

Meeting Cambridgeshire's Energy Needs

Notes from the 21st November 2013 Community Workshop

Overview

This is a write up of the workshop held on the 21st November at the Hauser Forum, Cambridge to support the development of the MLEI project. The session brought together participants from the Cambridgeshire Renewables Infrastructure Framework (CRIF) project which was the predecessor of the MLEI project and provided the evidence on which the project was developed.

This MLEI event was the third event where the MLEI model was outlined to an audience outside of the project team and experts. The event on 11th July targeted 'investors and local businesses' and the event on 8th October targeted 'politicians'. This event was a chance to test both the thinking and messaging behind the project with a broader audience. The aims of the workshop were to:

- Update participants from the CRIF project on progress since the project completed January 2012
- Present the current aim and objectives of the MLEI project and discuss how participants might engage with and use the new MLEI structures currently being set up
- Reaffirm their interest and engagement with the on-going work

The event provided a great deal of lively debate and some useful feedback on the model and its presentation. A number of people commented on having found the verbal presentation useful and recommended that the model itself – the diagram – would benefit from simplification with better labelling. The participants also asked for more detail about the development unit itself – some of the areas of interest are captured in the sections below. One strong message from the discussion was the need to ensure that the MLEI fund and development unit delivers for local communities and not simply in terms of profit – the participants wanted to see community gaining in terms of knowledge, facilities and opportunities for local businesses.

Is this a done deal?

There was some questioning as to what extent the MLEI work was a 'done deal' and there was concern about whether it was possible to influence the project at this stage in the process and this is something that should be kept in mind as we develop the next stage. There were also concerns about how the work might interact with national policy as well as the ability of local government to manage a longer term project that goes beyond the electoral cycle. These are understandable concerns that should be mitigated through the design of the fund and the development unit.

Is the level of ambition correct?

There was also some discussion as to whether or not the level of ambition for the project was correct. Some people felt that it was over ambitious and would struggle to build the pipeline of projects, others felt that it was duplicating other initiatives. Given the evidence base developed as part of both CRIF and the MLEI work these issues are

perhaps speaking to a need to be more structured about the communication of the potential that the collaborative approach that MLEI is suggesting specifically as this is where we would be able to both gain project scale as well as amplifying rather than competing with other projects.

It was generally agreed that it's essential that MLEI not be another layer of bureaucracy that slows things down and this point is picked up in the next section.

Would MLEI help you?

In discussing the development unit and the MLEI project a number of suggestions emerged which might influence the way in which the Development Unit might be developed. None of these contradict the need for some kind of unit but might develop distinctly different 'flavours' of organisation.

MLEI as a best practice hub

A number of people suggested that MLEI could be an invaluable hub for best practice and expertise for the community. In this model it would provide:

- Case studies and examples of community projects
- A checklist / wishlist of types of projects and delivery templates

MLEI as a facilitator

In this model MLEI would offer support to community projects and would supplement community skills in areas such as:

- Funding and grant development
- Programme development and project management
- Technology advice

MLEI as a broker / connector

A third model emerged where MLEI would help connect project ideas together and develop shared programmes. In this model one activity might be, for example, to use the website to connect the investment community with project owners. A further role would be to help secure funding.

Working with SMEs

One theme which emerged was the need to work effectively with SMEs – this was seen as one of the key ways in which MLEI would deliver on its ambition to support local economic growth. Ideas in this discussion were focused around the procurement process as well as the need to connect with innovative start-ups with new ideas. This is a role which the development unit might be able to fulfil in each of the models above.

Working with planning, planners and developers

Many of the event participants had had personal experience of the planning process around very relevant projects and they spoke of the need for a number of 'conditions' that would need to be met for MLEI projects to succeed:

- Committed individuals or group in community and engagement of whole communities.
- Close cooperation with CCC District Councils planners.
- Strategic relationships with local developers on long term growth agenda

What is the most pragmatic way of moving forward?

The group had a number of very helpful practical suggestions about how the project might move forward:

- Small amounts of funding to be made available now to test some of the MLEI assumptions
- In parallel develop a process of identifying MLEI suitable projects now. For example the Public buildings, Housing, Pavilion & Parish Office in Girton.
- Make sure LCDU is properly funded.
- Engage the colleges – largest landowners, and Power Companies.
- Use county councillors better for example with an information pack for each parish covering:
 - local right to buy.
 - land and housing.

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Public-I, December 2013

Appendix one: Notes from Flipcharts

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- 1) Does this model make sense?
 - Do “we” have a choice?
 - Are MLEI trying to go too big?
 - Small amounts of funding should be available now.
 - Political support.
- 2) How would you use MLEI?
 - Some parishes do not have community buildings.
 - Church / School?
 - Could help money is available quickly.
- 3) Barriers
 - Number of projects.
 - Should be identifying projects now.
 - Other projects already happening outside of this.
- 4) Opportunities
 - Create template model for qualifying low hanging fruit.
 - County council – inception projects.
- 5) Projects to work on
 - The ability to understand what is available regarding funding / technology.
 - A checklist / wishlist of types of projects.

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- 1) Addenbrookes – Mitie → British Co
Procurement – issue
SME – heat recycling machine → high temp into hot water → £1.5million saving Addenbrooke
How do small SME's work with the large companies who win all the frameworks agreement.
- 2) Engage with SME's → them into this work.
- Innovation in SME's that is ahead of corporate organisations.
How do we get the local SME's to aggregate these offers and provide the equivalent services that large corporations can deliver?
- 3) Option – match up local businesses to talk to the schools?

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- 1) Where is expertise? In programme development?
- 2) In addition to EPC, we would like recommendations as to: Specific improvements. Who do we talk to? Could we also get funding advice? From one person!
- 3) Barriers → Need for committed individual or group in community.
 - Engagement of whole communities.
 - Opposition from CCC District Councils planners.
- 4) Opportunities
 - Developers could work with local authorities to capture long term benefits.
- 5) Public building housing Pavilion & Parish Office in Girton.

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Cambridgeshire Unique Proposition (USP)

Clean tech → test → large-scale deployment

Local resources → expertise already exists

Will MLEI just be another layer of bureaucracy that slows things down? And be subject to political whim – example planning / conservation v. insulation etc.

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Model

- 1) Simplification of model → explanation
- 2) More information about the development unit
- 3) Benefit for local communities
- 4) Facilitates knowledge
- 5) Coordination role



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