

[EQUANS gets government grant to progress the energy transition in the UK](#)

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EQUANS, part of the ENGIE group, has been awarded a funding extension from Innovate UK, to progress its plans for a town wide, smart local energy system (SLES) in Rugeley, Staffordshire, which will demonstrate how carbon emissions and energy costs can be reduced across the country.

The rapid growth of renewable energy resources, coupled with the closure of large power stations, means how we use energy is changing. In 2018, UK Research and Innovation set up the Prospering from the Energy Revolution challenge programme, delivered by its innovation agency, innovate UK. The programme invited key players within the energy and regeneration space to pitch for co-funding that would enable them to help revolutionise the energy transition.

In March 2020, ten pilots were given the Government green light and EQUANS was awarded a £1.4m contribution to design a SLES called Zero Carbon Rugeley (ZCR). EQUANS was tasked with bringing together a consortium of partners that would support with the design of the scheme and has since assembled a team of nine businesses*; and embarked on an extensive community engagement programme.

EQUANS has worked collaboratively with academics at Keele University, to include the people of Rugeley in the plans – gauging key insights on energy use and deliverables.

This month, ZCR has been revealed as one of just three detailed design projects from the original ten to receive a contract extension to push further forward with the detailed design and bring it one step closer to implementation. To achieve this, Innovate UK has granted a further £500k. EQUANS and its partners have also injected £1.7m of their money to progress the scheme.

Louise Alter, Energy Innovation Manager for EQUANS UK & Ireland, said: *“We have spent the last two years investing heavily in this project and have passionately involved the local community to ensure we have co-designed a SLES that will work for them. A SLES is entirely dependent on local people engaging with the concept and we wholeheartedly believe this has been the point of difference for us.*

“We are thrilled Innovate UK has seen this commitment and is invested in our design. Together with our partners and the wider community, we are confident ZCR will be at the forefront of the UK’s energy transition.”

Rob Saunders, Challenge Director for Innovate UK’s Prospering from the Energy Revolution Challenge said: *“Zero Carbon Rugeley’s local energy system project has the potential to create transformational change in the community of Rugeley, making energy cheaper and cleaner for local people and accelerating the journey to net zero. We are delighted to be able extend the project’s co-funding so that its design and models can be piloted in the community, taking it to the next stage in becoming reality.”*

The contract extension is for an additional year and will be reviewed again in March 2023.

*Partners in the ZCR SLES include:

- EQUANS
- Cadent Gas
- Keele University
- Conigital
- Connected Places Catapult
- Opus One Solutions
- Sustainable Housing Action partnership
- Energy Capital
- Chase Community Solar
- Regen
- New Vic Theatre
- West Midlands Combined Authority

With support from:

- Cannock Chase Council
- Staffordshire Council