

# Littlebury Energy Project



SAFFRON WALDEN  
COMMUNITY ENERGY

## ***Where does the Littlebury Energy Project Go Next?***

***The Littlebury Energy Project (LEP) was established to help the village understand its energy usage and find ways to reduce it. One aim is to reduce dependence on fossil fuels for heating in a village that is off the gas grid, which could decrease vulnerability to oil price shocks and improve the energy efficiency of village homes.***

### ***Background***

Last year we reported on our study into low carbon heating for the village (see <https://lep.swce.co.uk/feasibility-study-results/>.) This feasibility study showed that changing to air source heat pumps (ASHPs) in suitable individual properties across the village is more cost effective than building a village wide heat distribution network. There are dozens of ASHPs already installed in the parish and working well, so we are looking at we can help more people to do the same.

There are two strands to this. The first is looking at ways that might help the Parish provide some of its own, cheaper, electricity. The second is assisting locals who want to switch to ASHPs now, while exploring alternatives for houses that are not suitable.

### ***Local Energy Generation***

Our feasibility study showed that local energy (electricity) generation could be beneficial in increasing affordability. Local electricity generation could take the form of small or large arrays of solar panels on the roofs or suitable buildings such as commercial or farm buildings, all the way up to a wind turbine combined with solar panels and battery storage. Developing local energy generation in the Parish could be helpful in two ways.



**Solar Panels on a Farm Building Roof**

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- If the generation facility is part or wholly community owned, part of the surplus money generated from sale of the electricity can be reinvested in the Parish. For instance, we could help people cut their energy bills by improving their home insulation, or we could improve or add to our community facilities.

- One way to provide benefit to locals from local energy generation is to set up a cooperative organisation that enables locals to buy the energy generated at reduced rates. One working example of this is the “Energy Local Co-op” (see <https://energylocal.org.uk>) which can link any new or existing local generation with local electricity consumers. Using energy in this way avoids some charges paid to the National Grid so that local generators receive a higher price for energy used locally, and consumers pay less when using electricity produced locally.



Banner from the Energy Local Website

Other communities already benefit from one or both these schemes. There are links to more information and case studies on the LEP website at <https://lep.swce.co.uk/community-energy-examples/>.

What we would like to do is to develop small scale generation and an Energy Local Coop as a pilot scheme initially, then expand to help more people in future. We would be interested in hearing any thoughts from the community on these ideas. Contact us at [contact@lep.org.uk](mailto:contact@lep.org.uk).

## ***Assistance with ASHPs***

Britain is on a path to reduce its reliance on fossils fuels, and this means that heating oil will be phased out at some point in the future (currently 2035). This leaves

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electrical heating as the future primarily through Air Source Heat Pumps (ASHPs). Switching is greatly aided by upgrading homes to improve energy efficiency, for example by better draught proofing, increasing insulation, radiator upgrades and adding or replacing secondary, double or triple glazing.

Although many homes in the village are suitable to install individual ASHPs, not all are, and we need to investigate this properly.

We have recently partnered with a local heating company and engaged a first group of Parishioners to undertake a feasibility survey at no cost to investigate whether their properties are suitable for ASHPs.

We also are aware of several villagers who already have ASHPs installed and who would be willing to discuss their experiences of installation and day to day running of their heat pumps.

If you are interested in finding out more, please contact us at [contact@lep.org.uk](mailto:contact@lep.org.uk).

## *Living with an ASHPs in Littlebury*

Ian and Charlotte have lived in Peggys Walk for more than 30 years in an extended 1960s detached house. Their oil boiler was more than 25 years old and although still functioning, spare parts were becoming increasingly difficult to obtain. The physical fabric of the boiler was also breaking down.



Heat Pump on the Patio of Ian and Charlotte's House

Charlotte says “We decided that the time was right to futureproof our heating system and take advantage of the £7500 government grant to install an air source heat pump. Initially I was worried about taking this step as you hear about many supposed problems in the media and we knew about the problems with the original prototype ASHPs in the new build houses in Peggys Walk. However, we talked to several people who already had ASHPs to convince ourselves that it would work.”

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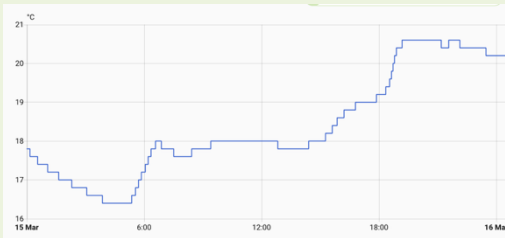
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Ian says “We paid for an online assessment that estimated our overall heat loss and the size of heat pump that we would need which helped give us confidence. Eventually we used Good Energy to do a full onsite survey and then install the system. We needed several radiators to be changed as we still had some of the original 1960s radiators.” ASHPs heat the house with lower temperature water than an oil boiler system so may need larger radiators.

They have been running the system now since June 2024. Charlotte says “The ASHP provides all our hot water and we never run out of hot water even with visitors. “



Temperature in the living room over 24 hours including increasing for visitors

Ian says “Running an ASHP takes a slightly different approach than with an oil boiler. Whereas before with the oil boiler we would heat the house in the morning and late afternoon, with the temperature dropping dramatically during the day in winter, now we run the ASHP constantly at a low rate. We have the temperature constant during

the day rising by a degree in the evening and then dropping back by a couple of degrees overnight. Personally, we don’t like to have the house at more than 20°C, but when our mothers visit we can up the temperature without problem. We have had no problems even on the coldest winter’s day.”

Some people say that with an ASHP you will be cold and it will cost a lot to run. Ian says “For us we are warmer than we were with oil, because the house is warm all day. I expected the cost to be roughly equal to what we were paying for oil, but have been pleasantly surprised that we are paying less on heating than we were before. The house is now running entirely on electricity including charging the car. You do have to remember though that in the depth of winter you will see some very high electricity use days but these are offset by lower costs in the rest of the year.

Contact Littlebury Energy Project (LEP) at [contact@lep.org.uk](mailto:contact@lep.org.uk) or 01799 252501

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