

Subject:	Sussex Energy Update
Date of Meeting:	22 October 2025
Report of:	Chair, Greater Brighton Economic Board
Contact Officer:	Name: Natasha Bridge
	Email: Natasha.Bridge@brighton-hove.gov.uk
Ward(s) affected:	All

FOR GENERAL RELEASE**1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND POLICY CONTEXT**

- 1.1 On 16th July 2024 the Greater Brighton Economic Board (“the Board”) supported the launch of the Sussex Energy mission.
- 1.2 An update was provided in the subsequent Board meetings highlighting the progress made since the launch event.
- 1.3 This report gives a further Sussex Energy update setting out the work undertaken since the last Board meeting and the next steps in developing the mission.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That the Board notes the progress on Sussex Energy.
- 2.2 That the Board agrees to the procurement of the associated work packages (Funding and Finance Generation and Solar Across Sussex) in section 3.16 – 3.20.
- 2.3 That the Board agrees the:
 - i. Next steps proposed to take the Sussex Energy workstreams forward as set out in sections 3.8, 3.13, 3.15, 3.18, 3.20 and 3.22.
 - ii. Branding and recommendations of the Sussex Energy communications working group as set out in sections 3.10 and 3.11.
- 2.4 That the Board notes the new process for producing Sussex Energy related letters of support as set out in section 3.23 and agrees to delegate authority to finalise such letters of support to the Greater Brighton Economic Board Business Managers.
- 2.5 That the Board agrees to receive a further update on Sussex Energy at the next Board meeting.

3. CONTEXT/ BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 Sussex Energy aims to achieve energy neutrality across Sussex by 2040. This ambitious goal seeks to ensure that our community's energy use equals the amount of zero-carbon energy generated locally, thereby enhancing energy security, driving down energy bills and addressing urgent climate concerns, at the same time as generating inclusive economic prosperity.
- 3.2 This is a priority for the Greater Brighton Economic Board. Pace is needed to progress this in 2025/6 because climate change is cumulative, accelerating, and characterised by tipping points. This means delaying action makes solutions more challenging, costly, and potentially less effective.

UPDATE

Plan

- 3.3 The appendix contains a high-level version of the Sussex Energy delivery plan showing milestones and deliverables, an updated version of the version presented in the April Board meeting. There are six core workstreams shown which this update reflects: Network, comms, devolution - environment & climate change, solar across Sussex, funding / finance generation, small organisation sustainability support.

Workstream 1: Network

- 3.4 The **Sussex Energy Partner Group's membership** has expanded to include Southern Water, providing a major energy consumer perspective. This expansion strengthens the alignment between large energy users and regional decarbonisation efforts.
- 3.5 The Sussex Energy Forum has been established to bring together practitioners across the region to strengthen connections, accelerate their efforts, and co-create Sussex Energy. The first event happened on 9th July. There was a fantastic momentum in the room and unanimous support for a regional collaboration on energy decarbonisation. The key outcomes are specified in 3.7. Ongoing communication is now supported by a private LinkedIn group to allow for discussion and further events are being explored.
- 3.6 In advance of the event a survey was issued to understand; the biggest challenges faced by respondents in their low carbon energy work, what help they need to overcome these challenges and what could a Sussex Energy regional collaboration do to help address these challenges. 27 responses were received to this survey (~50% of the forum meeting capacity). The themes that were commonly identified as ways that a regional collaboration could help (finding and investment, knowledge sharing and collaboration, awareness and advocacy, etc.) were extrapolated and the breakout groups in the workshop were based on these themes.
- 3.7 From the breakout groups the following priorities were raised to tackle collaboratively:

- **Speaking with one voice** – present a united Sussex position to key stakeholders including the new mayor, GB Energy, landowners and landlords.
- **Access to expertise** – improve availability of energy consultants and technical support, particularly for smaller organisations that lack internal capacity.
- **Strengthening communications** – resource and support the new Sussex Energy communications group to raise the region’s profile.
- **Showcasing success** – systematically highlight existing projects and the pipeline of work to build investor confidence and generate further demand.
- **Policy alignment** – coordinate local policies to create a coherent regional approach and influence national stakeholders more effectively.
- **Strategic planning** – develop a more dynamic Regional Energy Strategy, including representation for Sussex on the new National Energy System Operator (NESO) advisory structures.

These priorities have already begun to shape delivery: several are now embedded as Sussex Energy workstreams and are being actively progressed. The sections below set out what has been achieved against each of these priorities to date and the next steps for taking them forward.

3.8 Next Steps:

- ***Continue to keep Forum LinkedIn Group active to encourage connections to be strengthened.***
- ***Plan another forum event.***

Workstream 2: Communications

- 3.9 A Sussex Energy **Communications Working Group** has been convened, with representation from business representative organisations, community energy organisations, local authorities, universities, businesses and public bodies. The group are supportive of collaborating on communications to strengthen the region’s profile in energy decarbonisation and attending a regular meeting to progress this.
- 3.10 The group recommends establishing a public **Sussex Energy LinkedIn page** to:
- a) Provide a source of consistent content for partners to amplify.
 - b) Build Sussex Energy as its own brand. This will be helpful given uncertainties around where this work will be housed in the future considering change with devolution, and to reduce barriers by presenting Sussex Energy as a non-partisan, region-wide entity.
- Note: This is separate from the Sussex Energy Forum LinkedIn group which is a private group, intended to provide a discussion space for people working on low-carbon energy work in Sussex.*
- 3.11 A **Sussex Energy logo** has been produced through consultation with the Sussex Energy Partner Group.



- 3.12 Additional communications support has been secured for November via the University of Sussex's funded student consultancy programme. The students will be supporting to help develop a communications plan, catalogue existing content, and support campaign design.
- 3.13 Next Steps:
- ***Work with University of Sussex students on comms plan development and content identification.***
 - ***Launch Sussex Energy LinkedIn Group.***

Workstream 3: Devolution – Environment & Climate Change

- 3.14 In addition to connecting with existing Combined Authorities to learn about their devolution journeys for environment and climate change (e.g. Greater Manchester, West Midlands, South Yorkshire, West Yorkshire) a brief is being prepared with Local Authority officers from West Sussex, East Sussex and Brighton & Hove to outline the current landscape for Environment and Climate Change in Sussex and Brighton, and the opportunities that open up with devolution. This is currently intended to be used as a brief for senior officers to feed relevant information and evidence into the Local Growth Plan and Combined Authority set-up.
- 3.15 Next Steps:
- ***Finalise brief with Local Authority Officers.***
 - ***Use the forum to test and refine a joint Sussex and Brighton position on environment and climate change, reinforcing the commitment to speak with one voice.***

Workstream 4: Funding and Finance Generation

- 3.16 In July 2024, a total of £100,000 was agreed to be set aside from the Greater Brighton Economic Board Operational Budget to support Sussex Energy - £50,000 from 2024/25 and £50,000 from 2025/26.

The Sussex Energy Partner Group has recommended using some of this to generate funding and finance for decarbonisation projects in Sussex. This work package is still in review with the Partner Group so is evolving through feedback.

To this end, a work package has been drafted and is in review with the Sussex Energy Partner Group, for expertise to:

- Gain familiarity with energy decarbonisation projects across Sussex, including community energy initiatives.
- Research regional decarbonisation funds and investment models established elsewhere in the UK.

- Develop options for how a Sussex Regional Decarbonisation Fund could be structured.
- Identify and assess potential national and regional funders / investors relevant to Sussex.
- Develop a regional investment strategy including recommendations on; how Sussex should position itself to attract investment, areas of work to prioritise to optimise investment/funding, key enabling actions, partnerships required, etc.
- Develop an investment prospectus and promote Sussex as a prime location for investment in low-carbon energy infrastructure. This would encourage bundling of commercially attractive projects with less commercially viable projects.
- Generate income to sustain the funding/finance generation function.
- Promote Sussex's low carbon energy reputation.

The budget for this work package is £30k and the duration of the contract would be 9 months. Clear evaluation metrics / KPIs will be built into this package. The exact extent of the work package will vary depending on final proposals.

3.17 Developing a **single view of energy decarbonisation work in Sussex** is included as part of this draft work package currently (as part of familiarisation with energy decarbonisation projects across Sussex).

3.18 Next Steps:

- ***The procurement team have been engaged through Brighton & Hove City Council to explore either procuring a contract directly, or through existing frameworks.***
- ***Explore ways to create a single view of energy decarbonisation projects in Sussex.***

Workstream 5: Solar Across Sussex

3.19 In addition to funding and finance generation, the Sussex Energy Partner Group recommended investing in a resource to drive forward Solar Across Sussex, an ambition to increase large scale solar generation in Sussex (this can be rooftop or solar car ports as well as ground-mounted and includes batteries).

This work has been split across the following two work packages which have been drafted and are in review with the Sussex Energy Partner Group so are evolving further through feedback.

- **Identification and prioritisation** (£20k / 4 months) – Mapping, screening and prioritising potential solar sites.
- **Engagement and aggregation** (£50k / 6 months) – Landowner and stakeholder engagement, development of collective delivery models, and identification of best sites for aggregation. This could enable the bundling of investable sites with less commercially viable projects.

3.20 Next Steps:

- ***The procurement team have been engaged through Brighton & Hove City Council to explore procuring a contract for this work.***

Workstream 6: Small Organisation Sustainability Support

- 3.21 From the forum meeting in July, a priority raised to tackle collaboratively was to improve small organisations access to sustainability expertise. Through the [Make Business Greener Campaign funded by the NatureSave Trust](#) (an insurance provider with a focus on sustainability), sustainability support is provided to small organisations. Sussex Energy is working with this provider to promote this service. The provider is working to get sessions offered through the Business & Intellectual Property Centre (BIPC) Sussex which offers support to entrepreneurs, inventors, and small businesses across Sussex to help them start and grow their business via events, database access, information and one to one sessions with experts. They will offer sustainability expert sessions virtually where small organisations are offered to book 1-hour sessions to talk over their issues or questions. University of Brighton have proposed extend this offering by providing student support to research issues for small organisations, which could be turned into dissertation projects.
- 3.22 Next Steps:
- ***Promote how to access sustainability advice to small organisations.***
 - ***Work with provider to work out how to tie in University of Brighton student support offer.***
 - ***Connect with provider to understand lessons learned in January.***

Letters of Support

- 3.23 The Board has received recent requests for letters of support for work aligned with Sussex Energy (see table below). Currently these letters of support are signed off by the Chair and sent from the Chair. It is expected that more such letters will be requested. To make this manageable, it is proposed that authority is delegated to the Greater Brighton Economic Board Business Managers to issue letters of support from themselves for initiatives aligned to the following criteria:
- **Aligned with Sussex Energy Mission:** The project contributes to advancing energy neutrality in Sussex by 2040 through renewable generation, energy efficiency, demand reduction, energy system innovation, or related sustainability outcomes.
 - **Geographic Relevance:** The project is located in Sussex or delivers tangible benefits for communities, organisations, or businesses in Sussex.
 - **Regional Benefit:** The project advances the energy transition in a way that delivers clear benefits for Sussex and its communities. Benefits may include:
 - Local economic growth and investment retained in the region.
 - Social and community benefit (e.g. community ownership, empowerment, local services).
 - Financial fairness and energy equity (e.g. reducing energy costs, tackling fuel poverty).
 - Skills, jobs, and training opportunities for local people.

- **Delivery Credibility:** The organisation requesting support has a clear delivery plan and demonstrable capacity, partnerships, or track record to progress the proposal.
- **No Conflict of Interest:** The project does not place the Board in a position of endorsing one private supplier or commercial service provider over others, unless through a fair and transparent process.
- **Added Value of Support:** The requestor has explained how the Board's letter of support will strengthen the project (e.g. in funding bids, stakeholder engagement, profile-raising).
- **Clarity of Request:** The request clearly states what is being supported (e.g. funding bid, research collaboration, pilot project) and provides sufficient background for the Business Managers to assess alignment.

Proposed Process

- a) Business Managers will assess requests against these criteria before issuing a letter.
- b) Letters of support will be reported back to the Board in the Sussex Energy Update Paper.
- c) Where appropriate and agreed with the project lead, letters will be highlighted in Sussex Energy communications to showcase regional leadership.

Organisation	Project	Date GBEB letter of support sent
The South Downs National Park Trust	Proposal to expand community-delivered energy advice	3 rd Sept 2025
University of Sussex	Expression of interest for Regional Energy Planning and Heat Decarbonisation research funding	17 th Sept 2025

4. ANALYSIS & CONSIDERATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 4.1 The Board is unlikely to have sufficient funding directly for projects, but even if it could, the impact would be far less than incubating collaborative working to attract funding into the region for energy solutions, culminating in the implementation of scaled solutions which could make a large impact to the UK net zero goals. The Government has highlighted decarbonisation of energy as a priority with aims to transition to a zero-carbon electricity system by 2030, create 650,000 new jobs by 2030 through investment in clean energy and infrastructure and install thousands of clean power projects which local people directly benefit from.
- 4.2 The Government's energy ambition confirms the right approach is an ambitious goal that the Sussex Energy mission aligns strongly with.
- 4.3 Alternative individuals or consultants could lead on shaping the Environment and Climate Change approach in the submissions for the proposed Sussex and Brighton Mayoral Combined County Authority. However:

- Sussex Energy is working on the same geography as a future proposed Sussex and Brighton Mayoral Combined County Authority.
 - A wide network of contacts has been built (from Sussex local authorities and other organisations) that have the necessary expertise to inform an Environment and Climate Change approach for the proposed Sussex and Brighton Mayoral Combined County Authority in a way that can gather input from many stakeholders, so increasing buy in to the approach.
 - A Partner Group, including representation from the 3 Sussex upper tier authorities, has been established and is working together successfully.
 - Conversations about ways to leverage strategic level coordination to drive growth and add value are in progress in the Sussex Energy Partner Group.
- 4.4 The Greater South East Net Zero Hub work with public sector organisations and their stakeholders to support the development and financing of local net zero projects to increase the number, scale and quality of projects. They will be part of the Sussex Energy Core Network and will support the advancement of Sussex Energy through their expertise and sector knowledge. Whilst they will be an active partner, their work is focused on the delivery of individual projects rather than strategic regional work. Further, they are not resourced to deliver the range and scale of activity as set out in the workstreams (as set out in paragraphs 3.4 - 3.22), with the geographical focus envisaged for Sussex Energy.

5. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & CONSULTATION

- 5.1 Community engagement is an important principle of Sussex Energy. The ongoing approach will vary depending on the proposed energy solution, from consulting the community, offering community ownership options to enabling communities to implement their own solutions. Community engagement options will be different for each working group / project but will be considered and prioritised.
- 5.2 The first Sussex Energy Forum meeting was held on Wednesday, 9 July. The Forum brings together individuals working on low-carbon energy solutions in Sussex to strengthen connections, accelerate their efforts, and co-create Sussex Energy. This community is being cultivated through continuous online discussion on a Sussex Energy Forum LinkedIn group and future meetings are in discussion.
- 5.3 As mentioned in section 3 under the ‘Solar Across Sussex’ section, engagement is one of the areas of focus. This includes advice to site owners on community engagement and would promote awareness of community financial models that fund projects in ways that benefit local communities and secure buy-in.

6. CONCLUSION

- 6.1 The Board is asked to agree the recommendations 2.1-2.5, which will mean the work to operationalise Sussex Energy will continue.

7. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:

- 7.1 In July 2024, the Board agreed to earmark a total of £100,000 from the Greater Brighton Economic Board Operational Budget to support the Sussex Energy mission — £50,000 from the 2024/25 Operational Budget (carried forward to 2025/26) and a further £50,000 from the 2025/26 Budget. These funds are proposed to be used to commission priority work packages as outlined in paragraphs 3.16 - 3.20 (Funding and Finance Generation and Solar Across Sussex). Procurement will be undertaken within these agreed allocations, providing the necessary expertise to accelerate delivery of the Sussex Energy workstreams.

Finance Officer Consulted: Haley Woollard, BHCC Head of Finance & Deputy Chief Finance Officer
Date: 09/10/25

Legal Implications:

- 7.2 In respect of recommendation 2.2, as work packages are progressed, the proposed procurements will need to comply with the relevant provisions of the Procurement legislation and the Contract Standing Orders of Brighton & Hove City Council (as the accountable body). The Procurement Team has been engaged to ensure appropriate routes are followed, whether through direct tendering or existing frameworks. There are no direct legal implications arising from the rest of the recommendations in this report.

Lawyer Consulted: Siobhan Fry
Date: 14/10/25

Equalities Implications:

- 7.3 Sussex Energy is aiming to ensure that the benefits of the transition to net zero energy are shared equitably across the region. This includes supporting community energy models that retain value locally; promoting investment in energy efficiency measures that help reduce fuel poverty; and ensuring that smaller organisations and community groups, which often lack capacity or technical expertise, can access support through dedicated workstreams.

The communications working group is being built is with a wide variety of organisations to ensure engagement activity is designed to be inclusive, reaching residents, businesses, and voluntary sector organisations across Sussex. Citizens Advice and Fuel Poverty Coordinators are included in the Sussex Energy Forum so that the voices of those most affected by high energy costs or poor housing are heard when shaping solutions. The Sussex Energy Useful Resources page also signposts to Citizens Advice and support services focused on tackling fuel poverty and reducing energy costs.

By embedding these practices, Sussex Energy is helping to ensure that vulnerable households and smaller organisations are not left behind in the transition but

instead are supported and empowered to participate in and benefit from a fairer, more resilient low-carbon economy.

Sustainability Implications

- 7.4 The driving force behind Sussex Energy is to reduce carbon emissions and accelerate the journey to net zero, which will help protect the environment, enhance natural capital, limit the effects of climate change, and build resilience in key infrastructure and the supply of energy. The programme promotes renewable energy generation, energy efficiency, and decarbonisation of heat, all of which directly contribute to the UK's legally binding carbon budgets. It also supports adaptation and resilience by enabling more localised generation and greater energy security. Co-benefits include improved air quality from reduced fossil fuel use, job creation in low-carbon industries, and the development of skills and supply chains that will have long-term positive impacts for the regional economy. Sustainability principles will also be embedded in procurement processes, for example by exploring ways to prioritise local suppliers and ensure social value.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

Sussex Energy Plan September 2025