Almeley Village Hall Solar Installation Feasibility Study
Report to Council 11th September 2024

Commercial background & decisions
Herefordshire Council – Landlord
Almeley Parish Council. – Tenant, lease expires 2027*[1]
Village Hall Committee – Licensee and operator with responsibility for utility bills

The project supports the parish environmental policy aim "to support the community in significantly reducing carbon emissions by 2030" and would provide a showcase project for the parish. APC is the initiator of the project, and is providing project management.
EWG objective was to provide a feasibility study, and to prepare a "funding ready project".

Feasibility Study Status 11th September 2024
Quotations for both panels and a battery have been received from four MCS-certified and local installers. Mike Hodge (EWG) met three of these during their site visits to AVH and sought references. Costs range from £9.7k to £13.8k excl.VAT. A table showing details of the quotes and payback periods is attached.

Based upon the usage diary of AVH from 2022 and 2023, the building's electricity load and the potential solar benefit has been modelled. Electricity costs are currently £700pa (excl. standing charges) from British Gas Lite. The solar panels would meet most of the daily electricity requirement, apart from a few periods in the winter months when grid electricity would still be required. This is estimated at £50pa (excl. standing charges). During summer months, the income from excess power generated and exported is estimated at £500pa, resulting in a net benefit of around £1150pa.

In advance of installation, it would be prudent to carry out a Building Survey to assess the condition of the roof (cost indication £1500 incl VAT). We have also been advised by Herefordshire Council that we will need to seek a Licence for Alteration to the village hall which may cost in the region of £700*[2].

Grant Funding
Whilst carrying out the feasibility study, we were alerted to the Community Infrastructure Grant (CIG) being offered by Herefordshire Council. Applications are now closed, so we are no longer able to apply, but it is useful to look at the terms of that grant in order to demonstrate the feasibility and costs/benefits of the project. The CIG would have covered 80% of the cost of installation with the remaining 20% to be provided by APC/AVH. The upfront costs of the survey and the licence for alteration would not have been covered.

	Lowest Quote	Highest Quote
Upfront costs (£1500 + £700)	£2200	£2200
Grant funding	£7780	£11040
20% match funding	£1950	£2760
Total cost to ACPC/AVH	£4150	£4960
Years to recover investment	3.6 years	4.3 years
Remainder of benefit for community projects up to 10 years (life of battery)	£7360	£6555

This model assumes all the benefit for the first few years goes to repay the upfront costs. An alternative scenario could be, to consider a longer payback period, and providing some funds for community projects immediately.

Of the four solar installers, Pro-FitEnergy is the preferred choice in terms of ongoing cost of ownership because they offer the longest warranty cover for the most reliable equipment, at the lowest overall cost.

Installer's Risk Assessments (for the work) and detailed installation drawings are typically only forthcoming after they have been awarded the work. These documents are required to support grant funding.

The council is requested to approve:

a) moving forward to the next stage in seeking funds to implement the project
b) the selection of Pro-FitEnergy as the installation partner
c) agreement in principle to cover the upfront costs subject to a grant funding being awarded
d) to begin the process of early lease renewal to include the potential for solar power

EV Charge-point Investigation

Subsequent to the initial brief to look at solar panels and battery, we also considered the possibility of including an EV Charge-Point within the scope of the project.
As the car park is on Common land, it would need a Commons Act Section 38 consent to carry out the work.
Herefordshire Council currently have an ongoing project to roll-out charge points across the county. APC could request consideration of the AVH Car Park as a location for a chargepoint within this project. In this case, it is recommended by HC that we do some informal consultation with the neighbours including the school.

* Notes:

1. In general, eligibility for infrastructure grants require proof of building ownership or clarity on length of remaining lease. AVH lease expiry is set to 2027, which may not be viewed favourably by grant providers.

2. We have been advised by HC that if we were to seek early renewal of the lease with the inclusion of solar panels, this cost may not arise.