



## Understanding County Durham's Energy Needs

### Overview:

For the past year, we have been working in collaboration with innovation experts at the Rural Design Centre to understand the energy needs and challenges faced by community spaces within County Durham.

Following on from the development of the Northumberland Community Energy Ltd (NCEL), (a partnership with Community Action Northumberland and the National Innovation Centre for Rural Enterprise) we wanted to establish if there's an appetite for stakeholders in County Durham to participate in a similar scheme.

### What are the potential opportunities for your community space?

With the collaboration of several community spaces in Northumberland, NCEL were able to attract wider funding sources, thus enabling them to buy Photovoltaic (PV) panels and batteries in bulk at no cost to the community spaces. In addition, they are fully supported on their decarbonisation journey with free insurance and advice from a team of trained experts. NCEL have recently entered into a reduced tariff business rate with the council, further reducing electricity charges for their members.

We have chatted to several different stakeholders to understand whether we can develop a similar scheme here in County Durham. Ultimately to provide support in reducing energy costs, build resilience in response to climate change, help to reduce County Durham's carbon footprint whilst facilitating communities to generate a revenue.

Thank you to those who have taken the time to chat to us so far. The feedback is currently helping us shape our plans.

### Some interesting insights:

The research has uncovered some interesting insights.

Unsurprisingly, stakeholders have reported that the biggest challenge has been the cost-of-living crisis with many community buildings looking at alternative solutions to weather the current market volatility. Whilst the decarbonisation of buildings is high on the agenda for many, more clarity is required to encourage people to embark on the journey.

One unexpected discovery was the lack of impartial, coordinated advice available within the

UK to help community spaces in the decision-making process and transition in their decarbonisation journey. Whilst there are some excellent sources of technical information available in this fast-changing narrative, many stakeholders who have already embarked on renewables tend to place their trust in the advice provided by their preferred supplier(s).

Some stakeholders reported that their installation journey was confusing and difficult to navigate with a limited after-sales service.

### **Next Steps:**

As well as researching the potential formation of a community energy cooperative, we would like to further investigate how we can support the development of a more coordinated approach with trusted, supportive expertise to ensure that stakeholders are fully informed of the facts on their decarbonisation journey.

### **Find out more:**

You can watch an overview of the NCEL community energy company here.  
<https://youtu.be/TyT8F9fREIk?si=8fINTWfY-FwZH7WI>

### **Get in touch:**

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