

Subject:	Sussex Energy Update
Date of Meeting:	24 June 2026
Report of:	Chair, Greater Brighton Economic Board
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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”) approved the launch of the Sussex Energy mission.
- 1.2 This report provides a further update on Sussex Energy progress since the January 2026 Board meeting and sets out the next steps in developing the mission.
- 1.3 The update also sets out how Sussex Energy is being positioned to support transition of GBEB work into the Sussex and Brighton Strategic Authority (SBSA), with a focus on maintaining momentum, strengthening the project pipeline, and attracting investment into the region.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That the Board notes the progress on Sussex Energy.
- 2.2 That the Board supports the:
 - i. Next steps needed to take Sussex Energy forward as set out in section 3.9, 3.16, 3.21, 3.26, 3.30, 3.34 and 3.40.
 - ii. Progression to the 2nd phase of Solar Across Sussex running from August 2026 to December 2026, focused on stakeholder engagement and enabling actions to accelerate delivery of investable solar projects across Sussex.
 - iii. Progression of the procurement of the Regional Energy Finance Strategy with the contract planned to be awarded in July, ending in December 2026.
- 2.3 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, ensuring that the region's energy demand is matched by the supply of locally generated, renewable energy. The mission seeks to enhance energy security, reduce energy bills, address climate change and support inclusive economic prosperity.
- 3.2 The Mission remains a strategic priority. As regional governance changes through devolution, it is important that the momentum, partnerships and programme infrastructure developed through Sussex Energy are maintained and positioned effectively within future SBSA arrangements.
- 3.3 Energy security, energy affordability and the economic opportunities linked to clean energy infrastructure are expected to remain important regional priorities irrespective of future political or governance arrangements. Sussex Energy is therefore increasingly being positioned not only as a net zero programme, but also as a practical platform to support investment, infrastructure resilience, local job creation and long-term economic growth across Sussex.
- 3.4 MCS-certified renewable energy installations across Sussex local authorities increased by around 27% between 2024 and 2025, compared with around 5% growth the previous year. This demonstrates increasing momentum in local energy deployment across Sussex during the period Sussex Energy has been operating and reinforces the opportunity for coordinated regional action to accelerate investment, energy resilience and supply-chain growth.

UPDATE

Summary

- 3.5 Sussex Energy has continued to make strong progress across all workstreams. Key developments include:
 - The **Sussex and Brighton Energy Briefing**, developed by net zero, energy and environment leads across the three upper-tier authorities to give the Strategic Authority a clear starting point on energy, has been reviewed with districts and boroughs and will be presented to the Sussex Energy Forum to strengthen regional alignment before being shared with the SBSA.
 - A survey is being developed to **collate a regional pipeline of clean energy and energy efficiency projects**. This will support the Energy Briefing, inform potential community energy proposals to Great British Energy, and help position Sussex as an investable region for wider public and private sector funding opportunities. Early modelling from Sussex community energy partners suggests that coordinated regional investment could unlock significant renewable energy deployment, community benefit and local economic value.

- The **Solar Across Sussex identification and prioritisation work** is reaching a key milestone, with consultants presenting findings at this Board meeting of the 1st phase. Subject to the outcomes of this phase, a 2nd phase is proposed from August 2026 to December 2026 to engage stakeholders, focus efforts in more favourable locations and address delivery barriers to enable - and assist - viable sites to progress towards development. This phase is expected to be funded from the remaining Sussex Energy allocation previously agreed by the Board.
- The **Regional Energy Finance Strategy** is in procurement, with an intention to award the contract in July 2026 and complete the work in December 2026. This work will assess funding and investor opportunities and recommend how Sussex can attract and coordinate finance into energy decarbonisation. Early investor engagement suggests that the scale of investment is hundreds of millions of pounds, substantially larger than individual projects or organisations can typically attract alone, reinforcing the value of a coordinated Sussex-wide programme capable of building and maintaining a regional pipeline.
- A **Sussex Energy Forum in-person session is planned for 14 July 2026**, in collaboration with the University of Sussex, to strengthen partner relationships, provide an update on Sussex Energy progress, and draw on the collective expertise of the network to explore practical opportunities to improve energy security, attract investment and support delivery of local energy infrastructure projects across Sussex, helping inform the emerging priorities of the Strategic Authority.
- Communications work has progressed, including **publication of a Sussex Energy article** on the [Sussex Green Edit website](#) and securing a University of Sussex intern to support development of a “pick and mix” content library and shared communications calendar over the summer.
- A University of Brighton master’s student with Brighton & Hove City Council support has developed a **regional map dashboard showing energy decarbonisation projects across Sussex**. Work is underway to bring this into Brighton & Hove City Council digital infrastructure so it can be published via the Greater Brighton website.
- Brighton Metropolitan College, part of Chichester College Group, together with Vaillant and Optimus Heating Ltd, is **launching the UK’s first Vaillant training facility** focused on low-carbon heating skills. The new Centre of Excellence will help develop the skilled workforce needed to support the transition to heat pumps and low-carbon heating systems, strengthening Sussex’s position in the growing clean energy economy.

Workstream: Devolution – Transition to SBSA

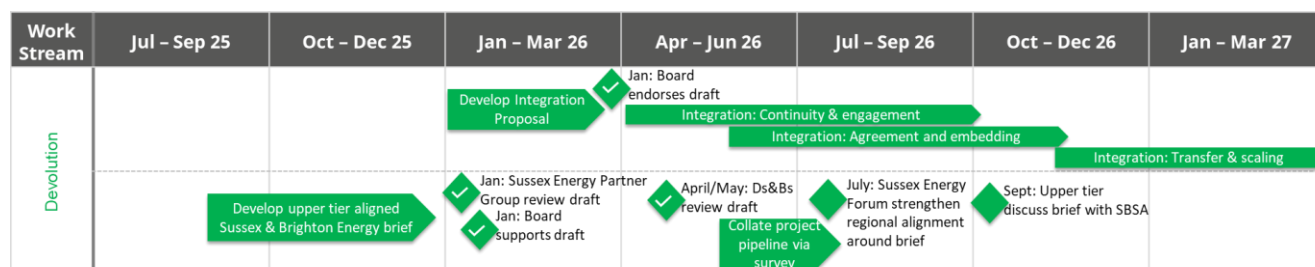
- 3.6 Engagement is ongoing with the SBSA on the Integration Proposal, including how Sussex Energy could be taken forward within future regional governance arrangements. Discussions are exploring how Sussex Energy can support wider regional priorities including energy security, investment, infrastructure resilience and local job opportunities, alongside the transition to lower-carbon energy systems. Regular meetings are in place with the SBSA and Board representation (including the nominated Board member – Cllr Eggleston).

- 3.7 Sussex Energy is being positioned as a delivery-ready, investable regional programme. It already has active partners, established governance through the Partner Group, communications channels, commissioned work and an emerging pipeline of projects. This gives the SBSA a practical platform to demonstrate early regional delivery on energy, net zero, infrastructure and economic growth. It also provides an emerging mechanism for the SBSA to help coordinate regional energy investment opportunities and develop project portfolios of a scale capable of attracting institutional investment.
- 3.8 Maintaining Sussex Energy through the transition period remains important. The work currently underway — particularly the Energy Briefing, project pipeline, Solar Across Sussex and Regional Energy Finance Strategy — is creating the evidence and investment proposition needed to help the SBSA understand the value of adopting and supporting this work.
- 3.9 Next Steps:
- ***Continue engagement with SBSA officers and leadership on the Integration Proposal, using Sussex Energy outputs to demonstrate the value of the programme.***
 - ***Continue activity to allow the current programme and investment work to be completed and transitioned effectively.***

Workstream: Devolution – Sussex and Brighton Energy Briefing

- 3.10 The Sussex and Brighton Energy Briefing has been developed by net zero, energy and environment leads across the three upper-tier authorities. Its purpose is to give the SBSA a clear starting point on energy, building on activity already underway so the Strategic Authority can move quickly, demonstrate early progress and begin attracting investment into the region.
- 3.11 The briefing has now been reviewed with districts and boroughs and will be presented to the Sussex Energy Forum in July to strengthen regional alignment before being shared with the SBSA.
- 3.12 A survey is being developed to collate a regional pipeline of energy projects. This pipeline will support the Energy Briefing by identifying projects where regional coordination, funding or investment could unlock faster delivery or greater scale.
- 3.13 The project pipeline also has wider value beyond the devolution briefing. It is helping to identify investable opportunities that could support bids to Great British Energy and attract wider institutional, philanthropic and private investment into Sussex, including place-based investment approaches. Early discussions with place-based investors indicate that aggregated regional energy programmes in the range of £300m-£500m may be attractive to institutional capital, provided a sufficiently mature and investable pipeline can be developed. This highlights the importance of Sussex Energy's work to identify, aggregate and prepare projects capable of attracting investment at a scale that individual organisations would struggle to achieve independently. All investment approaches would be reviewed in the Regional Energy Finance Strategy work.

- 3.14 For example, Sussex community energy organisations, working with Community Energy Pathways, are developing a proposal to Great British Energy seeking £33m of investment over four years into a Sussex Community Energy Revolving Fund. Early modelling suggests this could unlock around 88MW of new community-owned renewable energy generation and approximately £66m of project value, alongside wider community benefits including fuel poverty support, energy advice and local supply-chain development.
- 3.15 The pipeline work being coordinated through Sussex Energy will help identify, evidence and aggregate projects that could contribute towards opportunities of this nature, demonstrating how Sussex Energy can support not only net zero objectives but also inward investment, economic growth and community wealth-building across the region.
- 3.16 Next Steps:
- **Present the Energy Briefing at the Sussex Energy Forum.**
 - **Publish and promote the project pipeline survey and analyse submissions to identify investable opportunities.**
 - **Refine the briefing and project pipeline before engagement with the SBSA.**
 - **Use the pipeline to support investment conversations.**



Workstream: Solar Across Sussex (Commissioned Work)

- 3.17 The Solar Across Sussex identification and prioritisation work is reaching a key milestone, with phase 1 completing in July. The work has focused on identifying and assessing rooftop and ground-mounted solar opportunities across Sussex.
- 3.18 The project is intended to strengthen Sussex's long-term energy security and affordability by accelerating deployment of locally generated solar energy, reducing reliance on imported fossil fuels and increasing the amount of energy produced within the region. Solar represents a significant opportunity for Sussex due to the region's high levels of annual sunshine, established community energy expertise, and growing technical capability in renewable energy deployment. Increasing local solar generation can strengthen energy security, reduce exposure to volatile energy prices, support electrification of heat and transport, and help relieve pressure on parts of the electricity grid. Expanding solar deployment also has the potential to attract investment, stimulate local supply chains and jobs, and retain more economic value within Sussex through community and public-sector investment models. For rural areas, solar can provide an important additional income stream for farms and landowners, as well as reducing their energy bills,

helping support the long-term viability of agricultural businesses, while contributing to regional energy resilience.

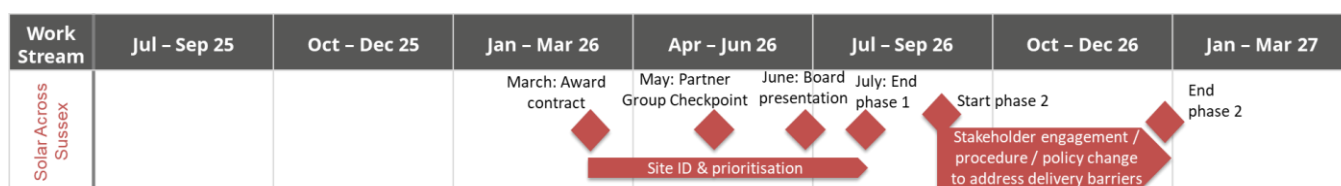
3.19 Subject to Board support and finalisation of the phase 1 outputs, phase 2 is proposed from August 2026 to December 2026, funded by the remaining Sussex Energy allocation previously agreed by the Board. This phase would focus on stakeholder engagement and addressing policy or delivery barriers and procedure changes required to unblock solar development. The aim is to enable and assist viable sites to progress towards development and identify changes that would make future solar projects easier to implement.

3.20 Asks of Board:

- **Board support is sought to progress phase 2 of Solar Across Sussex, focused on stakeholder engagement, project assistance and enabling actions to accelerate delivery of projects that improve energy security, reduce exposure to volatile energy prices, attract investment and increase locally generated energy across Sussex.**

3.21 Next Steps:

- **Review consultant phase 1 findings of priority opportunities for progression.**
- **Finalise scope and commissioning arrangements for the proposed phase 2.**
- **Develop a communications and stakeholder engagement approach for phase 1 findings.**
- **Align Solar Across Sussex outputs with the wider regional investment pipeline, community energy proposals and SBSA engagement.**



Workstreams: Regional Energy Finance Strategy (Commissioned Work)

3.22 The Regional Energy Finance Strategy is in procurement, with an intention to award the contract in July 2026. The work is due to complete in December 2026.

3.23 This strategy will set out how Sussex can attract and coordinate investment into energy decarbonisation, including consideration of revolving funds, blended finance, institutional investment and community wealth-building approaches. It will review funding and investor opportunities, assess potential models, and recommend how Sussex should position itself to draw finance into the region.

3.24 As part of this work, potential investors and finance models will be reviewed to assess their match for Sussex. This will be key to moving Sussex Energy from a collaboration and planning platform into an investable regional programme capable of attracting external funding and finance.

3.25 Asks of Board:

- **Board support is sought to progress procurement of the Regional Energy Finance Strategy.**

3.26 Next Steps:

- **Complete procurement and award contract in July.**
- **Use the strategy to support SBSA engagement and future investment propositions.**

Work Stream	Jul – Sep 25	Oct – Dec 25	Jan – Mar 26	Apr – Jun 26	Jul – Sep 26	Oct – Dec 26	Jan – Mar 27
Regional Energy Funding & Investment Strategy					July: Award contract 	Nov: Regional Energy Funding & Investment Strategy 	
					Sept: • Sussex Energy Landscape & Funding Baseline • Regional Benchmarking & Case Study Summary 	Dec: • Investor and Funding Landscape Summary • Implementation Plan 	

3.27 Should the Board be dissolved in September 2026, there would be a requirement for an organisation to administer and manage the contracts to completion for the Sussex Energy commissioned work. Delivery oversight will be provided by an agreed group from the Sussex Energy Partner Group, responsible for monitoring progress and confirming deliverable sign-off. The role would therefore be limited to contract administration, including verification of signed-off deliverables and processing payments to suppliers. Further consideration will be given to which organisation could appropriately house this role and whether any additional costs arise from this arrangement. These costs would be covered by the GBEB Contingency budget.

Workstream: Network – Sussex Energy Forum

3.28 The second in-person Sussex Energy Forum is planned for 14 July 2026, in collaboration with the University of Sussex. The event will bring together partners working across low-carbon energy in Sussex to strengthen relationships, share progress and identify opportunities for further collaboration. This builds on the success of the first in-person Forum event in July 2025, which brought together over 50 individuals from 35 organisations across Sussex, and the online LinkedIn Forum group of over 80 practitioners continuing the dialogue, collaborating on energy project site visits, sharing knowledge and news.

3.29 In addition to providing an update on Sussex Energy progress and strengthen regional alignment on the Sussex and Brighton Energy Brief and projects survey, the Forum will be used to draw on the collective expertise of partners to discuss the emerging Community Energy proposal (see paragraph 3.13) and help formulate a pipeline of projects that could form part of the proposal.

3.30 Next Steps:

- **Integrate outputs from workshop into Sussex Energy workstreams.**
- **Explore forum event for early 2027.**

Work Stream	Jul – Sep 25	Oct – Dec 25	Jan – Mar 26	Apr – Jun 26	Jul – Sep 26	Oct – Dec 26	Jan – Mar 27
Network	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jul: Forum event Jul: Forum LI group set up 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Feb: Worthing Heat Network - Forum drop in 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jan: Forum event 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> July: Forum event 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Forum event: Heat Network Energy Centre site visit TBC
Sussex Energy forum LI group activity							

Workstream: Communications

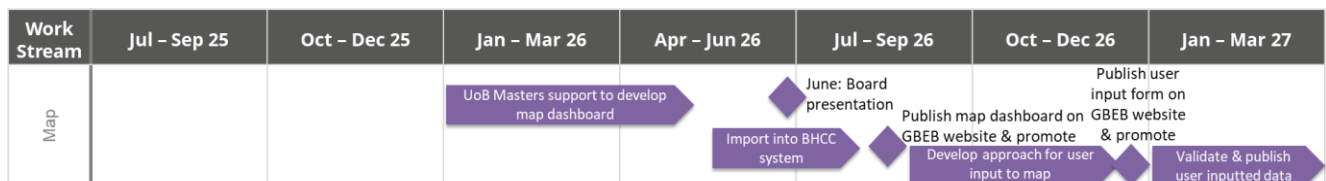
- 3.31 Sussex Energy communications activity has continued to develop. A Sussex Energy article has been published on the Sussex Green Edit website (<https://sussexgreenedit.ghost.io/from-rooftops-to-resilience-the-mission-to-make-sussex-energy-neutral-by-2040/>) by a local journalist who has been collaborating with Sussex Energy to promote positive local energy stories.
- 3.32 A University of Sussex intern is in position to support Sussex Energy communications over the summer. The intern is helping develop a “pick and mix” content library and calendar, building on previous student consultancy work, and will engage partners to align communications around shared Sussex Energy themes.
- 3.33 This work will help coordinate and amplify the region’s voice on energy, ensuring that partners can promote local success stories, raise public awareness and strengthen Sussex’s profile as a leading place for low-carbon energy activity.
- 3.34 **Next Steps:**
- **Develop the “pick and mix” content library and communications calendar.**
 - **Engage partner organisations to align communications around shared themes.**
 - **Continue working with local media and partners to promote positive Sussex energy stories.**

Work Stream	Jul – Sep 25	Oct – Dec 25	Jan – Mar 26	Apr – Jun 26	Jul – Sep 26	Oct – Dec 26	Jan – Mar 27
Comms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oct: Logo & Sussex Energy LI page set up 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dec: Newsletter 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> May: Article 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> June: Newsletter 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dec: Newsletter
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> UoS consultancy UoS summer intern Shared Comms Calendar & Content Developed Partners Engaged Content Posted Sussex Energy LinkedIn posts to raise profile of region’s energy work 							

Workstream: Mapping Work – Sussex Energy Project Map

- 3.35 A University of Brighton master’s student has developed an interactive map and dashboard showing energy decarbonisation projects across Sussex. This responds to a key gap identified by partners: the absence of a single, visible and up-to-date view of energy activity across the region. This map will be presented at today’s Board meeting.

- 3.36 The map will help build a visible identity for Sussex as a leading place for the energy transition. It will support investment, collaboration and public understanding by showing the scale and range of activity in plan or operational.
- 3.37 The map will also help inspire replication by allowing communities, councils and delivery organisations to see examples of projects elsewhere in Sussex. It will enable organisations to showcase their work and support partnership-building, funding applications and increased delivery.
- 3.38 Work is underway to bring the map and dashboard into Brighton & Hove City Council digital infrastructure so it can be published on the Greater Brighton website. A subsequent phase of work is planned to enable users to submit project data points for verification and publication, helping to capture smaller capacity sites and those not captured by the national, public databases where the data is pulled from.
- 3.39 The map pulls data from central government and Distribution Network Operator sources that are regularly updated. The map is being handed over to the Greater Brighton Economic Board to update the map (depending on capacity) from the sources on a regular basis so the map will not be a static “snapshot”.
- 3.40 Next Steps:
- **Continue work to integrate the dashboard into Brighton & Hove City Council infrastructure.**
 - **Publish the dashboard on the Greater Brighton website and add link to it in the Sussex and Brighton Energy Briefing.**
 - **Develop the next phase to enable verified user-submitted project data.**



4. ANALYSIS & CONSIDERATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 4.1 The Board does not have sufficient funding to directly deliver large-scale energy projects. However, Sussex Energy can add significant value by convening partners, building shared evidence, developing an investable project pipeline, and laying the foundations to attract finance into the region.
- 4.2 The work now underway demonstrates that Sussex Energy is not only supporting net zero objectives, but also creating the conditions for inward investment, infrastructure delivery, community wealth-building, lower energy costs and long-term economic growth. Emerging opportunities linked to Great British Energy and other investment models demonstrate the potential scale of external capital that coordinated regional working could help unlock for Sussex. Early discussions suggest that institutional investors are often seeking opportunities at a scale of hundreds of millions of pounds, highlighting the importance of coordinated regional activity to build a sufficiently large and credible pipeline.

- 4.3 An alternative option would be to pause or reduce activity while SBSA governance arrangements develop. This is not recommended. The Energy Briefing, Solar Across Sussex, Regional Energy Finance Strategy and Project Map Dashboard all require continued coordination through to at least December 2026 if they are to produce maximum value and be effectively positioned for SBSA adoption.

5. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & CONSULTATION

- 5.1 Community engagement remains a core principle of Sussex Energy. The approach varies depending on the project, from awareness raising and consultation to community ownership and community-led delivery models.
- 5.2 The Sussex Energy Forum provides an important in person and online mechanism for engagement with organisations working across low-carbon energy in Sussex. The July 2026 in-person session will provide an opportunity to strengthen collaboration, test emerging proposals and draw on the experience of partners to develop a stronger project pipeline.
- 5.3 The communications content library and calendar, the Sussex Energy project map, and the public Sussex Energy LinkedIn presence – now with over 400 followers – help raise public awareness, promote regional energy activity, amplify partner messaging and strengthen local support for energy decarbonisation across Sussex.

6. CONCLUSION

- 6.1 Sussex Energy has continued to make strong progress and is increasingly moving from network-building into delivery, investment readiness and regional pipeline development. The work now underway is helping position Sussex not only as a leader in local energy collaboration, but as a credible destination for future energy investment and infrastructure funding.
- 6.2 The Board is asked to agree the recommendations 2.1-2.3, noting the progress made and supporting the next steps needed to maintain momentum, strengthen the project pipeline, and position Sussex Energy as a practical, investable regional programme for the SBSA.

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.
- 7.2 It is proposed that this funding is utilised as follows:
- £50,000 is being used to commission priority work packages that have been procured or are in procurement (the *Regional Funding & Investment Strategy* and *Solar Across Sussex – Solar Identification and Prioritisation*).

They provide specialist expertise to accelerate delivery of Sussex Energy priorities.

- £50,000 for follow on Solar Across Sussex work to enable and assist viable sites to progress towards development and identify changes that would make future solar projects easier to implement. This is not yet procured.

- 7.3 Elsewhere on the agenda the Board are considering the dissolution pathway for the board's activity. Should the Board dissolve in September 2026 the GBEB budget will need to cover contract administration for the Sussex Energy ongoing contracts (due to end December 2026). This will be met from the board's contingency budget.

Finance Officer Consulted: Haley Woollard, BHCC –Head of Finance

Date: 16/06/26

Legal Implications:

- 7.3 There are no legal implications arising directly from this report. In progressing the procurement activity noted within this report, Brighton and Hove Council (BHCC) as accountable body is required to comply with the relevant Public Contract Regulations and legislation as well as its Contract Standing Orders.

Lawyer Consulted: Siobhan Fry, BHCC Head of Legal (Commercial)

Date: 16/06/26

Equalities Implications:

- 7.4 Sussex Energy aims to ensure that the benefits of the energy transition are shared fairly 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.
- 7.5 The communications working group has a wide variety of organisations to ensure the communications shared content and calendar engagement activity will 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.
- 7.6 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

7.7 Sussex Energy supports the reduction of carbon emissions and the acceleration of the energy transition, from fossil fuels to renewables, which will help protect the environment, limit the effects of climate change, build resilience in key infrastructure and improve energy security. 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. Co-benefits include strengthened energy security, improved air quality from reduced fossil fuel use, community wealth-building, local job creation in low-carbon industries, and the development of skills and stronger regional supply chains that will have long-term positive impacts for the Sussex economy. Sustainability principles will also be embedded in procurement processes, for example by exploring ways to prioritise local suppliers and ensure social value.