

# Carbon Co-op

# Annual report

## 2016

## Hello and welcome!

This is the first ever Carbon Co-op annual report produced in response to the member's survey revealing people want to know more about the organisation and the range of activities we are involved with. One support organisation, Pure Leapfrog, described us as 'all action and no talk' a sort of a compliment but also part of the impetus for us to tell more people about the good things we do.

2015 was an exciting year for Carbon Co-op and one that saw great change. Large, long term projects such as Community Green Deal came to fruition with remarkable carbon reduction performances achieved

(up to 92% carbon reductions), we embarked on a new smart grids project and for the first time we employed paid staff.

Our Strategy Day in May helped build a consensus on where the organisation is heading (section 2) and as a result we employed Aneaka Kellay, our new membership development worker & carried out a new members survey (section 3).

This report provides an organisational overview, summarising progress to date and outlines future work. But it is not set in stone and if you want your say on future direction let us know your views or attend our next Strategy Day meet up.

**the Carbon Co-op board, March 2016**







## Section 1: Overview

A reminder of how we are constituted and how we operate

### Constitution

We are constituted as a Community Benefit Society co-operative (our rules can be found here: <http://s.coop/1xsxs>) this means the organisation is directly responsible to our members and the wider community. We are members of Co-operatives UK (the body for co-operatives) and subscribe to the seven co-operative principles, that can be found here: <http://s.coop/1u9j1>

### Membership

Members pay an annual subscription of £35/year and gain a range of benefits and services. We encourage members to engage in the organisation, contribute to its running and development and importantly to share their knowledge and expertise.

As of 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2016 we have 98 members up from 85 members on 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2015.

### Governance

We are accountable to our membership via an Annual General Meeting at which members elect a committee (though additional people can be co-opted between by the committee between AGMs). Committee members are legally responsible for the governance of the organisation and the board have recently received training in director's responsibilities from Co-operatives UK.

The committee elect honorary officers and constitute sub-committees where appropriate. The full committee meet on a bi-monthly basis at our offices in central Manchester.

The 2015/2016 committee members are:

- Jonathan Atkinson (Society Secretary)
- Lorenza Casini
- Matt Fawcett
- Michael Hemingway
- Rob Jones
- Jane Masam
- Sian Richards (Membership Secretary)
- Eddie Sheehy (Co-opted Dec 2015)
- Julian Tomlin (Treasurer)

### Staff

Until January 2015, activity at Carbon Co-op was carried out by a mixture of volunteers and sub-contracted consultants. A stable funding base has now enabled Carbon Co-op to hire staff members who are accountable to the board.

- **Jonathan Atkinson**, Project Manager (Full Time Equivalent: 0.8)
- **Matt Fawcett**, Technical Lead (FTE: 0.4)
- **Aneaka Kellay**, Carbon Co-op Development Worker (FTE: 0.6)
- **Carlos Alonso Gabizón**, Carbon Co-op Technical Development Worker (FTE: 0.4)

### Offices

We currently operate from URBED's offices at 10 Little Lever Street in the Northern Quarter of central Manchester.



# Section 2: Strategy

Carbon Co-op’s strategy is formulated and revised at an annual strategy day with all members of the co-operative invited to contribute and take part.

## Carbon Co-op Mission

Our mission is to enable householder members and the wider community to make large scale reductions in their home energy usage by brokering access to technical expertise, trusted contractors, low cost finance and enabling peer learning and knowledge sharing.

We believe Carbon Co-op should be an innovative organisation and demonstrating what is possible in the field of low carbon technologies, carrying out work that others can’t or wont do and disseminating our knowledge and learning to members, wider civil society and government.

## Carbon Co-op Values

Our values include: being innovative; spreading and disseminating knowledge; being disruptive to existing business models; enabling peer learning and knowledge dissemination; acting as an independent, trusted advisor; working in partnership; and demonstrating co-operative principles.

## Key Partners and Collaborators

We work with a number of organisations, including:  
  
URBED, OpenEnergyMonitor and Megni, Fieldwork, National Energy Foundation, MadLab, University of Salford, Sustainable Consumption Institute at the University of Manchester, Pure Leapfrog, Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA)

and the Greater Manchester Low Carbon Hub, Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC).

We are members of: Community Energy England, Co-operatives UK and AECB (Association of Environmentally Conscious Building).

## Key audiences

Our activity breaks down in to three areas:

- Working with **early adopters** in new, pioneering projects
- Providing tangible value and benefits to **members**
- Raising awareness and providing knowledge to the **wider community** and stakeholders

Pioneering	Membership	Community
Whole House Retrofit – Community Green Deal project  Nobel Grid Smart Grids  'My Home Energy Planner' whole house assessment and decision making tool	Carbon Co-op socials  Routes to Retrofit training & other seminars including Retrofit Advocacy Carbon Literacy course  Showcasing retrofit projects eg through videos etc  Offers and discounts  Recommend contractors  Website: member area, ie forums, factsheets etc  Discounted home assessments	Green Open Homes weekends  Sharing reports and learning  Free assessments via My Home Energy  Eco-home Lab meet ups  Fuelling Manchester community energy socials  Presentations, discussions and talks  Participation in networks such as Community Energy England and AECB

Current projects broken down by audience



## Section 3: Membership

98 members as of 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2016

### Member Survey

In late 2015, we undertook research to understand member experiences and gather suggestions for the future. The research consisted of an online survey and a focus group. Key findings are summarised below. The results and analysis of both the online survey and focus group can be found in the document 'Survey Report 2015', available in the appendix.

### Key Findings

#### 1. Members look to Carbon Co-op as a trusted source of information and advice

Members are looking for technical advice and recommendations on suppliers, both of which are primary motivations for members in joining. Members are not always clear on where to find this information and this can be a barrier to action.

#### 2. Carbon Co-op could improve its support

#### to members on their retrofit journey

Response to the online survey question on how useful we have been in supporting our member's retrofit work was mixed and although generally positive there is clearly room for improvement. The focus group also identified difficulty in finding specific information and advice for smaller retrofit works.

#### 3. Carbon Co-op events, seminars and workshops are well received

Not only were events, seminars and workshops the most utilised benefits and services they were also rated very useful. There is clear support for continuing and developing these activities further.

#### 4. Other services rate well but are less utilised

Members rated all our services fairly well (between 3-4 out of 5), however some were less utilised. This is in part due to some services being specialist (eg Eco

Home Lab) or having limited availability (eg Community Green Deal). However, we could look into expanding services, such as through the Community Energy Champions program and offering free whole house assessments.

#### 5. Carbon Co-op can do more to facilitate and encourage peer-to-peer support

There is much potential in providing space for both structured and unstructured peer-to-peer support. Suggestions include: a buddy system, mentoring, themed 'retrofit surgeries' and local groups. Improving peer-to-peer support may be a means to increase confidence, a current barrier to action.

#### 6. Member forum, 'Ask the Expert' webinars, bulk discounts, member area of website need improvement

These were least well utilised and rated lowest in terms of usefulness. The member area of the website and forum were discussed at the focus group and identified as being in particular need of development.

#### 7. More communication!

The area identified by members as in need of most improvement over the next 12 months was communication. This includes better communication of outcomes and achievements, more consistent information on events, services and member offers, better communication with new members, better communication with Community Green Deal householders and more in depth information on relevant issues in newsletters.



#### 8. Carbon Co-op can better utilise the skills, experience and motivation of members

Our members are active, busy and motivated. There are a huge variety of skills to share (from bargain hunting to board and governance experience) and much members would like to gain. While there is engagement in the running of the co-op, the majority of this is through attending AGMs and events. Despite member time restraints, more could be done to give a clearer idea and more opportunities to engage in the co-op.



1. The focus group conversation was informal and over the period of an hour we discussed member experience of Carbon Co-op. Due to noise levels in the venue no sound recording was made of this conversation. The conversation was recorded in note form by the interviewer, and therefore cannot be fully accurate.

2. It is worth noting here that there was a high level of support for Carbon Co-op taking on the role of supporting members to procure and oversee works themselves.

3. In the online survey, 'informal advice from another member' was the highest rated benefit, but was among the least well used.



## Section 4: Innovative Projects Round Up

### Green Shift - Nobel Grid project

**What is it?** A three and a half year, EU-funded project to test out the use of new smart meters in a co-operative. Up to 200 householders in Greater Manchester will participate with the project involving other energy co-operatives in Spain, Italy, Belgium and Greece.

**What do we aim to achieve?** To install and test new technology. Firstly to develop and install a new kind of affordable smart meter, predominantly using open source technology. And then to test how these meters might enable members to save energy, shift energy usage and collaborate together for shared benefit. It will involve different technologies such as solar panels, electric vehicles, batteries and heat pumps, but we want to ensure the project focus is also on energy efficiency and a 'fabric first' approach.

**Where is the project at?** It is a year in and a lot of the technical ground work has been

laid although there is much still to do. Some small scale testing of equipment has gone on in the membership for example, we have selected homes to take the batteries.

**How will members get involved and benefit?** We are still in the testing phase now, from Summer 2016 we will start to recruit participants and install meters in greater numbers. Participating householders will benefit from new metering equipment - likely installed in series with an existing meter - as well as use of a home energy app. Householders will be able to manage smart home equipment - some of which we may be able to give away for free. We will also pilot a scheme to enable householders to use more energy when the carbon intensity of the grid is lower.

We will be launching a local group element of the project later in the year but enthusiastic and technically minded

members can get involved now by attending monthly [Eco-home Lab sessions](#) at MadLab.

**What's the dream?** Members able to manage, shift and gain an income from the energy use and production in their home. Members selling renewable power to each other. Community electric vehicle car share schemes. Link ups to community energy generation.

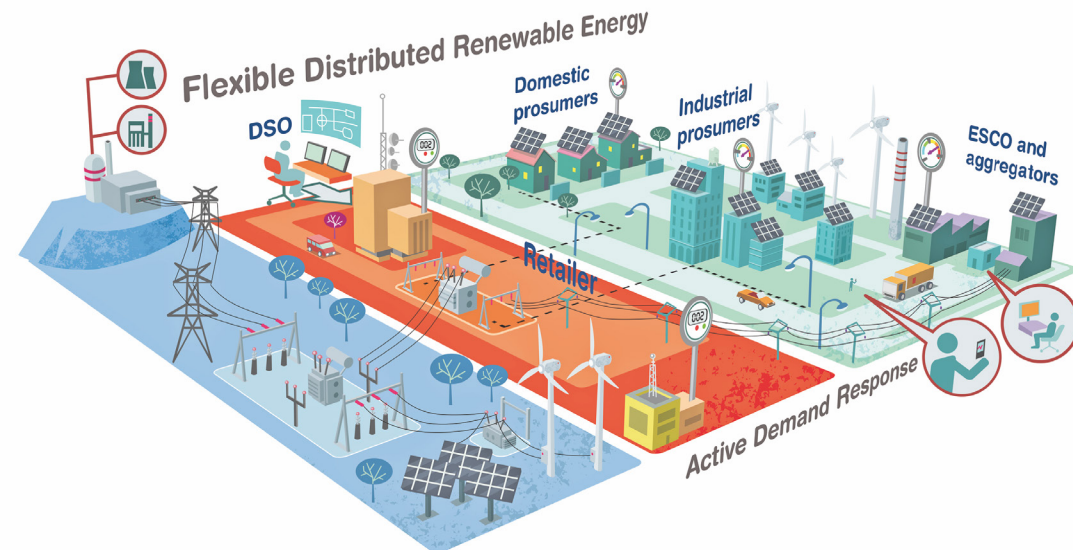
**Who is involved?** Carbon Co-op, OpenEnergyMonitor, 20+ European Partners, Electricity Northwest, Greater Manchester Low Carbon Hub

### Community Green Deal

**What is it?** A programme to test deep retrofit at scale at an affordable price.

**What did we aim to achieve?** Working with members to retrofit their homes to 2050 standards, carrying out whole house assessments, securing 0% interest loans and ECO grants, procuring a contractor, overseeing works.

**Where is the project at?** The first phase has been delivered with eight homes completed. The project has been incredibly challenging but there has been a great deal of learning





associated with householder involvement in the project. Post-works performance has been exceptional with high carbon, energy and financial savings achieved.

In phase 2, more homes are benefitting from 0% interest loan money and support from Carbon Co-op to procure their own retrofit works.

**How will members get involved and benefit?** Those in the scheme have benefitted from lower bills and improved homes. We are now focussing on sharing the learning from the project through presentations, seminars such as Routes to

Retrofit and distributing the whole house energy assessment methodology.

**Who has been involved?** Carbon Co-op, URBED, Procure Plus, Jackson and Jackson, NPS Solar, RED Co-operative, University of Salford

**What's next?** Assisting householders to procure work themselves, packaging learning and knowledge from this project.

Over time the loans householders took out will be repaid and will create a fund for grants for householders in fuel poverty. Carbon Co-op are now considering different ways this fund might be used.

## My Home Energy Planner

**What is it?** Carbon Co-op's whole house energy assessment package has been so successful that we have struggled to keep up with demand. My Home Energy Planner is an online version of the assessment tool which means more assessments can be done by more assessors, quicker.

**What do we aim to achieve?** My Home Energy Planner enables householders to baseline their current energy performance and acts as a decision making tool, modelling the impact and price of different retrofit improvements for the home. The assessment tool is mainly for use by trained assessors but we feel more technically minded members will also be able to use it.

We have also secured some funding from Ordinance Survey to explore a simplified version of the tool, My Home Energy, that uses publicly available data to produce an instant online assessment around 80% the accuracy of the full version.

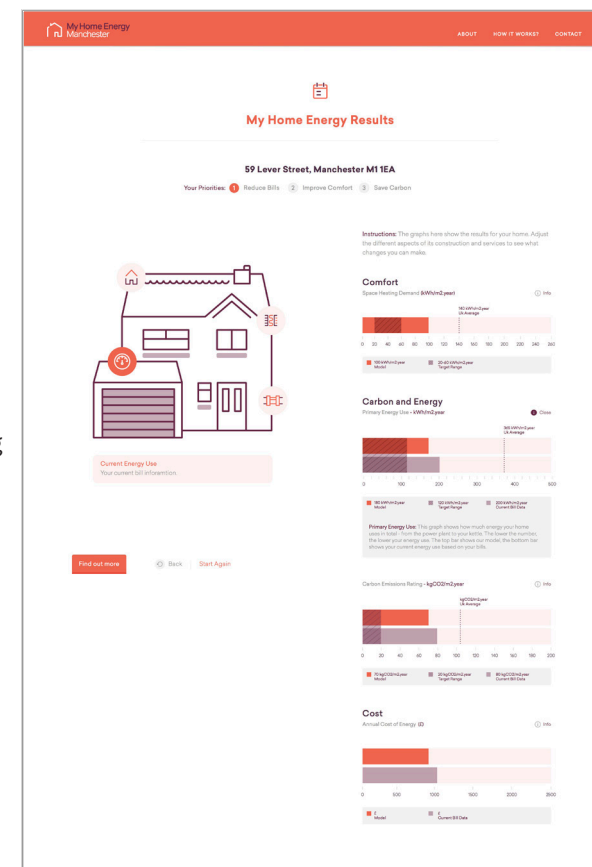
**Where is the project at?** My Home Energy Planner is online and working and we are currently using this with our assessors at URBED. My Home Energy is close to being ready.

**How will members get involved and benefit?** People waiting for assessments will be able to get theirs sooner. Technically-minded householders can create a free account and start creating their own assessment.

**Who is involved?** URBED, OpenEnergyMonitor, Gervase Mangwana (an assessor), National

Energy Foundation, Centre for Sustainable Energy,

**What's next?** The project is open source which means that other community energy groups around the UK can copy and replicate our assessment methodology in their part of the world. We hope that this will see more community energy groups focussing on energy efficiency and demand reduction.





## Section 5: Membership activities

Carbon Co-op is owned by its members - householders wishing to make large scale reductions in their energy use. In 2015 we made a strategic decision to invest staff resources in developing our member offer, in better enabling members to take action and in supporting members to share their knowledge and experiences with others.

### Carbon Co-op socials

Members told us they wanted more interaction and to feel they were a part of a group of like-minded individuals. Commencing in 2015, our socials are semi-structured meetings, held in open, public places such as cafes or bars. They have proved a successful way for people to exchange knowledge and learning with other members - and to get to know each other.

### Routes to Retrofit training & other seminars

Our emphasis is now on increasing the capacity of the membership to take

action for themselves and in sharing the professional expertise and experiences we have accumulated.

To this end we have developed a range of member training programmes:

- **Introduction to Retrofit** - an hour long taster
- **Routes to Retrofit** - 2x 1/2 day course on procuring retrofit works
- **Retrofit Advocacy** - 2x 1/2 day course accredited by the Carbon Literacy Project enabling people to speak confidently to others about whole house retrofit

Routes to Retrofit has been particularly successful with four rounds of seminars having been delivered since 2014 and most sessions fully booked.

### Showcasing retrofit projects

We have been encouraging members to share the learning from their retrofit projects. One of the most successful ways we have found to do this is through video profiles, the first eight of these can be found on the Carbon Co-op website and we plan to commission more.

### Member benefits

During 2015 we have tried to develop the benefits available to members. This has included expanding the range of **offers and discounts** available, improving the **forum and member's area** of the website and where possible **signposting** members to contractors, suppliers and installers.



## Section 6: Community engagement

As a Community Benefit Society, our remit to reduce carbon extends further than just our members. Many of our activities are free and open to all to participate.

### Green Open Homes weekends

We now have over 30 homes in the Greater Manchester area that participate in our Green Open Homes weekends. The events are a fantastic opportunity for a wider audience to learn from existing eco-home householders and we have combined self-directed visits with bus tours, workshops and networking lunches.

### Eco-home Lab meet ups

We continue to run a monthly Meet Up group at MadLab for users of OpenEnergyMonitor and this has been extended to related open source applications of the software and hardware. These events feed in to our other projects, such as monitoring the Community Green Deal project and testing new applications for Green Shift Nobel Grid.

### Irwell Valley Sustainable Communities

Carbon Co-op have been commissioned by the Broughton Trust to run a community energy champions project as part of the Big Lottery-funded Irwell Valley Sustainable Communities project. The area experienced flooding in late 2015 and the project is seeking to link action on climate change with increased resilience to flooding. We are working with a group of enthusiastic community champions and examining ways to support their energy efficiency work.

### Presentations, discussions and talks

Carbon Co-op staff and members regularly present at conferences, events and seminar locally and around the UK. Presentations have included Powering Up North, Community Energy England, CoRE (Centre for Refurbishment Excellence), AECB (Association of Environmentally Conscious Building), Greenbuild Wales and the Tyndall Centre.





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