

## United kingdom community microgrids

The Community Energy sector has been challenged since the Government's new position on incentives for renewables. This is the chance for the United Kingdom to explore the new model of local energy communities that are possible thanks to smart and microgrids, energy sharing in a peer-to-peer dynamic and technology like smart meters and SNOCU units.

Since the end of the Feed-in Tariff Scheme (FITS) last year, the community energy sector in the United Kingdom has been struggling. At the same time, the lack of support from government incentives also creates an opportunity for new strategies and business models to thrive.

According to the data published by statista last February, solar energy generation in the United Kingdom increased rapidly, especially between 2011 and 2018, thanks to a mix of technological development and launch of the government's Feed-In Tariff scheme (FITs) in 2010. The last official data on electricity and heat production from photovoltaic generation recorded 12,857 GW hours in 2018 with a cumulative installed capacity of 13,098 MW.

This growth is also due to the contribution of the Community Energy sector, which evolved alongside solar panel distribution. Its exact size is unknown but around 300 community organisations have been counted, managing different kinds of community-owned renewable initiatives, not all solar. The first community-owned renewable project connected to the grid was a wind farm in Cornwall in 1991.

According to UKERC research, Community Energy includes any energy project completely or partially controlled or owned by a group of people identifiable as a community, for instance co-operatives. It also includes any project with two or more of the following features:

The UK Government underlines that the keyword of Community Energy is "local": local engagement, leadership, control, and outcomes. Local stakeholders own or control the majority of the sustainable energy projects, voting remains democratic and social and economic benefits are shared locally.

The benefits of these projects are both economic and social: community energy enhances local acceptance and awareness of renewable energy sources and emphasizes the importance of decreasing fossil-based energy consumption. At the same time, local communities have the chance to access energy at a lower cost, to maximise energy efficiency and to create local jobs.

Regardless of whether you live in a flat in the city centre with a shared rooftop or a terraced house in the countryside, you can monitor and analyse your energy consumption and the performance of your PV and ESS (Energy Storage System), balancing the energy you share with other community members. In any of these scenarios, the benefits of sharing energy can be further improved by installing SNOCU units and joining the



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Regalgrid platform.

The State of the Sector 2019 report by Community Energy England collects data for England, Wales and Northern Ireland and counts 275 Community Energy Organisations all across these regions. 136 of them are Community Benefit Societies, 42 are Co-operatives and 22 are Charity Organisations.

These projects require a decentralised system connected to the distribution grid. Organisations often reinvest incomes in low-carbon initiatives. Most of the projects funded are actually related to energy efficiency: energy switching, smart-meter installation, energy-efficient lighting and insulation.

London is a city that is particularly active in community energy. The specific report shares some available data for 2018. The Non-Profit Organisation that has gathered the data mentions 35 projects under way, an installed solar capacity of 475 kW and crowdfunded investment reaching over ?600,000.

For instance, Repowering is developing a community-owned project, working with local people. They are planning to install solar PV panels allegedly with a capacity of 50 kW on rooftops in the Middlesex Street Estate in the Portsoken ward, and to fund this ?48,000 project by selling shares to community members and thanks to donations from corporations which want to increase sustainable actions.

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