

Board Members

Finance & Audit Lead

Communications Lead



Applicant Information

Orchard Community Energy, a thriving community energy society serving Swale and Medway, is seeking to recruit **two additional directors** with relevant skills as **lead directors for finance and audit, and for communications and marketing**. You will oversee, support and help to develop our range of community-owned energy generation and other local carbon and energy efficiency activities.

About Orchard Community Energy

Orchard Community Energy (OCE) is one of about 400 community energy societies across the UK. Legally it operates as a community benefit society.

It develops and runs community-owned renewable energy, low carbon and energy efficiency projects in Swale and Medway. Its profits support social and environmental projects by local charities. It owns a ground-mounted 5MW solar farm near Iwade and a rooftop array at The COOK Kitchen in Sittingbourne. It is currently seeking new sites, particularly for rooftop arrays. It has donated over £80,000 to good causes since it was founded in 2015 and expects to donate over £1m during the lifetime of its current arrays. Its website is www.orchardcommunityenergy.org.

Day to day management of the society and its sites is undertaken by a range of subcontractors under the oversight of the board. There are no employees.

Subcontractors currently include:

- Bright Renewables, the UK's first community-owned renewable energy asset manager, which OCE co-owns. Bright provides a range of governance, project management, accounting and company secretary services
- PSH Operations and The Ethical Renewable Company (TERC) that maintain the two physical sites
- Neville Registrars that manages the register of members and their community shares

Board members and other volunteers handle publicity and networking, the annual grants process, and initial identification and early development of new projects.

OCE has about 200 members who are community investors based locally or across the UK. They have invested a total of about £2M in amounts from £250 to £100,000 to fund the arrays. Additional long-term loan finance is provided by Triodos Bank.

Communications and marketing activities support good relations with members and other stakeholders, and promote occasional community share offers to raise funding for new projects. No community share offers are currently scheduled.

OCE cooperates with its sister society Kent Community Energy that serves the Kent County Council area. It is a member of Community Energy England and Community Energy South.

Role Description

Working as a team and accountable to the Society's members, the board of directors:

- Steers the Society to deliver community benefit through the achievement of its mission
- Ensures that the Society meets all legal and regulatory requirements and follows relevant good practice
- Protects the Society's resources and reputation by effective governance

As part of this, the directors:

- Develop and monitor the Society's strategic plan
- Oversee the successful operation of the Society and its existing sites
- Undertake local publicity and networking
- Identify and undertake initial investigation of new sites and projects and oversee their development
- Manage the grant making process that currently awards about three grants per year after an annual open application process

Directors may also be appointed to the boards of subsidiaries of the Society and undertake specific tasks or responsibilities on behalf of the board.

All board members are expected to undertake the duties of a director, as defined by law, to a high standard, adhere to the policies agreed by the board from time to time, prepare for and attend all board meetings and participate in decision making between board meetings.

The lead directors for finance and audit and for communications and marketing are expected to take the lead on overseeing those areas. The lead director for communications and marketing may deliver limited communications themselves or oversee volunteers and/or subcontractors as preferred and agreed with the board.

On appointment, directors will be asked to sign a letter of appointment which lays out their commitments to the Society, including the expected time commitment.

The role is a voluntary one and directors do not have a contract of employment with the Society or any of its subsidiaries. Expenses may be refunded in line with the Society's expenses policy.

The Society currently provides Directors and Officers Liability Insurance, with the board deciding annually whether to renew this.

Directors will initially be co-opted to the board but, if they are not already a member, will be offered the opportunity after six months invest in the Society and so become a member and able to stand for election (details below). Elected board members may

serve up to three consecutive elected terms of office, each of approximately three years. Co-opted directors are appointed for a series of consecutive one year terms.

Person Specification

General Skills and Experience (All Directors)

Essential

- Collaborative problem solver with experience of working as part of a team to reach good decisions
- Good communication skills
- Sufficient digital literacy (and access to own equipment) to enable effective board communication by email, video conferencing and telephone
- Sufficient time available to undertake the role, including attendance at board meetings (see below for further details), with an expectation that if appointed they will serve on the board for at least three years
- Understanding of and commitment to sustainable development and addressing climate change in Swale and Medway; and support for the ethos and values of the community energy movement
- Understanding of and commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion
- Not be subject to any restrictions which prevent them from holding office as a director in the UK

Desirable

- Good understanding of the Swale and/or Medway area, preferably as a result of living or working locally or within the wider surrounding area
- Good local community and/or business networks in Swale and/or Medway
- Able and willing to invest £250 in the Society's community shares after six months unless already a member. This is because most, although not all, board roles must be filled by members according to the Society's rules. Community shares are long-term investments which are interest bearing but intended for those seeking primarily to support the aims of the Society rather than to secure a financial return. This opportunity to invest is specifically for £250 (25 shares) unless the Society has an open share offer at the time.

Additional Skills and Experience (across the set of directors)

General Business

Understanding and experience of

- Governance and accountability
- General commercial and management skills, preferably in a small business and/or social enterprise
- Commercial contract negotiation / procurement (with an emphasis on the commercial rather than legal aspects)
- Financial management, including budgets and accounting
- Project development, management and delivery
- Data protection and cybersecurity

Specialist

Understanding and experience of

- Commercial scale renewable energy technologies, particularly solar energy
- The UK energy industry and the UK energy market, including its regulation
- Communications and marketing (“story-telling”)
- Financial modelling and the analysis of financial models
- Overseeing production of management accounts and audited annual accounts

Time Commitment Required

Directors are expected to attend all board meetings of the Society as well as all meetings of committees, groups or subsidiary boards to which they are appointed and the annual general meeting and any other general meetings. This is important for the effective operation and accountability of the Society. If a director is frequently unable to attend these meetings, they will be expected to resign from the board.

The board currently holds quarterly three hour board meetings from 10am-1pm, usually on a Thursday, with between two and four of these each year being in person. In person meetings are currently held in Sittingbourne or Faversham. It also holds any further ad-hoc board meetings required online, usually for one to one and a half hours during normal working hours. The AGM is held online on a daytime evening.

Directors will be invited to attend other meetings from time to time, such as the Society’s fortnightly online meetings with its asset manager Bright Renewables. Not all directors will be expected to attend these meetings although it is recommended that at least two directors from the board commit to regular attendance.

All directors should allow adequate time to prepare for board meetings and to participate in decision making between board meetings. Typically, directors are expected to respond to email communications requiring decisions within 48-72 hours.

It would be reasonable to allow, say, an average of one to two hours per week to monitor and respond to communications from the Society outside board meetings, together with a further one to two hours per week for some but not all directors for additional online meeting attendance.

How to apply

To apply, please send your CV and a brief cover letter (max 2 sides A4 each) explaining why you are applying for this role and how you meet the person specification by email to info@orchardcommunityenergy.org with “Orchard Community Energy director application” and your name in the subject line.

We encourage you to contact us to discuss the role before making a formal application. Please email info@orchardcommunityenergy.org to set this up.

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