, and self-reliant by generating their own energy, using it efficiently, and directing the net income to regenerate their communities. CEW help to bring about this change by inspiring, empowering, and influencing people, policies and practices across Wales. They bring together a network of practitioners who work with and within the communities of Wales to develop renewable energy generation and energy efficiency schemes. Further details can be found on the CEW website [www.communityenergywales.org.uk](http://www.communityenergywales.org.uk)