

Community energy fund plugged in

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(Source SCDC website)

A £55,000 grant pot to help community buildings across South Cambridgeshire become more energy efficient and reduce energy has been given the green light.

Councillors backed setting up the Community Energy Grant Fund at a Cabinet meeting today (15 November) which will allow community groups to bid for funding to support their energy saving and green initiatives.

The Council now aims to get the scheme up and running in March next year.

Organisations will be invited to bid for funding for initiatives ranging from insulation and lighting and heating controls for community buildings, to the installation of electric vehicle charging points.

The new scheme will provide £55,000 each year for parish councils, charities, voluntary groups, sports and social clubs and not-for-profit organisations.

The maximum yearly grant will be £3,000 per organisation to make sure that the fund is distributed across a wide range of projects throughout the district.

The scheme will be funded from the business rates it retains from new renewable energy generation sites within the district so it can return some of the benefits from large scale renewable energy sites to the community.

Councillors also heard at the meeting how work is being carried out on setting up a loan scheme so local groups and residents could borrow money to invest in renewable energy schemes locally. The money would be paid back so as many people as possible could benefit and go green.

The loan scheme will be considered by councillors once the full scheme has been drawn up.

Cllr Simon Edwards, South Cambridgeshire District Council's Cabinet Member for Finance, said: "I'm delighted that we are reinvesting some of the money from renewable energy business rates back in to further green initiatives in the area. Community buildings are at the heart of our villages and are often the hub that help bring people together. However, some of our communities have buildings that could do with investment and our grants will help kick-start that. As well as making buildings more energy efficient and warmer it will also reduce the cost of running them and we achieve all the environmental benefits that go with that.

"Keep an eye on our website for more details in March and get your bids in."