

## **Orchard Community Energy: COVID-19 Update**

Thank you to everyone who has asked how the COVID-19 crisis is affecting us.

We are still generating clean community-owned energy, thanks to our partners Bright Renewables and PSH. Due to necessary changes in the service we receive, there may be longer outages if anything goes wrong. Non-critical preventative maintenance has been suspended and grass cutting and panel cleaning may not take place which could reduce generation. However, for the present, all seems to be going well as we move into the longer and warmer days of Spring.

We have had to postpone plans for school visits in 2020 but hope to welcome primary school children to the site in 2021.

There will be understandable delays in delivering some of the 2020 charity projects funded by our community grants programme but we have confirmed to the charities that they will still be funded for these.

We have been asked by our sister organisation Kent Community Energy to distribute its Kent Community Energy COVID-10 Emergency Community Fund which has a total value of slightly under £50,000. To begin with, we have decided to invite applications from some of the charities that we have supported in the past that we know work effectively to support vulnerable people. We haven't made this an "open call" because we think that it is not appropriate to ask charities to participate in a competitive and probably heavily oversubscribed process at this time. We welcome suggestions from stakeholders for priorities for future funding rounds.

Our 2021 Orchard community fund will open for applications on 1 August 2020 and close on 31 October as usual. We will have up to £10,000 in total to distribute for projects starting in 2021. Details will be posted on our website or can be obtained from [grants@orchard.coop](mailto:grants@orchard.coop) then.

We hope that everyone in our local village of Iwade, the wider community in Swale and Medway and all our investors and friends remain safe and well.

Penny Shepherd MBE  
Chair, Orchard Community Energy

14 April 2020