



Energise Barnsley 2021 Solar Fund Award to Community First Credit Union

Energise Barnsley has through extensive partnership working to date already delivered a lasting social impact across the Barnsley area. The 2021 Solar Fund Award, a sum of £20,000 has been allocated to Community First Credit Union, Barnsley. This represents a grant of over £13,000 per mega watt of solar installed for this community rooftop project, in addition to the five per-cent bond interest to local members the Society has been paying for the last four years.

In another innovative approach to offer further support to people in Barnsley, enhancing their health and life chances, the solar fund award is for Community First Credit Union to deliver four services focused on those in society that truly need assistance to better manage their daily finances. This will be achieved by the credit union working with key partners like Barnsley Council.

The first service will make available, for identified individuals, the credit union's Budgeting Account. This account manages an individual's critical payments; allowing them to save if they want to, but fundamentally, it also allows them to get on with their lives knowing that payments will not be missed.

The second is working together with the credit union and their landlord, private or social, to ensure critical payments like rent, council tax, and utilities are not missed, and they have access to a channel of additional support should issues arise.

The third is access a debt support loan service. This may result from someone who has problems paying utility arrears needing to replace a broken-down cooker, something most people do not budget for, and therefore this will prevent someone turning to unaffordable legal or illegal moneylenders or door-step lenders, with all the repercussions for them and the community this can result in.

The fourth is a service that securely issues cash where it is needed urgently, either using their savings held at the credit union, or on request to issue money from a supporting agency. The individual may not have a credit union, bank ATM card, affected by a life-changing event such as flooding where all their forms of identity and access to money may be lost, or a victim of domestic abuse, so they need to move away quickly for safety, and they need money to survive. Even in these current Covid-19 times where people may not wish to visit a credit union or a bank branch then using this service, they can collect their money without a card 24 hours a day from an ATM.

Andy Heald, Director Energise Barnsley, said; "When we established Energise Barnsley in 2015, the rationale was to reinvest any surpluses from the projects back into the local community. Our community has been paying for the feed in tariff subsidies through their electricity bills, and therefore the community should benefit from any surpluses in these solar projects. We are so glad that Community First Credit Union fit our vision for reinvesting the surpluses from our project into those most in need in our community."

Gary Simpson, Chief Executive Officer Community First Credit Union, said; "This is an exciting initiative to deliver crucial, real benefits to hundreds of people in and around Barnsley. Not more mere rhetoric but tangible and immediate support for people to better manage and have access to financial services and assistance."

Cllr Jenny Platts, cabinet spokesperson for, Adults and Communities, said; "We are pleased to be working with our partners in Barnsley to deliver projects like this that give back to our communities in ways that help them control and manager aspects of their lives, giving them opportunities to move forward with support and guidance. Financial issues can cause many problems for an individual, so to

have a service like this that can help them in the right way is invaluable. We thank Energise Barnsley and Community First Credit Union for their work to deliver this programme.”

Press Release Ends

Should any other organisations wish to be involved in this creative initiative then please contact the credit union via email: info@communityfirstcu.co.uk or call:03030300010.

Energise Barnsley details please contact Andy Heald on andy@energisebarnsley.co.uk
www.energisebarnsley.co.uk