Dear East Sussex Assembly Members,

My sincere apologies for not being able to join you today in your assembly.  I have put together a short briefing document which outlines some of the projects that are pioneering the path to net zero in the region.  Please do email me on ollie.pendered@communityenergyouth.org or phone me on 07870 689978 if you would like a briefing on any of these projects.

**Community Energy South**

Community Energy South was set up in 2012 to support the growth of Community Energy across the south east.  Today we support 42 community energy groups from Hampshire through Sussex to Kent and Essex.  Our goal is to act for a voice for the community energy sector across the region, look to capacity build and support growth and develop new energy market innovation.

In 2018 we co-founded Riding Sunbeams and a tech start up working with Network Rail to develop routes to market to decarbonise rail travel.  Riding Sunbeams seeks to support communities alongside this project by opening opportunities for local community investment and developing community benefit alongside decarbonisation.

In 2020 Community Energy South has started a programme called **Community Energy Pathways** which we are working on with Hampshire County Council, South Downs National Park Authority and Essex County Council.  The Pathways looks to mentor new community energy groups across the south east and aligns with each of the authorities Climate Change Strategies and Net Zero Targets.

Community Energy South works closely with government departments, regional local enterprise partnerships and infrastructure organisation such as Southern Water, South East Water, UK Power Networks and National Grid.  We are a bridge to local communities and our partnerships are a key aspect of our work to support the green recovery and a net zero future.

**Riding Sunbeams - Solar Railways (Getting Building Fund)**

It's very exciting that we have been working with Team East Sussex and are collaborating with Network Rail to connect the world's first solar farm to the railway in the vicinity of Berwick.  This aligns with the Rail Decarbonisation Strategy to which Riding Sunbeams has been a key stakeholder informing the strategy for the last 4 years.  This very exciting project has the potential to open up a new market for solar energy with the potential for 15% of the railways power to be supplied by direct wire renewable energy.  Riding Sunbeams has a triple bottom line strategy to supply low carbon energy, lower cost energy and develop opportunities for community investment and benefit, and we are working with the local community energy group towards embedding a community benefit fund from the project for the local area. We look forward to working with many stakeholders across the region from Lewes, Wealden District Councils to East Sussex and SELEP.

[www.ridingsunbeams.org](http://www.ridingsunbeams.org)

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**Communiheat - Net Zero Project (Community Energy South, OVESCO and UK Power Networks)**

For your Government’s target of zero by 2050 to be achieved, it is vital that the c. 4 million rural UK households that currently rely on oil heating move over to something more sustainable. Via the CommuniHeat project in Barcombe, Ovesco plans to design the roadmap that will enable this essential transition, while also creating jobs in the village.  We are working on this project from November 2020 to November 2021 with UK Power Networks and world renowned energy experts Buro Happold.

Locally recruited ‘energy champions’ will gather data on current energy usage from hundreds of local houses by undertaking surveys and installing free meters. This data will be used to plan for how the village could make the transition to electricity. The ultimate goal is to get the village to net zero emissions by 2030, and to create a masterplan which could be replicated across the country and make Barcombe a pioneer in sustainable energy.

**Ouse Valley Solar Farm Project (OVESCO)**

OVESCO is investigating the feasibility of a very promising solar farm to the north of Lewes.  A pre-planning scoping and screening request has been submitted to Lewes District Council.  We are in late stage discussions to supply carbon-free electricity to South East Water, a major electricity consumer in the Lewes District.  We expect the renewable energy project to be funded largely by the local community, providing a stable, long term financial return and significant carbon reductions.

The completion of this project will add to local energy security, make a significant contribution to achieving the carbon reduction targets of the Lewes district, and contribute to the UK Government’s Climate Plan.  Ouse Valley Solar Farm will also provide a long term community benefit fund for the local area.