

Insights from National Grid's 2024 Swansea forum

In November, National Grid hosted their final two in-person community energy forums of the year, in Birmingham and Swansea. Below is a summary of the proceedings and discussion of the Swansea event



These community energy forums form part of a series of six events (two online and four in-person) that Regen has delivered this year for National Grid as part of its programme of community energy support.

The agenda for these events was formed both from previous event feedback and wider changes going on in the sector, such as the formation of GB Energy and the proposals around their Local Power Plan. Below is a summary of the proceedings and discussions of the Swansea event. To see the companion piece for the Birmingham event, click [here](#).

Gwyrdd Bangla: The Bengal Dragons go green!

Jon Townend, director of [Ynni Teg](#), gave a presentation on the steps that his organisation has been taking to get around barriers such as lack of grid capacity and regulatory restrictions, focusing less on energy and more on people.

One example of this work is the [Gwyrdd Bangla project](#) between the Bengal Dragons and Ynni Teg, which seeks to address the impact of the climate crisis and high energy costs on the Pakistani and Bangladeshi heritage communities of South Wales. The first phase of this project includes the planned management of c. 200 kWp of rooftop solar, c. 300 kWh of energy storage systems, and six electric vehicle charging points across 12 community buildings, including mosques, which form a central convening and social space role in the community.

Seven buildings have already been surveyed, with a grant application submitted to Ynni Cymru. Ynni Teg and The Bengal Dragons now have a goal of achieving action for 500 households in the community, whether through energy advice, energy efficiency measures, or solar or storage installation.

Panel: How do we achieve successful shared ownership projects in Wales?

The second session of the day was a wide-ranging panel on shared ownership, hosted by Prina Sumaria of Regen, and featuring input from Ben Ferguson of [Community Energy Wales](#) and Monika Paplaczuk of [Thrive Renewables](#).

Some of the topics that came up throughout the discussion included:

- **The range of enthusiasm for shared ownership among developers.** Some developers are showing great willingness to build models for shared ownership and work with communities, but there are quite a few who are less enthusiastic. It was mentioned that some of this might come from a natural resistance to losing profit.
- **The challenges of getting good finance mechanisms to support shared ownership.** Whilst there had been supportive policy in Wales around shared ownership, there had been relatively little financial support. There was also a suggestion to incorporate shared ownership into the requirements of a Contracts for Difference auction to further encourage partnerships.
- **The importance of quantifying the wider economic benefit of shared ownership.** It was mentioned that a recent study from Awel Amen Tawe (AAT) suggested that the finance put back into a community by the benefit fund from their (AAT's) community wind farm worked out as £43,000 per MW. This stands in stark contrast to the industry standard for private developers of onshore wind of £5,000 per MW.

Community energy's role in the wider energy landscape in Wales

Jennifer Pride, the Welsh government's head of energy delivery, gave an update on how different energy policies are intersecting at a national, regional and local level. The presentation looked at what a Future Energy Scenario for Wales that could deliver more local value – while also enabling the grid – might look like.

This included delving into the interlocking nature of the plans that have been produced at national, local and regional levels, discussing the valuable outputs of Local Area Energy Plans, the work Ofgem has been doing to establish the Regional Energy System Planner, and the large scale infrastructure planning being supported by the Strategic Spatial Energy Plan.

Ynni Cymru: What's been achieved so far and what's next

Steve Keating of [Local Partnerships](#) gave a quick debrief on the work so far of Ynni Cymru, the government body set up to expand locally owned renewable energy in Wales. The work already done includes a £750,000 Community Energy Resource Grant, a [£10 million capital grant scheme](#) to fund SLES, and the launching of the 'Health Check' service for local renewable energy projects.

Steve also touched upon Ynni Cymru's ambitions going forward, including expanding the 'Health Check' process delivering a pipeline of SLES projects, providing the Wales Energy Storage Tool for those looking at the viability of battery storage in their localities, and looking at how SLES can build energy system resilience.

How can GB Energy support the development of community energy in Wales and England?

In both the Swansea and Birmingham forums, a session of the day was given over to discuss some of the challenges that the community energy sector is currently facing, and how GB Energy might play a role in helping overcome these challenges. Attendees were encouraged to engage in 'blue-sky thinking' and feedback on all potential solutions, with the idea being that with GB Energy still very much in its infancy, now is the time to make an ambitious case for

community energy support to government. You can see the summarised findings of these sessions [here](#).