

[News story: Energy systems of the future: local communities to benefit sooner](#)

A new research consortium and funding for business-led innovation projects will speed up the uptake of smart energy systems by local communities to start benefiting from cleaner, cheaper and more consumer-friendly energy.

Funding is by [UK Research and Innovation](#) through the [Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund](#) for clean energy – a £102.5 million investment in UK industry and research to develop systems that support the global move to renewables.

Rolled out by 2020s

Twelve projects from all across the UK will share £1.5 million to design ground-breaking, local, smart energy systems that are ready for roll out in the 2020s.

They will quickly bring forward energy systems with improved efficiency and productivity, at lower costs, in order to reduce energy bills for consumers and create better user experiences.

Ultimately this should help improve air quality in line with the government's [fifth carbon budget](#), at the same time as building the UK's energy supply chain, creating high value jobs and export opportunities.

Projects include:

- creating an energy marketplace and local trading platform between the predominantly commercial premises in London South Bank and Waterloo, using IoT sensors, predictive algorithms and storage systems
- maximising existing and planned renewable generation assets in Bridgend, including solar farms and a nearby energy park, to develop a local electricity flexibility market, an electric vehicle charging network and improved service offerings for transport and heat
- making use of an established energy innovation district group and new digital technologies, such as sensing and control devices, data analytics and artificial intelligence, the Cheshire Energy Hub will better manage energy use by industrial users, decarbonise and lower costs

Developing novel research concepts

To bring forward novel research in local energy systems and accelerate uptake, value and impact, £8 million will go to setting up EnergyREV, an energy revolution research consortium.

The consortium will be led by the [University of Strathclyde](#) and include 29

investigators across 22 universities, working to ensure that UK academic expertise delivers impact and a competitive advantage.

It will work closely with the [Energy Systems Catapult](#) to provide analysis, evaluation and assessment of the projects funded under the prospering from the energy revolution challenge.

Additionally, EnergyREV will deliver its own strategic research projects that address some of the industrial challenges in developing local, investable, consumer-centred energy approaches.

Improving uptake, value and impact

Professor Stephen McArthur, Deputy Associate Principal for Research, Knowledge Exchange and Innovation, at the University of Strathclyde said:

EnergyREV is excited about its role in supporting innovation in the prospering from the energy revolution programme.

The world-class knowledge, research teams and interdisciplinary expertise available through our university partnership will improve the uptake, value and impact of smart local energy systems.

We are focused on using our novel research to accelerate and help deliver the Industrial Strategy goals and enhance UK competitiveness.

Rob Saunders, Deputy Challenge Director, Prospering from the Energy Revolution, UK Research and Innovation said:

This is an exciting time for energy innovations.

We all rely on energy and we all need it to be cleaner and more cheaper, both as consumers and as a nation. New technologies point towards a new energy future, one of lower carbon and more efficient energy supply, distribution and storage, giving consumers more control.

This energy revolution – a crucial part of the Industrial Strategy – has the potential to unlock investment and create high-quality jobs and grow companies capable of exporting.

Press release: North East man fined for waste offences

A Teesside man has been fined after he breached his environmental permit and then obstructed an Environment Agency officer during his investigation.

Glenn Norman Walsh, 56, of Blue House Point Road at Portrack, Stockton-on-Tees, appeared at Teesside Magistrates' Court on Tuesday 4 December where he pleaded guilty to all four allegations against him.

He was charged with two offences of breaching the terms of his environmental permit, one of failing to comply with an Enforcement Notice, and another of obstructing an Environment Agency officer in the exercise of his duties.

He was fined £1,173 and ordered to pay legal costs and a victim surcharge amounting to a total of £4,790.

Number of breaches found

Prosecuting on behalf of the Environment Agency, Matthew Treece told the court that on 10 May 2017 Environment Agency officers visited SIS Plastics at Stockton-on-Tees where they found a number of breaches.

This included waste being stored without fire breaks, non-permitted waste accepted on to site, waste stored loose or in insecure containers, and waste being stored on land outside of the site.

Mr Walsh had also failed to tell the Environment Agency about the breakdown of the granulator, which is a piece of equipment central to the site's operation.

A number of enforcement notices were served, including one to remove all waste which is either sludge or liquid and dispose of it properly, which was met.

Another required all waste to be stored and treated properly, including all waste outside either being moved inside or into a secure container, or off site by 23 June 2018.

A visit on 19 April 2018 found there was still a risk of pollution due to fire, waste was still being stored outside and water was pooling in the yards due to inadequate drainage.

During a visit the following month Environment Agency officers were being shown around the site by the manager when Walsh approached angry and agitated, shouting at the officers to leave, and was abusive about one of them. The officers left without being able to inspect the premises.

The incident was captured on the officer's body worn video camera and the footage was played to the court before sentence.

On 25 June 2018 the officers returned and found large amounts of waste still stored outside and on the ground.

Body worn cameras

Paul Whitehill, Enforcement Team Leader for the Environment Agency in the North East, said:

Deliberately flouting environmental permits impacts on the environment and local community as well as undercutting legitimate businesses who abide by their permits.

We take offences such as this extremely seriously and I hope this sends out a message to others that we will take appropriate action for anyone who disregards the law.

Environment Agency enforcement officers in the north east first trialled the use of body worn cameras last year to help reduce incidents of anti-social behaviour, assaults and threats against staff. They are currently being rolled out to teams elsewhere in the country. Paul added:

Our officers are doing an important job ensuring that waste sites are operating within the law and it's not acceptable for them to be subject to abuse such as this. The safety of our staff is paramount and they shouldn't have to put up with any kind of abusive or threatening behaviour.

Our preference is for the cameras to prevent hostility in the first place and I hope this serves as a warning to others that their actions are being recorded and will be used in future court proceedings.

The cameras – which are the norm among many enforcement agencies – can be used in a variety of ways, including at visits to poor performing waste sites, illegal waste sites, enforcement investigations and during fisheries and navigation patrols.

Officers must follow clear guidelines on use of the cameras, including telling people they are being filmed, and deleting any footage after a month unless it is used for evidential purposes.

[Body worn camera footage of obstruction offence](#)

Press release: Innovative digital projects to improve public services win funding

Councils have been awarded almost £1.3 million to find solutions for how digital technology such as chatbots, artificial intelligence and one-stop shop websites can improve services for the public.

Local Government Minister Rishi Sunak MP today (7 December 2018) announced winning applicants receiving money from the first round of a £7.5 million fund aimed at harnessing digital technology to improve their work.

Some 16 projects across the country were awarded grants of up to £100,000, with 57 councils working in teams to shape new digital services and explore the potential of modern technology.

Projects include exploring how virtual assistants like Amazon's Alexa can improve the lives of people in need of care, improving online tools for reporting social home repairs, and using data analytics and artificial intelligence to produce education plans for children with special needs.

Other areas of research include giving frontline social workers better access to information to make crucial decisions and improving software used by council planning departments.

Minister for Local Government, Rishi Sunak MP, said:

Embracing digital technology can revolutionise public services. Within local government, I firmly believe it has the potential to improve a range of services in a host of different ways.

Ultimately, our aim is to make services better for users but it is likely to reduce costs for councils too. This could be by improving the experience of someone in care, streamlining the admin that comes with the stress of moving home, or offering a simpler way to license taxis.

And these are just some of the successful ideas which I am delighted to announce government funding for today. I'm excited to see these projects come to fruition.

Lead councils across the country are partnered with other councils to share knowledge and ideas. This collaborative approach is a key pillar of the government's [Local Digital Declaration](#), launched in July, to better coordinate public bodies seeking digital solutions.

The government's new Local Digital Collaboration Unit will also work with

LocalGov Digital, an organisation made up of people who work on digital solutions in local government, to create a place to see details of all the digital transformation happening in the sector.

This announcement is a further demonstration of the commitment by the government to help create communities that are fit for the future, including through the Brexit Deal.

More information on the Fund is available at www.localdigital.gov.uk

Projects receiving funding are to:

- Investigate how the use of virtual assistants or chatbots, such as Amazon's Alexa or Apple's Siri, could improve the provision of care for people in need. Birmingham City Council and 2 partners were awarded £69,300 for the project.
- Look at how the government's free online payment service for government and public sector organisations – Gov.uk Pay – can be used better across councils. North East Lincolnshire Council and 4 partners were awarded £52,103 for this project.
- Discover a better way for people in socially rented homes to report housing repairs online. London Borough of Southwark and 3 partners were awarded £80,000.
- Research how analytics and artificial intelligence can help the writing of education, care and health plans – currently a complex and time-intensive process – for children with special educational needs. Ealing Council and 2 partners were awarded £99,000.
- Unlock a transformation of town planning by working to understand problems with software and by encouraging more small and medium enterprises to support innovation. London Borough of Southwark and 3 partners were awarded £78,000.
- Improve decision making in council's children's services departments by improving inefficient and costly processes. Greater Manchester Combined Authority and 3 partners were awarded £80,000.
- Understand the best way to enable people moving into an area to have to only contact the council once to set up all services – such as council tax, bin collections, and benefits. Sunderland City Council and 4 partners were awarded £77,000.
- Help frontline children's services workers access the information they need to assess what support to offer and judge safeguarding risk by building a prototype to view the information easily. Stockport Local Authority and 3 partners were awarded £100,000.
- Provide better and more up-to-date information for planning departments by improving data collection. Greater London Authority and 4 partners were awarded £100,000.
- Look at how registration data for births, deaths and marriages can be securely and ethically shared to improve services and reduce costs. Worcestershire County Council and 14 partners were awarded £57,500.
- Fix complexity in taxi licensing applications, saving time, reducing costs and improving public safety. Gateshead Council and 2 partners were awarded £75,865.
- Ask whether chatbots and artificial intelligence can improve the design

of public services, and look at the possibility of creating a place for councils to share solutions for using such technology. Oxford City Council and 12 partners were awarded £80,000.

- Discover how local directories in councils, health bodies, police forces and the voluntary sector can be better coordinated. Adur and Worthing Council and 2 partners were awarded £78,400.
- Develop a prototype system for managing Freedom of Information and Subject Access Requests that makes it quicker and easier for enquirers as well as staff. London Borough of Hackney and 3 partners were awarded £80,246.
- Simplify the process of doing data protection impact assessments, which are a requirement in some work, by using digital and sharing the method across the country. Greater Manchester Combined Authority and 10 partners were awarded £74,900.
- Create a way of gathering information on problems and successes of waste collection services to solve local problems, educate, enforce, and improve customer satisfaction and efficiency. North East Lincolnshire Council and 1 partner were awarded £69,178.

[Press release: Charity regulator welcomes Financial Action Task Force report](#)



CHARITY COMMISSION
FOR ENGLAND AND WALES

The Financial Action Task Force (FATF), the inter-governmental body that sets the standards for Anti-Money Laundering (AML), Counter Terrorist Financing (CTF) and Counter Proliferation of the Financing of Weapons of Mass Destruction (CPF) has today published its Mutual Evaluation Report of the United Kingdom. The report can be accessed [here](#). A team of international assessors evaluated the UK's technical compliance with the FATF standards as well as the effectiveness the United Kingdom's AML and CTF regime.

The UK has achieved the highest rating of any country assessed as part of this round of evaluations – this includes achieving the highest ratings, for both technical compliance and effectiveness, relating to protecting charities

and the UK's wider non-profit sector from abuse for terrorist financing. The UK secured a compliant rating for Recommendation 8 and a highly effective rating for Immediate Outcome 10 – the best ratings available. FATF's evaluation of the UK identified no deficiencies in its approach relating to charities and non-profit organisations and has made no recommendations on this issue in the report published today.

Michelle Russell, Director of Investigations, Monitoring and Enforcement at the Charity Commission said:

The Commission welcomes the report published today and in particular the ratings and findings of the FATF assessors relating to the UK's approach to the protection of charities and other NPOs from terrorist financing. We're pleased to see that the report recognises the effectiveness and importance of the work of the Commission as civil regulator – including our outreach and collaborative engagement with charities and those who work with and support them, as well as our investigative and partnership working with law enforcement agencies and the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland and the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator.

The sad reality is that a number of people who have supported or engaged in terrorism have used and abused charities, including for the resourcing and financing of terrorism. The report published today recognises that the Commission's approach to tackling terrorist abuse and supporting charities to protect themselves against it, is firmly a layered, risk based approach. We have led the way in making clear that this risk of abuse is not shared equally across the charitable and not for profit sector, but is of serious concern where it does arise. The UK has a good understanding of those risks and the Commission's response is proportionate to that risk, with both targeted and robust interventions where needed, along with support and tools to make charities more resilient to such abuse. This enables legitimate charitable work to thrive. Charities and their work is a vital part of our society and we are working to ensure that public trust can continue.

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[News story: Local Charities Day 2018](#)



Local Charities Day returns this year on Friday 14 December, celebrating the fantastic work that local charities do to build thriving communities across the country. The Day builds on the work of our recently published [Civil Society Strategy](#), where we committed to enhancing relationships between businesses, charities and local areas, to help communities grow.

On [Local Charities Day](#) and in the run up, we'll be taking to our social media channels to showcase the amazing work of charities and volunteers that make a real difference and we want you to do the same to show your support.

Get involved

On the day

- Show your support using the #LocalCharitiesDay hashtag on your social media channels:
- From 9am: Share your stories, images, links, videos, pledges and champions to show your support
- Has a local charity helped you? Use the day to tell us about their work and how they've supported you. Volunteer with or support a local charity? Champion your work and the causes it supports.
- 10-11am: Head over to [Foundation for Social Improvement's \(FSI\) Facebook page](#) to watch a live training webinar for charities wanting to learn more about community & events fundraising. You can also follow them now for latest news and updates.
- 12-1pm: Take part in our lunchtime Power Hour and #pledgeYOURtime to show your support for a local charity We want to make this your day, to hear about the great work being done up and down the country. However you're involved, make your voice heard and celebrate local charities with us on 14 December by posting about, sharing, liking and retweeting your favourite local charities in action.

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