



The C.H.E.E.S.E. Project Review of Activities, July 1st 2019 - January 31st 2020

The C.H.E.E.S.E. Project CIC began trading on 1 July 2019 after the project operated first as a unit within the Bristol Energy Network since 2014 and then as an unincorporated association since August 2016. The former management committee became directors of the new CIC, with a normal term of office of three years - although this term limit is not in our articles.

The bank balance of the association was transferred to a new account for the CIC. This comprised a £10,000 grant from the Bristol Community Energy Fund, advance payment for training for SELCE and 26 Surveys for CSE's Futureproof project. Having failed to gain 7 grants applied for, we had a very slender balance sheet figure of only £701. We thus had to delay re-employing our survey manager until 23rd September.

With a slightly colder Autumn than 2018, and markedly more awareness of the climate emergency, we had a satisfactory start to the survey season and have now done over 60 surveys. The total cost to us of a survey last winter was £240, despite all management working *pro bono*. To improve our cash flow we discontinued free surveys, unless paid for by third parties, and doubled our prices for a 5 room house to £150. We also decided we would have to operate with volunteers as unpaid assistants. We were unwilling to charge more, for fear that we would lose customers to our deliberately low-cost business model. Futureproof are paying £200 per survey, and we have also carried out surveys of the Quaker meeting houses for a higher figure, and CHAS paid us at the rate of £250 for six surveys. We have a further 10 surveys paid for at £245 each for Hartcliffe, funded by CSE's WHAM project. So far we have earned around £20,000 from sales (including £5k advance payment for Futureproof). Thus we have substantially increased our income per survey, while cutting costs.

We failed in yet more grant bids to;

- Naturesave Trust
- Megawatt Community Energy Fund
- Friends Provident
- Nationwide
- Lottery Climate Action Fund

Tim Temple of the Lottery told us last week that the lottery would not support us, nor BEN's proposed partnership with us in the Warm Up Skill Up retrofitting project, because he did not consider us to be sufficiently community based. As all our members are community anchor NGOs this is, to put it mildly, unkind. We have an outstanding bid for £11,000 to the local John James Foundation to support free surveys. There are several further small grants to which I will apply to try to get funding to continue through the Summer.

Together with BEN we have been exploring other potential income streams, from tie-ins with Bristol Energy Ltd, Bristol and Bath Regional Capital, Bristol City Funds, BEIS, and others. There is clearly an opportunity for crowd funding.

We have succeeded, thanks to help from Re:work to get a Bristol City Council Impact fund grant of £7,500 for this year and next to work with Hartcliffe & Withywood community

Partnership and Re:work for Filwood and Knowle delivering free surveys and training more local Energy Tracers. Also good news is that we gained a grant from Bath and West Community Energy of £4500 to begin surveys in Bath, using Bristol ETs from this month, and then to train local ETs. This has given us the income to extend our survey manager's contract until April. Unfortunately, these only contribute a small amount to other core costs. In Bath we also have considerable interest from the new Council.

We have a dozen local energy groups who are interested in starting C.H.E.E.S.E. segments - and have been advised by the funding agency Voscur, that they should apply separately to funds like Megawatt. We have another dozen volunteer-based groups outside Bristol - also keen to start replicas - but they need £3-4K each to begin. Further, we have five potential large partners already generating funds from Feed-in Tariffs - of these Bath is the first and will be a prototype. And then there are other councils. Brian Harper has generated interest in C.H.E.E.S.E. surveys from the county of Worcestershire and potentially for the entire West Midlands.

In October we carried out our fourth training Phase 1 and 2 events with Brian Harper and Jeremy Birch for 7 local Energy Tracers and Tristan Hunt from SELCE (to whom we also supplied survey equipment). Unfortunately two trainees dropped out later (one for health reasons). This continues a high drop-out rate which will have to be addressed in the future. Only four out of an initial eight trainees received their CPD certificates from 2018/19 training.

We employed an intern, James Gourlay, a third-year Geography undergraduate, paid by the University of Bristol, to analyse the outcomes of our surveys one month and one year on. This showed that 2/3 of our clients take remedial action within a month and 87% within a year an extremely good figure - with a median spend of about £1,000 for those who take higher-cost action. Having finished the tables, unfortunately James became unwell, and he has now vanished. Neither we nor the university are able to communicate with him. Roz and Jamie will complete the report for publication.

Last week we were honoured and very proud to win VOSCUR's Environmental Impact Award at their Volunteer Social Impact Awards. I am pleased to report that we have recruited five new volunteers this season, and already a further two to help with surveys in Bath.

To sum up, it has been a very tricky seven months financially. But we have survived by adapting, and there is widespread and rapidly expanding interest and enthusiasm for what we do in a country increasingly concerned with the climate emergency. I was at a large conference in Bath last week called Building a Better Future. It was put on by Bath University for the big players in engineering and architecture - people like Arup and Norman Foster partnership. We already have business advice from Bath's STBAH programme, and one of the university Research Associates said to me, "Mike, you have more opportunity to change the energy used in housing than anybody else in the room." He offered to financially support research into our archive etc. with University projects.

To take advantage of the many opportunities opening before us what the management team urgently need is more help on projects from volunteers. Please consider what you could do.