



Claire Coutinho MP
Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero
1 Victoria Street
London
SW1H 0ET
31 August 2023

Invitation to London Community Energy Site

Dear Ms Coutinho,

Congratulations on your appointment as Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero. Community Energy England represents 280+ organisations which are harnessing the expertise, passion and money of local people to do local decarbonisation projects at scale. We look forward to working with you and your departmental colleagues closely to help realise the potential of the community energy sector to help the UK reach net zero.

During the 2022 Conservative Party Conference event '[Trusting the People](#)', you praised the community action seen since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, saying that where community groups came across problems, they found their own solutions: "*They innovated, they collaborated, they self-organised.*" We wholeheartedly agree. These values can be seen in the work of community energy organisations across the country.

Community energy enables local people to do decarbonisation projects that otherwise would not happen. It engages people in, and gives them "*ownership of the net zero project*", without which the [Climate Change Committee](#) warns "*the UK will not deliver Net Zero*", while delivering as much as [34 times the social benefit of commercial equivalents](#). People and communities are [routinely absent](#) from energy and climate policy and regulation. We hope you will be able to fix this potentially fatal flaw.

Your new department recently announced a new Community Energy Fund of £10 million over two years. This is a good starting point for reviving growth in a crucial sector that has been neglected in recent years. However, the sector still contains a reserve of untapped potential that the Community Energy Fund will only go some of the way to realising.

You have an opportunity to go further. To harness the local expertise in energy, and passion for tackling climate change that exists across the country, more action from your department is needed. DESNZ should enable community energy organisations to access funding currently only available to commercial players, ramp up action on energy efficiency and heat and enlist local and community organisations as key delivery partners to reach the UK's climate targets. For more details on transformative policy changes, see our [Parliamentary Briefing](#).

With the right policy environment, community energy organisations could deliver 5GW of community owned renewable energy by 2030, power 2.2 million homes, support at least 8,700 jobs, add £1.8bn to the economy and save 2.5m tonnes of CO₂. Each individual project would deliver tangible economic and social benefits to local people, while cumulatively making a massive contribution towards the UK's energy security and net zero target.

We would like to invite you to visit a London community energy site very soon so that you can see and hear for yourself what community energy can deliver. We are liaising with the excellent Olivia Blunn, Head of Local Energy Policy and Finance in your department, copied in, to identify the best opportunity. We would welcome a short meeting to discuss ways forward.

We look forward to working with you and your departmental colleagues over the coming months.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Emma Bridge." The signature is written in a cursive, slightly informal style.

Emma Bridge

Chief Executive, Community Energy England