

Chairman's statement for year ending 31st December 2019

Key Developments

- Installed LED lights at the Balcombe Social Club.
- Worked with Balcombe Parish Council re installing LED lighting at Bramble Hall.
- Prepared our first unsubsidised solar PV system at Milton Mount School.
- Worked with Bridges Recycling Yard in Pease Pottage to pre-register a rooftop solar installation.
- Review of capacity charges at Imberhorne, Holy Trinity and other West Sussex Schools.
- Engaged the community about the traction project and our rooftop projects at the Balcombe fete.
- Worked with Riding Sunbeams, Community Energy South and E4All on progressing our plans for traction project's solar farm.
- Applied for stage 2 RCEF grant funding for the traction project.

Financial Performance

The financial performance of the co-op continues to slowly improve each year. The repayment of capital to members last year has made our financial position stronger and for the first time we generated income above that needed to pay interest to members. The modest surplus will help build up funds to pay for inverter replacements, panel cleaning and repairs. Generation at some sites, particularly in Crawley Down, is lower due to very dirty panels which reduced income. We will aim to do more panel cleaning in 2020. We will continue to repay members' capital at 5% per year as long as funds are available.

Interest 2019

We are proposing to pay members an interest rate of 5%. We will aim to pay the interest in late May/early June. We may delay payment slightly, if funds are needed to help with cashflow for the possible rooftop installations in the Spring.

Energy4All

Not only do E4A provide our accounting and admin services, they have also assisted us with the traction project. They provided us with a financial model for the traction project's solar farm in order for us to complete the Rural Community Energy Fund's application. The continued advice and support from E4A will be essential to our solar farm project.

Community Benefit

The main project we looked to assist, was eventually self-funded by the special needs home. As it took some time to reach this point, we will have a healthy balance to pursue other projects in 2020.

We did, however, fund the LED lighting at Balcombe Club. It was particularly pleasing to be able to fund a project in the village. The installation has reduced the energy needed to light the clubhouse from 1040W to 171W per hour. With lights on 15 hours a day the energy saving is 4758kWh per year. This represents a fantastic saving for the £250 donated by Repower Balcombe.

We are currently working with Balcombe Parish Council to install LED lights at Bramble Hall and the install will be finished in time for our AGM.

We are also working on plans to assist the community fridge in Forest Row which is a project to reduce food waste and to help people on low incomes. In addition, we plan to provide solar on Age UK's Haywards Heath site.

Battery Storage

Despite Joju spending considerable time working on the data issues from the batteries at Turners Hill School, it is still not fully resolved. We are confident that the batteries work correctly but I am equally satisfied that they don't provide meaningful data. I am currently looking at installing a battery system at home and needless to say I will be looking at other manufacturers other than Sonnen.

Electricity Data and Capacity Charges

We finally got access to electricity data from our WSCC schools following an extended period without this. This data is helpful when monitoring our system and it also helps billing and to assess further energy saving measures. WSCC provided me with training on these systems which was useful and also enabled me to encourage them to look at the capacity charges which some schools pay. These are charges paid to ensure a large enough supply of electricity is available to the schools in areas where there may be grid constraints. I have long felt that the schools paid too much due to an overly cautious approach. The council have now reviewed these charges, with assistance from Tim Green and the result is an annual saving of £1,500 at Holy Trinity School and £500 at Imberhorne. The savings over all of West Sussex schools affected must be substantial!

Electricity Generation

Generation was marginally down on last year at most sites but we generated 1.5MW more overall as we didn't suffer from any breakdowns this year. The cleaning of panels at Crawley Down School improved generation but building work at the school meant we lost some generation in the summer holidays. Generation has reduced significantly at Grange Farm and we will clean the panels this year to try and improve the output.

Site/Predicted yield before installed.(kWh)	Capacity in kW	2015 Generation kWh	2016 Generation kWh	2017 Generation kWh	2018 Generation kWh	2019 Generation kWh
Grange Farm (18,514)	17.94	17,298*	18,045	16,950	13,784**	14,992
Balcombe School (9,163)	9.75	1,659*	7,864	7,338	7,514	7,365
Turners Hill School (13,968)	16.00	2,128*	12,188	11,920	10,903***	11,741
Crawley Down School (41,752)	49.92	-	33,887*	39,296	38,390	38,484~
Imberhorne School(46,475)	49.92	-	36,660*	42,449	41,945	41,717
Holy Trinity (18,555)	20.52				18,719*	18,467
TOTAL	164.05	21,085	108,644	117,953	131,255	132,766

*system installed partway through the year.

**Damage to AC cable no generation for May and some of June.

***Low generation due to inverter problem then inverter failure during much of April.

~ Panels cleaned 27/4/19, but due to electrical works at school lost approx. 773kWh generation.

LED Lighting

Our three completed LED projects save an estimated 27,758kWh every year and with the Balcombe Club installation now completed this figure will rise to 32,516 kWh.

The Team

Our small group of directors and volunteers are essential to the successful running and development of the Co-op. The Co-op had a strong presence at the Balcombe fete and continue to be active in the local community on environmental issues.

Traction Project

Progress on the traction project has been challenging in 2019. We applied for the Rural Community Energy Fund stage 2 grant in August. A shambolic process meant we had to wait 5 months to find out we had not met the criteria. It may be possible to meet the criteria needed but with constantly moving goalposts and lack of clarity and poor communication it is not clear how to progress.

Other challenges remain including the problems of data and analysis from the Balcombe stretch of line. Riding Sunbeams have further work to do with Network Rail on procurement and a power purchase agreement. More funding will be required for both Repower Balcombe and Riding Sunbeams to progress the project and in the meantime, we need to keep the potential landowners interested if we are to have a solar farm site.

New Rooftop Sites

We have worked hard to add to our rooftop sites in 2019. We were contacted by Milton Mount School in Pound Hill about solar PV for the school. With all subsidies now removed, only excellent sites offer the potential for return on the investment. Fortunately, Milton Mount is a very good site with an unshaded south facing metal roof and high electricity demand. The school are very keen to work with us on a 40kWp system and West Sussex County Council surveyors have been very helpful. However the process for getting a legal agreement with WSCC has been woeful. Not only have they changed their position from preferring a licence to lease without informing us they have also failed to communicate in any way. This has delayed our first unsubsidised project and possibly increased costs to the frustration of the school and the Co-op. This situation has wasted considerable time for myself and in particular for Julian who has spent time with the school drafting the licence agreement. It is now more challenging than ever to install solar PV on WSCC schools so much for the climate emergency.

Our other new rooftop site at Bridges Recycling Yard has been pre-registered. The timeline for getting this project is very tight but we do hope to complete the install before the deadline of the end of March.



Tom Parker
Chairman