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Westmill Solar Co-operative Newsletter - Autumn 2020

Dear <<First Name>>

Mark Luntley and I are delighted to welcome you to the first joint newsletter from the two electricity generation co-operatives at Westmill. This is a practical illustration of how the two boards are working together and planning for the future.

In this newsletter you can find out about:

- [Fair Tax award](#)
- [Good summer generation](#)
- [A visit from our MP](#)
- [Changes to our electricity contracts](#)
- [Longer-term planning for the site](#)
- [Westmill Education Centre](#)
- [First Community Grants Scheme awards](#)

All the best,

Westmill Solar and Wind Co-operatives awarded Fair Tax accreditation



Tax matters. Taxes help pay for essential services. We think it is vital that businesses large and small pay the correct rate of tax. Westmill Solar and Wind were recently independently accredited as [Fair Tax](#) businesses.

Both organisations commit to paying the right rate of tax and meeting both the spirit and letter of the law. We see this as an integral part of our co-operative identity. Together we are the biggest co-operative renewable energy site in the UK, and we are leading the way as the first renewable generation co-operatives to secure the Fair Tax accreditation.

For the full story and policy, click [here](#).

Westmill Solar continues to exceed all expectations

After record generation in May, the performance of the solar farm continued to dazzle in the third quarter of the year with actual generation exceeding expected generation in July, August and September.

In total, more than 1.75 GWh of electricity was generated during this period – slightly less than in the same period in 2019 but still enough to

The equipment on site continues to perform very well under the close supervision of our operations and maintenance provider, British Solar Renewables. In September, we carried out a thermographic drone survey of the 20,000 photovoltaic panels at Westmill to identify any potential 'hotspots' which might impact performance.

A visit from our MP - David Johnston



We were delighted to host a site visit for our new MP, David Johnston, on 31 July. Mark Luntley, Tom Parkinson, Mike Blanch (Chair of WeSET) and Adam Twine (the landowner) took the opportunity to describe the achievements and aspirations of the two co-operatives and WeSET (Westmill Sustainable Trust).

David was particularly interested in WeSET's educational work, and Wind and Solar's efforts to encourage younger members. He is also a co-sponsor of the [Local Electricity Bill](#), a cross-party initiative to enable community energy to be supplied directly to local users – a goal Westmill has long advocated.

Westmill Solar PPA switched to Octopus Energy

Following Co-op Energy's decision last year to transfer most of its supply operations to Octopus Energy, over the summer we transferred our Power Purchase Agreement (PPA) and Feed-in-Tariff arrangements from Co-op Energy to Octopus Energy.

Our PPA will continue to run until January 2022 and the price we receive and other terms of the PPA remain unchanged. The electricity we sell to Octopus is 'ring-fenced' for use as part of Co-op Energy's Community Power tariff which sources 100% of its electricity from community-owned generation. You can [visit their website](#) to find out more about buying Westmill's own generation (as far as is currently possible in the UK energy market!).

Longer term planning under way for the Westmill site

As many members will be aware, Westmill Wind is seeking to extend its planning permission and its lease of the Westmill site.

Westmill Solar's planning permission is not time-limited and our lease started later than Wind's, but we share the same desire to secure the long-term future of the co-operatives.

Westmill led the way in showing how communities can come together to build wind and solar generation, but as the climate situation becomes more critical, we all need to use our energy more efficiently and transition to more sustainable lifestyles.

Much of our Community Funding is already targeting these broader aims but we are planning a wider consultation with members over the winter on how best to move forward in this area and secure the co-operatives' long-term success.

Westmill leading the way with a new Education Centre



The Westmill Education Centre has been three years in planning. It will take the form of a yurt with capacity for 70 people, a toilet block, eight parking bays (including at least one electric vehicle charge point) and a coach parking bay.

The project has been funded by grants from LEADER (an EU scheme) and the Local Enterprise Partnership / UK Government's Getting Building Fund, as well as from Westmill Solar, Westmill Wind, Sustainable Charlbury, NatureSave and the Low Carbon Hub.

We are now in the final stages of the tendering process and it is hoped that ground will be broken in the spring, with the centre completed and formally opened in the summer of 2021.

WeSET are also excited to launch a new free, [downloadable education pack](#). Working in collaboration with Westmill Wind and Solar, as well as The Midcounties Co-operative, WeSET have created a resource of six lessons and accompanying materials aimed at children of approximately 6-12 years. They explore topics including energy, electricity, renewable and community energy, and sustainability.

All lessons include worksheets and practical activity suggestions to engage, educate and empower children by encouraging conversation,

energies bring and how, through co-operation and working together, we can create a more sustainable future.

Westmill Solar grants scheme off to a flying start

Thank you for spreading the word about our community grants, especially if you're one of the 12 members (you know who you are!) who recommended a particular organisation or project and were named on their application form.

We received 31 applications, requesting a total of over £117,000. The volunteer panel of members had the difficult task of assessing those applications, and the quality was so good that the Westmill Solar board have agreed to increase the total amount available under the scheme this year from £30,000 to over £43,000.

Applicants will hear whether or not they were successful later this month.

If you have any questions regarding Westmill Solar then you can email us at info@westmillsolar.coop. You can also visit our website at www.westmillsolar.coop.

WeSET are running virtual tours of the Westmill site on 3 December and 7 January at 7pm. Tours can be booked via [Eventbrite](https://www.eventbrite.co.uk).

If you have questions regarding your investment and contact information then please contact our registrars at Ethex at registry@ethex.org.uk.

Please also make sure to like and follow us on our social media channels below.
