Bigbury, Community Energy and What Comes Next

Powering Bigbury Together

The proposed community wind turbine near Bigbury is **currently paused**.

Devon Energy Collective CIC has confirmed that, because access to the proposed site is no longer available, the project cannot progress at this time.

That does not mean that technical work found the site unsuitable, that a grid connection was unavailable, or that the financial model had failed. It simply means that without access, there is currently no route for the project to move forward.

For Bigbury Net Zero, that is disappointing.

This was an opportunity to generate a meaningful amount of renewable electricity locally, help tackle climate change and, through a community-owned model, create income that could benefit local parishes for many years.

It was never simply about putting up a wind turbine. It was also about asking whether more of the value created by the transition to renewable energy could stay within the communities hosting it.

A few points worth putting on the record

With further commentary about the project appearing in this edition, we think it is useful to set out some of the information DEC provided.

Question raised	DEC's position
Was the site unsuitable and would the turbine generate the electricity claimed?	Independent assessment indicated a strong wind resource and estimated annual generation of around **2,800 MWh** — broadly equivalent to the annual electricity use of more than **1,000 average UK homes**.
Would there really have been community benefit?	DEC's financial model projected around **£1.5 million of surplus income over 30 years** — equivalent to a simple average of around **£50,000 a year potentially available for community benefit**, although actual surplus would vary. Further financial due diligence

Question raised	DEC's position
	would have been required before construction.
Who would pay for decommissioning?	DEC's model included decommissioning costs and provision for a decommissioning bond.
Would the turbine affect domestic solar or be regularly curtailed by the grid?	The grid offer was for an **uncurtailed 949kW connection**. DEC was also advised that the proposed connection would not alter existing arrangements for domestic or commercial solar.

None of this means that people had to support the proposal.

It does mean that views would be best formed on what the project was and how it was intended to work.

Why community energy matters

Community energy differs from conventional commercial development.

The principle is that local people and organisations can have a direct stake in generating energy, while surplus income can be retained for local benefit.

That could support energy efficiency, fuel poverty, community buildings, environmental projects or other priorities agreed locally.

For parish councils and community organisations continually looking for funding, the potential for a long-term income stream is significant.

The wider picture

National policy is also changing.

Onshore wind restrictions were eased in 2024, and current planning policy gives greater weight to the benefits of renewable and low-carbon energy, including small-scale and community-led projects.

Government policy is also placing greater emphasis on local and community-owned energy, aiming to help communities benefit financially from energy generated locally.

None of this means every renewable energy proposal is right for every place.

It does mean that communities like ours will continue to face choices about wind, solar, battery storage, community heat and other forms of low-carbon infrastructure.

So the more useful question now may not be:

“Are you for or against this turbine?”

but:

What forms of renewable energy could we support locally, where might they be acceptable, and what level of community ownership and benefit would we expect?

The Bigbury turbine may be paused.

The challenge of climate change has not paused, and neither has the transition in how we generate energy.