

Introduction

Who is this Toolkit for?

This toolkit has been produced to help community groups to develop renewable energy projects. 'Groups' may be an informal collection of like-minded individuals wishing to start something in their community; or may be well-established, constituted organisations linked to a community facility (e.g. village hall or community centre) or with a wider purpose (e.g. Development Trust).

It does not assume any detailed knowledge of the topic and so allows you to decide where to start – whether this means looking at the basics of energy generation and use, or at specific detail of a particular renewable energy technology.

The Structure of the Toolkit – Three steps

The toolkit is designed to allow you to work through what your community's options will be and point you in the direction of further help and information to allow you to take a project forward.

It is structured according to 3 steps:

- **Your current position:** chose which section is most relevant to your requirements;
- **Information** on your chosen topic (Annex 2 includes case studies to support and help explain this);
- **More detailed and supporting information** on your chosen topic is in Annex 1. This along with links to further information in the body of the document will enable you to determine your need for further advice and, most importantly, be in a position to manage the provision of that advice and make decisions on it.

Community needs

It is a good idea to start by developing an understanding of what the needs of your community are. These may be obvious – for example the community hall or centre may be cold, difficult or expensive to heat and as a consequence, people may be reluctant to use it. There may be concerns that through increasing heat and power expenses it will become unsustainable to run and will fall into disrepair and/or that the community will suffer by not having an available meeting place. Alternatively, investment in new community buildings may be under investigation, so now is an ideal opportunity to build in renewable energy provision at the outset to help reduce long-term running costs. In addition, the community might want to actively participate in reducing its greenhouse gas emissions and combating climate change.

It may also be that the community needs an ongoing source of income to help address critical community needs and there may be a source of renewable energy nearby which could be used for this purpose. There may even be plans for a private renewable development near to the community from which the community could benefit.

Whatever the specific requirement is, it is highly likely that a renewable energy project could be taken forward and that this will bring a number of benefits to a community. For example, by equipping a community centre with a renewable energy system, running costs could be reduced, the centre would be warm, well used *and* its carbon emissions would be reduced.

Your Community's Requirements

Look at the following headings and decide which one best describes your current position. You can then begin by going to the section of the guide most relevant to your requirements. You can come back to the table in the light of your new position and move onto another section.

Your current position	Section
Beginner	1. Basics
Cold hall – high bills	2. Energy efficient buildings & 3. Technologies
Adjacent community buildings/houses need heating	4. District Heating
No grid connection	5. Off Grid Solutions
May generate more electricity than needed	6. Generating and Selling Electricity
Commercial wind farm locally	7. Securing Benefit from commercial schemes
Group structure	8. Organisation and consultation
Funding	9. Funding and Finance
Details	Annex 1 : Further Information
Other communities' experiences	Annex 2: Case Studies

A range of possibilities

Over the last few years an increasing number of community groups have discovered that it is possible to use renewable energy to benefit their community. There has also been a rapid growth in the range and quality of renewable energy technologies available to generate heat and power. There are now hundreds of such projects across Scotland which are up and running. They range from micro wind turbines to solar thermal to hydropower installations which help meet community energy needs. There may be one near you that would be worth going to see.