



# The future of renewable energy in Bonsall A community vision

# CPRE, the countryside charity

CPRE is the countryside charity that campaigns to promote, enhance and protect the countryside for everyone's benefit, wherever they live. With a local CPRE in every county, we work with communities, businesses and government to find positive and lasting ways to help the countryside thrive - today and for generations to come.

# CPRE Derbyshire and CPRE Peak District & South Yorkshire

CPRE Derbyshire and CPRE PDSY were delighted to deliver this innovative project as we all recognise the growing demand for renewable energy. It is too easy for local communities to have new planning proposals dropped on them, before they have chance to consider options. The local community knows their own landscape, and it is important that potentially conflicting pressures can be brought together in a way which is acceptable to local people and local livelihoods.

# We connect people with

What we do

the countryside so that everyone can benefit from and value it. We promote rural life to ensure the countryside and its communities can thrive. We empower communities to improve and protect their local environment. Through all our work we look at the role of our countryside in tackling the climate emergency, including seeking ways to increase resilience and reduce impacts.

# About Bonsall

The Civil Parish of Bonsall is in the south-east corner of the Peak District, falling partly within the Peak District National Park and Derbyshire Dales District to the east. The village itself sits just outside the national park boundary. The southern boundary of the parish is the Via Gellia, a steep and densely wooded valley. Much of the parish is classic White Peak upland farmland, with dry stone walls and barns, mainly grazed by sheep and cattle. Bonsall is a small rural community that retains much of its ancient field patterns and industrial and agricultural heritage. The landscape is scattered with a great number of mining remains: shafts, quarries and opencuts for lead, limestone and fluorspar. Knitting of stockings in small (domestic) workshops was also a key part of the village's history. In 2011, the Parish population was 803 residents. The Parish comprises 2440 acres (987 ha). During the workshops that informed this document, we spoke to Bonsall residents with a wide range of backgrounds, including parish councillors, and working and retired residents from many walks of life. In total, 44 people attended the meetings.

# MCS Charitable Foundation

<sup>66</sup> MCS Charitable Foundation are pleased to support this project which is demonstrating how to engage and involve people from across Bonsall in the planning of renewable energy in their area. The project aligns with our vision for a world where everyone has access to affordable and reliable renewable energies for the benefit of the environment and communities.<sup>99</sup>

# The climate emergency and the countryside

As councils and countries declare a climate emergency, the impact is already clear in our daily lives. The seasons are on the move, crops grown for generations fail and some species hover on the brink of extinction. Our countryside is changing - and we need to make sure it does so in a way that helps mitigate the impacts of the climate emergency and creates a countryside that we can all cherish.

In recent years, floods from heavy rainfall have brought to life the devastation a changing climate has on our daily lives. Images of sandbags piled up outside doors, submerged cars in flooded streets and local shops ruined by muddy water are now all too common.

Farmers struggle to grow our food and maintain their livelihoods in the face of such extreme weather, pushing the resilience of the countryside and its embattled communities to the limit. And some of our most cherished natural icons, such as English oak trees and beloved wildlife like hedgehogs and bumblebees, face challenges to adapt to changing weather patterns. Ecosystems are facing collapse and the biodiversity of our countryside is declining unabated. All of this threatens the look, feel and health of the landscapes we know and love. The decisions that we make now, and the approaches that we take, will shape our countryside and its communities for years to come. It's essential that we get it right from the start.

We know that achieving net-zero carbon emissions will mean a huge number of new renewable energy developments, many of which will be situated in rural areas, and this raises the prospect of potentially enormous landscape impacts, as well as new income streams, arising from the energy transition.

The need for rapid action must not be at the expense of the conservation and enhancement of our precious landscapes. For new renewables in the countryside to be done well, local people must be better involved in the decision-making process to minimise the impacts of new developments on landscapes and allow for a just transition to net-zero.

#### That is why CPRE has created the Community Visioning process

- to empower the people of parishes like Bonsall to set out where and under what circumstances they believe that new renewable energy could be sited within their local landscape.

# The Community Visioning process

The process used to create this vision was developed by CPRE, building upon previous work with the Centre for Sustainable Energy<sup>1</sup>. It involved a series of three workshops in which residents of Bonsall came together to discuss how they felt renewable energy could be appropriately integrated within their local landscape.

### First workshop

In the first workshop attendees discussed their connection to Bonsall and the countryside around it. Residents identified areas in the local landscape that are particularly familiar or cherished, as well as those places that they felt less positively about and the parts of their countryside that were important to them but had been lost due to landscape or other changes. The discussion ranged over parts of Bonsall's countryside residents felt are particularly distinctive and their emotional response to the landscape – how they would describe it and how it makes them feel. This discussion set the context for how residents would react to potential changes to their landscape as a result of new renewable energy developments.

## Second workshop

The second workshop focused on issues to do with energy infrastructure and how much electricity and heat Bonsall residents need. This discussion began with attendees talking about their awareness and opinions of pylons, wires and other types of energy infrastructure (including renewable generation) in the countryside around them. We then considered how this might change as we use more electricity and heat generated renewably in order to reduce carbon emissions contributing to climate change.

Using a tool (the CESAR spreadsheet) developed by the Centre for Sustainable Energy, attendees were able to explore how much renewable electricity would need to be generated in the Bonsall landscape in order to meet future needs, and how much different types of technology, like solar panels or wind turbines, could contribute towards this.

## Third workshop

For the third and final workshop we used maps of the local landscape to pinpoint locations for where the new renewables could be sited. Issues around who would own and profit from new renewable energy schemes in the Bonsall countryside were also discussed, as were ways that the impact on the landscape of these schemes could be minimised and even deliver benefits to nature and wildlife locally. Working together, attendees filled in a map of the parish with where and how new renewable energy could be generated locally in the future, which forms the basis for this community vision.

Uniquely, a fourth meeting was held to consult more widely on the draft vision document and to take the process forward. This was also attended by a project officer from Derbyshire Dales Community Energy who are offering advice and support to local energy projects.

# The Bonsall landscape and renewable energy

In the workshops that created this vision it was clear that the residents of Bonsall have a very strong connection to their local landscape. The beauty, tranquility and biodiversity of the surrounding countryside is a clear source of pride for local residents as is the deep landscape history with medieval field patterns and later mining remains. It is a less known area of the Peak District, with a sense of difference and isolation from surrounding parishes and villages.

### <sup>6</sup>It is different<sup>9</sup> <sup>6</sup>somewhere in-between<sup>9</sup>

<sup>6</sup>loved it at first sight: landscapes, roofscapes, the variety of people<sup>9</sup>

<sup>6</sup> love Bonsall Moor and the history of mining; the footpath network mirrors the mining use – it was how people got to work!<sup>9</sup>

The benefits of the local countryside were widely appreciated, especially for wellbeing and visitor income and interaction:

<sup>6</sup>I take daily walks around well-trodden paths, good for exercise and mental health<sup>9</sup>

<sup>6</sup>walking and countryside on my doorstep<sup>9</sup>

Although there is a good network of rights of way for walks, there were some issues with poor waymarking and maintenance but this was a minor concern. Footpaths gave access to nature, which was strongly valued, especially the survival of much unimproved grassland and associated biodiversity:

<sup>6</sup>Orchids and hay meadows, flowers in Horse Dale' 'The wild orchids are stunning<sup>9</sup>

<sup>6</sup>there's bats at Jugholes, hares and deer<sup>9</sup>

Issues relating to road use, including walking and cycling on narrow lanes or busy roads were a common bugbear, combined with problems of limited on-street parking and an infrequent bus service. Loss of village facilities, such as a number of shops and pubs has also affected the degree to which people came together and considered themselves part of a community. However, core community assets such as the village school, village hall, shop and two pubs survive and were highly valued:

<sup>6</sup> the primary school is so good for forming relationship with neighbours<sup>9</sup>

<sup>6</sup>Can't live without them [village facilities], especially in the winter<sup>9</sup>

<sup>6</sup>We really welcome people as visitors – love to see and chat to them<sup>,9</sup>

including warblers, redstart and skylark<sup>9</sup>

We have six species of bird present

The discussions revealed a strong understanding of and connection to a working village and countryside, even by those who had moved to the village for family or amenity reasons:

# <sup>6</sup>I like that there's businesses here and that there's not so many second homes<sup>9</sup>

Although the scale of new development in the parish is generally limited and often mitigated by good design, wider scale threats to the countryside were raised. These included modern quarrying, with noise, dust and lorries being problematic at times and some unauthorized development, such as a motocross facility on the open moor which was impacting on tranquility. Modern farming was also felt to be damaging some landscape and wildlife features.

Throughout the visioning process, there was a appreciation of the need for a transition to a low carbon future but some concerns were raised. Some doubted whether local generation was the answer, instead suggesting economies of scale could be better achieved in less sensitive landscapes and with offshore wind. And there were mixed views as to whether wind turbines would be acceptable in the local landscape and, if so, at what scale. However, it was generally felt that the need to deal with climate change meant accepting new infrastructure at a scale appropriate with the landscape and the village's built environment.

There is already some low carbon heat and electricity generation in the Parish, including a biomass boiler at Tufa Cottage and a scattering of roof-mounted solar panels in the village. There was a very small array of ground mounted solar panels in Bonsall Dale, utilizing a steep slope to good advantage. In 2008 a study, part funded by the Peak District National Park Authority, had looked into energy efficiency and renewable options for the village and concluded that space heating improvements were the top priority and that wind generation would be the most cost effective way to offset energy useage.<sup>2</sup> Commercial scale wind turbines were evident in nearby landscapes, notably at Carsington and on the intervening ridge at Ryder Point (Hopton) and Longcliffe (seen at distance in Figure 3). Energy infrastructure, such as electricity wires, poles and substations, was a minor issue to most residents.

Solar energy was seen as the most acceptable option, especially if well designed and in keeping with the Conservation Area. It was noted that the sun not reaching some parts of the village could limit deployment of roof solar. Deploying solar panels on domestic and farm building roofs was a supported option but not at the expense of the village 'roofscape'. Ground mounted solar was seen as an option but sited in old quarries.

There was also interest in using the mill pond at the Via Gellia Mill for hydro-electric power.

There was strong support for the need to use less energy by enhancing insulation (most of the housing stock is old) and replacing space heating demand (largely gas, supplemented by wood burners) by use of heat pumps (including a communal heat pump system, possible based on local geothermal resources).

# Map of proposed installations

In total the workshop attendees proposed a vision for the future of renewable energy in the Bonsall landscape which includes:

- An occasional small wind turbine in suitable locations on the moor/in the National Park
- And/or a possible site, outside the national park, for a medium sized wind turbine
- Up to 10 acres of ground mounted solar, preferably in old quarries (Ball Eye and Parish Quarries)
- Supplemented by solar panels installed on up to 25% of the houses and agricultural buildings across the Parish (an estimate of 200 buildings with rooftop solar)
- A central community heat pump (possibly using thermal waters at depth) supplying 100 houses in the centre of the village
- Possible micro hydro schemes on the Clatterway and at Via Gellia Mills



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Small wind turbine just north of Blakemere Pit, within the National Park area



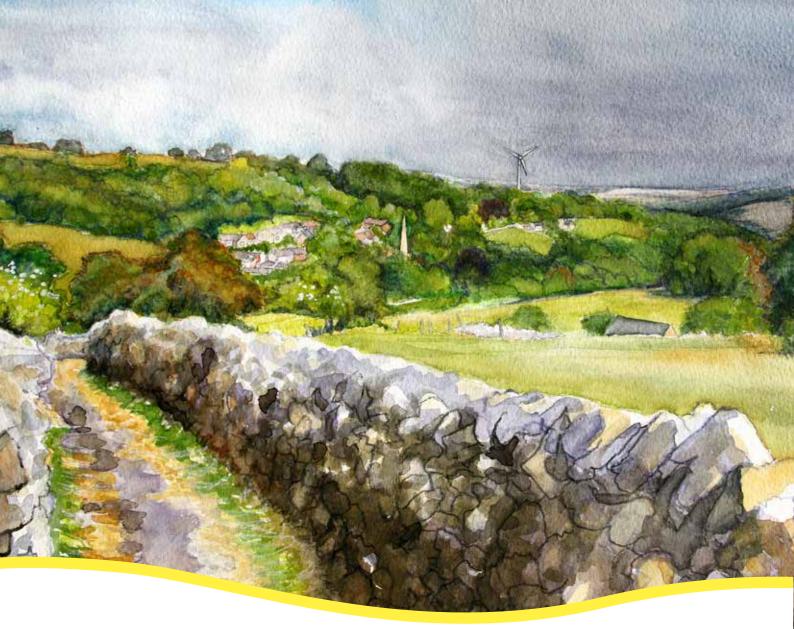
Community ground source heat pump in centre of village supplying up to 100 homes (using geothermal water)

Medium wind turbine to north of Ball Eye quarry, outside of the National Park area

Ball Eye Quarry, former quarry identified for potential ground mounted solar photovoltaic arrays

Clatterway & Via Gellia Mills, 2 micro hydro power sites - could yield up to 15kW capacity in total - 40MWh output

Parish Quarry, Slaley, former quarry identified for potential ground mounted solar photvoltaic arrays



#### Wind power

There were divided opinions among attendees as to whether wind turbines were the right option in Bonsall's countryside. Some thought that one larger turbine would be more efficient and acceptable than several smaller turbines. It was also noted that the optimum site, Masson Hill, was an iconic amenity spot and any installation would be extremely prominent in the plateau area above the village, albeit that the hill is located outside the National Park.

Local landscape guidelines<sup>3</sup> states that the plateau/moor area (landscape type: limestone plateau pastures) has a 'high sensitivity' to small, medium and large turbines but on the surrounding 'limestone village farmlands' and 'limestone slopes' there is a 'moderate-high' sensitivity to small turbines. National Park Authority planning guidance<sup>4</sup> also states that turbines should be in scale with buildings and landform and relate to them functionally, rather than be placed in isolation in open landscapes.

In terms of locations for wind turbines within the parish, there was no clear consensus among the group but, based on landscape and policy constraints, three options have been illustrated for two locations (Figures 1, 2 and 3). The most ambitious (and prominent) would be a medium turbine (84m/275' to tip) outside the NP area, on the hillside above Ball Eye quarry (see Figure 1, illustrating a much loved view of Bonsall from Stepping Lane). This would fall within the Derbyshire Dales Local Plan remit and be subject to Policy PD7: Climate Change which supports renewable energy 'provided the installation would not have significant adverse impact' (either alone or cumulatively).

#### Figure 1

A medium turbine situated in the fields above Ball Eye Quarry, seen from Stepping Lane, with Bonsall in the middle ground.



#### Figure 2

Figure 2. Solar panels in the upper part of Ball Eye Quarry and a small wind turbine in the field above (as seen from the footpath from Middleton by Wirksworth).

#### Figure 3

Small wind turbine just north of Blakemere Pit, as seen from the Limestone Way long distance path. Three existing large turbines are also seen in the distance near Hopton. A second illustration of a smaller turbine (37m/120' to tip) at the same location (but seen from Middleton by Wirksworth) is shown in Figure 2, in addition to a proposed solar park in Ball Eye Quarry. Clearly the smaller size of the turbine would reduce landscape impacts (compared with that shown in Figure 1) and would not 'skyline' as prominently.

Finally, some residents suggested that the open landscape of the moor (largely in the National Park) could be a suitable for several small wind turbines. Land adjacent to Blakemere Pit (a former fluorspar opencast site) was identified as there is a sympathetic landowner. An option of a small turbine just above and to the north of the former workings has been illustrated (Figure 3 below), as seen from the adjacent Limestone Way footpath, looking south.



## Roof mounted solar

It was suggested that further low carbon solar energy could be boosted by an aim to retrofit roof mounted panels onto approximately 25% of existing domestic housing stock (200 houses) in the Parish, subject to the degree of financial incentives available to encourage uptake. This would need to be done sympathetically, bearing in mind the valued roofscapes and the Conservation Area. There are already good examples of sensitively mounted panels on valued vernacular buildings in the village (see Figure 4 below).



**Figure 4** Solar panels sensitively arranged on a recently renovated older house in the village.

## Ground mounted solar

Former quarries such as Ball Eye (see Figure 2) and Parish Quarry (Slaley Brook) were seen as the most suitable sites for ground mounted solar and possibly related energy infrastructure, such as battery storage. Both sites are well screened from most viewpoints and have suitable, south facing orientation and topography. Whilst Parish Quarry is clearly disused (and has informal amenity use for rock climbing), the planning status of Ball Eye is uncertain. Parish Quarry has also revegetated naturally and is likely to have significant areas of valued biodiversity, so the potential for development may be limited to the former quarry floor/processing area (as illustrated in Figure 5).

An option for ground mounted solar panels was also investigated adjacent to the track (footpath) that runs from Town End (Bonsall) southwest towards Cromford. This is outside the national park area and is well screened from most distant viewpoints. However, fields of panels would be prominent in close views from this popular footpath, impacting on users' amenity. For this reason, it is suggested that new hedge planting adjacent to the path be carried out to help screen near views (as illustrated in Figure 6). It is also the case that new hedging, with an appropriate local mix of species would improve biodiversity and reduce visual impact.

Late in the consultation process, south-facing fields below Slaley Hall were suggested as suitable but have not been scoped for feasibility or acceptability.

#### Figure 5

Solar panels on floor of the former Parish Quarry in the Via Gellia (below Slaley).



## Other options for further investigation

There was some interest in utilising the outflow of the millpond feeding Via Gellia Mills. A previous study had shown that capacity would be limited (c.12kW maximum output) but suggested further investigation was merited.<sup>5</sup> At that time, the owners of the mill (an engineering/construction company) were sympathetic with the idea of a micro hydro power plant. Development of the site would be unlikely to have significant landscape or biodiversity impacts and in fact there may even be multiple benefits (e.g. heritage, amenity, biodiversity, flood control) to restoring the millpond area (badly silted at present) and mill races (channels). Late in the consultation process, it was learnt that a micro hydro scheme (2.5kW) on Bonsall Brook has received Environment Agency approval and is likely to be implemented. The likely output from this scheme is taken into account in the modelled CESAR energy output totals.

In terms of other technologies, there was consensus that a small anaerobic digestion unit could be an option as long as it didn't require incoming traffic or import of feed material.

There was also interest in potential use of either warm water or warm air (from old lead mine shafts) that could be gathered at depth and used in heat pumps (possibly via a communal facility). There are known to be thermal waters at depth locally (under Masson Hill and in a sough – an underground drainage channel – underlying the former Ball Eye lead mine). Community heat pumps are starting to be developed in the UK, for example the local authority supported scheme at Swaffham Prior, Cambridgeshire, powered by a local solar park.<sup>6</sup>

The residents were keen to include other renewable heat options, in the form of air source heat pumps in addition to the community ground source (geothermal) heat pump facility and also wanted to reduce energy usage by the uptake of retrofit measures, focused particularly on the numerous older buildings in the village and wider parish.

#### Figure 6

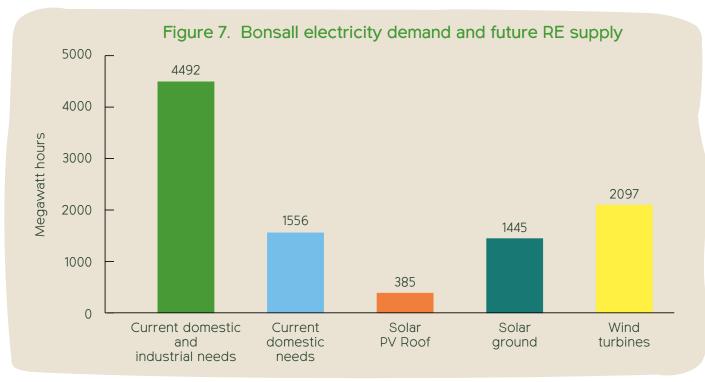
Solar panels on grazing land above Ball Eye Quarry showing restored hedges adjacent to the track (footpath) from Church St/Town End to Cromford.

# The benefits to Bonsall of a low carbon future

Throughout the workshops Bonsall residents showed a real willingness to consider all options that might generate low carbon energy locally, alongside a determination to find solutions that make the best use of the opportunities available in the Parish. Most people were open minded about installing renewables as long as the energy generated would directly benefit those in the village, especially through cheaper bills.

There was a strong push towards making the most appropriate use of the local landscape and recognizing the special sensitivity and qualities of the National Park as a key constraint. Solutions were therefore differentiated according the two planning authorities (inside the NP: the PDNPA; and outside: Derbyshire Dales District Council). This was particularly the case in relation to wind power, which attracts strict planning controls in the National Park.

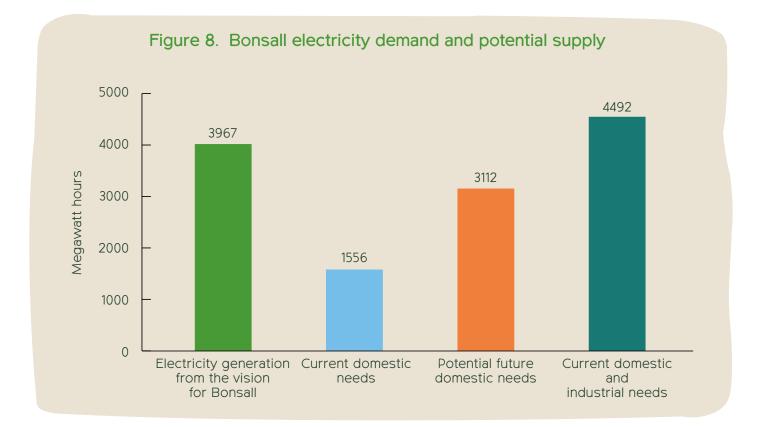
The main focus was on solar energy, predominantly in well screened quarry sites within or adjacent to the parish. There was also a desire to use suitable rooftops within the village, subject to design sensitivities and the overall impact on the village's valued 'roofscape'. A small hydro power installation at the Via Gellia Mill plus the Clatterway scheme on the Bonsall Brook would also provide some limited power (see Figure 7 for a breakdown between the different technology options; micro hydro output not shown but optimistically would be up to 40 MWh). In relation to wind power, after a further community meeting, it was decided to include the modelled energy outputs for one medium and one small turbine in the overall vision options.



The energy that could be generated by this plan (totalling 3967 MWh, including the wind options and micro hydro) would meet most of Bonsall's current overall needs (domestic and industrial) – see Figure 8. The CESAR model also shows that domestic demand would roughly double in a future in which half of the cars in the Parish are electric and half of the homes are heated by electric powered air source heat pumps. However, some of this demand would be offset by the proposed energy efficiency/retrofit measures applied to a housing stock of predominantly older buildings (and this programme could be enlarged to include the larger community buildings such as the village hall, school and church, as envisaged by the 2008 CAT study). However, the difficulties of retrofitting older housing stock (especially those with vernacular value) was raised as an issue that needed further work.

In total, energy efficiency measures and local heat generation (via heat pumps), together with taking up all the renewable energy supply options would cut current CO2 emissions by a third.

The addition of the two wind turbines (as illustrated in Figures 1, 2 and 3) would undoubtedly help meet the likely future electricity demand (adding around 2000 MWh output) but it was recognized that capital costs would be difficult to find for a community-led scheme.



# Next steps

This document marks the beginning of a conversation. The vision for the future of renewable energy in Bonsall's landscape will no doubt adapt over time and as more residents engage with the project. Nevertheless, by setting out a clear plan for where, how and on what conditions more renewable energy could be generated in the Parish, this community vision gives residents a powerful tool to take the future of their countryside into their own hands.

Too often the shift to low carbon energy across England has become divisive and confrontational when rural communities have been presented with a proposed scheme in their landscape which they have had little input on and must either accept or reject. By developing this vision for the future, Bonsall residents have sent a clear message about the importance of their landscape and what renewables done well would look like locally.

In summary, this community vision shows that the residents of Bonsall are prepared to play a significant role in the effort to avert the climate emergency. This vision would generate enough low carbon electricity to power nearly all of the current needs of the Parish of Bonsall. Bonsall residents have shown that they are in favour of renewable energy not just in principle, but would also support hosting new installations in their countryside as long as these developments are sited sensitively to protect the countryside that they and visitors value. There is a clear appetite for renewable energy schemes that represent a suitable use of land, especially through the re-use of former quarry sites.

There are many steps the residents of Bonsall can now take to make their community vision for the future of renewable energy in their landscape a reality. There are discussions to be had with the Peak District National Park Authority and Derbyshire Dales District Council to see this vision incorporated into local or neighbourhood plans. The vision could also be used to update the Village Design Statement<sup>7</sup> (dating from 2002) which is formal supplementary planning guidance. Western Power Distribution (recently acquired by National Grid), the local distribution network operator (DNO), will also be an important partner, to ensure that Bonsall has the right infrastructure to support the renewable energy residents want to see.

This vision could be used to seek out landowners, farmers or renewable energy developers who would be interested in bringing forward one or more of the schemes residents have shown support for. In addition, this document could be used as a plan for establishing a community energy scheme in Bonsall, with residents coming together to design and own their own renewable energy development, with profits flowing back to the local community or seedfunding further positive energy initiatives.

CPRE Derbyshire and CPRE PDSY will continue to support the residents of Bonsall as they take this community vision forward.

For any readers outside of Bonsall, CPRE has a network of local groups across the whole of England who could partner with you to develop your own community vision for the future of renewable energy in your local landscape. If you would like to find out more about this project and explore the opportunities for running the community visioning process in your local area please contact us at <u>info@cpre.org.uk</u>

## Useful links and key stakeholders

CPRE Derbyshire https://www.cprederbyshire.org.uk/

CPRE Peak District and South Yorkshire <a href="https://www.cprepdsy.org.uk/">https://www.cprepdsy.org.uk/</a>

MCS Charitable Foundation <u>https://www.mcscharitablefoundation.org/</u>

Bonsall Parish Council https://bonsallvillage.org/parish-council/

Derbyshire Dales District Council <u>https://www.derbyshiredales.gov.uk/planning-a-building-control/planning-policy</u>

Derbyshire Dales Community Energy https://derbyshiredalesenergy.org.uk/

Peak District National Park Authority https://www.peakdistrict.gov.uk/planning

Western Power Distribution (National Grid) <u>https://www.nationalgrid.co.uk/customers-and-community/community-energy/communities-strategy</u>

Centre for Sustainable Energy <a href="https://www.cse.org.uk/">https://www.cse.org.uk/</a>

Community Energy England https://communityenergyengland.org/

## References

<sup>1</sup> <u>https://www.cse.org.uk/projects/view/1315</u>

<sup>2</sup> S. Labrum/Centre for Alternative Technology (2008) CAT Assessment of Renewable Energy Generation for the Village of Bonsall and Associated Public Buildings. PDNPA Sustainable Development Fund/CAT Consultancy Services, 89pp.

<sup>3</sup> <u>https://www.peakdistrict.gov.uk/\_data/assets/pdf\_file/0026/55439/SPD-Landscape-Sensitivity-Asess-</u> ment-and-Wind-Turbine-Guidance.pdf

<sup>4</sup> Peak District National Park Authority (2013) Climate Change and Sustainable Building: Supplementary Planning Document.

<sup>5</sup> Woods G., Tickle A., Chandler P. & Beardmore, J. (2010) Peak Power: developing micro hydro power in the Peak District. Friends of the Peak District, Sheffield, pp.225. See p.205 for detailed analysis of the Via Gellia Mills site.

<sup>6</sup> <u>https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/climate-change-energy-and-environment/climate-change-ac-</u> <u>tion/low-carbon-energy/community-heating/swaffham-prior-heat-network</u>

<sup>7</sup> <u>https://www.derbyshiredales.gov.uk/documents/planning/conservation/bonsall-village-design-state-ment-part-1</u>

https://www.derbyshiredales.gov.uk/documents/planning/conservation/bonsall-village-design-statement-part-2

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