



Image courtesy of Neil Maw, taken from <http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/>

TYPE OF LEARNING: Interactive Learning, Information & Knowledge

EVENT AUDIENCE: Local residents & neighbouring low carbon communities

DURATION OF EVENT: 1/2 to 1 day (dependent on distance travelled)

KEY AIMS: To share experience of community-owned large scale renewable energy generation developments

COST¹: Medium Cost (Around £170 for car hire and petrol)

TIME²: Light

KEY TASKS: Administrative e.g. arranging date, car hire, & journey

ATTENDANCE & FEEDBACK FORMS

Ten people attended the event including three people from neighbouring low carbon communities and seven from Hook Norton-Low Carbon (HN-LC).

Number of feedback forms completed: **9**

DESCRIPTION OF EVENT

The objectives of the visit were:

- To see a community wind development and field solar PV site 'in the flesh' to help Hook Norton-Low Carbon (HN-LC), and other communities;
- To better understand what was involved both physically and in relation to community engagement with potentially controversial projects that they might want to undertake in the future.

The visit took the form of a guided visit of Westmill wind and solar farms, with questions and answers. Westmill is a community-owned wind and solar farm at Westmill Farm in Oxfordshire. It is the first wind farm co-operative in the South of England and was established to provide an opportunity for all who are interested to become involved in the ownership and operation of a wind farm. The community-owned solar farm was created in 2012. Further information can be found at: www.westmill.coop

LEARNING

Comments received on the feedback forms reveal the valuable role of community to community peer mentoring in helping people understand the technical, financial and social aspects of projects and change processes. Respondents mentioned learning about 'the scale of the task in setting up a wind farm', 'the mechanism of a community orientated and owned scheme', 'hearing about community process to opposition' and how 'the financial model could be applied to HN-LC work'. The fact the trip involved a site visit also enabled additional and important physical learning that might not have occurred otherwise. For example one person said 'I didn't like field solar PV – I found it quite physically disturbing being near it'.

The trip also showed how peer to peer mentoring can affect people's motivation and understanding of the process of change. All nine respondents said they intended to make changes to energy use in their community as result of the event. In addition one person explained that they felt more motivated as a result of the visit because they learnt 'it [change] takes persistence and determination and this shows it can be done' and another person said it was because of 'feeling part of a wider movement'. However it can also decrease motivation – one person said they felt 'overwhelmed at the idea of the development which may cause conflict'.

¹Cost key- Low Cost (less than £50); Medium Cost (between £50-£500); High Cost (£500 or more).

²Time key - Light (Less than 1 person day); Moderate (several days organisation over a number of weeks); Intensive (Several weeks over a year).



Academic partners:

**Environmental Change Institute,
University of Oxford and Low Carbon
Building Group, Oxford Brookes
University.**

Community partners:

**Awel Aman Tawe, Sustainable Blacon Ltd,
Middlesbrough Environment City, Hook
Norton Low Carbon, Kirklees Council and
Low Carbon West Oxford**

For further information on EVALOC

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The EVALOC project seeks to assess, explain and communicate the changes in energy use due to community activities within six selected case study projects under the Department of Energy and Climate Change's (DECC) Low Carbon Communities Challenge (LCCC) initiative, a government-supported initiative to transform the way communities use and produce energy, and build new ways of supporting more sustainable living.



EVALOC is a four-year multi-disciplinary project worth £1.14 million funded by the UK Research Council's (RCUK) Energy Programme. The Energy Programme is a RCUK cross council initiative supported by EPSRC, ESRC, NERC, BBSRC and STFC.

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