

The Challenge: Building a strong and Net Zero regional economy on limited public funds

In 2022, Devon County Council faced a two-pronged issue: how to grow a strong post-pandemic regional economy whilst meeting the county's environmental commitment to Net Zero. Small and medium businesses are the majority in Devon, but the least able to afford the changes that will save them money and reduce their carbon impact.

As part of Devon County Council's post-pandemic economic recovery response, the council created a 'Green Innovation Fund' and put out an open call for innovative solutions. One of the fund's grants was offered to EP Connect and their 'ESCO-in-a-box' (EIAB) solution.

ESCO stands for 'Energy Service Company', a place-based one-stop shop that helps businesses and organisations reduce their energy costs and carbon impact. ESCO-in-a-box (EIAB) provides customised software, finance and funding, contracts, marketing materials and quality assurance to make setting up an ESCO easy.

'We try to be very evidence-based in the work that we do and the investments we make ... we're using scarce and valuable public resources in the best way.'



Polly Frost
Economy Team Manager
(Economic Infrastructure &
Strategic Intelligence) - Devon
County Council



The Solution: A tailored and self-sustaining ESCO working with Devon's small and medium businesses

The evidence-based and proven nature of ESCO-in-a-box made it ideal for a council wanting to spend scarce and valuable public funds in the best way.

With their project management time paid for by the Green Innovation Fund grant, EP Connect created an ESCO tailored to Devon. The county has many existing community energy groups and EP Connect worked with them to ensure that the ESCO could make best use of the existing connections with businesses and other organisations.

EP Connect also trained Devon's community energy groups in the customised ESCO-in-a-box software and contracts, and connected them to the finance options available.

Setting up the Devon ESCO was a fast process, moving from project approval to public launch in under a year. The EP Connect team were friendly to work with, very prompt, and timely in the way that they did things.

Key Outcomes:

- Devon ESCO is a self-sustaining business model
- The ESCO future profits can be reinvested
- Increased financial resilience for local businesses
- Achieves some of the county carbon plan targets

The Results: A council ready to boost local businesses and deliver the actions in their carbon plan

The Devon ESCO finance options will enable small and medium businesses to immediately reduce their energy bills by installing renewable energy solutions. Examples could include solar panels, LED bulbs and air pumps. This decreased expenditure will improve their financial resilience in a challenging time. It also unlocks the carbon reduction opportunities in this frequently hard to reach sector.

Around 25 local suppliers for the low carbon economy will benefit from the new Devon ESCO. They'll be connected to an ongoing pipeline of work projects, allowing their businesses in turn to grow.

The ESCO is expected to be financially self-sustaining within 2-3 years from the project launch. 25 businesses or more should be supported within this time, providing the ESCO with £197.3k of income from project delivery. The work over those 2-3 years will also mean that Devon will benefit from local annual carbon savings of 136.5 tons.

To find out how ESCO-in-a-box could work in your area,
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