

RURAL COMMUNITY ENERGY FUND - NORTH WEST OF ENGLAND

What is the RCEF?

The Rural Community Energy Fund (RCEF) is a grant that has been made available by the Government. Its aim is to support rural communities in England to develop renewable energy projects, which provide economic and social benefits to the community.

How much funding is available?

In total £10million of grant is available across England. In the North West, a total of £1 million is available to support projects.

How much grant can be applied for?

At the first stage, a maximum of £40,000 can be applied for. There is no set minimum amount and no match funding is required. This would be used to work with an environmental consultant to look at whether your renewable energy project is workable in terms of technology, planning, finance, legal issues, community group capacity and expertise and that the local community supports the proposed project.

Energy efficiency projects can be explored as part of a wider renewable energy project, but RCEF will not support projects that are only considering energy efficiency measures. If the stage 1 feasibility shows the project stands a reasonable chance of becoming operational, a further grant of a maximum of £100,000 is available to get the project to a position where it is ready to start on site. This includes securing full planning permission, drawing up detailed designs and tendering the work to contractors. Please note the amounts detailed are the maximum that can be awarded. We anticipate some projects will require a much smaller grant award, and would encourage such bids.

Who can apply for the fund?

A whole range of community groups can apply for the fund. These could be parish councils, charities, local groups with a specific interest in the environment, or any legally constituted group with a community focus. We would also like to encourage other businesses or groups to partner with communities to establish projects.

What type of technology can projects utilise?

Applicable technologies include but are not restricted to solar power, wind turbines, hydropower, heat pumps and anaerobic digestion. There is a longer list of examples in the guidance, but the key is, the technology needs to provide renewable energy.

What size of projects will be supported?

There are no set limits on either the overall cost of the projects or the amount of energy they must produce. However, generally it would be expected that projects will be of a size that requires planning permission. It would also be typically expected that projects will generate enough renewable energy for more than one building.



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How is it paid for?

The RCEF grant will support the upfront costs involved in getting a project to a position where it is ready to start on site. However, it does not pay for the capital costs of the technology, so for example, would not pay for solar panels or wind turbines. So how is this paid for? The community group will need to raise that money themselves. This could be through borrowing money against future income from selling electricity, or from an issue of community shares, where community members and others can invest in and receive returns from the project. These are tried and tested models, which have been utilised many times by community energy groups. There are many examples on websites such as [Community Energy England](#), and the [Centre for Sustainable Energy](#).

If we are interested, what should we do now?

If you are interested, it is worth reading the full guidance found at <https://www.localenergynw.org/page/rcef>. It will also be worth getting in touch with your RCEF Project Officer, details below.

You can talk to them about all aspects of your project, including how best to get a consultant on board to support you. Is it also worth visiting some of the websites mentioned above which have a wealth of information on community energy projects.

We look forward to hearing from you!

Contact: kate.gilmartin@lancashire.gov.uk / **Website:** www.localenergynw.org/page/rcef

