Community Benefit Summary Report

Background

Yealm Community Energy provides financial support to its five constituent parishes through three main mechanisms:

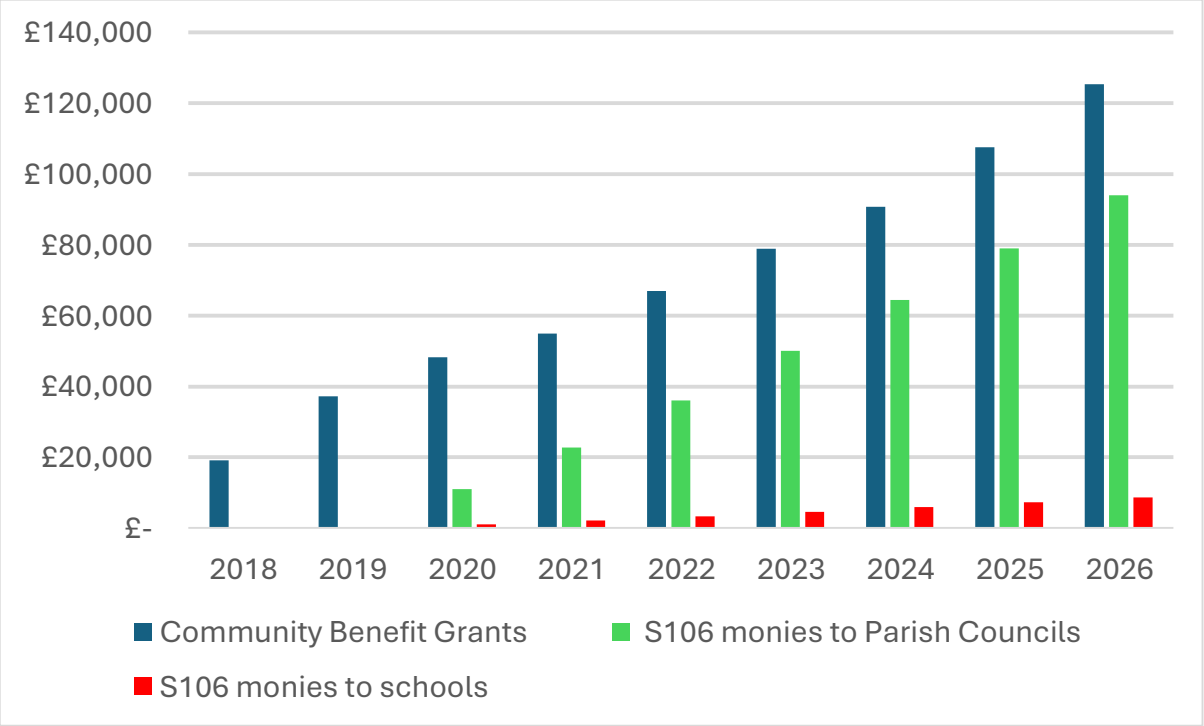
1. Through the YCE Community Benefit Fund through grants in all five parishes.
2. Through S106 payments to three parish councils from Creacombe and Marlands.
3. Through S106 payments to three primary schools from Creacombe and Marlands.

As an aside, the S106 route was established by agreement between the planning authority and the landowner. YCE, the eventual owner of the sites and a strong supporter of planning being granted, was not party to the use of the S106 route and disagreed with it.

Funding stream since 2018

These three sources have provided finance of £227,895 since Newton Downs was commissioned in 2018 (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Cumulative finding streams of benefits to communities



A summary of grants awarded by YCE is dealt with separately. Primary Schools have used the funds received to run annual classes on solar electricity and the environment to final year

pupils. The use to which Parish Council Funds have been put is not known in detail, but mostly it has been used for environmental and other improvements for the communities.

YCE Rules

YCE's Rules provide clear guidance on the Aims of the society, and these aims govern the way grants from the Community Benefit Fund are awarded. The aims are:

- Supply of heat/electricity from renewable and low carbon sources;
- Generating income for the Community Supporting Organisation to provide grants to community organisations in the Local Community, and for other activities in line with the Community Supporting Organisation's objects;
- Enabling the local and wider community to share in the ownership of the renewable and low carbon electricity/heat generation projects;
- Providing funding for further community renewable and low carbon energy generation and energy efficiency initiatives in the Local Community; and
- Supporting educational and other community activities which promote awareness of energy and environmental related issues.

YCE meets the first of these aims by operating three solar farms: Newton Downs, Creacombe, and Marlands. Between 2018 and 2026 the three solar farms have produced about 100,000,000 kWh (units) of low carbon renewable electricity, sufficient to power about 5,000 houses over that period. As the five parishes have about 4,700 homes, by one calculation the amount generated is sufficient to power all five parishes.

How the CBF funds have been spent since 2018

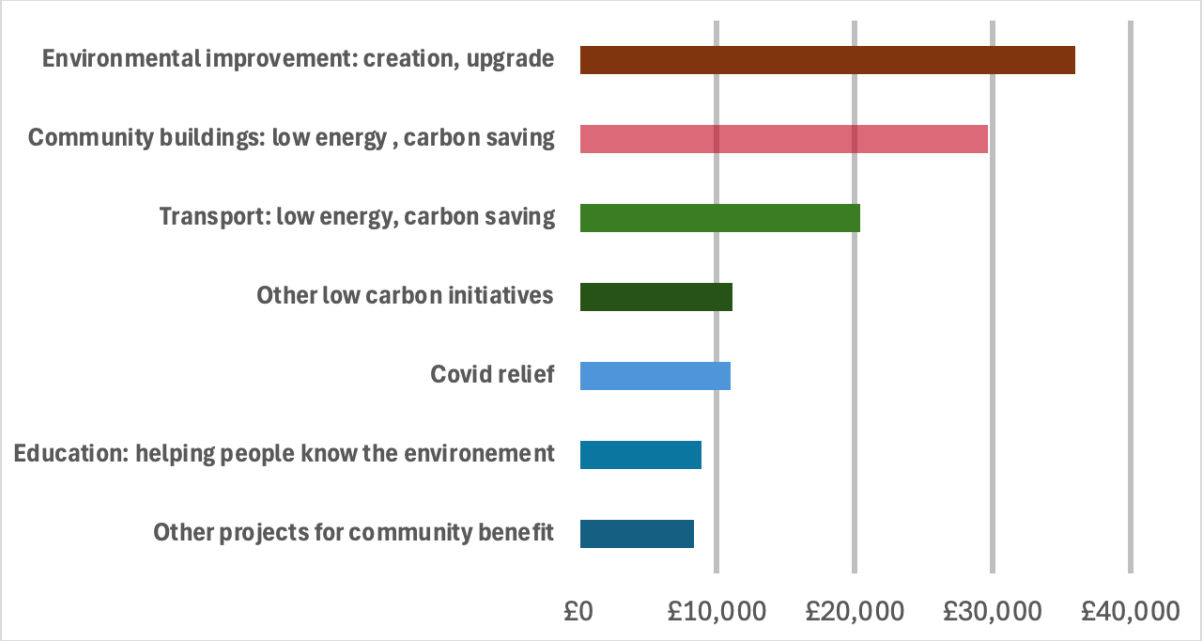
£125,337 has been spent on 70 different projects since 2018. These are not always easily categorised, but for ease of understanding they have been grouped into seven categories. These are:

1. Environmental improvement: creation of and upgrading environments. Thirty projects have received £35,967. Some involve relatively small amounts (£300 for a Holbeton bird box project to large; others more, with almost £10,000 in total granted to the Yealm Estuary to Moor project aimed at creating a thriving wildlife corridor over the whole 12 miles from the entrance of the Yealm to its source on Dartmoor. More recently grant money has been used to measure water quality on the neighbouring Erme.
2. Community buildings: low carbon and energy savings. Community halls serve as important focal points for the vibrant communities in our parishes. That is why 10 projects have received £29,635 to install solar panels, insulation, and efficient heating and lighting – reducing energy use and lowering costs to keep them sustainable.
3. Transport: low energy, carbon saving. The 8 projects receiving £20,403 divide between provision of cycle racks and footpaths to encourage people away from cars, and the Yealm Water Taxi providing a novel electric transport system for the Yealm

Estuary over summer months, replacing two-stroke engines. It has also encouraged a move towards electric outboards amongst Yealm boaters.

4. Other low carbon initiatives: These five projects of £11,151 in total include energy advice services, and energy fair, and solar and low wattage lighting for sports clubs.
5. Covid relief: During 2020 a normal round of grants was not possible. However, each community sought to provide relief to some of their residents in hardship during that difficult time, and grants of £11,000 were given to each village community to help that relief. It is worth noting that this was a small part of what communities contributed.
6. Education: helping people know their environment: these 8 projects received £8,872. The smallest were projects involving Rainbow and Brownie groups do small projects on the environment. Others included helping fund a primary school outside classroom and an A-level course on Environmental Studies involving undisturbed woodland.
7. And of course there are always other projects that defy simple grouping. These 9 received £8,872 and included projects on gardening, community housing and work, and supporting gig rowing activities.

Figure 2: Analysis of £125,337 spent over 70 projects (2018-2026)



Conclusion

Having an annual source of funding lie with the YCE CBF has been an important multiplier for communities already active and willing to do good things. Relatively small amounts kick start projects and lubricate the moving parts to get them up to speed.

Two important examples were the Electric Water Taxi, and Yealm Estuary to Moor. Both had their origins inside YCE but were soon running independently. Neither would have been the success they seem to be without CBF funding. It's an excellent example of how Community Energy Societies are a force for good.