

How volunteers power the Big Solar Co-op

Francis Musgrave & Jon Hallé, Sharenergy



What do we mean by 'volunteer owned'?

- 75% volunteer ownership
- Volunteer agreement - that underpins your rights and responsibilities.
- At the moment anyone can work with us.
- In future there will be a path to becoming a member:-
 - 1st contact > mutual assessment > invitation > signup = 'keys to the kingdom'.
 - Enabling volunteers to have super powers - high rights and high responsibilities.



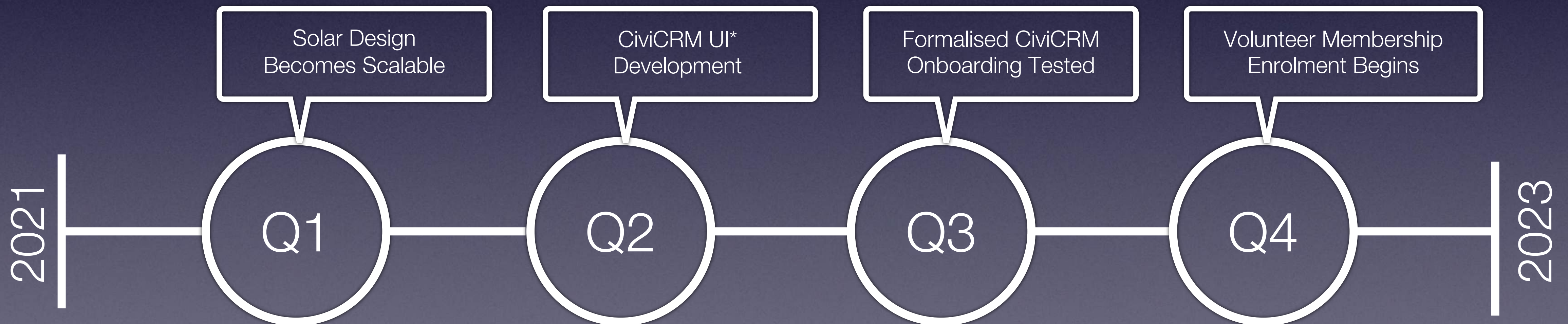
What do we mean by 'Volunteer led'?

- Proposed transition to a board with volunteer members by March 2023.
- Day to day volunteers build value through Work Groups:-
 - Teams of highly committed and focused individuals.
 - Starting with initial staff input, but soon become their own self-organising groups.
 - Work collaboratively internally to complete or aid a step in the overall business process.
 - Work collaboratively externally to ensure other groups can use their output effectively.



Where are we now

- Since the spring of this year we've really started to focus on the process of becoming a volunteer.
- From the start we wanted to involve volunteers every step of the way.
- Our volunteer "Evolve Beta Group" have helped shape what we build, and how we build it.

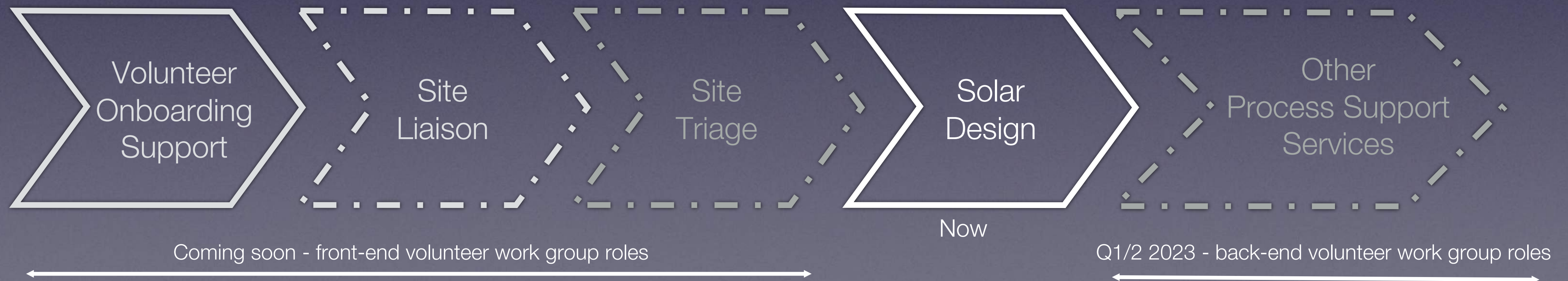


*CiviCRM = our internal database application used to track all activities.
*UI = User Interface, design to make computer software easy to use by anyone.



Volunteer groups are the key to what we do

- **Solar design group** - our longest established group, is already designing PV arrays for host sites.
- **Coming soon: Volunteer onboarding support group** - will help us recruit new volunteers and ease them into becoming effective team members.
- **Coming soon: Site liaison group** - will be early stage relationship builders, working with host site owners from project inception to project delivery.
- What's important: is that volunteers are helping us to define these roles, and how we should be training people to do them.





Where do we plan to get to in terms of groups and roles?

- A Triage Group - to help us filter the massive influx of sites.
-
- A Paralegal Group - to help us with land registry, and property ownership searches.
 - A Financial Modelling Group - to help us build bespoke financial solutions.
 - An IT Group - to help us optimise our IT usage.
 - Marketing & Social Media Group - to help us get our message out.
 - Funding Group - to help our investors feel connected to our cause.
 - ESG* Group - to ensure we meet our own high standards.



Things that we've created together so far

- Volunteer agreement - the legal document that underpins membership status within the organisation.
- Policies - our organisational behavioural guidelines.
- CiviCRM - our portal into just about everything we do.
- The volunteer handbook - that outlines the way we work, and how we work.
- Role descriptions - that describes what a role is, what it does, and how it fits into the bigger picture.
- Training material - the knowledge, the know how, the skills and techniques needed to get the job done.



Training, workshops and support groups

- For every volunteer role we aim to offer training, workshops and an ongoing support package.
- We offer solar design training and support already.
- In the pipeline over the coming months:-
 - Volunteer Onboarding Support - December 2022
 - Site liaison - (Q1/2023)
 - Site triage - (Q1/2023)



So where does all this take us?

- We can't make community solar easy, anything worth doing is hard.
- It never gets any easier, but we've found a way to make it go faster.
- It represents a significantly more powerful way to put more solar, on more roofs, more quickly than ever before.
- Our aim is to build a highly effective and focused UK wide workforce.
- Using local knowledge backed by central support to help with the heavy lifting and funding.



Q & A



Backup Slides



We started with some simple consumer software tools

- Slack - for activity channel coordination for the many work streams we manage in parallel.
- OpenSolar - for solar design and interoperability with other applications that it needs to talk to.
- CiviCRM - which we've simplified to make it a more user friendly web application.
- We strive to overcome complexity, by solving problems as they arise.