

## **APPROPRIATE LEVELS OF COMMUNITY BENEFIT**

### **A further statement from Southill Community Energy**

The Botley West Solar Farm NSIP hearings were held during May in Oxford and just days after the hearings, the Botley West developers (PVDP) doubled their community benefit offer to £440,000 per annum. This appears to have been in a process that was not transparent and which did not reflect either government proposals, nor examples of community benefit levels nearby.

The recent Government Working Paper 'Community Benefits and Shared Ownership for Low Carbon Infrastructure' compares with other projects and proposes a figure based on £5000 per MW (for Botley West 840 MW) - this would be the equivalent of £4.2 million per annum. Consequently, settling for £440,000 per annum would mean that local communities may miss out on millions of £s over the 40-year lifetime of the project.

A reminder that Southill Community Energy pays out a minimum of £10,000 per MW per year. Compared to that the proposed level of , PVDP's community fund is not proportionate or fair. Over 40 years, the community fund at £5,000 per MW per year would amount to £168 million compared to just £17.6 million on offer from PVDP.

A fair community benefit would be one that reflects the scale, impact and profits of the project. While community benefits are well established for renewable energy projects, there is no legal requirement in England for developers to offer a community fund and so communities have to rely on voluntary offers from developers, PVDP in this case.

If the proposed government level of community benefit is used, Oxfordshire would have an annual sum that could be used strategically to lower emissions and energy costs by, for example, training a cohort of builders and engineers to deliver high quality home energy retrofit.