

Equalities Comprehensive Impact Assessment v3 - Head of service review

Reference: ECIA552949698

Submitted: 09 October 2023 09:49 AM

Executive summary

Title of policy / decision: Endorse the 12 month extension of ECC's participation in Solar Together Essex campaign (solar PV group buying scheme)

Policy / decision type: Executive Director Decision (EDD)

Overview of policy / decision: Solar Together Essex is a group buying scheme available to residents and SME businesses for solar PV systems, battery storage and EV chargers. It is an initiative run by iChoosr, a group buying specialist, on behalf of UK Councils. The decision relates to extending the current concessions contract with iChoosr Ltd. by 12 months in 2024, with the option in 2024, to extend again for a further 12 month period.

What outcome(s) are you hoping to achieve?: 'Everyone's Essex' sets out four strategic aims and 20 commitments. Within the strategic aim of 'Environment' there is a commitment to 'Green Communities: We will work with communities and businesses, providing advice and support to enable and empower local action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and build climate resilience'.

Consistent with achieving this commitment, this project aims to increase local renewable energy generation through collective purchasing – Solar Together Essex. The scheme provides a significant benefit to residents and local businesses by providing an easy, good-value route to high quality solar PV installations.

Executive Director responsible for policy / decision: Mark Ash (Climate, Environment and Customer Services)

Cabinet Member responsible for policy / decision: Cllr Peter Schwier (Climate Czar, Environment, Waste Reduction and Recycling)

Is this a new policy / decision or a change to an existing one?: Change to an existing policy / decision

How will the impact of the policy / decision be monitored and evaluated?: The project will monitor the number of interested residents and installations achieved in each group buying campaign. Monitoring is performed by a third party (iChoosr) which shares regular reports with Essex County Council. iChoosr and ECC will evaluate the impact of the campaign and decide on future campaigns based on the past performance. During the marketing phase, ECC Comms team have tools in place to monitor performance of social media posts and newsletters. iChoosr collects information through their 'Solar Together' website. After residents accept their quotations, the solar PV installer will monitor progress of surveys and installations and provide regular reports to iChoosr and the Council.

Will this policy / decision impact on:

Service users: No

Employees: Yes

Wider community or groups of people: Yes

If the policy decision impacts on employees, provide details here and include potential impacts on identified groups later in the form: Workload will continue for the Energy and Low Carbon team, minimal work once in place such as keeping an eye on the progression of the scheme.

The community will benefit from a reduced cost on solar PV systems should they chose to take up the offer.

What strategic priorities will this policy / decision support?: High Quality Environment

Which strategic priorities does this support? - Environment: Net zero, Transport and built environment, Green communities, Levelling up the environment

What geographical areas of Essex will the policy / decision affect?: All Essex

Digital accessibility

Is the new or revised policy linked to a digital service (website, system or application)?: Yes

What steps you have taken to meet the digital accessibility: iChoosr, the consultancy running the website, will follow the requirements for public sector bodies.

How have you tested accessibility?: We will test accessibility before launching the campaigns together with iChoosr and ECC Comms team.

How will you monitor and maintain accessibility once it has gone live?: There are communication channels (website and call centres) where residents can raise issues.

Equalities - Groups with protected characteristics

Age

Nature of impact: None

Disability - learning disability

Nature of impact: None

Disability - mental health issues

Nature of impact: None

Disability - physical impairment

Nature of impact: None

Disability - sensory impairment

Nature of impact: None

Sex

Nature of impact: None

Gender reassignment

Nature of impact: None

Marriage / civil partnership

Nature of impact: None

Pregnancy / maternity

Nature of impact: None

Race

Nature of impact: None

Religion / belief

Nature of impact: None

Sexual orientation

Nature of impact: None

Rationale for assessment, including data used to assess the impact: This is a scheme that is available for any Essex resident that is looking to add a solar PV system to their household.

What actions have already been taken to mitigate any negative impacts?: N/A

Levelling up - Priority areas & cohorts

Children and adults with SEND, learning disabilities or mental health conditions (taking an all-age approach)

Nature of impact: None

Children on Free School Meals

Nature of impact: None

Working families

Nature of impact: None

Young adults (16-25 who have not been in education, training or employment for around 6-12 months)

Nature of impact: None

Residents of Harlow

Nature of impact: None

Residents of Jaywick and Clacton

Nature of impact: None

Residents of Harwich

Nature of impact: None

Residents of Basildon (Town) housing estates

Nature of impact: None

Residents of Canvey Island

Nature of impact: None

Residents of Colchester (Town) - Housing Estates

Nature of impact: None

Residents of Rural North of the Braintree District

Nature of impact: None

Rationale for assessment, including data used to assess the impact: The scheme is openly available to anyone that wants to take it up, this isn't mandatory and just an additional offer we can provide for residents.

What actions have already been taken to mitigate any negative impacts?: N/A

Equalities - Inclusion health groups and other priority groups

Refugees / asylum seekers

Nature of impact: None

Homeless / rough sleepers

Nature of impact: None

People who experience drug and alcohol dependence

Nature of impact: None

Offenders / ex-offenders

Nature of impact: None

Victims of modern slavery

Nature of impact: None

Carers

Nature of impact: None

Looked after children / care leavers

Nature of impact: None

The armed forces community (serving personnel and their families, veterans, reservists and cadets)

Nature of impact: None

People who are unemployed / economically inactive

Nature of impact: None

People on low income

Nature of impact: None

Sex workers

Nature of impact: None

Ethnic minorities

Nature of impact: None

Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller communities

Nature of impact: None

People with multiple complex needs or multi-morbidities

Nature of impact: None

Rationale for assessment, including data used to assess the impact: Openly available scheme for any Essex resident regardless of who they are. There is no mandatory reason anyone would have to take this up as it's optional to help save residents money if they would like a solar PV system installed.

What actions have already been taken to mitigate any negative impacts?: N/A

Equalities - Geographical Groups

People living in areas of high deprivation

Nature of impact: None

People living in rural or isolated areas

Nature of impact: None

People living in coastal areas

Nature of impact: None

People living in urban areas

Nature of impact: None

Rationale for assessment, including data used to assess the impact: Same as before. This is an optional scheme open to any resident and does not mandate that it should be taken up.

What actions have already been taken to mitigate any negative impacts?: N/A

Families

Family formation (e.g. to become or live as a couple, the ability to live with or apart from children)

Nature of impact: None

Families going through key transitions e.g. becoming parents, getting married, fostering or adopting, bereavement, redundancy, new caring responsibilities, onset of a long-term health condition

Nature of impact: None

Family members' ability to play a full role in family life, including with respect to parenting and other caring responsibilities

Nature of impact: None

Families before, during and after couple separation

Nature of impact: None

Families most at risk of deterioration of relationship quality and breakdown

Nature of impact: None

Rationale for assessment, including data used to assess the impact: Same as before.

What actions have already been taken to mitigate any negative impacts?: N/A

Crime & Disorder

Crime and disorder

Nature of impact: None

The misuse of drugs, alcohol and other substances

Nature of impact: None

Re-offending

Nature of impact: None

Serious violence

Nature of impact: None

Rationale for assessment, including data used to assess the impact:

Same as before, no relation to crime.

(If negative impact assessed) What actions will be undertaken to mitigate negative impacts, including timescales:

What actions have already been taken to mitigate any negative impacts?:

N/A

How could you strengthen any positive impact(s)?:

Climate

Does your decision / policy involve development or re-development of buildings or infrastructure?: Yes

Have you calculated the predicted operational energy demand and the carbon emissions (both operational and embodied) impact of the development / infrastructure / building?: Yes

Please provide details: Each year over 1,600 tonnes of CO₂e will be avoided by replacing grid electricity with 100% renewable electricity from solar PV systems in these domestic installations. This figure represents the combined emissions saved across the four Solar Together Essex campaigns delivered so far, and it is calculated

based on nationally published data regarding the carbon intensity of the grid electricity, which comprises both renewable and non-renewable sources. The 2022 scheme alone saw the reduce of 560 tonnes of CO₂e per year.

Does your proposal align with the Net Zero Carbon (in operation) definition being promoted through best practice and emerging planning responses at ECC?: Yes

Please provide details: By providing solar PV arrays to residents and SME's we will be reducing the demand for energy from the grid, as above. This will provide a renewable energy source for participants, minimising energy demand from the grid and reducing their carbon footprint.

Have you assessed the upfront embodied carbon emissions (building life cycle stages A1-A5) of your proposed project and have you set targets in line with best practice to reduce embodied carbon emissions?: Yes

Please provide details: The above calculations have been worked out using the governments conversion factors for companies reporting of GHG emissions. Any solar PV installation will reduce the embodied carbon emissions related to that property.

Your development needs to be resilient to projected climate risks including flooding, overheating and subsidence. Please outline how you will achieve this: N/A

Does your decision / policy take place in, or make use of, existing buildings or infrastructure?: Yes

The use of existing buildings will always have a climate impact because it requires energy consumption.

Please outline how you will mitigate against this impact: Moving households to using a higher % of renewables and away from electricity from the grid will have a positive climate impact where energy use is not reliant on fossil fuels.

Does your decision / policy involve elements connected to transport, travel or vehicles? This includes travel needs / requirements of both service users and staff (including staff you're planning to recruit): No

Are you undertaking a procurement exercise?: Yes

Please confirm for purchase over £100k that you have a carbon reduction plan as part of your procurement: No

Please list which climate TOMS (Themes, outcomes & measures) you have included in your procurement and the weighting these have been given: Built environment, energy, community engagement, green economy

Does your decision / policy involve the purchase of goods or materials?: Yes

Have you considered making use of goods / materials that already exist in the organisation, or using second-hand equipment?: N/A

Will you purchase goods that are durable and long lasting, and can be easily maintained or repaired?: Yes

Will you source goods / materials from a local provider where possible?: Yes

Will you use goods or materials made with recycled content and / or recyclable at the end of their life?: Yes

Will any waste be generated by this decision? This includes waste from construction, waste generated by service users / staff, and waste generated by replacing existing products / materials with new: No

Nature of impact

Built Environment / Energy: Positive

Sustainable Transport / Travel: None

Waste: None

Extent of impact

Built Environment / Energy: High

Rationale for assessment, including data used to assess the impact: These campaigns which saw uptake comparable to campaigns in other local authority areas and strongly positive customer feedback, resulted in over 2,000 Solar PV systems installed in Essex households, and over 7.5 megawatts (MW) of solar energy generation capacity. The four campaigns run to date have saved residents between 22% (2018) and 37% (2021) on market prices for solar PV systems. The 2023 scheme saw a 32% average saving for a 12-panel system secured in the March 2023 auction and is on track with over 675 installs delivered so far.

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What actions have already been taken to mitigate any negative impacts?: N/A

Action plan to address and monitor adverse impacts

Does your ECIA indicate that the policy or decision would have a medium or high adverse impact on one or more of the groups / areas identified?: No

Details of person completing the form

I confirm that this has been completed based on the best information available and in following ECC guidance: I confirm that this has been completed based on the best information available and in following ECC guidance

Date ECIA completed: 09/10/2023

Name of person completing the ECIA: Rachel Porter

Email address of person completing the ECIA: Rachel.Porter@essex.gov.uk

Your function: Climate, Environment and Customer Services

Your service area: Energy & Low Carbon

Your team: Energy & Low Carbon

Are you submitting this ECIA on behalf of another function, service area or team?: No

Email address of Head of Service: thomas.day@essex.gov.uk