# Press release

**For immediate release: 3 November 2014**

## **Downlands School catches the sun with community solar project**

**Photo opportunity:** Downlands School, 2.30 – 4.00 pm, Saturday 8 November 2014

Downlands School, Hassocks, will soon have one of the largest school solar power arrays in the country – and it will all be paid for by investors from the local community.

266 solar panels will be installed on the Downlands School roof in spring 2015, thanks to its partnership with a new non-profit community energy group, HKD Energy. The project will provide the school with a cheap source of green electricity, and will also help students learn about renewable energy, energy security and reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Members of the local community will be able to buy shares in the project, and earn a return on their investment as a result of the electricity that the solar panels sell back to the grid.

**Downlands School solar facts**

* The 266 solar panels will produce over 80,000 kilowatt hours each year – enough power to make 4 million cups of tea.
* Downlands School will save around £150,000 in electricity costs over the next 20 years, as a result of the cheaper power provided by the project.
* The school will not pay anything for the solar panels themselves. Instead the project will be entirely funded by investors from the community.
* Investors can buy shares from a minimum of £250 to a maximum of £10,000.
* HKD Energy intends to pay interest on investments at approximately 4%, and plans to repay investments in full during the 20 year project.

**Local views on Downlands School solar**

The Downlands School Head Teacher, Rose Hetherton, said:

*I am delighted that Downlands has the opportunity to work in partnership with such an innovative scheme. It fits the ethos of our school perfectly to operate as a true community initiative with direct benefits to both the school community, through reduced energy bills and educational opportunities, but also the local community through the returns on any investment.*

Chris Handel, Chair of the HKD Energy board of directors, said:

*Schools are perfect for solar energy. They use most of their electricity during the day when the panels are generating. We are delighted to be working with Downlands School as our very first community energy project.*

Local Hurstpierpoint resident Patrick Howarth said:

*In sunny Sussex creating energy from the sun is a “no brainer.” This project is green, good and pays a great rate of interest. I shall invest!*

Keymer resident, Downlands School governor and former councillor Colin Wilsdon said:

*This is a great project and I shall certainly invest in it. The school benefits financially and it contributes to reducing our carbon footprint - and the investors get a return. Win win.*

Ditchling resident, Max Bolton, Hon. Treasurer of the Turner Dumbrell Foundation said:

*I am excited about this type of project and will certainly invest in it myself. I will also ask my fellow Trustees to investigate the possibilities of this type of installation at the Turner Dumbrell Workshops.*

**Ends**

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**Notes to editor**

For project photos, plans and further information, contact Juliet Merrifield, HKD Energy director: julietmerr@gmail.com, 01273-841120 or 07745-069558

Full details of the investment opportunities and potential income tax relief available, as well as risks for potential investors, will be available on [www.hkdenergy.org.uk](http://www.hkdenergy.org.uk).

The launch event will be held on Saturday 8 November from 2.30 - 4.00 pm at Downlands School, Dale Avenue, Hassocks BN6 8LP. HKD Energy directors will present the details of the project and how to invest. Guest speakers will include Norman Baker MP for Lewes and Howard Johns, a national leader in community energy, and Downlands School Eco Club members will also take part. All interested community members are invited to attend.

HKD Energy Ltd is a new non-profit organisation, a Community Benefit Society registered with the Financial Conduct Authority, with a goal of creating community-owned renewable energy projects, increasing energy efficiency and reducing carbon emissions. It is an offshoot of HKD Transition, a group of residents of Hassocks, Hurstpierpoint, Keymer and Ditchling who have been active in community-led responses to climate change and shrinking supplies of cheap energy over the last 5 years.

Downlands Community School is a large (1,200 pupils) and popular comprehensive school for pupils aged 11 to 16. Pupils come from Hassocks and surrounding villages. It is recognised as a specialist Science and Mathematics school and has Eco school status ‘Green-Flag’ award, the Sportsmark, International School status and Travel Mark 2.