

# Swindon Borough Council Diversity Impact Assessment

## Chapel Farm Solar Scheme 2016

### 1 What's it about?

Refer to equality duties

The proposal is for the Council to invest £3m in a solar scheme on SBC owned land, at Chapel Farm, Blunsdon. The Council's £3m will be joined by a community investment, in the form of Debenture bonds at a minimum investment level of £5. Public Power Solutions has developed the scheme, Saliis Energy is the construction partner and Abundance Investment Ltd will administer the offer, lead the marketing and provide advice compliant with Financial Conduct Authority regulations. This offer will also be the UK's first Council owned ISA-eligible bond.

The scheme will contribute to the Council's target of 200MW renewable energy generation by 2020. It will also give residents of Swindon and beyond the opportunity to make any sized financial investment in a community project, at a predicted return of 6% over 20 years, while benefiting from the cleaner energy produced as part of Swindon's low carbon economy.

The scheme has given due regard to the duty in that it will be available to all socio-economic groups that can afford to invest £5 or more. Abundance works to increase financial inclusion and increase long term saving rates.

There may be impeded outreach if language barriers prevent potential investors from understanding the offer.

### 2 Who's using it?

Refer to equality groups

Abundance have administered similar share/debenture offers to similar groups and have used software programmes to assess the spread of take-up, to identify where the most successful roll-out of the schemes and the publicity are found.

Abundance is an inclusive community focused organisation who have developed a communications plan which demonstrates considerable inclusiveness and outreach. While there will be a focus on Swindon residents initially as the power is generated locally, the advertising reach will extend to national press.

There is confidence that the types of people most likely to be able and willing to participate in this offer will be identified and targeted with information using the data from previous offers.

### 3 Impact

- a) i) There is a risk of negative impact upon socio economic groups who may be priced out of any debenture offer.
- ii) There is a risk of negative impact upon groups for whom English is not their first language.

- i) Abundance was the first and currently the only platform that allows people to invest into UK renewable energy companies with as little as £5. Abundance achieve the low minimum investment level by operating entirely online, this does mean that people investing via Abundance must be able to access a computer to open an account and manage their account over the term of the investment. For people who are less confident operating online, the firm offer a customer service line to help people create and manage their account. The marketing plan, while having some demography based targeting, includes having the Council send out the offer with copies of the annual Council Tax statements

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which will reach every Swindon resident. Need to work to ensure that the invitational marketing material is in as plain English as possible to mitigate the language impact.

ii) Abundance are focused on this as an issue and additionally, the financial services regulation requires them to ensure things are "fair, clear and not misleading". There will also be a helpline to explain to potential investors, on a one-to-one basis, the details of the offer. This is available no matter how big or small the investment.

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**b)** The benefits are clear to residents of Swindon and beyond: that they get a rate of interest preferential to a bank, invest in a scheme that has 65% of its profits going back into community benefit and join in a community scheme.

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There will be advertising and advice prior to and during the debenture offer process, which commence in November 2016 when the solar farm is constructed and energised.

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#### **4 So what?**

In the course of developing this DIA attention has been given to the accessibility and clear nature of the information; Abundance have been advised and have undertaken to revisit the material and address any issues which they identify.

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The scheme is being monitored as part of corporate business planning and monitoring in the reporting will be details of take up and demography, also of progress of the overall scheme. This will serve to inform the learning for the next similar scheme.

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Reporting is carried out quarterly and progress will also be reported regularly to the lead Cabinet Member.

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The scheme itself has clear milestones for delivery and the success of the outreach will be monitored by close examination of the participating numbers, demography and the issues raised by callers to the helpline. The following information has been gathered on the first community offer made on Common Farm and the main findings are as follows:

Common Farm gained investment from all the main demographic groups in the Swindon area as defined by CACI analysis, with the youngest investor being 22 and the oldest over 80. Although, as may be expected, more affluent sectors were key contributors to the project, we also saw over £70k of investment from younger up and coming urban segments, and £60k from older suburban segments that we don't traditionally see investing in renewable energy projects via the platform. This suggests the Council involvement has broadened access to the investment offer.

<b>For the record</b>	
Name of person leading this DIA - Philippa Venables	Date completed 26-09-16
Names of people involved in consideration of impact – Philippa Venables (SBC), Karl Harder (Abundance Investment) Dale Heenan (Cabinet Member, Sustainability and Transport)	
Name of manager signing DIA – Andy Evans	Date signed

# Diversity Impact Assessment – an inclusive business planning tool

## 1. What's it about? refer to equality duties

- What is the proposal? What outcomes/benefits are you hoping to achieve
- Who's it for?
- How will this proposal meet the equality duties?
- What are the barriers to meeting this potential?

## 2. Who's using it? consider all equality groups

- What data/evidence do you have about who is or could be affected? (e.g. equality monitoring, customer feedback, current service use, national/regional/local trends)?
- How can you involve your customers in developing the proposal?
- Who is missing? Do you need to fill any gaps in your data?

## 3. Impact consider dimensions and equality groups

Using information in parts 1 & 2:

- a) Does the proposal create an adverse impact which may affect some groups or individuals? How can this be mitigated or justified?  
> What can be done to change this impact?
- b) Does the proposal create benefit for particular groups or individuals. Is it clear what this is? Can you maximise the benefits for other groups?
  - Does further consultation need to be done? How will assumptions made in this assessment be tested?

## 4. So what?

- What changes have made in the course of this DIA?
- What will you do now and what will be included in future planning?
- When will this be reviewed?
- How will success be measured?

## Considerations

### Our equality duties

1. Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation
2. Advance equality of opportunity
3. Foster good relations

### Equality groups

For the following equality groups: age, disability, sex, transgender, marriage/civil partnership, maternity/pregnancy, race, religion/belief and sexual orientation.

Extended by SBC policy to include: financial economic status, homelessness, political view.

## Dimensions of equality

How will the proposal affect Human Rights and life chances of different groups? Consider how the proposal affects

1. Longevity.
2. Physical security.
3. Health.
4. Education.
5. Standard of living.
6. Productive and valued activities.
7. Individual, family and social life.
8. Participation, influence and voice.
9. Identity, expression and self-respect.
10. Legal security.