



Neston Community Energy Limited

Annual Report of the Board of Directors

Neston Community Energy Limited (NCE) was registered as a Community Benefit Society in June 2024. It was established initially from a group of members of Neston Earth Group for the purpose of bringing green community energy projects to the CH64 Area.

The project that provided the impetus for the setting up of NCE was the potential for the Council owned (and now clay capped) former landfill site at Clayhill in Neston to be used as the location for a solar park. However, the aim of NCE is to explore, support and promote all possible projects locally using any available sources of renewable energy.

In October 2024, NCE was granted government funding through the Community Energy Fund North West Net Zero Hub, administered by Lancashire CC. A grant of £37,825 was awarded to engage Scene, a Renewable Energy Consultancy, to carry out a Feasibility Study on the suitability of the Clayhill site as a solar park. Extensive work was carried out and two separate meetings were held in January and March to share the findings with members of the local community.

Considerable interest was generated by the study and the attendant publicity about the work being done. The general feeling was that there was widespread support for a Community Energy organisation in Neston. The potential for decreasing dependency on central electricity supplies, raising income from projects to benefit the community and giving people a chance to do something to reduce carbon emissions has been attractive to many.

The conclusion of the Feasibility Study was that whilst the solar park was technically feasible, there wasn't currently a private customer available to purchase the electricity and give the best financial return. The report concluded:

"Our recommendation is to progress the project further as a community-led venture, seeking to de-risk the project prospects by securing an option agreement with the landowner (Cheshire West and Chester Council), conduct a detailed system design, develop a business plan, and secure planning permission. This will ensure that the community is best placed to progress the scheme where a local customer is identified and / or preferential export rates are secured."

In July NCE received confirmation that it is able to bid for further support from the GB Energy Community Energy Fund (GBECF) to enable more detailed business planning on the Clayhill scheme. It is the intention of NCE to explore all options for delivering the scheme including partnerships with other community energy companies, community shares and other energy sector providers/funders. NCE also intends to explore a stage 1 funding bid to the GBECF for a small roof solar scheme within CH64.'



In its first year NCE has received much appreciated support from local councillors, Martin Barker, Louise Gittins and Keith Millar and officers from Cheshire West and Chester Council, in particular, those with climate change and sustainability responsibilities.

NCE has been very grateful for the grants received from both Cheshire West Voluntary Action to pay the registration fee with the Financial Conduct Authority, as well as from Cheshire Community Foundation to support our volunteers in establishing essential administrative and legal compliance structures so that NCE can ensure it has a sound basis on which it can grow as a Community Benefit Society and be ready for new challenges and opportunities. A particular ambition is to increase and broaden membership and make more use of social media to widen the reach of NCE.

As well as the task of project managing the Clayhill Feasibility Study, NCE has been working with local organisations and businesses to share information and support anyone wishing to explore ways to make use of green energy. An example of this is the recent support NCE has provided to Neston Community Youth Centre in investigating the potential for fitting solar PV at the centre.

NCE has recently also submitted representations with regard to the energy implications of the Cheshire West and Chester Local Plan proposals and this is something that will continue to be monitored as the Local Plan progresses through its next stages.

NCE has achieved much in its first year and with the support of its Members, local people, businesses and the network of organisations who have given so much encouragement along the way, we are confident that we can thrive in the year ahead.

Susan Davies

Dr Robina Hetherington

Andrew Mills

Robert Thrift

David Wetherell

Directors, Neston Community Energy Limited.

September 2025

A Community Benefit Society regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority

Registration Number 9307

Registered Office: Neston Community Youth Centre

Burton Road

Neston CH64 9RE