

# MORE THAN A SHOP

Speaking up for our planet:  
turning talk into action

**Louise Marix Evans**

*Director, Community Energy North  
and Pennine Community Power*

**Samantha Moyo**

*Disruption Doctor, Speaker, Activist*

**Also featuring:**

*Treesponsibility*



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**Elizabeth Alker, presenter Alker, presenter**

Hello and welcome to More Than a Shop, hosted by me Elizabeth Alker. We're welcoming guests with something new and radical to say about the big issues of the day. Well the flavour of the series is a search for new alternative ideas in the spirit of the worldwide co-operative movement, which happens to started in my hometown of Rochdale.

Well, co-ops proudly offer radical alternatives to mainstream ways of getting things done. They are indeed so much more than a shop.

Today, we're looking at climate change – arguably the biggest issue facing the planet today. And we're hoping to find ways of engaging with what can feel like an overwhelming issue, but in a meaningful way. There are already many co-operatives doing great things to address this issue, from community owned wind turbines and solar panels to a co-op helping communities make radical reductions in their home carbon emissions.

But I'm joined in the studio by two people, both working with communities to address climate change, but in very different ways. Would you please like to introduce yourselves, ladies.

**Louise Marix Evans, Community Energy North and Pennine Community Power**

I'm Louise Marix Evans sevens, Director of Quantum Strategy and Technology. I'm also, in my spare time, Director of two community energy organisations.

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**Samantha Moyo, Disruption Doctor, Speaker, Activist**

Hello there. I'm Samantha Moyo. I founded the global movement Morning Gloryville. And now on a day-to-day basis, I'm a diversity advocate. So I get lots of enquiries from press and different organisations asking me to give them tips on how to become more diverse how to create inclusive policies.

**Elizabeth Alker, presenter**

Fantastic, great to have you both, thank you for coming.

Louise, tell us a bit more about the work that you do. What does that mean to work with communities, to find these kind of renewable sources of energy?

**Louise Marix Evans, Community Energy North and Pennine Community Power**

We've been working since about 2004 on sustainability. Working a lot to start with Local Authorities actually, and raising awareness of what they could do to reduce their emissions and to adjust to climate change, to adapt to it. And then we found we ended up working more and more with local communities who were installing renewable energy on, say, community building – like a village hall, for example, or a school.

And then I became a Director of Pennine Community Power, which has got a small wind turbine up on the top of a windy hill. So, that's great, because we've got we've got members who invested in the wind turbine and we sell the electricity into the grid, and it creates a profit, which we then drive back into environmental projects.

But I'm really excited to meet you, Sam, because we've just set up a women-led community energy organisation called Community Energy North, and we're trying to do some projects, which are quite challenging. Looking at installing more solar renewables but without subsidies. We're five women, but we're all white. We're relatively diverse in other ways. So I'm really interested in how your work might relate to that as well.

**Elizabeth Alker, presenter**

Yeah, well, Sam, tell us more about what you you do and how what you do does relate to you what Louise is talking about.

**Samantha Moyo, Disruption Doctor, Speaker, Activist**

Yeah, thank you so much for your warm, warm welcome both of you.

I have to be honest and say I do feel nervous when I have to present the issues that I work on because I'm usually the only person of colour within the conversations. But it's really exciting. I work on presenting the need for diversity within climate issues. My take is, let's work on climate change but also let's look at economic and racial injustice. Because what's happening with the climate movement is really hurting my heart. And it's hurting a lot of people's heart from marginalised communities.

Myself and others don't feel like the climate movement is including us, and is asking us for advice to solve a problem that's going to mostly affect our people and where we're from.

**Elizabeth Alker, presenter**

Why is this happening and what can be done about it?

**Samantha Moyo, Disruption Doctor, Speaker, Activist**

I think the 'why' is historical. A lot of my friends are in the major climate movements. So I don't want me to sound like I don't like white people or I don't think their intentions are good because they are. And I have to also say how grateful I am for the work that everyone's putting in like XR [[Extinction Rebellion](#)], [It's Our Time](#), [Wretched of the Earth](#), you know, it's really incredible. But I think it's just we've inherited post-colonial behaviours. So, what's happening within the climate movement is a lot of white privileged, intelligent people have become the 'saviours' or are putting themselves as the saviours.

**Elizabeth Alker, presenter**

And is that, like you say, that perhaps white saviour attitude or the way people perhaps present themselves – does that make this movement feel inaccessible for people of colour?

**Samantha Moyo, Disruption Doctor, Speaker, Activist**

You know I can't speak for everyone, I can speak for myself and I can speak for some of the people I've come into contact with. And the answer is yes. You know, I've been invited to a dinner hosted by Al Gore talking about climate change. And as much as I love Al Gore and the work he's doing, I feel that him speaking on a stage about these issues when he's someone who lives in a mansion somewhere, doesn't necessarily get me. I'm like, okay, happy to hear your support and, you know, wanting to see change, but put someone else on that microphone who's actually being directly affected. And that would be much more attractive to someone like me

**Elizabeth Alker, presenter**

And take the time to understand your experience.

**Samantha Moyo, Disruption Doctor, Speaker, Activist**

Exactly.

**Elizabeth Alker, presenter**

And this is here and overseas as well. It's not just a problem for the West is it? Or developing countries? How does that work? Is it different in both places?

**Samantha Moyo, Disruption Doctor, Speaker, Activist**

Yeah, I'm so grateful for this answer because it shows your research, which everyone else needs to do. So, there are different takes on diversity within the climate movement within, say, the UK's African Diaspora and within the global south. So, in the global south, I think because there's less resources, there's much more gratitude when people come from the West to help them out and walk the front lines for them. And that's because, you know, in places like Brazil, you don't have as much freedom of speech and could get into trouble with your President. So when someone comes from the UK, to fight your causes for you, you are like, "thank you, because we really need this".

Whereas I think here, people of the African Diaspora are still healing and don't feel like their traumas are being listened to, basically.

**Louise Marix Evans, Community Energy North and Pennine Community Power**

The 'feeling excluded' thing rings a bell because I've been in plenty of meetings around energy, renewable energy and climate policy, where I play 'spot the other woman' at plenty of events. And when we contributed to the

Green Summit that was held in Greater Manchester in 2018, we pushed really hard in that steering group for 50% women representation on that stage. I think we got a third of women speakers, I totted them up. But it didn't reflect Greater Manchester's diversity, that was for sure. Although we had pushed for that and tried but, like you say, you can be invited to endless things and not feel comfortable in coming along or it might not be your issue because or you might be fighting another corner.

And I think more widely, sometimes you have to be quite brave to put yourself forward to say, "I will come and speak at this panel", or "I will turn up at a meeting that's full of white men in suits", and then use your voice in that meeting as well. And I've been in that situation and I'm not afraid of it but I feel the intimidation when I've got a load of chief executives and I think "why have they asked a little old me along". I know I know enough, but am I going to be listened to.

Another thing we quite often do in the climate change challenge, is we take economic norms as a big truth. So people tell you, "it's not cost effective, that can never be done". And very confident people use long existing accepted truths to be the reason you can't achieve what you're trying to achieve. This is even though, you know theoretically – you might have even modelled it on a spreadsheet – and go, "but if we could do it like this, we can do it", you know. "We can look at it as the cost of finance, not the cost of payback". Or "why do we have to pay 10% interest on that, when we can raise it for 5%?" And people were in a rather paternalistic way looked down on you and go, "Well, it can't be done, you know, the bank say so the markets won't accept it". And you think, well, I don't accept that's true, so I will try and come up with another way of doing it.

### **Samantha Moyo, Disruption Doctor, Speaker, Activist**

And that is decolonial thinking, what you're doing and raising. Because decolonisation is about anti-oppression and, you know, if colonisation was about, you know, taking over, controlling and dominating; decolonisation is about new thinking, so unlearning, coming up with new solutions and letting go of power. So what you're doing takes incredible courage. So, yeah, really inspiring.

### **Elizabeth Alker, presenter**

And we want everybody to feel empowered, don't we. Because this is about people being able to do small things at home, not just waiting for the men, or whoever it is, in suits in these big organisations or political parties, or whatever it is. It's about women and men of all colours at home, doing things in their communities and in their households.

### **Louise Marix Evans, Community Energy North and Pennine Community Power**

Yeah, so as individuals or grouping together in little groups, and then doing something. And I think through that, you can tell through sort of things like saving schemes that get set up. I mean, that's a global phenomenon, isn't it. A group of women coming together to start a saving scheme and then gaining visibility, and then being able to address other issues in their local area, because they've come together on one issue, but then spread to other issues. I've seen that happening in India through saving schemes.

### **Elizabeth Alker, presenter**

So what are the biggest challenges that we face for each of you, in your roles? On a day-to-day basis, what are the big challenges?

## **Louise Marix Evans, Community Energy North and Pennine Community Power**

My biggest challenge around this is it's a massive, complicated issue, it needs action on all fronts. And that action has to be immediate. Because we've got to go down a really steep slope of emissions cuts. Because the longer we wait, the steeper that slope gets. Because the endpoint is getting nearer all the time.

So that cuts across things we measure quite well like our domestic household emissions, our transport emissions and emissions from industry. But then there's also things like food, aviation, shipping and all of the carbon emissions that we've exported to other countries where we get them to make all the stuff we buy. So, it's a whole sort of ecosystem of interrelated things. Where there are lots of stakeholders and people with vested interests who don't want this to change because our economy rests on it and who give us reasons why they can't particularly act.

## **Elizabeth Alker, presenter**

That's interesting, because often we're told – well, as individuals – we're made to feel like if we're just doing one thing then we're making a big change. But you're actually saying, we need to think about everything – not just plastic straws or plastic bags. We need to think about how much we fly, how much we use our cars, how much plastic we use at home.

## **Louise Marix Evans, Community Energy North and Pennine Community Power**

And that can be quite off-putting, because telling someone that they can have quite an emotional reaction to it. Which is, “you're telling me I can't go and see my aunt who lives in Australia” or, “how am I going to get my kids to school and stay warm and healthy. I haven't got time to do this”. And it feels overwhelming, and I must say I quite often feel overwhelmed by it.

So breaking it down into individual actions, sort of simpler things you can do, is possible. And there are lots of organisations which help you do that. Like switching over to renewable electricity, which is visiting a website like the [Big Clean Switch](#). You could use more public transport or walk or cycle more if that's possible for you. And then there are things where we really need the big policy actions and enabling actions done by our local authorities or by our government or by big companies, perhaps, that make it easier for us to do this. So we're all doing it. So that the challenge to me is how you take something so big and stuff it into quite a small sentence or a small set of doable actions.

## **Elizabeth Alker, presenter**

Okay, and Sam – what's the big challenge that you face in what you're doing?

## **Samantha Moyo, Disruption Doctor, Speaker, Activist**

I'm primarily here to put people first or at least equally with our planet climate issues. The big challenge I face is that I don't feel that people leading the climate movement are understanding the importance of holding both priorities in equal form. The impact of climate change means that our systems are going to be dismantling and falling apart. We have to be ensuring that for this next wave of change and transformation that's going on, that the seeds of the structures of governance of industries, of organisations, don't have the same colonial forms. And by not focusing, and putting the same amount of attention on climate justice, racial justice and economic justice, as we are on climate issues, we're going to create the same structures. It's just going to look much more evangelical, and like conscious, or like white savouriness. So that's the biggest challenge I'm facing getting people to understand that on a cellular level.

## **Elizabeth Alker, presenter**

Well, we've asked both of you to come along today with one radical idea, however big or small. It doesn't have to revolutionise everything, but one that could make an important difference. Sam, what is your big idea?

**Samantha Moyo, Disruption Doctor, Speaker, Activist**

I do not know if the collective ego will allow this. But my big idea is for every single organisation within the climate movement to uproot themselves from the core. So, by the core, I mean their leadership teams and their advisory teams – strip them apart. I'm really sorry for anyone who loses their job, and put in the people who are most impacted by these issues in those positions. And not just as tokens – as people you actually listen to. Because that's going to be much more powerful and has way more integrity.

**Elizabeth Alker, presenter**

Just to mention the issue of class as well. When Extinction Rebellion took over Deansgate [Manchester] recently I went down there and my initial reaction with the feels nice, you know, “there’s hay bales out on Deansgate. Yeah, does feel cleaner, children around”. And I sent out a tweet just saying that I was enjoying being there. And the Manchester Evening News retweeted it. And it was one of those moments where you end up being taken out of your echo chamber. And the number of people who came back to me really angry. They were feeling that Extinction Rebellion were threatening their jobs. Like you were saying, you know, how do they get their children to school – they need to use their cars. Economically, they will be the most affected by they drive for a more carbon neutral society. I mean, class is a big part of it as well, isn't it?

**Samantha Moyo, Disruption Doctor, Speaker, Activist**

Yes. And I think as people are coming up with all these demands around emissions and climate issues, we need to be putting in the infrastructure to support the people who are going to be most impacted. And I've not seen nor heard that anywhere.

**Elizabeth Alker, presenter**

And they have to feel like they're part of the conversation.

**Samantha Moyo, Disruption Doctor, Speaker, Activist**

100%

**Louise Marix Evans, Community Energy North and Pennine Community Power**

And I see that straight away where there is a role for community-led co-op businesses to start doing that. Because the market will provide some of the changes. So, for example, you see more and more rapid electric vehicle chargers going in. But who's bought an electric vehicle? I think I know three people. One is my neighbour.

**Samantha Moyo, Disruption Doctor, Speaker, Activist**

I don't have the money.

**Louise Marix Evans, Community Energy North and Pennine Community Power**

But the people who can afford new electric vehicles are going to be privileged well-off people. And the charging infrastructure will be put in in cities and places where the people who own the cars are going to be. But if we're going to move away from, say, dirty diesels, then we need to make it so that we say are we going to set up electric vehicle car clubs that are affordable for people to join. So you can see them starting up and say, like Bristol. And they might run as co-ops, so people might pay and set that up. So a lot of this is about communities

coming up with their own solutions, I think, and saying, Oh, “we want to build a zero carbon housing development here – we’re going to get this development anyway. How can we make it benefit all of us?”

**Samantha Moyo, Disruption Doctor, Speaker, Activist**

Yes. Yes, yes, yes.

**Louise Marix Evans, Community Energy North and Pennine Community Power**

So we will own this and that... We're working on one at the moment in Cumbria. So there's a village that's going to get housing, it's in the plan, there's going to be new housing. So we're looking at how the community energy group can raise the finance to put in the energy infrastructure there. So it would be owned by ordinary people and ordinary investors. The people in the homes will have nice new zero carbon homes. Quite a lot of them will be for rent so there'll be affordable to live in because you won't have many energy bills. But the profits from the energy company that's community owned will then be used in other areas of the village to do insulation on homes that aren't so good. So you're keeping the economic impact local and the social impact local; and creating local jobs, hopefully. So it's stopping everything leaching out and big profits being made and keeping it in the little area and benefiting as many people as possible.

**Elizabeth Alker, presenter**

But are we seeing those kinds of schemes implemented and in a grassroots way in places like Bradford, in Brixton, in more economically deprived areas? And what does the movement have to do, I guess, to make those people feel empowered, so that they will do that in their communities? I guess the movement is quite stretched already, isn't it, in terms of resources and people? Is that a challenge with your idea?

**Samantha Moyo, Disruption Doctor, Speaker, Activist**

Yeah, I don't think the movement is stretched in terms of resources, because everyone's an impact and climate activist in this day and age. I think it's, you know, we all need to take responsibility if we know someone with money to get them to start putting their money – not towards these sexy organisations, where they can look good for giving money to – but actually starting to put things in place so that the more deprived communities can start getting educated, learning the skills they need to learn and build the communities they need to build to support them through the changes ahead.

**Elizabeth Alker, presenter**

One of the most high-profile ways of fighting climate change is through planting trees which can eventually absorb carbon. There are any number of schemes up and down the country. And our producer Geoff Bird has been to visit one of them.

Hard at work on a windy Lancashire hillside. It's called Treeresponsibility.

**Christina, Treeresponsibility**

My name's Christina Hooley. I work for Treeresponsibility. We were set up in 1998 to communicate the need for action on climate change. We can offer people the opportunity to do something positive, come out and plant a

tree. You know, because people can feel “goodness, what can I do?” Obviously, we need to do a lot more than just plant trees. But it’ll get people on to thinking what else they can do.

**Geoff Bird, producer**

We're on top of the hills somewhere near the Lancashire-Yorkshire border. It's a fantastic view we've got.

**Christina, Treesresponsibility**

It is! We're entirely reliant on the landowners to offer land. And Richard who owns this land, you know, he gets it about, you know, we really need to start looking after our environment. So he got in touch.

**Geoff Bird, producer**

We've got about 20 people in front of us, some of them volunteer, some of them with Treesresponsibility. How is Treesresponsibility organised? What's the setup?

**Christina, Treesresponsibility**

Well, even after 22 years we're unincorporated. You know, we're not a limited company or community interest company or anything like that. We are a 'loose group' with a constitution and that's it. We've got 10 volunteers from the Co-op Group in Manchester today, and we've also got one local volunteer and the rest are our crew.

**Geoff Bird, producer**

Are you from The Co-op then?

**Volunteer, The Co-op**

Yeah.

**Geoff Bird, producer**

This is not a setup. I didn't know you were coming. You didn't know. I was coming.

**Volunteer, The Co-op**

We're part of a community and volunteering working group.

**Geoff Bird, producer**

And how's it been? It's cold!

**Volunteer, The Co-op**

Yes it's been a cold day, but spirits have kept us warm. It's really good to be able to give back. So we've enjoyed it

**Volunteer, The Co-op**

The Co-op is absolutely great. They give us two days a year in which we can go out and do stuff like this and give back to the community. And we selected Treesresponsibility as its close to everybody's heart, climate change, it's quite topical. So we thought we'd come out and plant some trees.



**Geoff Bird, producer**

In terms of who comes along, and how you make sure that the people who come along aren't just the usual suspects, how deliberate are you in trying to make this as accessible to as many people as possible?

**Christina, Treesresponsibility**

We just advertise what we're doing through as many avenues as possible. Social media outlets and so on. We find we get quite a variety of people out now.

**Geoff Bird, producer**

And you work with schools?

**Christina, Treesresponsibility**

Yes, a lot of our work is with schools?

**Geoff Bird, producer**

How many trees do you think you're going to plant in the course of the work here?

**Christina, Treesresponsibility**

We actually had 1000 trees to plant. We've got quite a way to go. The fields very, very stony, so it's been a lot harder work than usual to make a hole deep enough to get the roots of the tree right in.

**Volunteer, Treesresponsibility**

Basically, the idea is to just take the grass from the top layer. Screening is not hacking! I just want to expose the soil basically so that you can get a tree in there.

**Geoff Bird, producer**

Are you from Treesresponsibility

**Volunteer, Treesresponsibility**

I am from Treesresponsibility.

**Geoff Bird, producer**

With that level of expertise I'm not surprised! Where do the trees come from?

**Volunteer, Treesresponsibility**

These were provided by the Woodland Trust.

**Geoff Bird, producer**

So you buy them from the Woodland Trust?

### **Volunteer, Treesresponsibility**

Yeah, I mean, I'm not involved in any of the procurement at all. I'm just I'm someone who wheels the Mattock – one the oldest tools known to man and woman. Everybody should have a Mattock.

### **Geoff Bird, producer**

Everyone needs a Mattock. Thank you very much.

### **Christina, Treesresponsibility**

Treesresponsibility, since the beginning, has planted more than a quarter of a million trees. And myself personally, I don't know.

### **Geoff Bird, producer**

And when you see a small copse of a group of trees that you may have had a hand in, how does that feel?

### **Christina, Treesresponsibility**

That just feels absolutely great. There are some copse I go near quite often which is one of the first sites I ever volunteered on and it looks like a proper woodland now. It just feels great, you know, to make that difference to the landscape.

### **Geoff Bird, producer**

What's your name, please?

### **Volunteer, The Co-op**

I'm with The Co-op helping to volunteer today. And I live in the Calderdale Valley and I knew about Treesresponsibility. It's just a nice day in the outdoors planting some trees – lovely!

### **Geoff Bird, producer**

And for you, the co-operative model – do you think it has a real part to play in the fight against climate change?

### **Volunteer, The Co-op**

I think anything that brings people together to work in a unhierarchical way, for a common goal and purpose, for the betterment of everyone. Yeah, I think it is, definitely.

### **Elizabeth Alker, presenter**

Geoff Bird with the crew and volunteers of Treesresponsibility.

It starts with education, doesn't it? People need to recognise that their communities will be affected as well. And that, in the short term, it looks like they do need their cars on a day to day basis. They do need that job that's perhaps in not so much of an environmentally friendly industry. So how do we get to change their way of thinking in the long term?

### **Samantha Moyo, Disruption Doctor, Speaker, Activist**

Yes, sorry to be putting my hand up frantically. But I was part of a campaign recently that I was just like, wow, why has xR [Extinction Rebellion] and other people not done this before? And it was with a new creative agency called [POCC](#), and they did a short film called 'The world is yours', or 'The world is ours'. And it's just so beautiful. It's part of It's Our Time campaign, informing young people about the impacts on climate change on them, but not just any young people – people of colour, young people. And what was great about this short film had people of colour who've been directly impacted here and where they're from talking about climate change and how where I live, because I live in England, impacts where I'm from making that connection. And so, suddenly, loads of people of colour are listening. But I was just like – that's what people need to see. They need to see their own issues being spoken about by their own people.

### **Elizabeth Alker, presenter**

Working class people of colour as well. How do we reach them? Because their voices are so important in this too aren't they?

### **Samantha Moyo, Disruption Doctor, Speaker, Activist**

Yeah. And I think it's the same strategy, you know. Creating content and media that represents them that speaks into their issues and what's going to be affected by them – number one. Number two is getting into schools, you know, getting into the areas because you know, you can't go in there like parading as you would like at Trafalgar Square. You know, go there, find out what their needs are, speak to them, get their advice. And I think speaking to people asking them what they need is always the second step after education.

### **Louise Marix Evans, Community Energy North and Pennine Community Power**

Can I just step in on the sort of community energy front, one of the early community energy organisations was Repowering London with Repowering Brixton and Lambeth and getting solar panels up on Loughborough Estate. I've never visited it and I can't speak on Afsheen Rashid's behalf. But Repowering have been brilliant because they've been a really good example of community energy right in the heart of London. And they also use lots of young local people as interns to do quite a lot of the market research, I think. And their share offer was available to local people. I think they've got quite a lot of local investors from their area.

So occasionally people will say community energy is just for retired middle class white people. I looked at the statistics actually – a third of the members are over 60 and only a third of female. Of our members and volunteers in the Community Energy England survey 4% BME. But that's a really good example, the London lot, Repowering.

I've just been working with Bradford Trident to look at what was possible in Bradford on their buildings. They've just put in 90 kilowatts of solar PV and they're going to be setting up a new community energy organisation in Bradford, which will have a share offer that's available to local people. And we're looking at how it can be Sharia compliant for the share offer so that it's accessible. Oldham community power did the same thing as well. So it can be inclusive.

### **Elizabeth Alker, presenter**

Are you experiencing resistance? Another small personal experience that I had of being surprised at the way the mainstream media report on this and their narrative with this. I tweeted about Yorkshire Teabags bursting because they've taken the plastic out of the sealant on the tea bag. And my tweet ended up on the front page of The Sun, as if this was an outrage that Yorkshire Tea would jeopardise the quality of their tea bags to make them environmentally friendly. And I was suddenly kind of like, "Oh, yeah, of course, people feel threatened by these drives to be more environmentally friendly".

### **Samantha Moyo, Disruption Doctor, Speaker, Activist**

I think the next 20 years are going to be a shit show and everyone's just got to be okay with it because we have to radically change everything about the way we produce. And people aren't going to be happy. Luckily, we're in a time where we're not like, you know, going to break out into World War Three, I don't think. But it's going to be uncomfortable and they're going to be a lot of unhappy people. So I think we all just need to hold on tight. Understand, it's gonna be a shit show, but keep moving forward together.

**Elizabeth Alker, presenter**

Okay, well, thinking of the long game, that's part of your big idea isn't it, Louise. Share your big idea with us.

**Louise Marix Evans, Community Energy North and Pennine Community Power**

Well, it's not my idea. It's lots of people's idea. But for community owned energy, we've had the sort of first phase of communities owning generation and more communities beginning to look now at energy efficiency; electric vehicles or car clubs – low carbon mobility, you could call it; and trading energy. And then another challenge, which is how we heat our houses – that's a big, big difficult one. So community energy is going to... I like the way you said that, Sam, is that there's a phase of disruption because the sector had got very comfortable with a Feed-In tariff, and being subsidised, basically. Now we're moving out of that and we're sort of being kicked out on our own with no support, really, no subsidies. And so it feels quite a struggle. But we've still got groups looking at how we can set up Community Benefit Societies and co-ops to say, "we want to generate our own electricity or heat here and use it locally here" and how do we balance all that in the system. Build homes or restore homes so that they're more energy efficient, create that energy, use that energy and create a local benefit for everybody – not just for rich people who can put PV on their roof or buy an electric car. Thank you very much. I'm alright.

So one of the key things about community energy, it's supporting the 'just' transition to low and zero carbon.

**Samantha Moyo, Disruption Doctor, Speaker, Activist**

How would you feel about... because I don't know who's currently learning those skills to produce the technology and innovations. Could there be more resource, perhaps, that training kids from all walks of life to come up with the solutions as well? And maybe that's us thinking a bit longer term and ensuring that it's speaking to different demographics, but everyone understands?

**Louise Marix Evans, Community Energy North and Pennine Community Power**

Yeah, that's an interesting one because if you look at the sort of volunteers in the sector, or people with the skills some of them are older generation engineer types. But one thing that's been coming up more and more is digitisation. And so our electricity grids are digitising. And there's a possibility to democratise that a bit. So young people who are programmers... I know northern power grids are doing more gamification around electricity use on their grids. And I think that's quite exciting. But that's some of the new skills that we're going to need. And recently, I was at a meeting about the Northern Powerhouse and 'future skills for energy' and there was a sense that it was still a bunch of men bashing metal up in a factory. And I said, "Where's the digital skills? Where's that? Where's the programming" and that innovation of saying, "Oh, look, there's a market here at the moment in electricity storage, we can trade it like this. We can share that. We can depower this section of our houses on the grid and be paid by the grid to do that". And Carbon Co-op are working on that. Half of their staff now are programmers and they're a young organization. They're looking at retrofit as well, and how to make that work. So there's, I think, how they reach out or how we reach out into schools.

**Samantha Moyo, Disruption Doctor, Speaker, Activist**

It could get exciting. And this is where we can actually start bringing the kids of diverse backgrounds involved right from the start because we are now aware of the future skills needed. Yeah, really exciting.

**Elizabeth Alker, presenter**

I want to know how these movements are kick-started locally. You know, is it councils? You know, if someone was listening to this and thinking we would like to get this going in our community. I mean, I'm thinking exactly that, but I would not know where to start. So how do you start this? Who do you go to where do you find the skills and the resources?

**Louise Marix Evans, Community Energy North and Pennine Community Power**

It really varies. So Plymouth, Oldham Oxford. It was kick started by people but with the help of the local councils who provided loans. And in Plymouth's case they provided a load of admin as well. And they quite often provide buildings which you can install renewable generation on. Then there are other ones that came right straight up out of a community where, so Lymm in Cheshire, they had an initiative called Low Carbon Lymm, which was looking at decarbonising their town. And the council noticed that that was there. They sort of saw the potential and supported it.

**Elizabeth Alker, presenter**

So we're relying on councils?

**Louise Marix Evans, Community Energy North and Pennine Community Power**

No, no, I don't mean to say that really. So there are some where councils work well on this. And then there are other groups that just saw an opportunity.

It's quite often where the right people to send up meeting each other or you knock on someone's door and go: "can we install solar panels on your roof". And if you get the right person – that makes it sound far too easy. I think Burnside Community Energy is a good example of a massive paper mill with a huge electricity demand. And the people who owned the mill, and the people in the local community got together saw an opportunity and they've installed a lot of community-owned PV [solar panels] there now, which means they've installed it on the school as well out of the profits.

So, yeah, it depends on the local area and different, like, there might be a transition group.

**Samantha Moyo, Disruption Doctor, Speaker, Activist**

I just don't know how we can get young people and people of a diverse background interested in this. Because it sounds so technical and it sounds like you need... It doesn't sound like a layman accessible thing. So what I'd be really interested in, in how everything you're communicating can be communicated in a much more like simple, easy way so that Stormzy's fans can like be interested in what you're doing. Because that's so important for everyone to be interested in this because it's the future skills we need in terms of solutions. So yeah, I'd love to spend time with you outside of this.

**Louise Marix Evans, Community Energy North and Pennine Community Power**

Well, Community Energy England, who is who you would go to to start finding out how would we do this? And they're the umbrella body for community energy. Jeana [Malhi, [Community Energy England](#)] who works for them, she is working on diversification of community energy. And she would really love to get together with you, Sam.

**Elizabeth Alker, presenter**

And it's all very well doing these things on a very micro level, on a community level. But actually, how much difference is that going to make? And how much can that impact international industry and, and these big global companies?

### **Louise Marix Evans, Community Energy North and Pennine Community Power**

I don't know if we'll impact the global energy system to be honest. But when I look at what community energy has achieved in other countries. So, if you look at Spain, there are big community co-ops where they've installed their own grids and their own energy generation. And now they're innovating around electric vehicles. Because there wasn't an infrastructure there, so they said, "Oh, well, let's not hang around for government to do it or for a company to do it. We'll do it ourselves".

And in Germany, we see the same but with government support. You'll have a village that says, "okay, we can create our own heat over here on this farm". The government helps them put in the heat network infrastructure and everyone invests in the network; they buy and generate local heat for their homes. And that's a norm. There are loads and loads of bio-energy villages, they're called, in Germany, and it's just a very normal thing.

We happen to not set it up like that in this country because we have a one-way national grid and we have a gas system that we put in. But I think where we can create a like a patchwork quilt effect, I think, where if we put some demonstrator projects in we can start to show it is possible. And then the big house builders might put them into because it'll be harder for people not to do the low carbon or zero carbon development.

But we're saying there's a different way of doing this. You'll tell us the economics don't work. You'll tell us the regulations won't allow it. Well, let's try and do it because it does exist in some places. Because it is fairer, it's more inclusive. It is complicated and we do have a range of skills that we can bring together and co-operate on to deliver it. And ultimately it makes me feel hopeful rather than just giving up.

### **Elizabeth Alker, presenter**

Samantha Moyo, Louise Marix Evans – my guests today. Thank you so much for coming and sharing your passion, your ideas your, experience – so much food for thought so much to inspire us.

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