

BOTHER meeting 21st July 2020.

Present: Margaret Matthews, Dave Willey, Helena Vallis, Sarah Edwards, Malcolm Fletcher, Ray Holland (Yealm Energy)

Apologies: Chris Burns, Claire Pethick, Ian Pethick, Elizabeth Pearson.

The meeting had invited Ray Holland of Yealm Energy (YE) to share YE's experience of setting up a community association to invest in and share the benefits of renewable energy. The main points that emerged from the meeting were:

- Ray and a number of like-minded residents in the Yealm estuary area (Yealmpton, Newton and Noss, Brixton, Wembury and Holbeton) began by setting up a Community Benefit Society called Yealm Community Energy. CBS's are owned and controlled democratically by a number of stake holders, and operate primarily for the benefit of a wider stakeholder group. (see: <https://www.uk.coop/developing-co-ops/model-governing-documents/community-benefit-society>).
- Advice and support was gained from CORE (Community Owned Renewable Energy Association) in Penryn.
- Having decided on renewable energy as the focus for the CBS, they decided on solar as the preferred source. (At that time it was thought that there would be too much opposition to wind energy.)
- A grant was obtained from Devon County Council for a study of the area. Jacques Berniac of Communities for Renewables was the consultant.
- Rather than build their own solar farm, Yealm Community energy decided to invest in solar farms that were already in the area or were planned for construction. In 2018 they purchased their first solar farm at Newton Downs, and in 2020 they purchased a second in farm in Creacombe.
- Shares in YE are available to buy (minimum investment?) for a minimum of 5 years. Current rate of return is 5%. They will be bought back after 15 years.
- Landowners typically receive £1000 per acre p.a. rent
- Profits are made available for community projects. One of YE's solar farms provided £20,000 last year for community projects.
- The board of directors of YE are volunteers: they are all retired professionals. They have recently appointed a salaried part-time administrator.
- Ray suggested that the grant currently available from Cornwall Council could be used to pay a consultant to provide a report on likely renewable energy projects/models in our area.
- HV informed the meeting that South Hill parish had a wind turbine owned by the community.

Date of next meeting: 6th August 2020. Time and place TBC.