

Let's Go Zero welcomes new support for solar on schools and community energy by Great British Energy

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Ashden's schools campaign Let's Go Zero welcomes new support for solar on schools and community energy by Great British Energy.

Ashden welcomes the government's announcement of the first major project for Great British Energy, which is investing £80m to put rooftop solar panels on around 200 schools, alongside £100 million for nearly 200 NHS sites, and increased support for community energy.

Alex Green, Head of Let's Go Zero, the zero carbon schools campaign run by climate solutions charity, Ashden, says: "The huge potential of Great British Energy has always been about giving citizens and communities a real stake in—and direct benefit from—the clean growth story of the 21st century. It's great to see the first steps in that vision taking shape in schools and hospitals, which sit at the heart of every community.

"At Let's Go Zero we know solar on schools is a success—cutting bills, inspiring young people, and strengthening vital public services. Schools often lead local clean energy initiatives but these efforts rely heavily on school fundraising, but with greater government support, they can scale more quickly and effectively."

Through Ashden's Let's Go Zero campaign, signed up to by over 5,600 schools and representing 2 million students, schools can get free expert advice on how to decarbonise and save money on energy bills from local Climate Action Advisors, including guidance on financing is available for retrofit and renewables.

Multiple schools around the UK have already taken up the mantle of clean energy – some working with local schemes organised by community energy groups or local authorities. For instance

Leicestershire Solar Schools has just started a project with Green Fox Community Energy, a not-for-profit community benefit society, partnering with Leicestershire County Council to offer free community-funded solar panels and guidance on climate action planning, supported by the government's Community Energy Fund.

Tudor Grange Academy Solihull are going to be connected to the Solihull Energy Town Centre Energy Network, and Bath & Wells Community Energy have installed solar into a raft of schools.

Alex Green continues: “The support announced today from Great British Energy will help schools across the country replicate these initiatives, helping the schools save much needed funds as well as being proactive on reducing carbon emissions.

Embedding behaviour change alongside renewable energy investments is also key to unlocking their full potential, she says. “When staff and students are actively involved in energy-saving habits and sustainability initiatives, schools maximise savings, deepen learning, and create a culture of climate action that extends beyond the school gates. Let's Go Zero look forward to supporting the government to realise this potential.”

Ashden also welcomed the move by government to provide support for local authorities and community energy groups with nearly £12 million to help build community-led clean energy projects which could generate profits that will then be reinvested into community projects including tackling fuel poverty.

Support for community energy is a vital part of the country's clean energy progress, shown by the success of community energy organisations like Low Carbon Hub, Repowering London, and Energise Barnsley, which show clearly how this sector is tackling fuel poverty, reinvesting revenues into local social programmes, and creating long-term benefits where they're needed most. Many of these community energy organisations also partner with schools or are part of Ashden's Energy Learning Network, which supports community energy organisations across the UK.

Ashden's UK Policy Lead, Will Walker, points out that: “There is overwhelming public support for community energy – with 78% of people agreeing communities should own and benefit from local energy – so making sure the financial and regulatory barriers and capacity challenges are faced will be the next stage of the GB Energy journey”, he says.

“Great British Energy's announcement today is the start of a once-in-a-generation opportunity to scale community and local energy – this isn't just about generating power — it's about generating resilience to energy price rises, local wealth and pride in the places people live, work and play.

“We hope that this government will stop the previous start-stop policy changes and provide certainty on the full £3.3 billion Local Power Plan at the Spending Review. To unlock its full potential we need long-term funding, capacity support prioritised in low-income communities, and market and policy reforms that deliver fair returns and real community benefit.”

Will Walker goes on to say: “We welcome Great British Energy's first investment in schools and communities, recognising that young people and places must be central to national renewal. Success will

depend on government, communities, the public and private sectors working together. This is a positive step to protect public services, and deliver resilient, future-ready schools – we stand ready to help the government achieve their target of 8GW of community and local power, and decarbonise and adapt the entire school estate.”