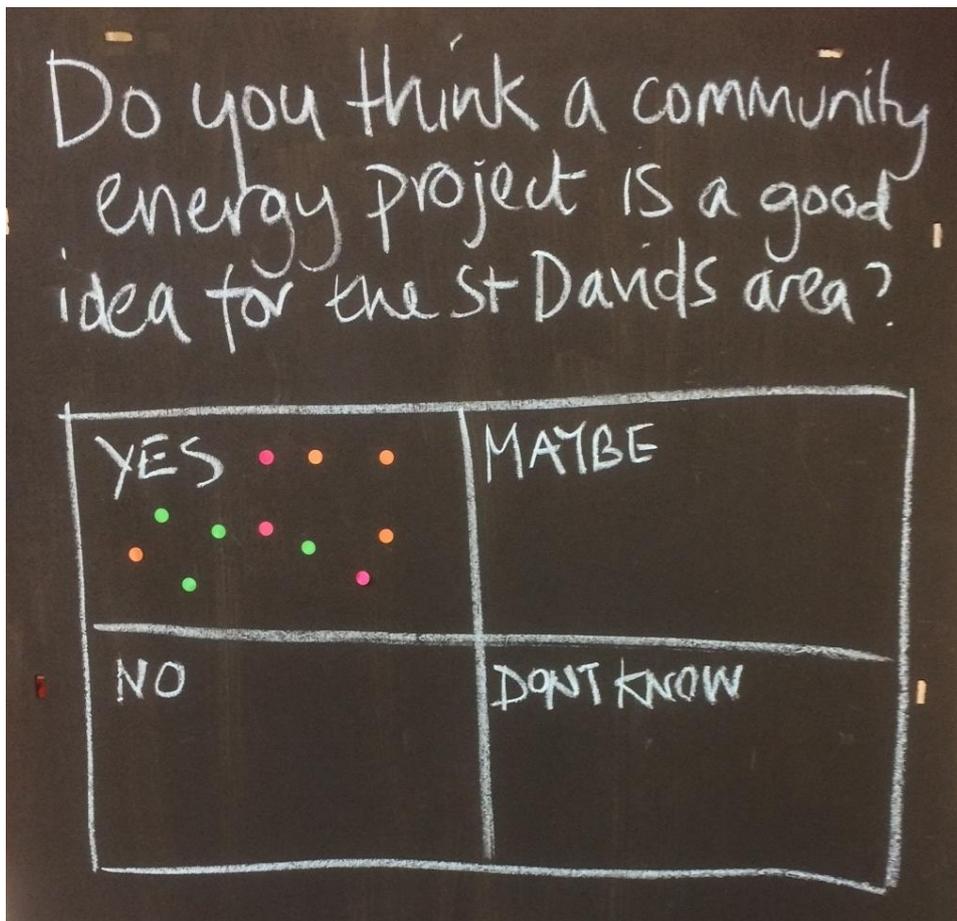


## LOCAL ENERGY ACTION FORCE PROJECT

### EVALUATION REPORT



**FINAL DRAFT APPROVED BY CEP 04.12.20**

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## 1. Llythrenwau a ddefnyddiwyd / Acronyms used

**CEP** – Community Energy Pembrokeshire

**LEAF** – Local Energy Action Force

**LEAG** – Local Energy Action Group

**LPM Ltd** – Llanteg Park Management Ltd

**PAVS** – Pembrokeshire Association of Voluntary Services

**PLANED** – Pembrokeshire Local Action Network for Economic Development

**PM** – Project Manager

**PO** – Project Officer

**SDF** – Sustainable Development Fund (Pembrokeshire Coast National Park)

**WGES** – Welsh Government Energy Service

## 2. Executive summary

Community Energy Pembrokeshire's Local Energy Action Force (LEAF) project aimed to support five communities in Pembrokeshire to develop projects generating, selling and buying sustainable energy by establishing Local Energy Action Groups (LEAGs). Funding was provided by Arwain Sir Benfro's EU LEADER fund, with match funding contributed by local and national delivery partners.

This document sets out the results of independent monitoring and evaluation commissioned to support the project.

The LEAF project has had mixed success at delivering the intended project benefits, the LEADER outputs, and the LEAF Theory of Change outcomes -

- Progress has been made towards the intended benefits, but not all have been achieved yet
- The project overachieved on some of LEADER outputs but further work is required to fully meet the definitions provided by the LEADER team for others
- Many of the Theory of Change outcomes are being achieved, particularly in St Davids and Llanteg Park

The project was significantly hampered by several staffing challenges and the Coronavirus pandemic.

Two active groups have formed that are likely to continue in the future – one constituted voluntary group (in Llanteg Park) and one in the process of becoming a charitable incorporated organisation (in St Davids). Another group met regularly while supported by the LEAF project and may reform / continue in the future (in Tiers Cross).

In the fourth community that received support from a dedicated project officer no group has formed yet (Milford Haven, Hakin and Hubberston). There is potential for an energy project in a further community where an event was organised by the LEAF team (Lawrenny).

Two community energy projects have been developed to the pre-planning stage (St Davids; Llanteg Park). A preferred site has been identified for a further project (Tiers Cross).

The real success of the project will become apparent over time. Further evaluation based on the Theory of Change outcomes should be completed in 2022 and 2025.

Recommendations for similar projects / developing further local energy action include:

- Recognise that developing a group, people and a project is time and resource intensive. Set realistic timescales but do look for quick wins along the way.
- Ensure the right support and knowledge is on hand from the outset.
- Provide a simple and easy to understand project process overview.
- Provide strategic support to ensure aims, objectives and outcomes are clear.
- Complete a 'pre-project phase' in each community to inform the support provided to that community. Some general participation and engagement work may be required.
- A small definable community (geographical or community of interest) may be easier to work with than a larger one.
- Consider providing marketing and communications support.
- Involve participants in the design of capacity building session programmes.
- Provide multiple opportunities to network with other communities.

While the LEAF project has had a number of positive outputs and is likely to result in community energy projects coming online, alternative models of support should also be tested to assess whether they may be more effective.

### 3. Introduction

The LEAF project was developed and delivered by Community Energy Pembrokeshire (CEP). The project was funded by Arwain Sir Benfro LEADER Pembrokeshire (which is part of the European Union's Agriculture Fund for Rural Development) with in-kind match funding provided by the Welsh Government Energy Service, Community Energy Pembrokeshire, and other delivery partnership stakeholders.

The original project budget including in-kind match funding was £237,425.18, with £166,089 of LEADER funding. The final project spend was however significantly lower than this.

The following benefits were intended at the start of the project:

- Local people will be engaged in saving energy to reduce their bills, seeking access to cheaper, green, locally produced energy.
- Local sustainable energy projects will be more viable by selling energy directly to local customers above wholesale rates.
- New direct jobs will be created.
- Environmental and climate change benefits will arise with energy savings and renewable energy generation.

Project output targets were agreed with LEADER before the start of the project. These are listed in Table 2 on page 9.

The LEAF project aimed to develop solutions that were *"technically innovative and bespoke to each community's characteristics and opportunities"*. The Project Manager stated that in their final report that it was hoped that *"novel technologies and market / regulatory solutions would arise, from which learning and replication opportunities could be shared with communities across Wales"*.

Local capacity was identified as a key gap for the development of community energy projects which LEAF aimed to address by:

- Recruiting a team consisting of one part-time Project Manager & 4 Project Officers.
- Recruiting 3-5 "project champion" volunteers in each of the 5 communities.
- Delivering an intensive programme of activities engaging citizens at community events, on the doorstep and online.
- Building CEP's capacity as a hub for five key projects acting on sustainable energy – coordinating and enabling access to support, skills, knowledge, experience and sharing learning.
- Delivering capacity building / dissemination sessions, plus fact-finding trips to other community projects.
- Developing strategic partnerships to engage, work with and support communities.

LEAF intended to build an 'action force' of project workers and volunteers able to develop projects moving Pembrokeshire towards a low carbon economy.

In each area, the core group of volunteer 'champions', alongside the Project Officers, were intended to be the key beneficiaries of an intensive programme of development and capacity building activities. Their learning and development were to be reinforced by them acting as ambassadors engaging within and beyond their own communities and passing on their learning.

Funding was approved for the project in September 2018. A Project Manager was appointed in November 2018 and the project began in December 2018. Project Officers were recruited and began work in March 2019. The project ended on 30 September 2020.

### **3.1. Project team**

The project was delivered by a team of four or five (staffing changed over the course of the project). Each member of the team was employed by CEP for two days a week (with some extra hours awarded to members of the team to deliver specific projects e.g. the podcasts). The team was made up of three or four project officers plus a project manager. Some additional project capacity was added on the ground in Milford Haven in Autumn 2019 when an individual contracted for a few days to assist with community engagement. A project delivery structure diagram is provided in Figure 1 below.

Each community had a lead project officer. The whole team acted as support, and a nominated support officer was identified to assist the lead project officer in each community.

A named CEP Director was given the responsibility for managing and supporting the Project Manager. A second named Director was given responsibility for the monitoring and evaluation contract.

The project was to be supported by a delivery partnership. An independent chair was recruited to support and manage the partnership on a voluntary basis.

Organisations who formed the delivery partnership included

- PAVS
- PLANED
- Pembrokeshire Coastal Forum
- Swansea University
- Pembrokeshire College

The terms of reference for the Partnership included the following functions:

- Understand the progress made and development needs of the officers, volunteers, and Local Energy Action Groups.
- Use this knowledge to tailor planned capacity building and fact-finding events, and where relevant to identify additional opportunities for LEAF communities.
- Share learning from the LEAF project and report opportunities arising within Partnership organisations because of LEAF findings.
- Provide objective oversight and constructive guidance to the Board and project team in all aspects of delivery, finance, and governance.

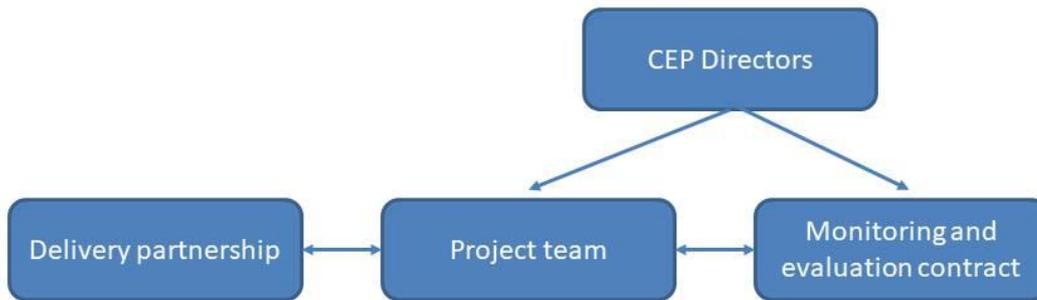


Figure 1: LEAF project delivery structure

### 3.2. Communities targeted

Four communities received substantive resource input as part of the project, these were:

- **Llanteg Park** estate
- **Milford Haven, Hubberston and Hakin**
- **St Davids peninsula** (including Solva and Llanrhian ward)
- **Tiers Cross**

The communities targeted by the project were based on a CEP Director’s previous work and community connections in Pembrokeshire.

**Tavernspite** was initially included in the list of communities to be targeted, but in Autumn 2019 a decision was taken not to progress with developing a LEAG in Tavernspite as part of the LEAF project.

Consequently a community event was held in **Lawrenny** in January 2020. However, no further activity took place in Lawrenny due the combined impact of staffing challenges and the coronavirus pandemic.

Detailed background information on each of the communities supported as part of the LEAF project is included in the mid-term review report. A summary of the characteristics of each community is provided in the table below.

Table 1: Characteristics of each community supported by the LEAF project

Lawrenny	A small village built up in the early 1800s around fishing and boat building. The community already boasts a thriving shop with a novel 24hr key card access to all members. A community member is already looking to establish a biomass health network on a new development and wanted to explore the potential to make it a community owned scheme supplying the whole village.
Llanteg Park	A small and unique community of 38 households (22 of which are occupied full time). Residents contribute financially to Llanteg Park Management Limited (LPM Ltd), a volunteer led infrastructure management committee for the estate. LPM Ltd manages all aspects of the estate, including the sewage treatment facility, street lighting and site improvements.

Milford Haven, Hubberston and Hakin	A large community (for Pembrokeshire) with a population of 13,500. Hakin and Hubberston Community Forum manage a £1m National Lottery Invest Local fund targeted at deprived communities. The Port of Milford Haven is a major land and property owner, as well as a large employer.
St Davids, Solva and Llanrhian	St Davids is a small town (technically the smallest city in the UK). Solva is a village with tourist shops, pubs and other facilities and Llanrhian is a very rural area. Ramsey Sound, to the west of these communities, was the site for the testing of the DeltaStream tidal energy device in 2015.
Tiers Cross	A small community of just under 600 residents. The community includes the village of Tiers Cross and the surrounding rural area.

### 3.3. Monitoring and evaluation - purpose, scope and methodology

The purpose of the LEAF monitoring and evaluation contract was to provide the CEP Directors and the project funders with independent monitoring and evaluation of the LEAF project.

The scope of the monitoring and evaluation contract included:

- Developing a Theory of Change for the LEAF project.
- Evaluation of events – with evaluation support at up to four events and project officers required to gather evaluation data at the remaining events.
- Online or paper evaluation forms for capacity building days and study tours.
- Attendance at a selection of team meetings and project officer 1-2-1s at mid-term review and final report stage.
- Attendance at one LEAG meeting per community and interviews with a small selection of LEAG members towards the end of the project.
- A mid-term review and a final report.

The mid-term review and Theory of Change reports are available as separate documents, as are evaluation reports on LEAF events and capacity building sessions / study tours.

This evaluation report assesses the project against:

- The intended project benefits as highlighted in the monitoring and evaluation project brief
- Outputs agreed with the project funders (LEADER)
- Outcomes developed as part of the Theory of Change work.

These are summarised in Table 2 below.

*Table 2: LEAF project intended benefits, LEADER outputs and Theory of Change outcomes*

Intended project benefits
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local people will be engaged in saving energy to reduce their bills, seeking access to cheaper, green, locally produced energy</li> <li>• Local sustainable energy projects will be more viable by selling energy directly to local customers above wholesale rates</li> </ul>

- New direct jobs will be created
- Environmental and climate change benefits will arise with energy savings and renewable energy generation.

### **LEADER outputs**

- Number of feasibility studies (target 1)
- Number of networks established (target 1)
- Number of jobs safeguarded through supported projects (target 4 part time)
- Number of pilot activities undertaken/ supported (target 1)
- Number of community hubs (target 1)
- Number of information dissemination actions/ promotional and/or marketing activities to raise awareness of LDS and/or its projects (target 32)
- Number of stakeholders engaged (target 5)
- Number of participants supported (target 19)

### **LEAF Theory of Change outcomes (developed with project team)**

#### 'Higher level outcomes'

- A greater awareness of energy
- Community cohesion
- A greater sense of self and place
- New / improved relationships
- Community engagement with power holders

#### Developing a group

- Successful gatherings with a purpose
- Discovering a shared interest / common goal
- Awareness of the project in the community
- An effective group of 3 or more people
- Community involvement and openness, no one is excluded
- A quick win / action you can build on

#### Developing people

- Understanding of people's motivation
- Understanding of the skills in the group / community
- Engagement and deeper, meaningful personal development
- Upskilling of the team
- People know and understand their roles

#### Develop your project

- Heads of terms for lease agreement
- Community energy project

The information for the evaluation was gathered through:

- Ongoing interaction, mid-term, and end of project interviews with the project team
- A survey of members of the Local Energy Action Groups (9 responses across three groups received out of a total of 28 active members across four groups) - 32% response rate
- Attendance at a selection of community events and Local Energy Action Group meetings
- Theory of Change workshops

- Event evaluation forms or feedback boards.

### 3.4. Theory of Change summary

A Theory of Change was developed for the LEAF project at workshops in July and October 2019 and reviewed at an online session in August 2020.

A Theory of Change explains what a project is trying to achieve and demonstrates how the project activities contribute to outcomes which in turn contribute to a final goal. It is developed by working backwards from the final goal, and helpful for project planning and reflection, team building, identifying success criteria and designing evaluation. The project team found it a valuable tool; their only criticism being that it was not reviewed and used regularly enough.

The following final goal was identified for the LEAF project as part of the Theory of Change work:

**Bringing power back into communities:**  
building capacity within communities for a sustainable, long term future for people,  
health and environment.

Developing a community energy project was considered a complementary goal. All present at the review workshop in August 2020 agreed that if a community energy project was developed without capacity building within the community, the project would not be deemed to be successful.

Five 'high level outcomes' that would help to achieve the final goal were identified, along with a need for external validation or support to make community energy projects happen. These are shown in Figure 2 below, along with the 'community energy projects' outcome, and the outcome of 'external validation and support'



*Figure 2: Theory of Change final goal and 'higher level outcomes'*

A range of other outcomes were identified as an important part of the process for achieving the final goal. At the Theory of Change review workshop in August 2020 it became apparent that these outcomes fell into three types of work or 'work streams' - group development, people development and project development.

Outcomes were placed into one of the three work streams by the facilitator after the workshop in August 2020 (there was not time to explore this in detail at the workshop). At this point it became clear that many of the outcomes defined to date were more about development of a group and people than development of a community energy project.

Figure 3 below shows a simplified version of the Theory of Change. This was developed after the August 2020. The detailed Theory of Change is included in the separate Theory of Change report. Note that a Theory of Change is a live document and should continue to be reviewed and updated.

It is recommended that CEP arrange workshops with the LEAGs that continue to be active in the future to review and further develop the LEAF Theory of Change. CEP may also wish to consider supporting the active LEAGs to develop a Theory of Change specific to their community or their project.

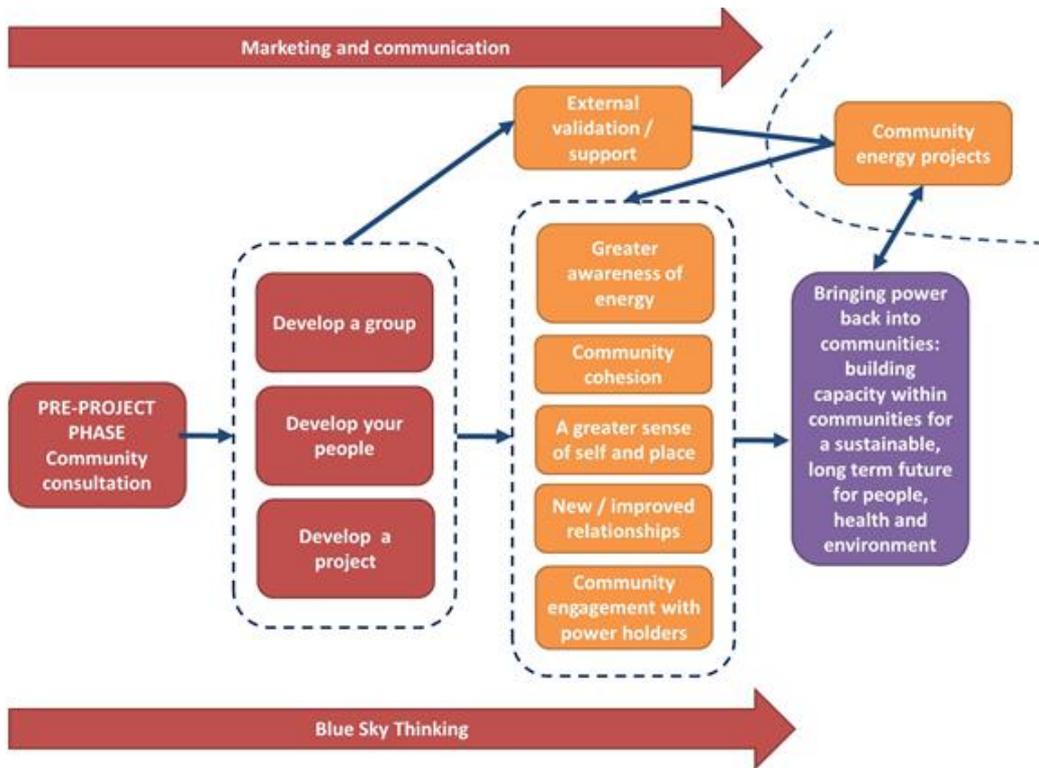


Figure 3: Simplified LEAF Theory of Change

## 4. Achievements

### 4.1. Intended benefits defined at project outset

Table 3 below lists the intended project benefits that were set out in the monitoring and evaluation brief, and summarises progress made towards them by the end of the LEAF project.

Further information is provided in the following sections, organised around the agreed LEADER outputs and the Theory of Change outcomes.

Note that although the intended project benefits are largely yet to be fully realised, over a longer timescale there is potential that they will be delivered.

Table 3: LEAF project intended benefits

<p><b>Local people will be engaged in saving energy to reduce their bills, seeking access to cheaper, green, locally produced energy.</b></p>
<p>A small group of people within each community targeted are already engaged. The groups are working towards wider community engagement.</p>
<p><b>Local sustainable energy projects will be more viable by selling energy directly to local customers above wholesale rates</b></p>
<p>The projects under development are exploring the potential to develop Energy Local partnerships.</p>

### **New direct jobs will be created**

Temporary jobs were created and there is potential for further grant applications / income from projects in the future to support job creation.

### **Environmental and climate change benefits will arise with energy savings and renewable energy generation**

It is likely that at least some of the people that have been engaged in the project will have more awareness of their energy use, and that community renewable energy projects will eventually come online. Environmental benefits are being seen with better management of the Llanteg Park site and the beach stewards scheme in the St Davids Peninsula.

## **4.2. LEADER outputs**

Table 4 below lists the outputs that were agreed with the project funders at the start of the project, and achievements at the close of the project. Further information on how these outputs were achieved and opportunities for further work is included in the sections below.

Note that the outputs reported by CEP to LEADER do not always match the outputs recorded by the evaluation team. In some cases, the evaluation team have recorded additional outputs that meet the definitions provided by LEADER, in other cases there may be further work to do to fully meet the output definition.

*Table 4: LEAF project LEADER outputs*

<b>Output</b>	<b>Target</b>	<b>Output reported by CEP to LEADER Sept / Oct 2020</b>
Number of feasibility studies	1	1
Number of networks established	1	1
Number of jobs safeguarded through supported projects	4 part time	6
Number of pilot activities undertaken/ supported	1	1
Number of community hubs	1	1
Number of information dissemination actions/ promotional and/or marketing activities to raise awareness of LDS and/or its projects	32	21
Number of stakeholders engaged	5	5
Number of participants supported	19	28

#### **4.2.1. Feasibility study**

The final report by CEP to LEADER highlighted the 'Options Appraisal' report that explored the potential for community owned anaerobic digester between Milford Haven and Tiers Cross as a feasibility study output of the LEAF project. It was further commented that second phase / draft of the study will add assessment of the potential for local biogas markets including for off-grid heating and transport fuel.

In addition, there is reasonable potential for further feasibility studies that meet the LEADER output definition to be completed by the groups in St Davids and Llanteg Park in the future.

#### **4.2.2. Network established**

The final report by CEP to LEADER highlighted the network of consultees that were already in place in support of the application to LEADER as evidence of this output being met.

#### **4.2.3. Jobs safeguarded**

The final report by CEP to LEADER highlighted the Project Manager and 4 Project Officers recruited under LEAF as outputs under the 'jobs safeguarded' heading. The CEP report stated that 'there was a view to safeguarding those jobs through project activities'.

#### **4.2.4. Pilot activity**

The LEAF project has piloted the development of local energy action groups and a local energy action 'work force'. Many useful lessons have been learnt through the process and should be shared as widely as possible – with other groups thinking of developing community energy as well as organisations that wish to see community energy generation increase.

#### **4.2.5. Community hub**

The LEAF project has helped to increase the reach of CEP into communities in Pembrokeshire. Further work is required to further develop and cement their position.

#### **4.2.6. Information dissemination actions/promotional and/or marketing activities**

A total of 22 activities were delivered against a target of 32. The achievement of this target was hampered by a slow start to the project with staffing difficulties, as well as the coronavirus pandemic.

Table 5 below lists information dissemination / promotional / marketing activities completed during the LEAF project.

Table 5: Information / dissemination / promotional / marketing activities completed during the LEAF project.

Information dissemination / promotional / marketing activities	Target in grant application	Achieved	Notes
Capacity building sessions	8	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Energy and Sustainability Overview (Pembs College/ Pembs Coastal Forum Apr 2019)</li> <li>• Community Energy Scheme Development (Welsh Government Energy Service October 2019)</li> </ul>
Study tours	5	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low Impact Housing Schemes (Ty Solar October 2019)</li> </ul>
Community events	15	8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• St Davids x2</li> <li>• Llanteg Park</li> <li>• Tiers Cross</li> <li>• Milford Haven x2</li> <li>• Lawrenny</li> <li>• Energy café (online)</li> </ul>
Presentations to Community Energy Network	3	0	Likely to happen after project close as results and lessons from project are shared.
Website	1	3	Original target was a website. CEP website exists and 3 blog entries on website reported to LEADER
Podcasts	Additional activity	3	LEAFcast <a href="https://leafcast.org/">https://leafcast.org/</a>
Facebook pages / posts		2	Milford LEAF / EcoDewi
Newsletter articles / adverts		1	Milford Youth Matters newsletter
Poster / postcard deliveries		2	Milford Haven Tiers Cross
<b>Total</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>22</b>	

#### 4.2.7. Stakeholders engaged

Thirty-four stakeholders were engaged across three communities and the delivery partnership (see Table 6 below).

The following definitions of stakeholders and engagement were provided by LEADER. The monitoring and evaluation team felt that additional outputs could have been claimed under this heading over and above those reported by CEP to LEADER in October 2020.

***Stakeholder:*** Any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the project objectives. These can be people, groups or entities that have a role and interest in the objectives and implementation of a project. They include the community whose situation the project or programme seeks to change.

**Engagement:** Stakeholders who become actively involved in the project's implementation at any stage.

Table 6: Stakeholders engaged as part of the LEAF project

Stakeholder type	Number of stakeholders engaged	Notes
Active local energy action group members	29	Comprised of group members from Donkey Hill Transition Group (Llanteg Park), EcoDewi (St Davids peninsula) and Tiers Cross, plus the community of Lawrenny (counted as a single stakeholder)
Delivery partnership	5	Pembrokeshire Coastal Forum, PAVS, PLANED, Swansea University, Pembrokeshire College
Total	34	

#### Delivery partnership

At the start of the project it was anticipated that the delivery partnership would meet bi-monthly. However, the partnership only come together once (although the project manager did engage individually with partnership members to support delivery).

Engagement from Pembrokeshire College was limited after April 2019 due to a change in staffing.

More regular meetings of the delivery partnership may have helped the LEAF project to deliver more and could have helped the CEP Directors with project. One of the original aims of the partnership was to give board members (who are all volunteers with many other commitments) the confidence to proceed with the LEAF project on the basis that the partnership would provide additional support, oversight and scrutiny of the project.

#### **4.2.8. Participants**

Participants are defined by LEADER as *'the number of people who attend an event to disseminate information etc.'*

Data collected as part of the monitoring and evaluation contract suggested that the LEAF project had 162 participants that attended at least one event, meeting or capacity building session. This is higher than the number reported by CEP to LEADER in October 2020.

Table 7 below highlights the number of project participants and their level of participation.

Table 7: LEAF project participants, by level of participation

Participant type	Number	Notes
Attended at least one event	162	8 events were held in total, including 1 online event

Attended at least one meeting	59	More than 50 across four communities
Attended at least one capacity building session	19	3 capacity building sessions were organised, and LEAG members attended a CAT Zero Carbon Britain online session

### 4.3. Theory of Change outcomes and enablers

Table 8 below lists the LEAF Theory of Change outcomes developed by the project team. A status is given for each outcome based on the data gathered and knowledge gained as part of the monitoring and evaluation contract. Further information is provided in the sections below.

*Table 8: LEAF Theory of Change outcomes and status October 2020*

Theory of Change outcome		Status
'Higher level' outcomes	A greater awareness of energy	Beginning to be achieved, impact will hopefully grow
	Community cohesion	Beginning to be achieved, impact will hopefully grow
	A greater sense of self and place	Need to consider how this could be measured
	New / improved relationships	Beginning to be achieved, impact will hopefully grow
	Community engagement with power holders	Beginning to be achieved, impact will hopefully grow
Developing a group	Successful gatherings with a purpose – meetings, events, own or other people	Achieved, will hopefully continue to be achieved
	Discovering a shared interest / common goal	Achieved, will hopefully continue to be achieved
	Awareness of the project in the community	Some awareness achieved; awareness will hopefully continue to grow
	An effective group of 3 or more people	Achieved in 3 communities
	Community involvement and openness, no-one is excluded	Additional work required to measure
	A quick win / an action you can build on	Achieved in 5 communities
Developing people	Understanding of people's motivation / what drives them – staff, volunteers, community	Knowledge within LEAGs of members' motivation is good, further understanding of wider community motivation may be helpful
	An understanding of the skills in the group / in the community	Knowledge of skills of LEAG members is good, further understanding of skills in communities may be helpful

	Engagement and deeper, meaningful personal development	Some evidence that this is being achieved
	Upskilling of the team – staff, volunteers, wider community	Some upskilling achieved, but not to extent originally envisaged
	People know and understand their role 'happy people'	LEAG members who completed evaluation survey clearly understood their roles

### 4.3.1. Higher level outcomes

In order to assess the LEAF project's achievement of the 'higher level outcomes' identified in the Theory of Change -

- the project team were asked to rate the effectiveness of the project in achieving the outcomes on a scale of 1 – 10 (with 1 being not at all effective and 10 being very effective)
- LEAG members were asked in the post-project survey whether they thought their local group had achieved each of the objectives – yes, no, maybe or not sure.

To compare average project officer scores with LEAG member scores, the LEAG member scores were given a value of 3 for yes, 2 for maybe, 1 for not sure and 0 for no. The scores were totalled and turned into a score out of 10, based on the maximum possible score of 27 for 9 answers of yes (so a score of 27 would be turned into 10 out of 10, 3 would be 1 out of 10 etc).

Figure 4 below shows the average project officer and LEAG member scores for each Theory of Change 'higher level outcome'.

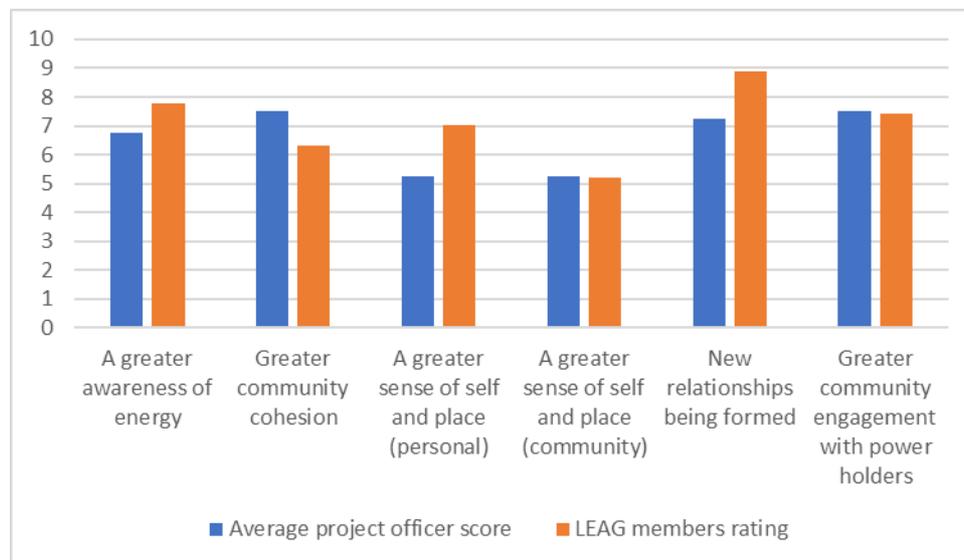


Figure 4: LEAF project achievement of Theory of Change 'higher level outcomes' – average project officer and LEAG member ratings

LEAG members rated the project's impact on 'new relationships being formed', 'greater community engagement with power holders' and 'a greater awareness of energy' the highest.

Project officers also rated 'new relationships being formed' and 'greater community engagement with power holders' highly, and rated the project's impact on 'greater community cohesion' higher than the LEAG members.

The highest combined score (16.1 out of 20) was given to 'new relationships being formed', followed by 'greater community engagement with power holders' (14.9 out of 20) and 'a greater awareness of energy' (14.5 out of 20).

Table 9 below shows the combined scores of group members and projects officers for the Theory of Change 'higher level outcomes'.

*Table 9: LEAF project achievement of Theory of Change 'higher level outcomes' – combined project officer and LEAG member scores*

<b>Theory of Change 'higher level' outcome</b>	<b>Combined score (max 20)</b>
New relationships being formed	16.1
Greater community engagement with power holders	14.9
A greater awareness of energy	14.5
Greater community cohesion	13.8
A greater sense of self and place (personal)	12.3
A greater sense of self and place (community)	10.4

The lower score attributed to the self and place statements is probably related to the fact that it might not be clear to participants exactly what this means. There was some discussion in the August 2020 Theory of Change workshop about turning the higher level outcomes into something more measurable, but there was not enough time in the workshop to explore this in any detail.

In the end of project interviews, project officers were asked to list the three best things about the project. Statements that supported the higher level outcomes include:

- [The LEAF project has] *"started people thinking about energy and expanded the idea of infrastructure being something to take responsibility for"*
- *"Raising awareness of energy generation potential"*
- *"Effective platform for engaging people and power holders"*
- *"Effective hub around which to create community cohesion"*
- *"The added extras of reconnecting to own land and space"*.

#### **4.3.2. Group development outcomes**

##### Successful gatherings with a purpose – meetings, events, own or other people

Eight community events were held, with various evaluation activities completed at six, as follows:

- The evaluation team attended two events
- A paper feedback form was circulated at one event

- Feedback boards were used at four events
- A Mentimeter online poll was used to collect feedback at the online energy café session.

Although some events were poorly attended, those that did attend the events usually gave positive feedback. A separate evaluation report considers the LEAF events in more detail. However, a brief summary of observations and challenges is provided below:

- Turnout was good at events in Tiers Cross, Llanteg Park, St Davids and Lawrenn
- The events in Milford Haven in July 2019, and the 'energy café' online session were poorly attended
- At least two active LEAG members found about the project through a community event
- Paper evaluation forms and post event reflection provided the most useful feedback on events
- Comment walls / feedback boards are a useful visual tool. However, community members seem reluctant to provide any critical (but potential constructive) feedback in this public way.

In addition to the community events the project team organised over 50 LEAG meetings across four communities. Feedback from LEAG members about group meetings was largely positive, although there were some suggestions for improvement around organisation, increased awareness / support / membership, strategic focus and the length of time external support was provided.

Table 10 below shows the number of LEAG meetings held in each community as part of the LEAF project.

*Table 10: Meetings held in each community as part of the LEAF project*

<b>Community</b>	<b>Group meetings held</b>
Llanteg Park	20 meetings of Donkeyhill Transition Group
St Davids, Solva and Llanrhian	13 EcoDewi group meetings, 4 Management Committee meetings, 6 Workshops / Subgroups = 23
Milford Haven, Hakin and Hubberston	7 meetings
Tiers Cross	14 meetings

The project team also attended other events to promote the project – for example, a meeting of Solva Community Council.

The capacity building sessions organised as part of the project (see more details in the 'upskilling of the team' section on page 24) also served as successful 'events' that brought group members together, as well as people from across the communities.

The capacity building sessions seem to have been valued as events by the people that were able to attend, for example one LEAG member responded to the question 'how has being part of the LEAG benefited you' by saying –

*"Although curtailed by the coronavirus I enjoyed the capacity building days I was able to attend"*

Some group members suggested they would have liked more wider networking opportunities like this and that they would like to hear what other groups are doing to share best practice and project ideas.

#### Discovering a shared interest / common goal

When asked open questions about how their local group has benefited them, and the best things about their local energy groups, many LEAG members provided responses that supported the outcome of 'discovering a shared interest and common goal'.

Answers to open questions about positive benefits of LEAF that supported the 'discovering a shared interest / common goal' outcome included:

- *"Meeting interesting and enthusiastic people"*
- *"Meeting other people in the community who believe in the possibilities that LEAF has opened up"*
- *"Being part of a team"*
- *A "sense of collective ambition"*

#### Awareness of the project in the community

Over 160 people across five communities attended at least one meeting or event. Further word of mouth communication from these 160 people is likely to have resulted in reasonable community awareness of the LEAF project.

The number of people reached was largest in St Davids (around 85 people).

Proportionally the reach was highest in Llanteg Park (with 18 attendees in a community of around 60 residents plus second homeowners).

In Tiers Cross every household and business received a postcard about the project and 16 attended a community event.

The reach appears to have been poor in Milford Haven, Hakin and Hubberston (the largest community targeted) although 70 posters were distributed to local businesses. These businesses should therefore at least be aware of the project even if they did not get involved.

Table 11 below shows community reach by community and by method.

*Table 11: LEAF project community engagement activities in each community*

<b>Community reach</b>	<b>Llanteg</b>	<b>Milford</b>	<b>St Davids</b>	<b>Tiers Cross</b>	<b>Lawrenny</b>	<b>Online</b>	<b>Total</b>
No. of events	1	2	2	1	1	1	<b>8</b>
No. that attended each event	18	5	50	14	30	2	<b>162</b>
		8	35				
Posters distributed	3	70	60	5			<b>138</b>
Posters displayed	3	Not sure	40				<b>43</b>
Postcards distributed	38	0	20	250			<b>308</b>
Social media posts		12	18				<b>30</b>

Social media reach		?	150				<b>150+</b>
Newsletter articles / adverts		1	2				<b>3</b>
Podcasts	<b>3</b>						

Community reach is hard to assess fully without further evaluation work in the community. This was outside of the scope of the agreed brief monitoring and evaluation contract.

Five LEAG members found out about LEAF via word of mouth, two found out because of a community event, one from a newsletter and one got involved as a result of active recruitment.

#### An effective group of 3 or more people

This outcome has been achieved in two communities and may be demonstrated in a third in the future (when the community are able to come back together and organise post COVID).

Each of the four communities targeted with significant support have at least three members of the community who are considered by the project officers to be 'active LEAG members'.

Both the project team and LEAG members considered their groups to be working effectively. The most common score for group effectiveness was 4 out of 5 (with 1 being 'not working at all well' and 5 'working very well indeed').

In addition, several response to the open question 'what is the best thing about your LEAG', suggested that the participants thought the groups were effective. These included:

- *"Core group thoroughly committed to carrying on with the process as long as it takes"*
- *"Sense of collective ambition"*
- *"Dedicated members"*
- *"It has morphed into a new group with specific goals that is clearly making progress and has community involvement"*
- *"It has drawn many excellent and enthusiastic people together to achieve more and better for our community"*
- *"We are still together and moving in the right direction, although slower than we might have hoped"*

#### Community involvement and openness, no-one is excluded

It was not possible to assess whether this outcome has been achieved. This is because it requires evaluation work with the wider community, which was not within the scope of the monitoring and evaluation contract.

One comment by a LEAG member in response to an open question in the post-project survey could be considered to show that a sense of community involvement and openness may be being delivered:

[The LEAG's] *"looseness brings a diversity of individuals offering a range of expertise and experiences together"*.

### A quick win / an action you can build on

The project team identified the following quick wins that had been delivered:

- Opening up the site (Llanteg Park)
- Community centre with solar panels on roof (Milford Haven)
- Ecology partnership with local organisations (St Davids).

In addition, other group activities that could be considered 'quick wins' are:

- Holding community events (all communities supported)
- Developing a website (St Davids)
- A beach stewards scheme which has been shared with the Clean Seas Wales Partnership as an example of good practice (St Davids)

At least one quick win has been achieved in each community.

All but one of the people who took part in the evaluation thought their local group had already benefited their community.

### **4.3.3. People development**

#### Understanding of people's motivation / what drives them – staff, volunteers, community

The project team demonstrated an understanding of the motivation of their group members, and provided a table outlining the interests, background, motivation etc of each group member as part of the evaluation. The blue-sky thinking exercises completed in each community also helped to identify the group members' hopes and desires for the community.

It is difficult to say whether the local groups understand what motivates and drives other members of the community. An understanding of this could be used to devise strategies for wider community engagement and participant recruitment.

#### An understanding of the skills in the group / in the community

Again, the project team clearly understand the skills within the group but more work on community reach and engagement could help the groups to understand what other skills may be available within the community.

#### Engagement and deeper, meaningful personal development

Responses to the evaluation survey demonstrated that membership of the local groups is having a positive impact on the people involved. Five out of seven respondents said being part of the group benefited them (two said they were not sure).

Examples of deeper, meaningful personal development given in response to the open question in the evaluation survey 'how do you think being part of your LEAG has benefited you' include:

- *"Learned a lot more about the community which has made me feel more 'local'"*
- *"Given me more of a view from 'the other side of the fence' so I am more aware of the challenges facing community initiatives"*
- *"I have studied things I didn't previously feel like I could tackle"*

- *"It has helped to cement a local group which has the potential for further development and that is important to me as I live in a very small and quite isolated place"*
- *"Feel like I am helping the community"*

#### Upskilling of the team – staff, volunteers, wider community

19 LEAG members attended at least one of the capacity building sessions that were delivered by the LEAF project or partner organisations.

Eight people attended two sessions and two people attended three.

Capacity building sessions and study tours organised by the team were:

- Energy and sustainability overview (delivered by Pembrokeshire College, April 2019)
- Community energy scheme development (delivered by Welsh Government Energy Service October 2019)
- Ty Solar study tour (October 2019).

The team had organised or planned a number of additional sessions that were consequently cancelled or postponed due to low levels of interest or were not possible to deliver once the coronavirus pandemic affected project delivery.

In one instance, it was decided that group specific advice from an expert (e.g. PAVS constitutional advice) was better delivered individually to a group based on their specific information needs rather than as a more generic session for a wider group of people.

Following the onset of the coronavirus pandemic, LEAG members were encouraged to attend online capacity building sessions organised by others including:

- CAT Zero Carbon Britain
- SPECIFIC project: Active Buildings
- Climate Literacy 101.

In addition, the EU Heroes team provided the Llanteg Park group with an introduction to their financial modelling tool. The Llanteg Park project was used by the EU Heroes team to help develop the financial modelling tool and as a case study for their project.

The project team benefited from several additional capacity building opportunities including:

- Welsh Government climate change conference (1 member of team)
- Planning Aid Wales 'planning a community led energy development' (1 member of team)
- Energy Local training (full team session)
- Understanding Welsh Places (1 member of team)
- Conferences in Scotland, Cardiff and North Wales (1 member of team per event)
- QGIS training (full team session).

Networking was highlighted in the project officer interviews as one of the best things about the project.

#### People know and understand their role

LEAG members that responded to the evaluation survey understood their role in the project, giving clear descriptions of their role and ability to contribute.

Core group members in St Davids and Llanteg Park have been allocated distinct roles. In one community, LEAG members were reluctant to commit to formal roles (only one person attended the 'role giving' meeting at the end of the LEAF project).

#### 4.3.4. Project development

Four of the five communities have completed feasibility work for a community renewable energy generation project.

The projects under consideration include:

- Milford Haven – an options appraisal has been completed for a community owned anaerobic digester
- Llanteg Park – a solar PV installation of 33 kW (sizing as recommended by EU Heroes financial modelling tool - to provide electricity for the estate sewerage plant, 10 homes, plus surplus offered to all residents in Llanteg area via the EnergyLocal model)
- St Davids – 800 kW community owned solar PV farm
- Tiers Cross – 1MW community owned solar PV farm

Applications for pre-planning advice have been submitted in two communities (St Davids and Llanteg Park). However, feedback had not been received from the local planning department by the close of the LEAF project (the service was experiencing delays because of the Coronavirus pandemic).

In Tiers Cross it is hoped that the additional information and knowledge gained as part of the LEAF project will help the community move forward with their proposed solar PV project soon.

#### 4.3.5. Enablers

The table below lists some of the enablers for success identified as part of the LEAF Theory of Change workshops. These were not reviewed at the final session in August 2020 due to time constraints so it would be worthwhile to review and further develop these in the future.

'External validation and support' was identified as an outcome in the Theory of Change workshops, but may be better categorised as an enabler, so is included in the table below rather than the Theory of Change diagram.

Table 12 below shows the enablers identified as part of the Theory of Change work and how they contributed to the project.

*Table 12: LEAF project enablers (that contribute to Theory of Change)*

Enabler	Comments
<b>Important at project outset / feed into initial stages and activities</b>	
Draft terms of reference	Drafted and shared with groups
Project team	Project team of PM plus 3/4 POs in place for duration of project. CEP to consider make up of legacy 'project team'

Activities, events and engagement tools budget	Budget in place for duration of LEAF project. Groups / CEP to consider funding sources for future work.
Partners (delivery partnership)	Delivery partnership organisations supported work of project particularly in terms of capacity building. Consider future role of partnership.
Understanding of different methods of community engagement	Not explored as part of evaluation (limited survey space / time / budget).
Supportive outside agencies (in addition to formal delivery partnership e.g. Wales Coop Centre)	Not explored as part of evaluation.
Case studies – evidence	Case studies are available in the Welsh Government’s online community energy toolkit
<b>Group development</b>	
Be aware of group dynamics / community ‘politics’	Embedded officers and/or LEAG members will be aware. Not explored as part of evaluation. May be useful to discuss openly and without prejudice, in confidence, in each group.
Recognise negative influences / deal with negativity	Not explored as part of evaluation.
Understand structures / options for working	Support provided by PAVS
Understanding of group dynamics, succession and legacy	Not explored as part of evaluation.
<b>Skills and capacity building</b>	
Communicate that just because you are involved does not mean you have to be responsible for everything	Not explored as part of evaluation.
Fun exercises to identify people’s skills	Not explored as part of evaluation.
Example skills assessment	Example available from EcoDewi
<b>Overarching</b>	
External validation and support	Provided by WGES

#### 4.3.6. Resources developed / available

The LEAF project has developed several resources including:

- LEAF podcasts x3
- Online energy cafe recording
- A giant energy themed snakes and ladders game has been purchased which can be used at community events
- A map stand
- Energy ‘Play Your Cards Right’ game – which was fun to play at the first Milford event and could be a useful welcome / ice-breaker / team building activity at other meetings and events
- Roll up event banners

- A1 maps for each of the communities
- A2 posters
- Event postcard and poster designs
- Display boards have also been purchased.

In addition, the following resources that were already available were utilised:

- 'Energy bike' - a fixed bicycle which can be pedalled to power a light (previously built by Tim Brew of Pembrokeshire Coastal Forum).

## **5. Participant's suggestions for improvement / future work**

The project team and group members who responded to the survey provided several helpful suggestions for improvement / future work. These are listed below and can be grouped into the following themes:

### **Expert support and guidance**

- *"A better roadmap for how to get these projects off the ground. Like a lot of these projects, a certain level of knowledge is assumed by the experts and even the help of a community liaison is always enough to close the gap. Most of the time we know what we didn't know and had no way of finding that out. It was until the last few weeks that we were given potential models for moving forward, and by then most of our support was about to disappear".*
- *"A library of contacts and resources to turn to whenever needed".*

### **Local support / awareness / engagement**

- *"More engagement from local leaders would have strengthened the group's 'clout' and potential to move initiatives forward";*
- *"More public awareness and support is needed";*
- *"We need to increase our membership/support base".*

### **Peer support**

- *"Wider networking opportunities";*
- *"Would be great to hear what other groups are doing to share best practice and project ideas".*

### **Time**

- *"A longer period of support. Covid has obviously added to our woes, but even without it, this kind of project needs a longer period of hand-holding to help keep it together and keep it moving forward".*
- *"More time to build a proper integrated plan. We have lots of great ideas, but perhaps we'd benefit from some more strategic focus".*
- *"These are a great idea but need to be supported for a much longer period of time. You are asking people - often unqualified in these kinds of fields - to organise themselves, make decisions, apply for funding, set up and run companies that could have turnovers in the tens of thousands of pounds, etc etc and, though the support currently offered is good, it doesn't last for nearly long enough. I would argue that the hand holding should be continued even into the first year of energy production if necessary. Surely it's better to err on the side of over-supporting such enterprises*

*than have them fall apart and waste the time and money already invested if the support is prematurely withdrawn".*

### **Organisation / events**

- *"Meeting timetables could have been arranged slightly more in advance"*
- *"More organised meetings and preparation"*
- *"More follow up for events – it takes some people time to formulate questions in response to information. Other meetings were scheduled however Covid prevented them from happening face to face, and a significant proportion of our community has no access to Zoom or equivalent"*
- *"Maybe some intro literature re the nature and aims of LEAF projects. Even just a list of addresses linking to online content - plus taking email permissions so attendees can be re-contacted to keep them thinking about LEAF"*
- *"More events please"*

## 6. Challenges

Several challenges affected the project's ability to deliver the intended benefits, Theory of Change outcomes and LEADER outputs. These included:

- **Coronavirus pandemic** – the COVID-19 pandemic arrived in the UK just after the mid-term review and as the team were making plans for an intense period of activity to meet the LEADER targets. As well as having an impact on achieving these targets, the pandemic also impacted heavily on LEAG members ability to contribute. Some were uncomfortable with virtual meetings, some saw their work / family pressures significantly increased and others highlighted the impact that digital communications have on team building, positivity and connection. The pandemic also affected the local planning department's ability to provide timely pre-planning advice.
- **Staffing challenges** – there were several staffing challenges throughout the project, including an early change of project manager and resignation of another member of the team (who took up a full-time permanent position elsewhere). In addition, a further member of the team required long-term leave and another team member's ability to contribute was hampered by personal circumstances.
- **Project duration / seasonality** – the effective start of the project was delayed to April 2019 due to the early change in project manager. This meant some of the communities / potential project partners were already too busy with the tourist season or affected by summer holidays by the time the team were ready to start to develop the groups. Community engagement began in earnest with events and follow up activity in Autumn / Winter 2020, but activity was curtailed shortly afterwards activity by the coronavirus pandemic.
- **Delivery partnership** – although the members of the delivery partnership supported the project where possible, the project did not benefit from regular oversight and support of a partnership that met regularly. In addition, one member of the partnership became less active due to a change in staffing.
- **Time pressures on voluntary Directors** – CEP is primarily led by a team of voluntary Directors. During most of the LEAF project the Directors were attempting to bring a long-planned community wind turbine online to a tight deadline, so their focus was sometimes elsewhere. The fact that the Directors are all volunteers also meant that when project challenges arose (and a lot did!) their ability to deal quickly and decisively with issues was affected by commitments outside of CEP.
- **Staff capacity and development** – the project officers selected for the LEAF project were deliberately not experienced in energy and some were also new to community development work. The aim of the project was to develop them as part of the 'Local Energy Action Force' as well – to increase the pool of people with an interest in and experience of community energy in Pembrokeshire. However, this also meant that the team had a lot to learn and deliver within the timescales of the project. The project team and volunteers have learnt a lot, but possibly not as much as anticipated. The opportunities for volunteers to learn were limited by the project team's learning and development needs.

In addition, project officer time was limited to two days a week (with one officer asked to try and develop groups in two communities in that time), supported by a

project manager two days a week. Dealing with project challenges, professional and personal development, team building and remote working (pre and post pandemic) was perhaps a little too much in just two days a week.

- **Capacity building session programme** – there were already challenges in delivering the capacity building programme before the coronavirus pandemic began. LEAG members struggled to find the time to attend events and there was difficulty setting dates that worked for enough people to make the session worthwhile. Some events were difficult for people with accessibility needs (e.g. Ty Solar event).
- **Marketing and communications** – although there were some excellent examples of marketing and communications activity (for example the hand delivery of postcards to all properties and businesses in Tiers Cross and the opportunity in a small unique community like Llanteg Park to reach every household) on some occasions marketing and communications could have been improved.
- **Strategic / forward thinking and planning** – some of the feedback from group members suggested that a clearer plan and strategic focus might have benefited some of the groups (although it is recognised that this can be difficult when you are also trying to let the community lead based on their needs and interests).
- **Match funding** – the project was reliant on match funding from services provided by the Welsh Government Energy Service and others. As project delivery was hampered by challenges and the tight timescale, it became clear that the projected match funding would not be able to be accessed and as a result the project budget had to be amended.
- **Creating an entirely new community group** - Project officers have had success developing projects where there was a pre-existing group (even if it had not met for a while or was not fully constituted) and where they were based within community. Moving groups towards constitution and project development was more difficult elsewhere.

## 7. Conclusions and recommendations

The LEAF project has delivered positive benefits in five communities across Pembrokeshire, and these benefits are likely to grow in the medium to long term.

Highlights include

- **Community led energy projects** have been developed to pre-planning stage in St Davids and Llanteg Park, and the Tiers Cross community has identified a preferred site for a community led energy project.
- **Local energy action groups** have been developed in St Davids and Llanteg Park.
- **Successful community events** have been held in St Davids, Tiers Cross and Llanteg Park, and more are likely to follow in St Davids.
- A **committed team of volunteers** who can contribute to further development of the hub and the network.
- **Bringing volunteers from different communities together** at capacity building sessions and study tours.
- The beginnings of a **community energy podcast** series (LEAFcast).

However, the project did experience significant challenges. Some of these were already becoming apparent at the mid-term review stage and were consequently exacerbated by the Coronavirus pandemic. The lessons learnt should be shared and used to inform further work to support the development of community energy.

Aspects of the project that weren't as successful as planned include:

- **the number of community events, study tours and capacity building sessions were well below the target set at the start of the project.** This was obviously influenced by the Coronavirus pandemic but the likely difficulty in achieving the targets was already clear at the mid-term review stage.
- **The community energy projects have not developed past the pre-planning advice stage.** The steep learning curve for the project team and volunteers, and the time taken for community / volunteer groups to form and take action were limiting factors.

Progress has been made towards the intended project benefits that were set out in the monitoring and evaluation contract (see Table 3 on page 12 for a summary of progress).

The LEADER funding targets were challenging to meet, particularly so in the face of the Coronavirus pandemic. The LEAF project over-achieved on some outputs, but further work is required to fully meet the definitions provided by the LEADER team in some instances (see Section 4.2 for further detail).

The development of a Theory of Change for the LEAF project was a process that was valued by the project team. More regular reflection sessions based around the Theory of Change may have benefited the project. The majority of the Theory of Change outcomes are already

being achieved, although some were hard to evidence, require additional evaluation with the wider community or need further definition (see Section 4.3 for detail).

Recommendations from the monitoring and evaluation team for future work are as follows:

### Recommendations for the Pembrokeshire LEAGs

- Ensure you have a **clear plan** that you can refer back to and use to share and communicate with others (including potential new helpers). **Consider using Theory of Change** to demonstrate what you are trying to achieve and how, and use it to develop ways of measuring and sharing progress towards a final goal (which might take a long time to achieve). Consider independent facilitation to support this process.
- Take some time now, after the funded project support has ended, **to reflect and plan what happens next**. Focus on the things that make the people in your group happy. Keep building relationships and sharing knowledge and inspiration.
- **Give everyone a clear role / task, but don't ask anyone to do too much**. Lots of people doing a small bit each are more likely to achieve in the longer term than one person doing too much. Overloading one person may put them at risk of volunteer fatigue and they may step away completely.
- Keep working to develop **close relationships with the wider community** and make sure you **understand what motivates and drives others** in the community so you can align your objectives and activity.

### Recommendations for CEP

- Organise a **post LEAF project knowledge sharing and networking opportunity** in the near future to bring people together, and to continue to engage and inspire. This could include information on how community energy fits into the whole of the energy system (one of the things suggested that it may be helpful for groups to understand more about).
- A further series of workshops a year or so in the future could bring a selection of LEAG members together to **continue to review and reflect on the LEAF Theory of Change**.
- Consider the **future role of the Delivery Partnership**. It could come together after the knowledge sharing and networking event to review and agree how ongoing support for the communities could be organised to ensure the work that has gone in to date is built upon rather than forgotten.
- Further develop a **membership programme for groups and individuals** and highlight funding, support and project opportunities (e.g. SDF, WGES). Explore whether SDF or other funding could support the development of this service (i.e. paying someone to do it rather than relying on Volunteer Directors limited voluntary time)
- Consider hosting some meetings in **Tiers Cross** in the future to help them on their journey

- Engage with the Port of Milford Haven to encourage a back to basics project to stimulate citizen engagement and participation **Milford Haven, Hubberston and Hakin**, which could be centred around the **Energy Kingdom** project. Consider working with Hubberston and Hakin Community Forum, Co-Production Network for Wales, PLANED Community Wellbeing and Resilience project, Milford Haven Town Council and others.
- Continue to support the community in **Lawrenny** to explore the extension of planned heat network for a new development to the existing community.
- **Podcasts and energy café online session** – it may be useful to develop a bank of resources like this, which are a more friendly and accessible addition to Welsh Government community energy toolkit.

### **Recommendations for similar projects / developing further local energy action**

Community energy projects can be empowering and can provide a vehicle to achieve a whole host of community development objectives. However, they are also complex projects for communities to take on.

The following recommendations for future work to develop community energy groups and projects are based on the monitoring and evaluation of the LEAF project:

- Recognise the challenge of **developing a group, people and a project** concurrently. It can be done but is **time and resource intensive**. Do not expect too much too soon. **Set realistic timescales** but look for **quick wins** along the way.
- Ensure communities have the **right support and knowledge on hand from the outset**. If projects are being led by inexperienced staff / volunteers a fairly intensive knowledge and capacity building programme could be designed at the start of the project. This could be followed by regular mentoring and opportunities to learn and share by reflecting on what has worked and what hasn't as the project develops.
- Help groups to visualise the path towards a community energy project by providing a simple and easy to understand **project process overview**. The LEAF Theory of Change could be built upon to provide this.
- Groups may benefit from **strategic support** to ensure aims, objectives and outcomes are clear. The Theory of Change process may be useful for this.
- **Communities selected for an injection of support should be carefully chosen**. A pre-support / project phase to establish community hopes and desires, existing group structures and potential issues should be completed before support is confirmed. The type of support needed will be different in each community. Some may require a period of activity to encourage overall engagement in civic life before volunteers can be identified to help take forward a community energy project.
- **A small definable community** may be able to deliver a community energy project quicker than a larger community that might be harder to engage and bring together. This could be a small geographical community or a community of interest (which may be within a slightly larger geographical area).

- **Marketing and communications** is an area of work that requires time and energy and that can sometimes be overlooked. However, putting more effort into marketing and communications can have big benefits in the longer term. These may include finding more volunteers to help and therefore spreading the load, as well as reducing the likelihood of mis-understandings and a lack of connection with the wider community causing problems that distract from objectives in the longer term. Specific marketing and communications support for groups may be helpful, as well as having an individual responsible for this within each group.
- The **energy café idea is promising** (see LEAF events report for further information) but could not be fully tested and explored as part of LEAF due to the impact of the coronavirus pandemic. The online session developed by the team could be used as a follow up to an informal drop in.
- **Capacity building activities should be designed in partnership with the intended recipients.** Once group members / volunteers have an overview of the process / skills required, they can discuss and agree which skills they need to build upon (either by developing them personally or by looking to the wider community or beyond for those skills). A capacity building programme can then be developed based on any skills gaps. The programme / timing of sessions should be designed to suit the individuals intending to develop the required skills. Further recommendations on capacity building are contained in a separate capacity building evaluation report.
- Ensure communities developing or interested in community energy projects have **opportunities to network and share** successes and failures with other communities, either locally or further afield.
- **Ensure volunteers feel supported.** Meet with individuals as much as possible to strengthen relationships. Support volunteer relationships via sub-groups and mini projects. Ensure 'pastoral' support is available to group members (e.g. take time to listen to people talking, understand and problem solve any issues that may be affecting their ability to contribute). 'Pay' volunteers in quality management time.
- **Alternative models of support should be tested.** For example, a team of technical and community development specialists could run a competition for their support to develop a community energy project. A suite of communities could be selected for support and mentoring, and further communities added as initial projects move towards completion, and as groups become more experienced and financially secure.

There are elements of the approach suggested above that are similar to the support provided by **Renew Wales and the Welsh Government Energy Service**. Lessons learnt from both those programmes (and other community energy projects) should be integrated into the design of any future programme of community energy support.

## **Recommendations - general**

- **Volunteer Directors** need to be wary of taking on too many projects if the organisation does not have a staff pool that can help to address any capacity issues. The LEAF Delivery Partnership was designed to help address this risk for CEP and could have supported the CEP Directors with project oversight if it had met more regularly. The LEAF project was very reliant on the project manager - when that

individual became unable to focus fully on the project due to circumstances outside of their control, the volunteer Directors were not able to fill the gap due to other commitments.

- **Clear intended outcomes for community events and meetings** can help to ensure they are worthwhile and fit for purpose. Work with a partnership of people to develop a plan (including marketing plan) to ensure those outcomes are delivered.
- **Community event marketing and communications** - a simple and clear marketing and comms plan should be produced for each event, based on the intended outcomes. Do not rush into events and plan them well. Seek support from other organisations and partners to help promote your event.

## **8. Complementary documents**

- Theory of Change report
- Events report
- Capacity building sessions report
- Monitoring and Evaluation Mid-Term Review
- Project Manager's report
- LEADER End of Project Evaluation form

Dilys Burrell

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[dilysburrell@gmail.com](mailto:dilysburrell@gmail.com) 07736 120580