

Community Energy

Solar panel mounted on the roof of school building

Key information

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The Mayor and central Government must inject additional funding, and work to remove some of the planning barriers for community energy projects in London, to help London meet the Mayor’s target of net zero carbon by 2030.

That is the view of the **London Assembly Environment Committee** that has published a report on community energy in London.

Community energy contributes to the Mayor’s target for London to be net zero carbon by 2030, which will require significant action to reduce carbon emissions across the city.

Community energy is defined by the Greater London Authority (GLA) as “collective action taken by a self-organised network of people with a common agenda to reduce, manage or generate energy”.^[1] This can include working together to finance solar panels or to install heat pumps on community buildings.

Community energy projects in London could produce enough solar power to power 350,000 homes in London^[2], but a lack of available funding and planning barriers are preventing growth of the sector.

Whilst the Committee views the Mayor’s London Community Energy Fund as a success in building skills and expanding the range of community energy projects in London, there is a need for further funding to reduce oversubscription and ensure projects are appropriately funded.

The Committee is also calling for the Mayor to provide additional planning guidance for local authorities to remove planning barriers to installing solar panels. This includes presuming in favour of solar panels in conservation areas, wherever possible, using Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea’s approach as a potential model.

The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea (RBKC) issued a planning order in March 2022 that “gives consent for solar panels on most Grade II and most Grade II* listed buildings without the need for individual listed building consent.”^[3]

Local planning rules are one of the biggest delays to community energy projects. The Committee heard evidence from Councillor Mete Coban, Cabinet Member for Climate Change, Environment and Transport for Hackney Council, on how ‘roadblocks’ slowed down implementation of a project in Hackney.

Community Energy London (CEL) told the **Committee** how, in 2022, it combined the Mayor’s Solar Opportunity Map^[4] with data on community buildings to create a new ‘Potential Map’, identifying locations where solar panels could be potentially installed throughout London Boroughs.

If all the total capacity was achieved, it could amount to over 1GW of solar.^[5] This is equivalent to powering about 350,000 homes (around one-tenth of London homes).^[6]

The **Committee’s** report includes **eight recommendations** to the Mayor and Government, to help community energy realise its potential in the capital to help London towards net zero 2030. These include:

- The Mayor’s London Community Energy Fund has been successful and should continue. The Mayor should increase the funding available to this mechanism in his 2024-25 Budget plans.
- The Mayor should support London Boroughs to develop their own Community Energy Funds through Carbon Offset Funds, providing clear examples and case studies in future guidance and monitoring reports about how this can be done.
- The UK Government should increase the level of funding for its Community Energy Fund, to help community energy groups in London and others across the country.
- The Mayor should explore providing additional planning guidance for local authorities to remove planning barriers to installing solar panels, including presuming in favour of solar panels in conservation areas wherever possible.

[Read the Report](#)

[Read the Mayor's response](#)