

Wales & West Utilities Vulnerability & Carbon Monoxide Allowance (VCMA)

Project Eligibility Assessment (PEA)

Plymouth Energy Community Home Hub

Plymouth Energy Community (PEC)

Rachele Verdini

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Eligibility criteria for company specific projects (other than condemned essential gas appliance repair and replacement)

In order to qualify as a VCMA Project, a project must:

- a) have a positive, or a forecasted positive, Social Return on Investment (SROI) including for the gas consumers funding the VCMA Project;
- b) either:
 - i. provide support to consumers in Vulnerable Situations and relate to energy safeguarding, or
 - ii. provide awareness of the dangers of CO, or
 - iii. reduce the risk of harm caused by CO;
- c) have defined outcomes and the associated actions to achieve these;
- d) go beyond activities that are funded through other price control mechanism(s) or required through licence obligations; and
- e) not be delivered through other external funding sources directly accessed by a GDN, including through other government (national, devolved or local) funding.¹

Eligibility criteria for company specific essential gas appliance servicing, repair, and replacement

In order to qualify as a VCMA Project, unsafe pipework and essential gas appliance² servicing, repair or replacement must meet the following criteria:

- a) a GDN has to isolate and condemn unsafe pipework or an essential gas appliance following a supply interruption or as part of its emergency service role;
- b) the household cannot afford to service, repair or replace unsafe pipework or the essential gas appliance; and
- c) sufficient funding is not available from other sources (including national, devolved or local government funding) to fund the unsafe pipework or the essential gas appliance servicing, repair or replacement.

¹ If part, but not full, funding is available through an external funding source for an eligible project, VCMA funding can be used for the remaining amount.

² Essential gas appliances are gas fuelled heating systems (including gas boilers and gas fires), and gas cookers.

Information required for the registration of VCMA projects

Information required	Description
Project title	PEC Home Hub
Funding GDN(s)	Wales & West Utilities
New/ Updates PEA	New
Date of PEA submission	June 2024
VCMA Project contact name, email and number	Rachele Verdini Rachele.verdini@wwutilities.co.uk 07811 795210
Total VCMA funding required (£)	£999,752
Problem(s)	<p>Plymouth is experiencing a huge increase in the need for support around energy issues, to address the impacts of fuel poverty. Findings from the 2021 Census showed that the population of Plymouth increased to 264,700 and had more deprivation than the national with over 17% of areas being in the 10% most deprived in England. How life has changed in Plymouth: Census 2021 (ons.gov.uk)</p> <p>Families live in ageing housing stock and issues are compounded by high energy prices, the cost-of-living crisis and the expense of heating sub-standard homes. The physical and mental health impacts of these cold, damp homes are significant and recognised as a strategically important contributor to the stark health inequalities that exist between Plymouth's richest and poorest neighbourhoods.</p> <p>Plymouth Energy Community (PEC) is a multi, award-winning charity and a social enterprise, with a cooperative ethos. PEC's mission is to empower our community to create a fair, affordable, zero carbon energy system with local people at its heart.</p> <p>Since 2013, PEC has:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Developed and generated 45,000 MWh of clean power from our community owned solar farm and thirty-two roof top arrays. - Saved schools and community organisations over £0.8m from their energy bills through renewable power and energy efficiency improvements.

Criteria

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Saved a total of 25,000 tonnes of carbon.- Grown to a turnover of £2.2m pa with a dedicated staff team of thirty-three people. <p>PEC has thirty-three staff, and every Energy Advisor holds a Level 3 City and Guilds in Energy Awareness. Each is trained in key community working skills including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Trauma informed practice- Equality and diversity- First aid- Suicide prevention- Mental health awareness- Fire hazard training- Refugee awareness <p>Relevant past and present projects outside of VCMA funding include:</p> <p>South-West Affordable Warmth Partnership – National Grid Electricity Distribution - PEC coordinates six other community energy organisations across Devon and Cornwall, to support and advise vulnerable residents in partnership with NGED.</p> <p>Redress ‘Energy Team’– two, 2-year projects to deliver fuel poverty services to refugee communities and low-income families, totalling £800,000.</p> <p>National Grid Warm Homes Fund – a project that initiated the current partnership with Livewell Southwest where PEC Advisors work alongside Plymouth City Council and Adult Social Care teams to combat the effects of cold, damp homes.</p> <p>Climate Active Neighbourhoods – an £800,000 EU contract to supply free energy assessments and install simple energy efficiency measures to 1,000 homes, leading to £2m of lifetime savings.</p> <p>PCC Covid Winter Grants and Household Support Fund – PEC is PCC’s preferred partner for dispersal of the Energy Support element of the DWP’s crisis fund, totalling £1.5 million.</p>
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Criteria

	<p>Warm and Well - National Lottery Reaching Communities projects totalling £900,000 to support people with disability and at risk of fuel poverty.</p> <p>Delivery of Local Area Delivery and Sustainable Warmth Funding totalling £5m over the past 2 years, in partnership with PCC. Funds targeted at retrofitting low-income homes with poor energy performance.</p> <p>The Far South West Retrofit Consortium Local Energy Advice Demonstrator (LEAD) funded by DESNZ, which PEC leads on behalf of 5 community energy organisations from across the South West. This project will provide in-home energy advice visits to 1,300 households. £1.4M budget across the consortium over 2 years.</p> <p>Healthy Homes – British Gas Energy Trust. A £400,000 programme to provide residents living with long term illness with new heating systems and support to improve their physical and financial wellbeing.</p> <p>Against this backdrop there is an urgent need for PEC to secure continuation funds for services that risk closure in March 24, and at the same time to broaden the scope of its support to reach groups of residents who are excluded or at risk of fuel poverty.</p>
<p>Scope and Objectives</p>	<p>PEC will reach customers through the areas of work listed below.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The PEC Home Hub – A walk-in energy advice space based in Plymouth city centre, delivering income maximisation advice, supplier mediation and access to the Priority Services Register. ● In-depth energy advice calls ● Home Visits – PEC’s Energy Advisors will undertake home visits to provide energy efficiency advice, carbon monoxide awareness and help residents with their energy issues. These visits help to build trust and can be a valuable route into other means of support such as PEC’s home retrofit services.

Criteria

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acute Energy Advice Services through Adult Social Care teams - PEC will reach vulnerable residents through a combination of complex casework, home visits, phone, or online advice. These service users are amongst the most vulnerable to fuel poverty in the city, and independent evaluation shows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 91% have a low income and were in receipt of one or more benefits. - 72% have one or more severe health conditions – from brain injury to cardiovascular disease. This service defines PEC as an essential component of local support services with over 150 referral partners, allowing continued growth of the single point of contact recommended within NICE guidelines to prevent excess winter deaths from cold Homes. • Fuel poverty first aid training – PEC will host free fuel poverty first aid training for frontline workers to maximise the reach of energy advice and support. <p>PEC will use an outcome-based approach to recording and evaluation, capturing initial data, Casework data, Event and drop-in data, and end-of-casework surveys. Their objectives will be routinely monitored and reported on using the Microsoft Dynamics CRM system, alongside others such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Financial benefit to residents engaging in casework. - Financial and carbon savings from simple and major energy efficiency measures.
<p>Outcomes, associated actions, and success criteria</p>	<p>PEC will reach approximately 9,000 households over the course of two years (20,000 individuals) and the outcomes for the project can be broken down as below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4,740 customers reached with face-to-face energy efficiency advice and carbon monoxide awareness at the Home Hub. • 7,110 customers reached with in-depth energy advice calls.

Criteria

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1988 customers reached via long-term Energy Advice casework (1040 - acute casework; 948 – general casework). • 3,792 customers reached at events with partner organisations. • 395 individuals reached via face-to-face drop-in appointments at health and wellbeing venues. • 280 frontline workers reached with fuel poverty first aid training. • 2000 referrals to the Priority Service Register. <p>To maintain a focus on progress toward the outcomes listed above, WWU and PEC will form a steering group, meeting quarterly to discuss and identify ongoing risks and mitigations. In addition, WWU will request case studies and client testimonials to further demonstrate the success of the initiative, throughout the project term.</p>
Project Partners and third parties involved	<p>This project is being funded by Wales & West Utilities and delivered by our principal partner Plymouth Energy Community.</p> <p>PEC will work with more than 150 local referral partners and hold regular advice sessions in the City’s Wellbeing Hubs, Health venues, Food Banks, and refugee services.</p> <p>Other key partners for the delivery of the work will be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Millfields Trust • Livewell Southwest (LSW) • Plymouth City Council (PCC) and Public Health • Wellbeing Hubs
Potential for new learning	<p>This project has the potential to provide insight into the levels of support required in an area chronically affected by poverty. We may also be able to understand the quality of the service provided by organisations such as PEC, and what skills and techniques can be adapted and applied to business-as-usual activities at Wales & West Utilities. In addition to this, we can also look to engage further with the target group of this project, to understand how our general work impacts their livelihoods.</p>

Criteria

Scale of VCMA Project and SROI calculations, including NPV	We have taken the forecasted numbers expected by PEC for the two-year delivery period and calculated the following SROI over a 2-year period: Total Gross Present Value = £16,494,273.56 Net Present Value = £15,506,314.51 SROI per £1 spent = £15.70
VCMA Project start and end date	This project will begin in April 2024 and run until the end of March 2026.
Geographical area	Plymouth