

Energy and low carbon Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) analysis

Lead Organisation:

Sustainability West Midlands

Project Manager: Alan Carr (Sustainability Adviser)

Partners:



Project Duration:

February 2017 – June 2017

The Project

The Energy Systems Catapult (ESC) commissioned SWM to undertake a review of energy and low carbon activity and commitments in all 38 LEPs in England, drawing on our expertise and knowledge from our previous work not limited to [Fit for the Future](#). The ESC is progressing their engagement with LEPs and wanted to enhance and expand this engagement by bringing SWM's knowledge and relationships with LEPs to the table.

Aims

- To identify the most appropriate contact at each LEP at Board, management and officer level with whom to engage.
- To identify good practice around local energy planning, smart energy systems and low carbon economic development happening in LEPs across the country.
- To provide a mandate for ESC to engage with LEPs in the future to contribute to ESC's [vision and mission](#).

Challenges

One of the main tasks associated with this project was to engage with LEPs verbally via informal telephone interviews, using a series of questions developed by ESC and SWM. The idea was to interview each LEP to ascertain the level of energy and low carbon activity and appetite in each area. This method provides a more accurate and up to date picture of activity that purely perusing literature, such as Strategic Economic Plans, may not convey.

SWM had already developed good relationships with some LEPs, but we were required to identify suitable contacts at others and it was this identification that presented the greatest challenge. Many LEPs do not have low carbon / energy officers or champions and, rather, these themes are embedded into the role of a programme or ERDF officer whose remit is usually wide-ranging. As

such, it was often difficult to get such LEPs to commit to undertaking an interview, but ultimately we obtained answers to the questions from around 75% of the LEPs. For the non-responders, we looked at relevant literature to determine low carbon and energy activity, but this may not have yielded information as granular as those that responded to the questionnaire.

Despite this, we were pleased with the response rate and the information that the 28 LEPs did provide was hugely valuable for ESC in taking forward their engagement.

The Outcome

Results

The analysis that was undertaken to complete this piece of work generated some examples of excellent practice as well as interesting results. We ranked each LEP based on the answers they gave to the interview questions and determined that strong performing LEPs could be regarded as such because they have:

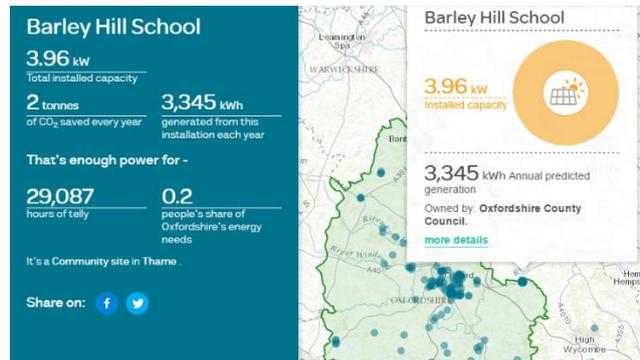
- Established LEP-wide carbon targets.
- Considered future funding post-Brexit (e.g. Strategic Research Innovation Fund, Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund, Green Bonds etc).
- Strong cross-sector partnership working mechanisms, usually via a low carbon or energy working group.
- Evidence of relevant project delivery.
- Integrated the energy and low carbon themes into strategies and all other priorities.

Common barriers to successful project delivery included:

- Energy/low carbon is not seen as a strategic priority.
- There is no staff member or Board champion dedicated to the agenda.
- ERDF restrictions and onerous reporting requirements.
- Lack of capacity, cash or other resources.
- Too many partners to engage with.
- Frequent policy changes and uncertainty.

In the Future

The results of this report will help the ESC to develop relationships with LEPs across the country. The repository of contact details at both officer, manager and Board level gleaned from the interviews and other research will allow them to promote their offer to LEPs, along with understand which LEPs they would benefit from getting in touch with above all others. SWM recommended that the LEPs they engage with initially are those that have yet to engage fully with the low carbon or energy agenda, but that have a clear desire to do so.



From the People's Power Station website, Oxfordshire LEP

The research will also help LEPs to further their development by sharing good practice and by opening their doors to ESC support. Ultimately, this can only lead to an improvement in LEPs' understanding that embracing the low carbon and energy agendas will lead to improved productivity, job creation and growth, benefitting both the local economy and the environment.

The Extra's

Accolades

"The Energy Systems Catapult wanted to strengthen its intelligence on LEP progress around the energy and low carbon agenda and to find the right individuals to engage with to tap into the opportunity they present. We approached SWM to help us develop this platform because of a combination of their previous experience with national LEP sustainability benchmarking, their independence, reputation and values. The work they have done for us has been fundamental in brokering relationships with LEPs and helping us to strengthen our hand when offering our support. It has also given us a picture of LEP progress to date and a series of hugely useful recommendations for us to take forward."

Paul Jordan, Head of Business Development, Energy Systems Catapult.

Contact Details

For further information on the project or to work with us in one of a variety of ways, please contact the SWM team on 0121 237 5890 or enquiries@swm.org.uk.