

SOUTHILL COMMUNITY ENERGY

1. My name is Liz Reason. I am Chair of Southill Community Energy, a community benefit society which owns a 4.5MW solar farm, Southill Solar, near Charlbury, West Oxfordshire. I am here to put information about levels of community benefit on the record.
2. Consultation respondents to the Botley West planning application have focused on how communities affected by the development should be compensated, in part by imposing a duty on the developers to provide community benefit.
3. PVDP has proposed a contribution to community benefit from Botley West at a level of £300-500/MW.
4. For information, Southill Community Energy, which started generation in 2017, is required by its S106 conditions, to provide a minimum of £10k/MW each year - that is, £45,000. £15k goes to Cotswold National Landscape and a minimum of £30k goes to the related charity, Sustainable Charlbury, to distribute to local projects.
5. Sustainable Charlbury has granted funds to almost all the community buildings in Charlbury, including the school, to make them as low energy and low carbon as possible. It has supported community halls in other communities. It has also funded food, nature recovery and education projects. Between them, the two organisations have donated almost £300k of community benefit since 2017.
6. £45k is roughly equivalent to 1% of our income and is a minimum. The level of community benefit is likely to increase significantly over the next few years and could more than double.
7. It's hard to calculate the income of Botley West, but estimates range from £50m-£100m year.
8. If it was required to pay 1-2% of its income to community benefit, this would amount to £500k - £1m/year or twice that.
9. A sum of this magnitude could benefit local communities. But it could be used strategically to benefit Oxfordshire as a whole. A fund to develop quality retrofit training for excellent energy and carbon performance for all buildings in Oxfordshire could transform the skills of the local buildings industry. The fund could be managed by a vehicle set up for this purpose, to be run by a group of existing grant-giving bodies working with, for example, Abingdon & Witney College.

