



Community Energy for Energy Solidarity: Evaluation of the CEES pilot projects

Repowering London chapter

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www.energysolidarity.eu



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CEES
COMMUNITY ENERGY FOR
ENERGY SOLIDARITY

Introduction

The CEES project and the CEES evaluation

In the Community Energy for Energy Solidarity (CEES)¹ project, six energy communities implemented six pilot projects to alleviate energy poverty, including projects to diversify sources of funding for this work. Knowledge exchange and mutual support between the energy communities was a key component of the six pilots. Within CEES, such projects are referred to as a form of energy solidarity. Led by the University of Birmingham, the CEES team implemented a comprehensive evaluation of the six pilot projects.

Evaluation materials

The following evaluation materials are available at www.energysolidarity.eu/evaluation:

- A short summary of the evaluation findings
- The Full evaluation report (232pp)
- The Executive summary (15pp)
- Individual documents of each of the evaluations of the six CEES pilot projects, plus an additional project that was evaluated through CEES.
- The full Evaluation framework (60pp)

About this document

This document contains the evaluation of the pilot project that was implemented by Repowering London, UK. In the Full evaluation report, this is Chapter 10 and begins on p174.

Key terms in this document

Energy poverty

The situation in which households are unable to access affordable energy services (such as adequate warmth, cooling, lighting, and energy to power appliances), which underpin

¹ The CEES project received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No. 101026972. The project commenced in June 2021 and ran to the end of August 2024.



elements of human flourishing (such as health and wellbeing, relationships, social inclusion, employment, recreation and education). (Day et al.,2016)².

Energy communities

Local collectives of individuals that tend to share values and ambitions relating to: supporting equitable, democratic and fair transitions towards more local, sustainable and efficient energy systems; establishing renewable and decentralised energy systems; assisting local community members with energy efficiency, demand reduction and energy poverty; or economic activity on energy for social and community benefit. These organisations are diverse in structure, size and scope.

Energy solidarity

Actors willingly working in ways that align, on a shared goal of overcoming energy-related adversity that is experienced by one or more of the parties. Energy solidarity is inspired by empathy and / or a sense of justice, and may, but does not have to, involve reciprocal obligation. Stronger solidarity involves a more sustained commitment, and / or a willingness to incur a higher personal cost in pursuit of the shared goal. (Day and Burchell, 2023)³

Fund mechanism

Fund mechanisms are employed to raise funds or income to fund work on energy poverty alleviation.

Identify mechanism

Identify mechanisms aim to seek out and identify households in energy poverty, recruit them to projects and assess their eligibility for projects.

Alleviate ('soft' and 'hard') mechanism

Alleviate mechanisms aim to alleviate energy poverty. 'Soft' alleviation mechanisms do this through household engagement, provision of advice about energy poverty, energy efficiency measures, the provision of energy kits consisting of a variety of small energy efficiency measures (such as window insulation material) and support applying for financial support. 'Hard' alleviation mechanisms alleviate energy poverty through building renovation, retrofitting and refurbishment. In CEES, hard alleviation

² Day, R. et al (2016) Conceptualising energy use and energy poverty using a capabilities framework, *Energy Policy*, 93: 255–264.

³ Day, R. and K. Burchell (2023) Energy solidarity in Energy Communities: alleviating energy poverty and supporting just energy transitions through solidarity approaches. European Sociological Association RN12 mid-term and Energy and Society Network 6th international joint conference, 'Energy, Environment and Societies in Crises', 6-8 September 2023, Trento, Italy.

was undertaken in one pilot project. Several of the CEES pilot projects include recruitment and training for energy advisers. These activities have been included as part of the Alleviate mechanisms.



Repowering London



1. Summary

The evaluation report addresses the following mechanisms:

New CEES mechanism

1. **Fund:** test and tailor microdonations mechanism (inspired by Enercoop) and – as necessary – investigate other fundraising mechanisms.

Additional mechanism

2. **Alleviate:** drawing on Repowering London's established practices and making use of the funds raised in the new CEES mechanism, implementation of a roadshow of public energy poverty awareness and advice events.

Evaluation summary

Fund

The core objective of Repowering London's CEES pilot project was to diversify its portfolio of funding sources beyond grant funding, starting with microdonations (inspired by Enercoop's Energie Solidaire programme). The plan was to use the funds raised to support a programme of energy poverty events later in the project (Alleviate mechanism). Given that Repowering London does not have customers, the team explored options for microdonations schemes with local high street retailers. However, this was not possible in the context of the 'energy crisis' and the complexity of setting up such a scheme.

As the challenges with the microdonations approach became clear, Repowering London turned its attention to seeking local retailer and corporate donations and service contracts. With respect to corporate donations, despite considerable effort, it was not possible to secure any donations during the CEES project time period. Repowering London was successful in securing an offer of a €5,750 donation from the Corporate Social Responsibility fund of a local company; however, the company was unable to make this donation because Repowering London is not a charity. On public donations, Repowering London was able to secure €2,855. These funds were used alongside other grant funding in the Repowering London roadshow (see Alleviate below). More significantly, in April 2024, Repowering London secured a service contract partnership worth €237,554, with SGN (this is a UK gas network operator, as opposed to a retail supplier), for the provision of energy poverty services in south London, in a project called [Warm and Well Networks](#). Running from May 2024 to March 2026, this project was too late to be included in the CEES evaluation. In the later stages of the CEES project, Repowering London developed further innovative plans for funding (these are discussed below in the Legacy section).

Alleviate

Repowering London used the funds that it raised from public donations (and other grant funding) to support a programme of public energy poverty ‘drop in’ advice events, in community settings, in late 2023 and early 2024. By April 2024, Repowering London had implemented 10 roadshow events and had directly engaged with 139 people. This programme of events will be continued within the context of the SGN project.

Legacy

Looking to the future, Repowering London is in the process of submitting a license application to the UK regulator to become an energy supplier. A key legacy of the focus on energy poverty in the CEES project is that Repowering London plans to tackle energy poverty by providing energy at well below market rates. Further, as the result of Repowering London’s visit to Les 7 Vents in France (as part of CEES Open Day 3 in March 2024), Repowering London is now considering how it could set up a retrofit donations scheme in which regular retrofit customers will have the option to pay a ‘solidarity rate’ that includes a donation to fund retrofit for people in energy poverty. As noted above, as part of Repowering London’s SGN service contract, a further legacy of CEES will be the provision of energy poverty services in south London to March 2026.



2. Introduction

About Repowering London (EO1)

Working in urban London, Repowering London is a not-for-profit company that specialises in the co-design and co-production of community-owned renewable energy projects and advocating for change to support a just transition to net zero. Repowering London has a strong track-record of in-depth engagement with households, including households in energy poverty, and the involvement of local citizens in the co-creation and co-delivery of its projects.

The Repowering London pilot project (EO1)

As noted above, the evaluation report addresses Fund mechanisms and an Alleviate mechanism.

Timings

The timings of the Repowering London pilot are shown in Table 9.1.

	2022	2023				2024	
	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2
Fundraising							
Energy Roadshow							

Table 9.1. Timescales for the Repowering London pilot project.

Organisational structure

These Repowering London mechanisms were managed by a Repowering London manager, with delivery support on the Roadshow events. The manager of this work changed twice, due to staff leaving Repowering London. While this is a common phenomenon, it appears likely to the evaluators that this impacted on the project implementation.



3. Fund (EO2)

Background

The starting point for Repowering London's work on funding was a desire to diversify its sources of funding for work on energy poverty beyond grant funding. As other partners reflected, reliance on grant funding means that it is challenging to cover core costs – including, as Repowering London put it, 'our finance officer, our comms officer and our CEO' – and to maintain staffing levels over time. Interestingly, Repowering London has previously worked with fundraising consultants. Nonetheless, this issue has remained very difficult for Repowering London to solve, indicating how challenging it is.

Repowering London was originally inspired by the Energie Solidaire microdonations model. As was mentioned above, there were two staff handovers in the course of the pilot, and this had a significant impact on progress. Repowering London also commented on the very large time investment that funding diversification requires.

Repowering London implemented three further funding diversification activities in CEES, with varying degrees of success and – as a direct result of CEES – is exploring further plans for funding work on energy poverty in the future:

1. Local retailers: microdonations and donations
2. Corporate Social Responsibility donations
3. Service contracts

In addition, Repowering London began to explore the potential of a retrofit donations scheme.

These activities are discussed below.

Local retailers: microdonations and donations

Process

Since Repowering London does not have energy customers, a microdonations scheme could not be implemented following the Energie Solidaire model. Therefore, it was necessary to investigate other potential microdonations and donations models. To do this, Repowering London engaged with local high street retailers to investigate the possibilities of setting up microdonation schemes and securing direct donations from these businesses.

Challenges and outcomes

This work was very challenging and ultimately unsuccessful. Echoing the experiences of other partners, the following challenges were experienced:

1. In some cases, where retailers were part of a regional or national chain, Repowering London encountered a mismatch between these regional/national scopes and the much more local work of Repowering London. Larger national retailers offer charitable funding through grant funding-type schemes, and at least one potential new grant funding opportunity was identified and applied for during this scoping process.
2. More generally, it was considered inappropriate to set up a microdonations scheme in the context of the 'energy crisis' and broader 'cost of living crisis'. This difficult context also made it very difficult for smaller retailers who were struggling with their own energy bills to consider direct donations.
3. As noted in other contexts, this was a time-consuming activity.

Corporate donations

Process

Prior to the CEES project, Repowering London had worked with two different consultants at different times on fundraising through corporate donations. Despite initial optimism, this earlier work proved fruitless. Within the context of CEES, Repowering London returned to this task, carefully selecting and contacting larger local businesses that were considered likely to operate a Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) fund.

Challenges and outcomes

Although this was a further time-consuming activity, this work was unproductive. Repowering London was initially successful in securing an offer of a €5,750 donation from a local management consultancy that specialises in energy. However, it transpired that the organisation was not able to make this donation because Repowering London is not a registered charity (it is a not-for-profit company). This might have been because the organisation would not be able to claim tax relief on a donation to an organisation that is not a registered charity. This is in fact a challenge that was faced by Enercoop when it first attempted to set up a microdonations scheme for its customers. In response to this challenge, Enercoop set up Les Amis de Enercoop as a charity, to receive the donations.

Repowering London also reported other instances where a lot of time was invested, progress was made and it seemed that CSR-related donations would be forthcoming, only for the company to 'go quiet' or withdraw. Repowering London discussed an instance of this, relating to the Just Transition fund run by a local built environment consultancy business. This comment is worth reporting at length because it highlights the challenges of this work:

'They reached out to us saying, "We want to know about what you're doing", and we thought this seems like a great fit. I had several meetings with them in close succession,



a meeting with the person who initially reached out, a meeting where I pitched what we do to the directors, and then another pitch to some other board members. Everything sounds great, they're very positive, it's exactly the sort of thing they want to be funding, and then there's radio silence. And then I nudged them some months on, saying, "Here's something recent from what we've been doing, do you still want to get in touch?" And then get a positive response, like, "Yes, be back with you soon, just figuring things out." Anyway, nudged them again, nothing. And they just got in touch at the end of last year and it had been quite a long time, I don't know, many months, and so I'd assumed it had disappeared, and then the director got in touch end of last year out of the blue saying, "Okay, we're ready now with this just transition fund, do you want to have a chat?" Went back to him with times to have a chat, and now nothing.'

Service contracts

Process and challenge

As the CEES project progressed, Repowering London also turned its attention to seeking local service contracts for the provision of local energy poverty services. In part, this was inspired by Allenergy's success in this area earlier in the CEES project. As with the corporate donations, this work relied on very targeted relationship building. Work in this area focused on energy network operators and local authorities. As with much of this work, Repowering London reported that this was very time-consuming.

Outcomes

In early 2024, Repowering London was successful in securing a service contract with SGN (a UK gas network operator, as opposed to a retail supplier) with a value of €237,554. The project is called [Warm and Well Networks](#). The contract runs from May 2024 to March 2026 (with particular focus on the 2024-2025 and 2025-2026 winters), will operate in south London, and will consist of:

- Continuation of the energy poverty roadshow approach that was implemented in CEES.
- Training of frontline health and social care workers on key elements of energy advice.
- Provision of free boiler assessments and referrals to another grant-funded programme for free assessments on insulation, renewables and other retrofit measures.

Exploring a retrofit donations scheme

Repowering London attended the third CEES Open Day at Les 7 Vents, in Normandy, France, in March 2024. At this meeting, Repowering London was inspired by conversations about a French project that offers retrofit customers the opportunity to pay a donation (also referred to as a 'solidarity rate') to support retrofit projects and other work for people in energy poverty. As the result of these conversations, Repowering London is now exploring a similar project in south London.

4. Alleviate: energy roadshow process (EO4.1)



Process

Between December 2023 and March 2024, Repowering London implemented a programme of 10 public energy poverty roadshow events at locations around Brixton in inner south London. The roadshow events allowed people to 'drop-in' to a Repowering London table at set times in community centres, health centres and leisure centres. In some cases, the event was solely a Repowering London event, whereas in others, Repowering London was one of a number of organisations that had a table. The energy roadshow events were promoted to the community through social media, posters, WhatsApp groups, and flyers and word of mouth in existing community networks. The promotional materials used the heading: *Beat the cold and boss your bills* (see below). As shown in the following photos, the events took the form of informal conversations around a table. This format meant that it was not possible to provide in-depth advice at the events.

The Beat the Cold events had the following objectives:

1. To distribute draughtproofing kits.
2. To sign up people to the UK [Priority Services Register](#) (PSR). The UK PRS is a statutory free service that enables people to register themselves as vulnerable with their energy supplier. People who are registered with the PSR are eligible for a range of additional services and are prioritised in emergencies.
3. To offer tailored energy advice, to the extent possible in a drop-in context.



Repowering London Beat the Cold roadshow event, 24-02-24, Roupell Park Community Centre.

Free energy support is on tour this winter

Beat the cold and boss your bills



-  **Top energy-saving tips & hacks**
-  **Free draught-proofing kits**
-  **Energy-saving lightbulbs**

Need help with maximising your income, benefits or debt? Repowering London will show you where to find support

Thursday 7 December Moorlands Pantry (SW9 8QT), 9-11am	Friday 15 December West Norwood Leisure Centre (SE27 0DF), 1-3pm
Saturday 16 December St Martins Community Centre (SW2 3QB), 12-2pm	Thursday 21 December WLM St Luke's (SE11 4NT), 11.30-1.30pm

Please note: Repowering London isn't able to provide in-depth, one-to-one advice, apply for funding or contact support services on your behalf.

For more info, get in touch with Ewure Esi at ewureesi.ansaotu@repowering.org.uk or on 07 943 708 647



Repowering London energy poverty roadshow poster.





Repowering London Beat the Cold roadshow event, 08-02-24, Moorlands Pantry.

Outcomes

Between December 2023 and March 2024, Repowering London organised ten Beat the Cold roadshow events at locations around Brixton. As shown in Table 9.2, Repowering London was able to have conversations with 139 individuals at these events. Unfortunately, it was not possible to record all of the activities at all of the events. However, it is possible to say that Repowering London distributed a total of 87 or more draughtproofing kits and signed up 5 or more people to the PSR.

Experiences and impacts

Due to the nature and timing of the Beat the Cold roadshow events, it was not possible to formally evaluate participant experiences and impacts of the roadshow events. This was for several reasons:

- The roadshow events took place after the cut-off point for completing 'baseline' surveys (November 2023).
- Even if this had not been the case, these were not the sort of events and engagements at which contact details could be readily collected to enable completion of the 'follow-up' survey.
- Since the events offered a drop-in form of engagement, the engagements between the Repowering London team and the participants were sometimes relatively quick. This meant that there was too little time to complete the 'engagement' survey.

The CEES evaluators offered ideas for very basic evaluation of households' experiences at the Beat the Cold events. However, due to the pressure on human resources at the events, it was not possible for Repowering London to implement these. The evaluators have encouraged Repowering to think further about evaluation for further roadshow events within the new SGN service contract.

Date	Venue (event)	Numbers of...		
		Households spoken to	Draught-proofing kits distributed	PSR signups
07/12/23	Moorlands Pantry (<i>food pantry, Healthy Living Platform</i>)	20	17	Not recorded
15/12/23	West Norwood Leisure Centre (<i>following playgroup for families with autistic children, A2ndvoice CIC</i>)	9	9	3
16/12/23	St Martins Community Centre (<i>Winter Fair event at housing estate</i>)	19	23	2
21/12/23	WLM St Luke's (<i>Community Centre</i>)	0	0	0
08/02/24	Moorlands Pantry	21	Not recorded	
16/02/24	West Norwood Leisure Centre	6	11	0
24/02/24	Roupell Park Community Centre (<i>Local Community Energy Expo event</i>)	5	5	Not recorded
29/02/24	Moorlands Pantry	20	10	
14/03/24	Akerman Centre (<i>Loughborough Junction Action Group's Social Prescribing Day</i>)	5	5	
22/03/24	Marcus Lipton Centre (<i>Community Centre – Warm Welcome Session with RMUK Well-being</i>)	25	7	
Totals		139	87 or more	5 or more

Table 9.2. Details of the Repowering London energy poverty roadshow events.



5. Impacts for Repowering London: the legacy of the CEES pilot (EO6)

The work that is evaluated in this report has produced the following impacts and legacies for Repowering London.

Fund

1. At the start of the CEES project, Repowering London was largely reliant on one source of funding: competitive grants. Historically, this had made it challenging for Repowering London to cover core costs and to maintain staffing levels over time. During the CEES project, Repowering London has developed a range of knowledge, skills and processes to support a more flexible portfolio of funding sources. The large €237,554 [SGN service contract](#) that it has secured is evidence of real success in this area.
2. With respect to corporate donations, although the work in CEES was not successful, Repowering London has built its knowledge and resources for working on this task and will continue this work beyond CEES.
3. Repowering London is exploring further work on public donations. This work will draw on the learning of other CEES partners during the project, as encapsulated in the CEES Energy Solidarity Toolkit.

Alleviate

1. As a result of the funding from SGN, a key legacy of the CEES project is that Repowering London will be continuing to implement and develop its energy poverty roadshow approach. In addition, they will be able to train frontline workers in the health and social care sectors to provide energy advice. Finally, Repowering London will offer boiler assessments and referrals to another grant-funded programme for free retrofit advice.
2. In a further development, during the course of the CEES project, Repowering London submitted an application to the UK regulator for a license to become an energy supplier. This is a lengthy process, so this license will not be granted within the CEES project period. A key element of Repowering London's planned offer, as a not-for-profit retail energy supplier will be to provide energy at 'well below the market rate'. Repowering London reported that experiences in the CEES project have deepened this commitment.

6. Key learning from the Repowering London pilot

Fund

1. While micro-donations following the Energie Solidaire model are appropriate for energy communities that have their own customers, this is a very challenging approach for organisations that do not have customers.
2. When an organisation is not a registered charity, this can negatively impact the potential for corporate donations, because these will not be tax deductible.
3. Although these are time-consuming undertakings, programmes to support public donations, corporate donations and service contracts all have the potential to provide valuable income. Donations can be particularly useful because the income can be flexibly spent across different activities, unlike grant funding.

Alleviate

1. The relative ease with which Repowering London implemented the energy roadshow illustrates the value of previous experience. Energy communities that are new to such work will need more time to develop this level of skill and experience