

Glasgow Community Energy

Energy Justice POINTs case study

February 2022



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Glasgow Community Energy is a community energy co-operative operating primarily in two deprived communities in Glasgow. Led by a group of local volunteers, the project has installed solar PV on two schools in Glasgow – Glendale Primary in Pollokshields, and Ashton Secondary in Easterhouse. Both installations are registered under the feed-in-tariff, meaning that they will generate in the region of £5–10k per year for community benefit initiatives.

The aim of the project is to generate clean electricity in a way that can bring wider benefits of renewable energy to local communities, and to set precedent for future local energy projects in Glasgow. These systems will help Glasgow to meet its ambitious net-zero targets while also bringing financial and social benefits to two communities in the city.

Bringing Glasgow Community Energy to life has relied on coordination between several different groups. The volunteers who make up the board include a community energy researcher, several community organisers from local social justice campaigns, representatives from energy co-operative outfit Energy4All, an architect, and engineers from the University of Strathclyde. Partners in the project include Glasgow City Council, who own the school buildings on which the solar PV units are installed; Local Energy Scotland and CARES, who provided the initial loan funding to conduct the installations; and Good Energy and Absolute, who are solar PV installers.

Because Glasgow Community Energy operates as a co-operative, decision-making is taken by our membership i.e. those who contributed to our recent share offer, in which we raised £30k to cover the loan for the costs of installation. Prior to this share offer, decisions were taken exclusively by the GCE board of directors, in consultation with local community members and project partners. Our membership now stands at over 150 people and organisations in close proximity to the two projects, who have a democratic say in how the money generated by the installations is spent in the local community.

The project took a total of four years to bring to fruition. A core philosophy of the project was to build solidarity and community ties in Glasgow. As such, we conducted extensive outreach in the two involved communities, to understand how community members felt about the project, to build connections with community members via existing community groups, to help with education and understanding of community and renewable energy more broadly, and to understand what the communities themselves wanted to see from the initiative. All sessions were positive and discussions with community members taken forward in our planning and delivery phases.



The Energy Justice POINTs Framework

Energy Justice POINTs (Policy Overview and Impacts for Net-zero Transitions) provides a useful and usable framework to help decision makers explore the wide-reaching energy justice implications of their net-zero visions, strategies, and policies.

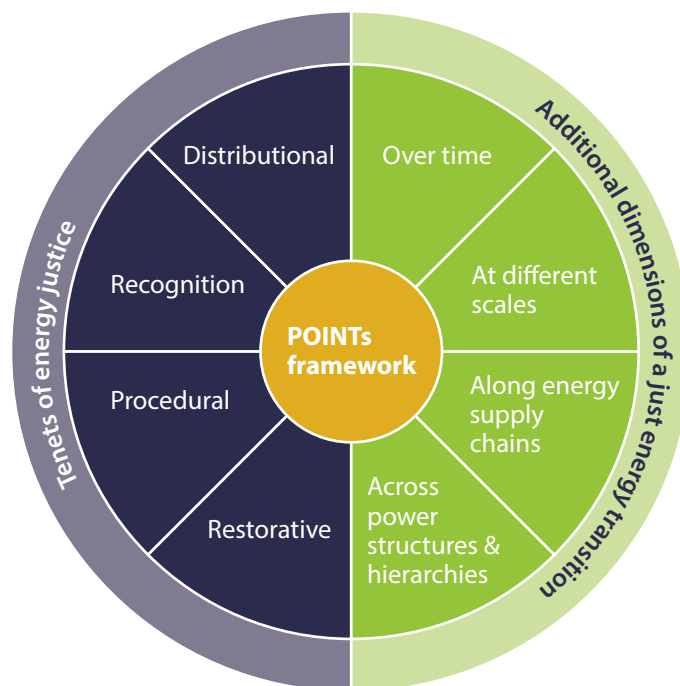
The Framework is based on four tenets of justice:

- **Distributional** – where injustices lie
- **Recognition** – who is affected
- **Procedural** – how injustices can be overcome
- **Restorative** – what we can do to rectify past injustices and mitigate against future injustices

It also includes an additional four dimensions to take a whole-systems approach to a just transition.

The development of the POINTs Framework is outlined in our report [Energy Justice POINTs: Policies to create a more sustainable & fairer future for all](#) which was published in May 2021.

The POINTs Framework has been tested by Glasgow Community Energy and their response is provided here as a guide for other organisations in completing the Framework and in considering the energy justice implications of their own net-zero policies or proposals.



POINTs Framework

	Distribution	
1	<p>What are the primary benefits? Are there any second order benefits? For example, policies supporting greenhouse gas emissions reductions in cities could have health benefits due to reduced air pollution; economic benefits due to reduced hospitalisation; and wider social and environmental benefits due to reductions in carbon emissions in line with targets for climate action.</p>	<p>The primary benefits of Glasgow Community Energy are (1) clean electricity generated in the city, which will save a total of 50 tonnes of CO2 per year, and (2) £5-10k in community benefit per year per installation. Secondary benefits include education on climate-related issues in those communities, improved neighbourhoods through use of the community benefit fund, and wider social and environmental benefits associated with reducing carbon emissions and bringing more money into deprived communities.</p>
2	<p>Who are the intended beneficiaries? This could focus on particular groups defined by geography (e.g., those in a particular region), or socio-demographics (e.g., those living in social housing, those who travel on public transport, those in fuel poverty etc.).</p>	<p>The main beneficiaries are those in the communities where installations are located, who will get to decide how best to allocate the £5-10k per year generated for the community benefit fund. As these are largely deprived areas, benefit will be for more deprived households, although this will depend on how those community members decide to spend those funds. Glasgow City Council in their emissions reduction targets also.</p>
3	<p>Are there structural reasons why certain groups may be unintentionally excluded or marginalised? For example, gender-neutral policies could have gendered impacts due to unaccounted for differences in working or travel patterns by men and women.</p>	<p>Because GCE operates as a co-operative, people had to invest in the share offer to become full members. The minimum buy-in for the share offer was £50, which is quite exclusionary for the very lowest-income households and especially women and people of colour (who make up a substantial proportion of the population in the Pollokshields area), meaning only people who could afford the buy-in get to make the decisions directly.</p>
4	<p>What are the costs (economic and beyond), who is bearing them, and how are these costs distributed? Explore potential unintended consequences that may result in additional unforeseen impacts, including financial consequences for future generations.</p>	<p>All costs of the project – economic, time and physical – were initially borne by the group of volunteers. The funds have been paid back by members who contributed to the share offer, who will receive their money back over a period of 20 years without interest. As the benefits will be shared within deprived communities (although many of the most deprived will not have a say in how), the project is somewhat redistributive in nature, with the volunteers taking on the vast majority of responsibility, time and effort.</p>

Recognition		
5	Who does this policy serve? Is it based on the dominant cultural groups (often aligned with white male identity) or are different groups explicitly considered?	Because the project is situated in one Asian-majority community in particular, people of colour and women are explicitly considered and stand to benefit. We have aimed to create a gender balance on our board and conduct regular outreach in those communities to ensure local representation and diverse voices in the process.
6	Are there any groups of people who are either not recognised or misrepresented in the future scenario/ society this policy aims to deliver? This could be unintentional due to replication of historical bias in how different groups of people with different identities are accounted for.	While outreach is consistent and inclusive, there are still no people of colour on our board, which means no people of colour wield definitive “decision-making” power in the project. This represents some historical bias in that the community energy sector is very white and middle-class, and made up of volunteers in industries that also reflect this.
7	Does the policy value all members of society in an explicit rather than an assumed way? Implicit recognition can suffer from hidden forms of bias, so it’s important to articulate how the policy ensures that all members of society are valued and treated fairly.	The project makes a conscious effort to include diverse communities (particularly deprived families, women and people of colour) in our community outreach and consultation processes, by holding hustings and workshops specifically for people from those groups which are generally well-attended. This has included going into the schools themselves and using connections through a local community organisation to bring together the Asian community (and Asian women in particular) in Pollokshields, and women in the Easterhouse area.
8	How does the policy level the playing field in terms of access to energy services or benefits for those people who may suffer injustice in the current system?	GCE is designed specifically to bring the (predominantly financial) benefits of clean energy into diverse, low-income areas, with recognition of the people in those communities in all processes and at minimal economic or time cost to those people. In the current system, lower income households tend to shoulder the burden of higher energy prices without experiencing the benefits of things like the feed-in-tariff or even the environmental benefits associated with local renewable generation. This project actively tackles these issues head-on.

Procedural		
9	<p>What channels have been employed to provide stakeholders with input to decision-making processes? Are these channels appropriate for all stakeholders? Have a range of channels been implemented to increase participation? For instance online consultations may be inappropriate for older people, while 'roundtables' may be inaccessible to those who work during the day or have caring responsibilities.</p>	<p>We conducted extensive community outreach both in-person and online throughout the process of bringing GCE to life. We first held evening sessions in local schools and churches with local community members and community activists, which were generally well-attended. In these sessions we discussed the high-level ideas of community and renewable energy and sought to understand the communities and their needs themselves, and how GCE could support that. These included group-specific hustings and discussions in local "safe spaces", such as the Pollokshields Trust and Ruchazie community centre. We also held community events on weekends outside the local shopping centre, where we had technologies and activities on hand and chatted with locals who might not typically attend the church or have children in the schools. In the latter stages, due to the pandemic, we hosted zoom Q and A sessions and workshops which were actually also well-attended, particularly by older residents in the local area. These were all held in evenings to ensure people who worked could also attend.</p>
10	<p>Which stakeholders have been actively engaged? Are there biases toward particular groups due to the engagement channels used?</p>	<p>We felt we did well to engage a diverse and expansive range of people throughout the procedure, such was a driving principle of the project. We strategised on this front in consultation with councillors and community activists, and made sure to include a range of very specific events. One bias, however, is in the very poorest households who hadn't had contact with local councillors or community groups. While we engaged lots of people, we only really engaged people who had already been engaged in some way in local activities. Many people in those deprived areas are not involved in local activities at all, and so reaching them proved difficult.</p>
11	<p>Are there any groups who have been systematically (if unintentionally) shut out due to the processes implemented?</p>	<p>As above, the most deprived people and households were mostly (although not exclusively) shut out, reflecting historic disenfranchisement and exclusion issues.</p>

Procedural		
12	<p>How has stakeholder input been accounted for in the decision-making processes and resultant policies? Are some voices given priority for deliberate or unintentional reasons? Is this bias (if deliberate) transparent? If unintentional, what action can be taken to remove the bias?</p>	<p>All decision-making processes and subsequent policy outputs are informed directly and intimately by stakeholder engagement efforts. No voices were given special dispensation as such, although we did try to amplify voices that were under-represented (women and people of colour in particular). The project was still whiter and more affluent than we had hoped, and so our plan to tackle this in future is to reflect the diversity of communities in our board members first and foremost.</p>

Restorative		
13	<p>Which stakeholders or parts of society experience injustice in current policy or practice arrangements? Why is this the case? Are there underlying issues (e.g., social, political, economic etc.) that have created this past injustice?</p>	<p>Due to the time, effort, policy knowledge and cost involved with establishing a community energy project, community energy generally has been more open to those with the time, expertise and know-how to bring projects to fruition. Projects require huge amounts of volunteer time to bring to life, which those experiencing deprivation (women and people of colour in particular) have significantly less of in general. They also require highly specialised knowledge of the technical/legal/policy space which is generally dominated by white, middle-class people. Injustices in community energy broadly reflect the wider inequality in the sector and specialised demands of the process – this is true also of the main GCE volunteer group.</p>
14	<p>How might these groups be affected by new policies in process and outcomes? Through what mechanisms is past injustice being addressed?</p>	<p>Past injustice is being addressed first by seeking better diversity and inclusion on our board of directors, who aim to support people from “non-traditional” community energy backgrounds to lead in our co-operative, and by ongoing engagement, outreach and education.</p>
15	<p>Have these groups been engaged in this restorative process?</p>	<p>Yes.</p>
16	<p>Can this policy/ proposal alleviate previous landscape degradation or community erosion?</p>	<p>Yes in the case of community erosion, particularly in allowing for local ownership and management of community benefit which can have social capital impacts too.</p>

Restorative		
17	Could the new policy create future unintended consequences?	Because the co-operative still ultimately requires some buy-in to become a full member, the potential consequences could be excluding poorest members of the community from decision-making around how to spend the community benefit fund. We intend to address this with continued contact and consultation with non-members within the community too.

Geographic scales		
18	What are the opportunities for reducing regional disparities (Levelling Up)?	Because we target areas of high deprivation as defined by the Scottish Government in particular, and because less deprived areas have tended to benefit at a greater rate than deprived areas from clean energy in general, Glasgow Community Energy and its future expansion poses great opportunity for reducing geographic inequalities. Within Scotland (and the UK to some extent), more rural regions have also benefited more from renewables, and so we do go some way to addressing this bigger, regional inequality too.
19	Could the policies / practices have adverse affects on those outside of the community of interest? What can be done to mitigate against this?	There are no immediately obvious adverse impacts for people outside of these communities.
20	What are the opportunities for reducing socioeconomic disparities within communities?	The main opportunities for reducing socioeconomic disparities in communities are in how we allocate the community benefit fund, which we hope can go towards projects that support marginalised groups and provide new social and economic opportunities that better bring communities together.
21	Is place based decision making taking into account all available evidence?	We use evidence from our citizens and communities, our own workshops and events, from local and national government, from other co-operative and community energy case studies, from natural resource and energy analysis and from financial modelling. In our consideration, yes, we are taking into account all available evidence.

Politics, power, decision making hierarchies		
22	How are stakeholders from citizens and communities to large organisations and elites influencing policy, research, and data? What strategies are in place to ensure that no one voice has undue influence?	We operate as a co-operative model, which means that each member of GCE regardless of the amount of shares, whether they are individual or organisation, or how long they have been with the project gets only one equal vote in the internal governance and decision-making process. Our meetings, hustings and discussions are open and democratic, with a collaborative agenda set prior to each meeting and rotating chair duties among membership to ensure that no one person controls the agenda. Naturally some issues require specialist expertise (technical matters, for instance) and so not everyone can meaningfully contribute – in every case, we ensure membership has an opportunity to vote and voice concerns.
23	How might the proposed policy/strategy impact this diversity of stakeholders? Might there be negative impacts to incumbents that needs to be managed?	Greater expansion of GCE and the community energy sector more broadly would require policy change and impact energy companies and local authorities particularly in their energy supply models. GCE has buy-in from the local authority for this project, but a wider roll-out across Glasgow would require collaboration on technical, policy and procurement matters.
24	What are the opportunities for greater inclusivity in decision-making / ownership / local trading & business models? How will the policy/strategy diversify power structures?	By its very nature, community energy democratises and decentralises energy power and decision-making away from national and big energy companies towards communities and citizens.
25	How are different values held by different actors accounted for and how are trade-offs made? And how are decisions being held to account by and for these stakeholder groups? And how are these processed being legitimised?	Our members have an ongoing say in the governance and decision-making of the co-operative. As such, compromises made with other partners, such as the local authority, are discussed and voted on by the board as a minimum requirement. Where feasible, we have consultation with membership and the local community.
Global supply chains		
26	What are the whole life-cycle implications and impacts?	The systems will last a total of 25 years with regular maintenance. After this, Glasgow City Council will be responsible for safe and conscientious disposal as per environmental standards.

Global supply chains		
27	What impacts might be felt by businesses or communities along the supply chain? Might there be negative unintended consequences?	We have not conducted a global impact assessment as yet, although are aware of some highly unethical production practises in the solar PV supply chain and are mindful of this going forward.
28	How are businesses and communities along the supply chain being engaged? Are they being exploited or is there a way to give them voice?	As Q27.
29	How can social inequities along the supply chain be mitigated, for example, by altering procurement frameworks to account for fair trade / environmental degradation, and embed this within existing frameworks?	More investigation into supply chains generally and favouring local, ethical manufacturers wherever possible.

Temporal aspects		
30	Is the policy / practice proactive in seeking long-term benefits?	Yes. GCE will generate for a total of 20 years, providing annual community benefit and CO2 savings.
31	Who / what could be adversely impacted by the policy / practice over time and how?	Without continued active engagement with the local community over this period, appropriation of the community benefit fund may stop reflecting community need as that community changes and grows over time.
32	Will the policies / practices adversely impact future generations? For instance through cost burdens; erosion of landscape or lock-in to a particular trajectory (e.g. hydrogen boilers)?	Not expected.
33	What measures could be put in place to mitigate against future generations being unfairly burdened by polices and decisions taken today?	Measures we currently have in place to protect against these issues are ongoing regular membership meetings and community engagement events, and annual rotation of a proportion of board positions so that more community members (particularly new and younger community members) have an opportunity to also manage the project as their needs and interests change over time.

About ALIGN

This case study forms part of Project ALIGN (**AL**igning Impacts for **G**etting to **Net-zero**) which was one of five unique Fellowships funded by UKRI, to support engagement with the international climate negotiations in the run up to the 26th Conference of the Parties of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP26) through the provision, synthesis, translation and interpretation of scientific evidence.

ALIGN aimed to provide evidence around the multiple benefits of a just net-zero energy transition. Appropriate climate change actions offer the potential for delivering multiple benefits (e.g. post-pandemic economic recovery, advancing UN sustainable development goals, enhancing political currency and social legitimacy). However, without a comprehensive approach or framework for considering the multiple benefits or impacts of transition, existing injustices could be amplified, and new vulnerabilities created in the wider economy.

ALIGN was innovative in bringing together insights and evidence from areas traditionally siloed, aligning the case for a just transition with financial, environmental, and other outcomes, and feeding into wider decision-making frameworks (e.g. at UNFCCC level). It built on aligned work, and focused on Scotland as an exemplar for delivering a socially just net-zero transition, while providing frameworks and evidence to make the case for the multiple benefits (e.g. resilience, prosperity, health, etc.) of a just net-zero transition in other countries, accelerating COP 26 outcomes.

This case study was provided as an example of how the ALIGN project outcomes can help organisations consider these multiple benefits and impacts in the development of their own policies and proposals. We thank the organisations involved for their time and feedback and for allowing us to publish their results without prejudice. We also gratefully acknowledge financial support for ALIGN from the UK's Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) through the Place-Based Climate Action Network (P-CAN), grant number ES/S008381/1.

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