

Response from Regen SW

- How is it best to engage communities in the smart energy agenda?

Ensure smart energy strategies and projects have social and environmental as well as economic objectives.

Engage local communities early on in smart energy projects to enable them to help shape initiatives to overcome concerns over issues such as privacy and provide local benefits.

See the Wadbridge case study in our work for Cornwall Council on the benefits of their Smart Cornwall project at page 186 of

www.cornwall.gov.uk/media/3620621/Smart-Cornwall-Evidence-base-report-FINAL.pdf

- What is the most appropriate geographical scale (local neighbourhoods, cities, city regions)?

I think cities and regions are already engaging in the smart city and energy agenda. The challenge is to engage communities at a more local level

- What are the motivating factors for local community groups?

They vary, but local economic resilience is often a strong driver.

- What are the main obstacles to community energy co-operatives and how can they be removed?

Developing energy projects is extremely complicated. Community groups need support, guidance and partners if they are to succeed.

The current government subsidy changes have made most community energy projects unviable.

- What sources of funding (e.g.: community banking loan schemes) could be made available?

Local share issues have proved a successful way of financing projects. We do not see finance as a fundamental barrier – although this could change if the scale of sector changes. Where funding is needed is grant funding at earlier stages to help groups get going. E.g Regen and Devon County council have run a grant scheme of a few thousand pounds.

- What role should businesses, local authorities and the Welsh Government play in this transformation?

- What skills development and training is needed?

We have found an ongoing community support network providing support and peer to peer mentoring on key issues such as business planning, cooperative structures, grid access and share offers is more successful than ‘one off’ training - see <http://www.regensw.co.uk/communities/> for more info on our network of 250 community energy groups in the south west - including a video on their views.

This support be made more effective with ability and resource to produce guides on key issues such as we have done with Western Power Distribution on community grid access www.westernpower.co.uk/docs/connections/Generation/Community-Energy-Schemes/WPD_Guide_FINAL.aspx and Local Energy Scotland on a wide range of issues.

- What are the successes and limitations of the Ynni'r Fro programme?
- What can Wales learn from elsewhere on how best to engage local communities with this agenda?