

Scottish Government Good Practice Principles for Community Benefits from Onshore Renewable Energy Developments



CONTENTS

MINISTERIAL FOREWORD	3	SUPPORTING LOCAL LEGACY	19
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	4	Developing a Community Action Plan	19
OVERVIEW AND KEY PRINCIPLES OF COMMUNITY BENEFITS	9	Milestones, Timeline and Support	20
Overview	9	Creating a lasting legacy	21
Principles of Community Benefits	10	Review Process	22
Key Principles	10	GETTING THE GOVERNANCE RIGHT	24
Community Benefits package	10	Good Governance – Principles	24
Area of benefits	11	Governance Structure – Options	25
Right to express views in the development	11	Effective fund administration	26
Roles and responsibilities	11	Wider packages of benefit	26
Renewable energy businesses and/or their agents	10	Ensuring transparency between partners	27
COMMUNITY – IDENTIFICATION & CONSULTATION	13	ONGOING ROLES FOR THE RENEWABLE ENERGY BUSINESS AND COMMUNITY	29
Principles of consultation	14	Point of Contact	29
Approach to consulting	14	Reporting	29
Consulting on details of the area of benefit and the Community Benefits package	15	Scottish Government Register of Community Benefits from Renewables	29
Identifying other local stakeholders	16	Review	29
Widening the area of benefit	16	Sharing experiences	29
Achieving majority support	17	SUPPORT AVAILABLE	31
Local Authority guidelines	17	Scottish Enterprise deliver the Energy Investment Fund (EIF)	32
Review and agreement	17	Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE)	32
Community Benefits Agreement	17	Local Energy Scotland website	32
		GLOSSARY	34
		ANNEX	35

MINISTERIAL FOREWORD



Scotland's wealth of natural resources and commitment to a sustainable low carbon future present a significant opportunity for achieving our social, economic, and industrial growth ambitions.

2018 proved yet another record year for Scotland with renewable electricity generation in Scotland up 6.1% on 2017, with renewable sources capable of meeting 74.6% of Scotland's demand. The equivalent of powering all households in Scotland for more than 2.5 years. We want to ensure that Scotland's long and positive association with renewable energy continues to go from strength to strength.

Key to this is our people, and the communities in which we all live. Empowering communities to engage in the decisions affecting their future, making their voices heard is a priority for the Scottish Government, and we are committed to enabling them to participate fully in and benefit from Scotland's low carbon transition. We continue to facilitate and support community involvement in renewable energy through our Community and Renewable Energy Scheme (CARES) and Energy Investment Fund (EIF) programmes, and set targets of 1 GW of community and locally owned energy by 2020 and 2 GW by 2030. It is also our ambition to ensure that by 2020, at least half of newly consented renewable energy projects will have an element of shared ownership.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Paul Wheelhouse'.

Paul Wheelhouse MSP

Minister for Energy, Connectivity
and the Islands

We first produced Good Practice Principles for Community Benefits from Onshore Renewable Energy Developments in 2014, and as at April 2019, a total of £18,520,483 has been made available to communities to support a diverse range of activity to improve the daily lives of people across Scotland.

I would like to congratulate Scotland's renewables sector for the positive manner in which they have worked alongside Scottish Government to ensure that the Good Practice Principles remain relevant and are seen as the "go to" documents for a range of stakeholders, primarily communities, who may have little or no experience in dealing with renewable energy businesses or other relevant bodies.

This document supersedes the 2014 document and is intended to function as a valuable tool for renewable energy businesses, communities, local authorities and other stakeholders involved in the development of renewable energy. The document acknowledges the success of community benefits to date, recognises the value of a more flexible and holistic approach to community benefits discussions in the future, and places a greater focus on achieving a lasting legacy for local communities underpinned by a well-developed community action plan.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Steering Group who helped govern the Good Practice Principles Review process, and all those who input their views and experiences through workshops and our public consultation during the Winter of 2018/19.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Community benefits schemes are a well-established, integral part of renewable energy developments, and often represent a positive relationship between renewable energy businesses and communities.

*They are **voluntary** arrangements offered by renewable energy businesses to communities located near developments, and are not a material consideration in a planning application.*

In 2014, the Scottish Government, in consultation with the renewables industry and communities, published the Good Practice Principles for Community Benefits from Onshore Renewable Energy Developments. Our aim was to promote transparency in the process by providing a practical guide for stakeholders to use.

The Good Practice Principles have been widely adopted across the renewables

industry, providing a benchmark for the sector. It has become an invaluable tool for those communities with little or no experience of engaging with renewable energy businesses developing projects. The Welsh and UK Governments have also adopted a similar process for their use.

The UK Government's response to its [Contracts for Difference consultation](#) also refers explicitly to our Good Practice Principles:

Decisions on the details regarding how projects can deliver local benefits are best taken locally, but the (UK) government expects renewable energy businesses, and operators of remote island wind projects should seek to provide community benefits consistent with Scottish Government or other relevant guidance and Good Practice Principles. This includes providing an opportunity for communities or local people to invest in the project, with any offer additional to a community benefits fund. Community benefits are expected to last for the lifetime of a wind farm and it is our expectation that the operator, or subsequent owner if the project is sold on, will honour agreements with the local community.

The (UK) government also expects renewable energy businesses to register community benefits package on the relevant community benefits register (which for projects on the remote Scottish islands is on the Scottish Government's Register of Community Benefits), so that delivery can be monitored.

This example highlights wider recognition of the value associated with our approach and principles. We will monitor progress to ensure that the application of the above is consistent with the UK Government's intent.

Our Good Practice Principles as published, included a commitment to review and update the document on a regular basis, to ensure that it remains relevant. We signalled our intention in the [Scottish Energy Strategy](#) and supporting [Onshore Wind Policy Statement](#) (published in December 2017) to undertake a review during 2018 highlighting the changes that have been introduced to the UK renewable energy support schemes, and their effect on the decision to invest in certain renewable projects.

The starting position for the review was that much of the document remains relevant and valid. This means that we see no need for wholesale change; however, the review provides a good opportunity to enhance and amend some aspects to reflect lessons learned, and align with current and future investment conditions.

We commend the renewables industry for working with Scottish Government and local communities in seeking to build a positive experience in relation to renewable energy developments. Community benefits from projects developed to date are making a real – and in some cases, transformational – difference at a local level. This is demonstrated by the diverse range of projects supported and the value of community benefits payments received by communities in the last 12 months:

Community Benefits Headline Facts and Figures

- 214 projects offering community benefits packages
- £15,719,720 total community benefits paid last 12 months

Example of projects supported:

- Community car club
- Community kitchen class room
- Community cycle club
- Befriending programme
- Refurbishment of community hall
- Start-up grant for small businesses
- Bursaries for further education

Source: [Scottish Government Community Benefit Register](#)

The Good Practice Principles are a great example of Scotland leading the way across the UK in our approach to how we wish to see renewable energy projects being developed in Scotland: One that puts communities' front and centre.

We accept that the renewables industry is in a period of transition at the moment, following changes to UK Government support schemes. This means that new models of community benefits, and new approaches, are likely to be needed.

It's in everyone's interest to work towards ensuring renewable energy continues to play an important role in Scotland's transition to a low carbon future. We believe that securing lasting benefit for communities adjacent to renewable developments must remain the core principle at the heart of the Good Practice Principles.

We will continue at a national level to promote community benefits of the value **equivalent to £5,000 per installed megawatt per annum, index linked for the operational lifetime of the project.**

We recognise that some renewable energy businesses will seek to offer communities a more flexible package of benefits, and that package might not necessarily be based on our recommended national rate of £5,000 per installed MW per year. It may, for example, include a different rate or include scope for the direct funding of projects identified by the community. This flexibility is not an entirely new development.

We are aware that the commercial profiles of renewable energy businesses will vary with technology type. However, the Good Practice Principles already recognise that community benefits packages are not limited to annual monetary payments in a fund, and that alternative arrangements can also address longer term community needs by generating positive social and economic impacts which provide a lasting legacy.

We would therefore encourage all renewable energy businesses, regardless of technology type, to consider what options or community benefits packages they may be able to offer, in line with their particular business model. More flexible packages of benefit should offer an element of additionality and go beyond the requirements of the planning process. Further details are available at Section 5.

We want to promote a more flexible approach to discussions about community benefits in future – a process which allows both renewable energy businesses and communities to identify clearly the best and most meaningful community benefits options and packages.

Key to future discussions will be a community possessing a community action plan: detailing its investment aspirations and associated outcomes. This will be critical for communities in their discussions with renewable energy businesses, irrespective of the community benefits package being offered and will deliver our goal of a lasting legacy in line with a community's aspirations and ambitions, as captured in a community action plan.

This document has been enhanced to include guidance on developing a community action plan. We encourage communities and renewable energy businesses to consider all community benefits options openly and fully, including whether a “fund” is the most appropriate or suitable mechanism to suit their specific circumstances.

In summary, we expect to see a change in emphasis from the way community benefits packages were offered in the past – purely monetary payments – towards a more holistic

approach of supporting a community's needs and aspirations. However, community benefits will still remain an integral part of renewable energy developments.

We intend to continue to review the Good Practice Principles on a regular basis, and to capture and share emerging practices for the benefit of renewable energy businesses and communities.

This Review Process was overseen by a Steering Group, which included representatives from community groups, the renewables industry and public bodies, and chaired by the Scottish Government. Full membership is attached as an annex.

This document supersedes the 2015 version. Although, there will be a number of renewable energy projects, not yet operational, that will have already agreed a community benefits package or, are well advanced in their discussions. We do not expect these packages to change as a result of the revised guidance. Non-renewable technologies may wish to adopt these Good Practice Principles and offer Community Benefits in relation to their developments, the Scottish Government welcomes this.

Section Summaries

A brief overview of the document's sections is provided below:

Overview: Key Principles of Community Benefits

- Provides a high level overview of community benefits
- Summarises key principles
- Discusses expanded value of community benefits
- Outlines key steps
- Helps to Identify the 'area of benefit'
- Explains the right to express views on the development
- Roles and responsibilities

Community: Identification and Consultation

- Principles of consultation
- Approach to consulting
- Consulting on details of Community Benefits fund
- Identifying stakeholders
- Widening area of benefits, including regional funds
- Community Benefits Agreement

Supporting local legacy

- Developing a Community Action Plan
- Milestones and timeline
- Creating lasting legacy
- Adjusting to changing priorities

Getting the Governance right

- Good Governance – Principles
- Governance Structure – Options
- Effective fund administration
- Wider package of benefits

Ongoing roles for the renewable energy business and the community

- Point of contact
- Reporting
- Review

Support Available

- Provides details of the support available under Scottish Government's Community and Renewable Energy Scheme



OVERVIEW AND KEY PRINCIPLES OF COMMUNITY BENEFITS

OVERVIEW AND KEY PRINCIPLES OF COMMUNITY BENEFITS

This section sets out:

- High level overview of community benefits
 - Key principles
 - Community benefits packages
 - Help to Identify the 'area of benefit'
 - Explains the right to express views on the development
 - Roles and responsibilities
-

Overview

Community benefits are a renewable industry led **voluntary initiative** to support communities and offer an opportunity for communities to work with renewable energy businesses for the long term benefit of the community.

The Scottish Government commends the role of the renewables industry over the last decade in making community benefits an integral part of renewable energy projects, and for their willingness to continue to offer this for new developments.

As previously indicated, we accept that the renewables industry is in a period of transition following changes to the UK renewable support schemes, and that investment decisions are being taken in a more challenging context than has been the case in the past. It is in everyone's interest to work towards ensuring renewable energy continues to play an important role in Scotland's transition to a low carbon future.

The onshore wind sector has been at the forefront in terms of offering community benefits, but the Scottish Government would encourage all renewable generation developments, irrespective of technology and scale to adopt the guidance.

The ultimate aim is to achieve a lasting legacy for communities regardless of the set-up of the community benefits package.

A key component of this guidance is the planning for and provision of information regarding community benefits, allowing time for communities to build capacity, and the development of ideas that can support the establishment of effective local arrangements that are in line with communities aspirations.

Alongside agreeing a community benefits package, we encourage communities to develop an action plan at the earliest opportunity. However, ultimately, that is a decision for a community to take.

Community action plans are discussed in more detail in Section 4. However, it is worth highlighting, that the development of a community action plan is not a linear process; some communities may already have one in place, others may decide to wait until later in the process, or refresh an existing plan that is not necessarily directly linked to the specific site but linked to a local development plan. What's important is the community has ownership of a "plan", that it identifies key priorities to maximise impact and has a process in place to update on a regular basis. A plan should be viewed as a "live" document that can be adapted to meet the current and future priorities of the community.

Community benefits packages can take many forms, and decisions on the details are best led locally based on consensus between the renewable energy business and the community/communities concerned. The provision of community benefits (including flexible packages of benefits) is **not a material consideration, and has no bearing in the planning process.**

Principles of Community Benefits



As mentioned previously, community benefits are voluntary initiatives; they are not a material consideration in the planning process. Planning permission will be assessed against the provisions in Scottish Planning policy, the local authority's development plan, and any other material considerations.

Conditions on planning permission and legal obligations with the planning authority are not thought necessary to secure voluntary community benefits, as these do not effect the decision on whether to approve or refuse the application for consent.

A renewable energy business may also wish to offer a community the opportunity to invest in the renewable energy project, or a community itself may wish to make the initial contact to a renewable energy business about investing in a project. Further information on this can be found in the [Scottish Government Good Practice Principles for Shared Ownership of Onshore Renewable Energy Developments](#).

Key Principles

Community benefits offer an opportunity for communities to benefit from their local renewable energy resource by engaging them in discussions to build a lasting relationship with the renewables industry that supports Scotland's transition to a low carbon future.

Community benefits packages

The package of benefits that a renewable energy business offers may vary in line with the priorities of community/communities involved, and the size and scope of the renewable energy project. However, community benefits should relate to the specific needs and aspirations of local people, evidenced by some form of ballot or other mechanism to capture views, for example, in a community action plan.

The importance of having a community action plan is critical to being able to engage with the renewable energy business irrespective of the community benefits package being offered. As part of that process, communities may also wish to consider advice on any available match funding opportunities to complement any package of benefits on offer.

While we will continue at a national level to promote a community benefits value of equivalent to £5,000 per installed MW per year, we do understand that some renewable energy businesses will seek to offer a more flexible package of benefits in keeping with their ambition to offer the lowest cost energy for consumers.

Area of benefit

Once determined through consultation with local communities, the geographical area that any community benefits packages is targeted towards is commonly known as the 'area of benefit'.

Community benefits packages may benefit one community or a group of communities within the area of benefit identified. Further details around consulting on details of the area of benefit (and community benefits package) are available at Section 3.3.

The Scottish Government is keen to encourage renewable energy businesses and communities to give consideration to widening the area of benefit where appropriate, but at a scale commensurate with the community benefits package that has been agreed.

Right to express views on the development

Contributing to community benefits discussions does not affect an individual's, community or organisation's right to express a view on the development proposals, and objecting to or supporting the development does not affect their right to discuss the community benefits proposals. There should be no implication that support for the development is contingent on the existence or size of a community benefits package.

Renewable energy businesses are encouraged to make this clear to all community members at the outset of the project, underlining the separation between community benefits discussions and the planning process. This discussion between the renewable energy business and the community should be logged or noted, and reaffirmed when appropriate.

Some people may be opposed to the development, but may still wish to have input on the community benefits discussions. This is one reason why a separate forum for consultations on the community benefits package is recommended.

Roles and responsibilities

The roles and responsibilities of communities and renewable energy businesses, based on lessons learnt, are summarised below:

Community

- Register interest with the renewable energy business.
- Engage constructively with renewable energy businesses.
- Recognise the complexity of energy projects.
- Appoint a lead organisation, could be a community council or other appointed representative group.
- Keep local people apprised.
- Regular contact with renewable energy business.
- Utilise the support provided through Local Energy Scotland.
- Engage professional advice, as required.
- Development of a community action plan.
- If applicable, devise a strategy to effectively administer and manage a fund.
- Submit community benefits details to Scottish Register of Community Benefits from Renewables, or contact Local Energy Scotland to assist.

Renewable energy businesses and/or their agents

- Establish geographical boundary for proposed benefit.
- Recognise local level capacity.
- Engage in early discussion openly.
- Engage in effective local consultation on any proposed community benefits.
- Appoint a single, key point of contact.
- Continue discussions post-consultation with community, as required.
- If applicable, utilise the support provided through Local Energy Scotland.
- Submit community benefits details to Scottish Register of Community Benefits from Renewables or contact Local Energy Scotland to assist.

COMMUNITY – CONSULTATION AND IDENTIFICATION

COMMUNITY – CONSULTATION AND IDENTIFICATION

This section includes details on:

- Principles of consultation
- Approach to consulting
- Consulting on details of a community benefits package
- Identifying stakeholders
- Widening area of benefit
- Community Benefits Agreement

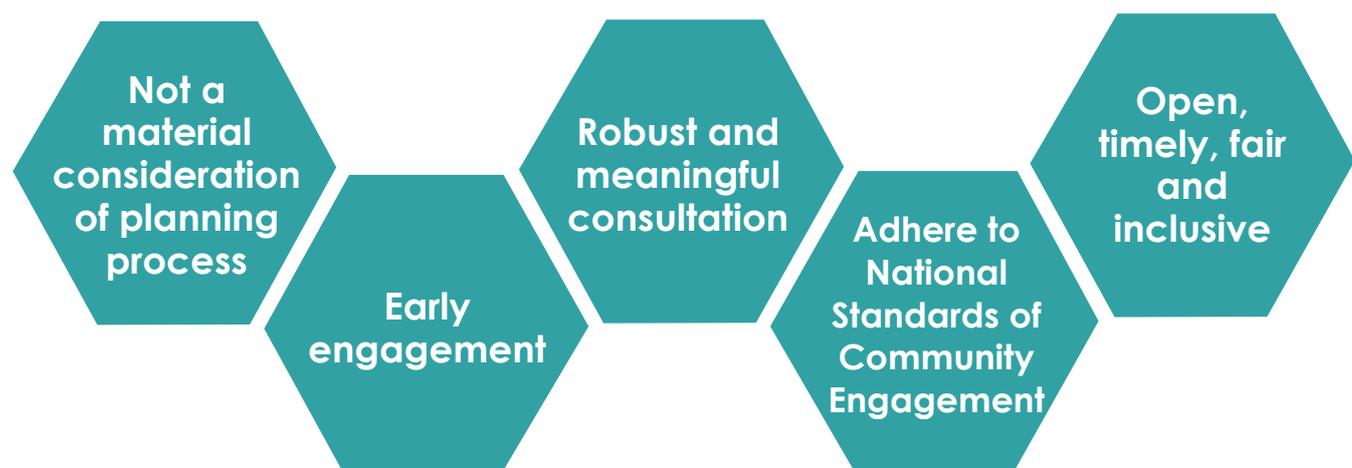
Principles of consultation

Consultation is an important component of identifying appropriate communities that will be involved in community benefits schemes. This can also help to avoid division and ill-feeling locally, helping to ensure the community benefits offer is viewed positively over the longer term.

The Scottish Government encourages this process to begin at an early stage, pre-consent where possible, to allow community groups time to consolidate their available resource and build capacity, as well as to enable discussion and identification of an appropriate area of benefit.

The creation of mutual trust and strengthening of relationships is integral to the overall process. Consultation should be open, timely, fair and inclusive; enabling everyone with an interest the opportunity to be involved and heard.

Principles of Consultation

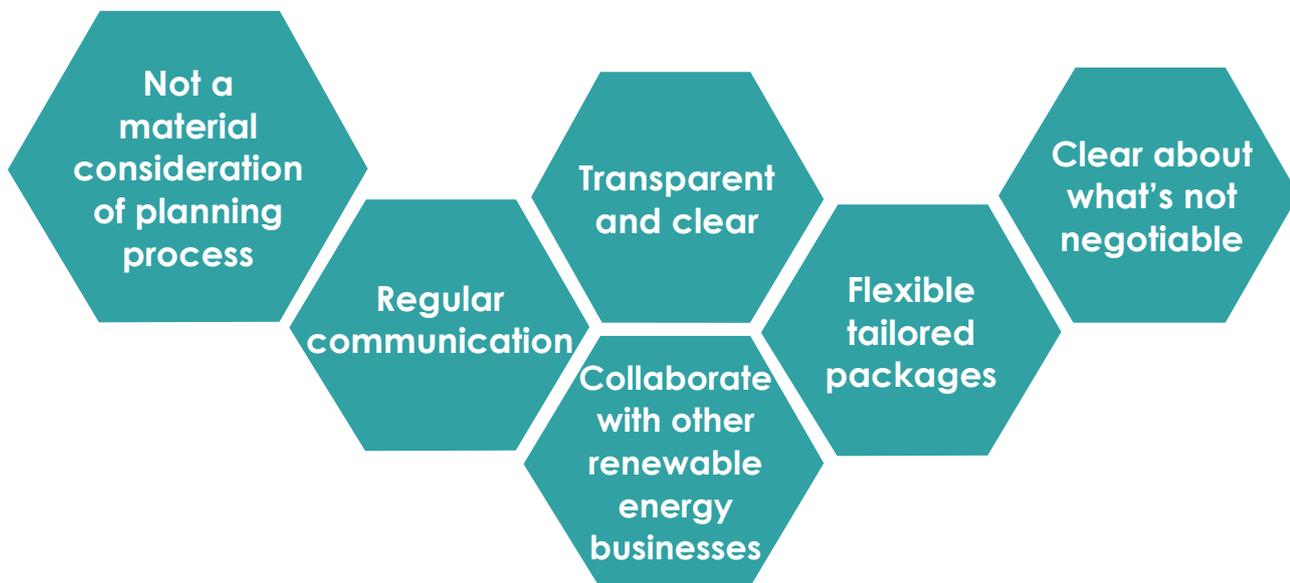


Although local opponents to the development itself may deem such conversations inappropriate, in the longer term it is the considered view of the Scottish Government that early stage conversations help build engagement in and commitment to local renewable energy developments. Discussions on the provision of community benefits **are not a material consideration in the planning process.**

To maintain this distinction, **Scottish Government recommends that discussions on the development itself and discussions on**

community benefits proposals are held in two separate forums or at separate times in the development process. However, it is recognised that this may not always be possible owing to the timescale of the project or available resource and capacity within a community. Therefore, when the concept of and approach to community benefits is introduced, it should be made clear to the community that it is independent of the planning process and is not a material consideration in deciding an application.

Approach to consulting



Renewable energy businesses and communities are encouraged to:

- Be transparent and clear during the consultation process, and be prepared to be flexible on the proposed boundary of the benefitting area, and what the community benefits will deliver (i.e. the proposed package and potential areas of needs and opportunity to be addressed).
- Ensure engagement with the wider community.
- Be clear at the outset which elements of the proposed community benefits package can be shaped by this consultation and which cannot.
- Be open to tailoring the community benefits package to a local community's specific circumstances while retaining consistency across their portfolio (where appropriate).
- Identify any barriers to participation and how these will be addressed.
- To make themselves aware of other relevant renewable energy developments and existing/proposed community benefits packages and to communicate with each other and work together where possible and appropriate.
- Community members directly engaged in discussions with renewable energy businesses should ensure they are keeping local people apprised of progress, to avoid generating conflict or ill feeling amongst the wider community.

Consulting on details of the area of benefit and community benefits package

As a first step, the consultation on the specific area of the community benefits package should at least engage the same wider geographical area that formed the consultation on the development itself.

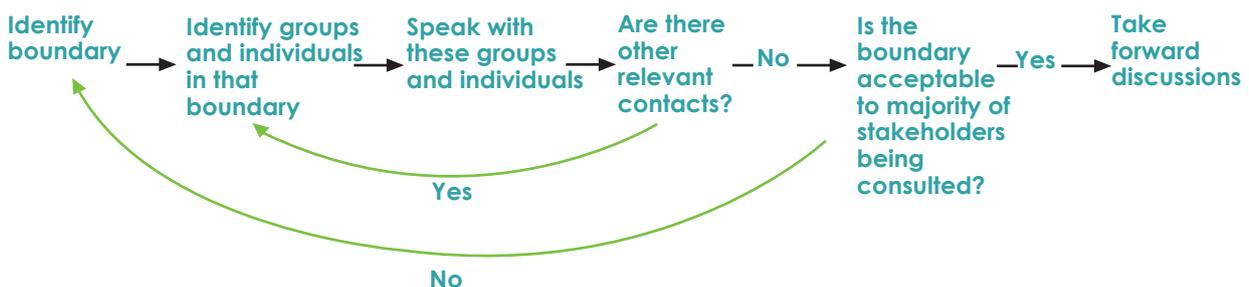
Fairness and transparency are key during the identification process. Favour must not be shown to particular individual groups or those with the strongest voices.

Discussions should:

- Initially involve every community council (where these exist).
- Where they don't exist, other representative community bodies within the geographical area should be approached.
- Similar organisations representing those communities directly bordering the application site should also be approached.
- The renewable energy business may also wish to explore links with the relevant local authority (or authorities) who may be able to provide support during this stage.
- The renewable energy business should be aware of planned investment in the community through discussion with community representatives and the local authority as well as familiarisation with any existing community plan in the area. Community benefits discussions should acknowledge what is already happening, and whether a community benefits offer can contribute to that and ensure existing planned investment is not undermined.

- Using the boundary of the relevant community council(s) administrative areas as a starting point, the following factors may also be employed to help determine the appropriate geographical area that makes up the 'area of benefit' for a proposed community benefits package:
 - Proximity to site – may give a starting point for identifying an area of benefit.
 - Geography and topography – immediate, adjacent and/or surrounding postcode areas.
 - Characteristics of development – its size, scale, siting and visibility.
 - Construction – communities that will be affected most significantly by the construction of the development.
 - Demographics – population density and spread.
 - Any relevant local authority policy/guidelines.

This list is not exhaustive and factors selected may vary according to local context and renewable energy businesses' corporate policies.



This should be a cyclical process, directed by the community.

Identifying other local stakeholders

Following identification of an appropriate geographical boundary for consultation, renewable energy businesses are encouraged to engage with other relevant local stakeholders, which could include:

- Local residents.
- Local businesses.
- Land managers.
- Community councils (often likely to be an important lever into the wider community) or, if none exist, any other representative community body.
- Local authority Officials.
- Thematic groups and clubs, for example youth groups, sports groups, heritage groups, or lunch clubs for the elderly,
- Community development trust or community company.
- Housing associations and tenants associations.
- Other existing community groups.
- Local environmental bodies, and other national environmental non-governmental organisations with a local presence.
- Local Chamber of Commerce, Federation of Small Businesses, and/or Business Improvement District.
- Other key service providers, e.g. village hall committees, schools, colleges, healthcare facilities, residential facilities, care providers, community transport services, credit unions etc.

Widening the area of benefit

There may be an opportunity to be more flexible in terms of widening the geographical area of benefit to reach a greater number of individuals and organisations would could support projects that are area-wide. This may be appropriate for larger scale projects or where there are multiple benefits packages within the appropriate area of benefit.

Any decision to widen the area of benefit should form part of the discussions/consultation process with the community living within the boundary of the development area and, the renewable energy business.

For larger projects one option may be to split the community benefits package to allow both local and wider regional benefits, particularly where the longer term economic and social impacts are identified as a priority.

These type of arrangements are likely to be successful when implemented with grassroots engagement and support.

If part of the agreed community benefits package includes a community benefits fund, the consultation process may wish to consider how this might fit in with other operational funds that may already exist in the area.

Priorities for wider area arrangements should reflect the needs and aspirations of the region. Local authorities should be aware that guidelines cannot be enforced through the planning system and must remain as optional guidance.

Stakeholders should be aware that where funds are administered by a local authority, any awards made to community groups may be assessed as state aid and must comply with State Aid regulations. Local Authorities may wish to seek their own legal guidance on this.

Some additional factors to consider when identifying the area of benefit:

- Resource and capacity of communities: some communities may require additional support to contribute fully, while others will be able to draw on established networks.
- Other relevant stakeholder areas, including:
 - The catchment area of any local schools
 - Travel to work areas
 - Neighbouring or nearby service centres or communities that serve the 'primary communities'

Achieving majority support

Renewable energy businesses are encouraged to be sensitive to, and welcome, the many different views within the community and where possible seek a consensus over the area of benefit. We recognise that sometimes it is not possible to set out the area of benefit in advance of a planning decision being made.

It is good practice to produce a report on the consultation process, representations, and the outcome and to circulate to interested parties – whether they participated in the consultations or not. This should also be publicised on relevant local websites.

If individuals or groups opt out of community benefits discussions until a planning application has been made, it should be made clear that they will have the opportunity to re-join discussions at a later date, if that is indeed the case.

Local authority guidelines

Some local authorities have policies or guidelines to aid regional consistency in the administration and distribution of community benefits arrangements which can be helpful to frame discussions. This is one possible route. The renewable energy business and the community should discuss the relevant local authority approach, where there is one, and arrive at a mutual agreement on whether this is the most suitable pathway to follow. **Local authorities should be aware that guidelines cannot be enforced through the planning system and must remain as optional guidance.**

Review and agreement

The findings of the consultation should be shared with the wider community. Following which, there should be a process of review and discussion between the renewable energy business and a group of local people mandated to progress discussions about confirming the community benefits arrangements. This group may be the Community Council or other mandated representative group and may involve a relevant third party. When the Area of Benefit includes multiple communities the group should include representation of all those communities.

It is worth highlighting that discussions may take some time and changes in personnel will occur (both renewable energy business staff and community volunteers). There may also be considerable time between a project receiving consent and the start of its construction and subsequent commissioning. For this reason, it is recommended that all meetings are documented and shared with all involved in a public space.

Community Benefits Agreement

It is recommended that, when community benefits discussions between the renewable energy business and the community have concluded, arrangements agreed upon are formalised through a **legal agreement** between parties. These 'parties' will vary according to different contexts. For example, some renewable energy owners will want an agreement directly with a mandated community body and others will want to have the agreement with a relevant third party that will have overall responsibility for administering the community benefits package. Irrespective of the parties involved, at its most fundamental the agreement should detail:

- The proposed community benefits package, including the time period it covers.
- The proposed roles of all involved, including any third parties.
- The protocol for advising the community if a site is to be sold.
- A commitment to honour all agreements should the site be sold on with documents being passed to the subsequent owner.

The renewable energy business should also provide an ongoing clear point of contact. In some cases this could be a third party appointed by the renewable energy business to deliver the community benefits package, to ensure that the community groups are able to access relevant support going forward.



**SUPPORTING
A LOCAL LEGACY**

SUPPORTING A LOCAL LEGACY

This section covers:

- Developing a Community Action Plan
 - Milestones and timeline
 - Creating a lasting legacy
 - Adjusting to changing priorities
-

Developing a Community Action Plan

Discussions about community benefits allow both renewable energy businesses and communities to identify clearly the best and most meaningful community benefits options and packages. It is, therefore, important to be able to capture a community's aspirations and ambitions, and we would encourage communities to consider developing a community action plan to support these ongoing discussions.

The format of an action plan can vary and there is no standard template; what works for one community might not necessarily work for another. The size and scope of the action plan may be influenced by the size and scope of the renewable energy development. The process for developing a plan will vary; some communities may already have one in place, others may decide to wait until later in the community benefits process, or refresh an existing plan that is not necessarily directly linked to the specific renewable site but part of the local development plan. It is considered critical that any action plan should align with any wider local development plan in place where there is a land use implication, and also to the Outcome Improvement Plan¹ for the area.

What is important is that the community leads and has ownership of a "plan", which identifies key priorities to maximise impact and has a process in place to update on a regular basis. A plan should be viewed as a "live" document that can be adapted to meet the current and future priorities of the community. Tools such as The Place Standard may be useful in helping local people identify their priorities for a particular place. Further information is available at: <https://placestandard.scot/guide/quick>

In summary, as a minimum a community action plan should be strategic, outline a long term vision, incorporate broad themes or outcomes in order to achieve that vision and, where possible, identify local projects and contribute to those.

The implementation of the plan should seek to improve the social, economic and environmental wellbeing of the community over the long term and help create a valuable legacy for future generations. The absence of an action plan at the outset should not preclude community benefits discussions taking place with all communities within the area of benefit.

¹ Outcome Improvement Plans are the mechanism by which Community Planning Partnerships deliver improved outcomes for their communities.

Examples of community action plans, demonstrating varying approaches, are available at the links below:

- [Coalburn, Douglas and Glespin Community Action Plan](#)
- [Three Villages \(Arrochar, Tarbert and Ardlui\) Community Action Plan](#)
- [New Luce Community Action Plan](#)
- [Watten Community Development Plan](#)
- [Muirkirk Community Action Plan](#)

This work of developing a plan can be undertaken by a local community organisation, an external organisation, or a combination of both, and can be funded by the community, by the Scottish Government or through charitable donations. The renewable energy business may also offer to contribute.

Where a community does not have a plan, funding is available from the Scottish Government's CARES programme, delivered by Local Energy Scotland, who can also signpost community groups to the relevant local, regional and national support organisations who can help build capacity to devise strategic and effective action plans.

Where a number of communities are within the area of benefit, there may also be more than one action plan in place. Following a process of wider consultation, communities may wish to reconcile the key priorities from each plan into one action plan to aid community benefits discussions.

An example of the steps to complete a community action plan, are set out below, along with the support available through CARES. Please note, however, this is a guide only and will vary depending on specific circumstances.

Milestones, Timeline and Support

Whatever methodology or approach is adopted, the community action planning process can take a minimum of four to six months (or possibly longer). It is important that both the renewable energy business and the community recognise this stage can be lengthy, but one that is critical to get right and devoting the time needed will help ensure a positive outcome for all parties.



Developing a Community Action Plan – Case Study

Identifying priorities

- The village of Dalavich faces a number of challenges in access to services and outward migration on young people.
- The Dalavich Improvement Group was set up in response to these challenges and in 2016 produced a Community Action Plan with CARES support.

Action Plan Process

- An extensive survey of local residents, visitors and holiday homeowners (past and present) was undertaken to gather the views of a wide range of people with an interest in the area.
- Interviews were also held with local business owners, children and elderly people to help understand the needs of different groups.
- The Action Plan set out a clear mandate for allocating funds generated by the local community hydro scheme.
- A community meeting was then held to determine the overall priorities of the area.

Outcome

- The Plan outlines projects to enhance life in the community. Members of the community have since been involved in planning and delivering these projects alongside the Community Council, Dalavich Social Club, Dalavich Improvement Group, Argyll & Bute Council and others.

You can view the full plan here: <http://www.awesome-energy.com/community.html>

Creating a Lasting Legacy

In discussion with the renewable energy business, a community action plan should provide the focus for the community to consider what delivery arrangement will help achieve some of the priorities in the plan.

At this stage, it is expected that the detail of the community benefits package offer will be clearer, along with any exclusions set by the renewable energy business.

Using the action plan as the basis, a community should draw up a strategy for supporting the delivery of the proposed package of benefits. As a minimum, it should seek to provide details of the following:

- The key purposes or priorities to be supported.
- What can't be supported, often referred to as 'exclusions'.
- Any other criteria to decide what type of projects or initiatives will be supported.
- Who can receive support, often referred to as 'eligible bodies'.
- Details of the distributing mechanisms.
- How changing priorities will be dealt with.

Review Process

The Scottish Government recognises that most communities' priorities will change over time. It will therefore be appropriate to revisit and review a community's needs and wishes at regular intervals.

It is important that provision is made for a community, to review and make appropriate changes to both the community action plan and their strategic priorities at regular intervals.

It is recommended that any review includes a review of area of benefit, impact and long term socio-economic benefits to the community.

The community and the renewable energy business should also be open to consider whether the delivery mechanism is still "fit for purpose" and all options should be explored on a regular basis. **It is important to focus on achieving a lasting legacy for a community – the outcome – and not the process.**

GETTING THE GOVERNANCE RIGHT

GETTING THE GOVERNANCE RIGHT

This section sets out:

- Good Governance – Principles
- Governance Structure – Options
- Effective fund administration
- Wider package of benefits

Good Governance – Principles

The Scottish Government encourages the renewables industry and communities to ensure community benefits packages are set up in a way which will support and promote local decision making, accountability and generate a lasting legacy.

The current practice adopted relatively widely by the renewables industry is to offer a community an annual payment over the lifetime of the project and to set-up a “Community Benefits Fund” to support local projects identified by the community.

However, as previously stated, and worth reiterating, while the Scottish Government will continue at a national level to promote community benefits of the value equivalent to £5,000 per installed MW per year, we understand that some renewable energy businesses will seek to offer a more flexible package of benefits for new projects being developed. That package might not necessarily be based on the national rate per MW, but may include a different rate or provide scope to directly fund projects identified by the community.

The rest of this section provides guidance on the administrative arrangements that both the renewable energy business and the community might want to consider in setting up and operating a “fund”. However, the high level principles are transferable to any community benefits arrangement that is put in place.

Good Governance – Principles



The renewable energy businesses, communities and others involved in the process should be as flexible as possible to ensure they find the best solution for their local area, including considering the feasibility of aligning with arrangements from other local renewable developments in order to maximise local benefit.

Once the key features of the community benefits package have been determined, including area of benefit, value and types of benefit, as set out in the community benefits agreement, the renewable energy business is expected to consult further with the relevant communities about the implementation of the community benefits package.

Whatever administrative arrangement used, most communities are likely to want representation in, or ownership of, the decision-making process.

Even in instances where a third party or the renewable energy business themselves are administering the package, most communities will expect the actual decision-making process to be devolved to them in some way. We would encourage renewable energy businesses to consider enabling a fund to be set up in a way which will support and promote local decision-making through an arrangement that has the endorsement of the local community as far as that can be achieved.

However, communities may require support to do this from those with experience, such as other communities or specialist consultants or other third parties.

Further issues to note are:

- Community benefits funds, do not have to reflect the conventions of more traditional funding – they can be more flexible and responsive.
- Where there is opportunity to invest in a local renewable energy project and the community wish to explore this, they may wish to consider capitalising any available community benefits payments towards their investment in the shared ownership opportunity.

- The governance structure and decision-making arrangements for the package/ fund may need to change over time as local circumstances and capacity change.
- Communities may wish to explore any match funding opportunities to maximise impact of any fund or package of benefits available. Where support to spend funds is requested by the community, we would encourage the renewable energy business to signpost the community to Local Energy Scotland in the first instance who can assist and advise on further third party support to help the community to build capacity and develop ideas.
- All parties need to be prepared to be flexible to enable the best solution for the local context.
- Decision-making arrangements should seek to be inclusive of the wide range of perspectives, experience, knowledge and ambitions within the fund area of benefit. They should also be transparent.
- The group making decisions over distribution of money should be separate from any group looking to apply to the fund to deliver a project.
- The role of the decision-making group and how they award funding should be drawn up in a governance document. This will vary in nature, terminology and legal standing depending on the structure chosen for the decision making vehicle.

Governance Structure – Options

The most common structures used to deliver community benefits funds in Scotland are:

- A community council, or other unincorporated association, where the amount of money involved is small.
- A new community body established specifically for the role, which may be a community company with or without charitable status or a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (SCIO).

- An existing community body that is appropriately set up to take on this role. Again, this body may be a community company with or without charitable status or a SCIO. Where that body also delivers local services and projects, delegation of decision-making to a group with wider representation can help to ensure decisions on the allocation of funds are not obscured by conflicts of interest and have wider local 'buy-in'.
- A specialist third party organisation that provides fund governance services, normally in conjunction with a 'panel' of local representatives whose role is to support decision-making on fund strategy and spend. The same body will usually also administer the fund for a fee.
- The fund donor holds the fund and maintains governance responsibility for it, either with or without a panel of local representatives.
- In some cases the organisation governing the fund may seek support with the work involved in administering it, for example grant-making, from a specialist third party. If a third party specialist is used there will be a cost attached which may be deducted from the annual monetary payment. Communities should be aware of this when seeking help.

Effective fund administration

Effective fund administration involves the ongoing business of managing and, in most cases, distributing money to groups and organisations in a timely, fair and transparent manner. It may involve a range of activities such as: producing the fund material; receiving and processing funding proposals; making payments in the form of grants and/or loans; and monitoring and evaluating impact.

Wider packages of benefit

In consultation with local communities and in line with the priorities identified and set down in the community action plan, a renewable energy business may wish to consider direct funding of an infrastructure project or provision of other in kind benefits (as appropriate).

Such measures could complement an annual community benefits fund, or be combined to offer a package of benefits as an alternative if acceptable to the community. Some examples include:

- Direct sponsorship of local groups or events.
- A one-off payment relating to construction activity.
- Capital works using heavy plant that is in the area as a result of construction activity, such as improvements to a vital community facility.
- Improvements to, and affordable lease of, housing and business units.
- Support for the community's own renewable energy project, such as help with feasibility work or sharing a grid connection.
- Strategic investments towards regional or area-wide services (renewable energy companies or their suppliers may offer this directly) like higher education courses or apprenticeship schemes (for example linked to renewable energy or engineering) or countryside ranger services.
- Local energy discount schemes. Initiatives to address energy efficiency or alleviate fuel poverty.
- In-kind support, such as donations of equipment or renewable energy business staff volunteering on local projects.
- Local jobs and contracts: employing of local contractors and using local suppliers, where effort has been made to source these directly from within the local or adjoining communities; apprenticeships and initiatives to support return to work for long term unemployed, post maternity etc.
- Tracks and walking routes: making roads, paths and tracks accessible to local users either on foot or by bike, where additional effort has been made such as signposting, the extension of paths to other local points of interest or provide car parking or other services; additional footpaths.
- Preserving local heritage/archaeology: redeveloping historic buildings, erecting statues and memorials.
- Ecological enhancements/conservation: wildlife/biodiversity enhancement, habitat expansion. These improvements often go beyond the planning condition of onsite mitigation and substantially enhance some habitats and local biodiversity.

In summary, the Scottish Government would encourage the renewables industry to offer a package of benefits that is of the equivalent value to £5,000 per installed MW per year. However, we are mindful that future community benefits packages will be more flexible to reflect the transitional period we are currently in and the commercial profiles of different renewables technologies. It is key that the community is involved in agreeing the best approach for their area: one which fits their long term needs and aspirations.

The earlier discussions take place between the renewable energy business and the community, the greater the opportunity for consensus to be achieved on the community benefits package, and for it to be viewed positively by the community.

Ensuring transparency between partners

It is important that communities are made aware of, and understand, any conditions or limitations attached to the community benefits package, including details of any common exclusions (things they don't want to be supported through community benefits resources) and their underlying explanations to communities at an early stage.

However, the renewables industry should understand that community benefits funding can be of most value to the community where it can be used to meet the priorities the community determines for itself.

ONGOING ROLES FOR THE RENEWABLE ENERGY BUSINESS AND COMMUNITY



ONGOING ROLES FOR THE RENEWABLE ENERGY BUSINESS AND COMMUNITY

This section covers:

- Point of contact
- Reporting
- Review

Point of Contact

It is in everyone's interest to ensure community benefits packaging are well run over the long term and deliver the maximum positive local impact.

The Scottish Government would encourage the renewable energy business to remain involved in some way once the community benefits package is signed off and becomes operational as it can help to maintain good working relationships.

Reporting

As a minimum and where a fund is devolved, the renewable energy business should request an annual report detailing the projects funded in the previous financial year (depending on when the fund began), and any projects planned for the forthcoming year. To aid transparency, it may be helpful for this annual report to be publicly accessible for example on a website.

An annual report will boost confidence in the wider community to show what has been achieved with the funds and will help prospective communities to understand the potential community benefits from renewable energy developments.

Scottish Government Register of Community Benefits from Renewables

In line with good practice, all renewable energy businesses with operational projects are requested to submit details to the Scottish Register of Community Benefits from Renewables, and to encourage community groups to submit recipient details.

The Scottish Government also expects a community to submit details to the Register, and this should be encouraged by the renewable energy business as part of their reporting requirements. The register is an opportunity to share and showcase the positive transformation from community benefits across Scotland. The Register can be found at: www.localenergy.scot/register

Review

The Scottish Government would encourage a review of community benefits packages to be undertaken on a regular basis, to ensure that priorities remain relevant. Communities might wish to consider doing this every 3-5 years. The renewable energy business does not necessarily need to be involved in this process, but may wish to be and could ask for a report on the outcomes of the review and any intended changes the community wishes to make to the scheme.

We recommend that a point of contact, reporting arrangements and review process form part of the legal agreement.

Sharing Experiences

It is recognised that a great deal of good practice exists to date in Scotland and it is hoped that this guidance will continue to drive Scotland's place as a leader in the UK in renewable energy policy and implementation. Context is key when agreeing community benefits packages and related arrangements. There is no single approach deemed to be "good practice" and Scottish Government hopes that this guidance inspires innovative arrangements and discussions. This document will be reviewed and updated on a regular basis.

SUPPORT AVAILABLE

SUPPORT AVAILABLE

This section covers:

- Support available through CARES
- Signpost to other relevant organisations

Support Available

Support is available through the Scottish Government's CARES programme, delivered by Local Energy Scotland, to help a community to engage with a renewable energy business to discuss the community benefits package.

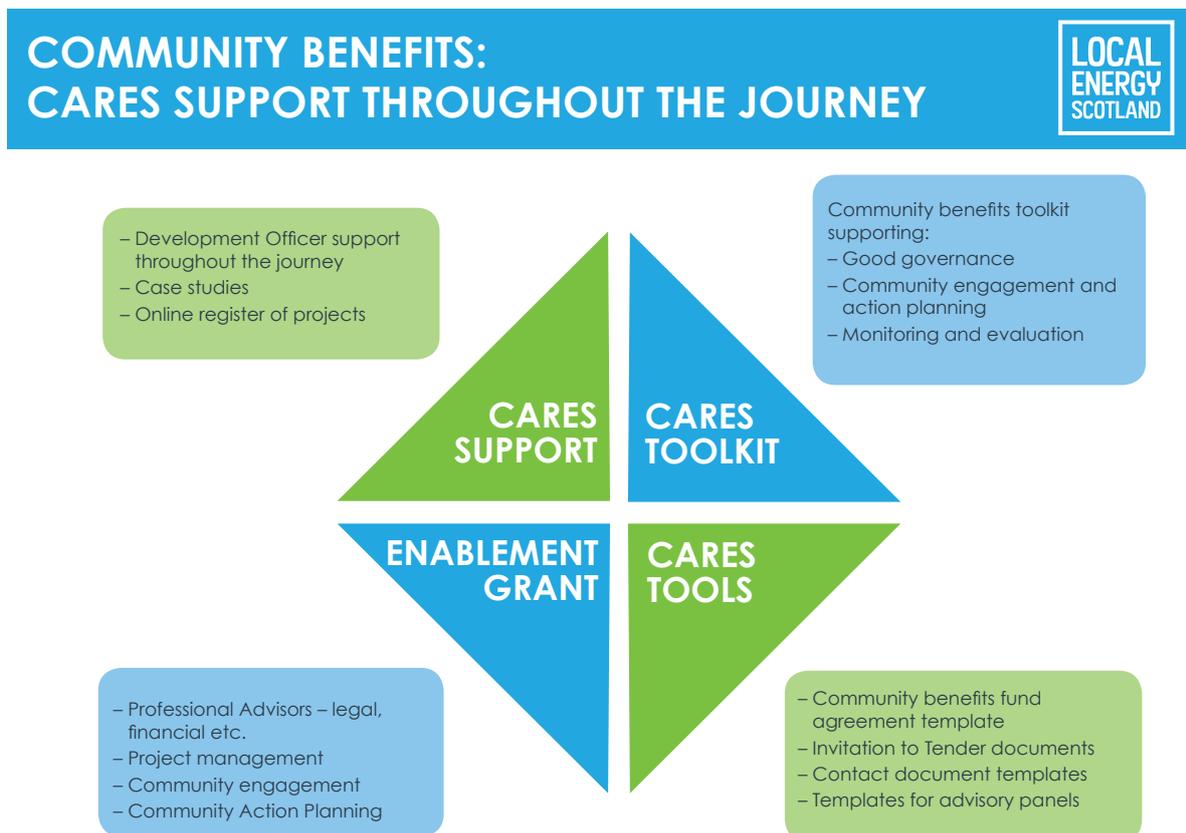
The first line of support will come from a Local Development Officer. Referrals to other agencies and support mechanisms will be suggested as part of this service.

A key issue for a community is to consider its capacity (skills and expertise) to support and manage the process. This will be different for each community – for example, some may have paid development staff, while others will be reliant solely on volunteers. The local authority may be able to offer support, and

communities may wish to approach them to establish what types of support may be available to them.

However, irrespective of the level of capacity within a community, Local Energy Scotland will assess a community's overall requirement, and in discussion with the community, outline what CARES support is available as well as signposting to other organisations who may be able to assist. The support available falls into the following broad categories and the diagram below summarises the key elements:

- **Funding**
- **Professional Services**
- **Online Tools and Resources**
- **Signposting**



There are a number of other organisations which can provide help and assistance. Contact details for the main ones are:

Scottish Enterprise deliver the Energy Investment Fund (EIF)

- The EIF team offers a range of financial solutions to facilitate communities' aspirations to secure stakes in shared ownership projects.
- EIF works closely with all stakeholders following planning approval to maintain open discussions to smooth the progress of the project through to successful completion.
- Find out more by contacting Scottish Investment Bank on 0845 607 8787

Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE)

HIE also provide support specifically to local energy projects through their Energy Team and Strengthening Communities Team, as well as account management for communities in fragile areas.

Further information on the support HIE can provide is available here:

<http://www.hie.co.uk/community-support/community-energy/shared-ownership-of-renewables.html>

Other organisations supporting communities to move forward and understand investing in renewables and what to do with the income generated include:

- Development Trusts Association Scotland
<http://www.dtascot.org.uk/>
Tel: 0131 220 2456
Email: info@dtascot.org.uk
- Community Shares Scotland
<http://communitysharesscotland.org.uk/>
T: 0131 220 3777
- Foundation Scotland
<https://www.foundationscotland.org.uk/Edinburgh> –
Tel: 0131 524 0300
Email: edinburgh@foundationscotland.org.uk
- Social Investment Scotland
<http://www.socialinvestmentscotland.com/>
0131 558 7706
hello@socialinvestmentscotland.com

There is also the South of Scotland Enterprise Agency under development which will provide economic support to communities and businesses operating in the Scottish Borders and Dumfries and Galloway. This document will be revised to include details when operational.

Local Energy Scotland website

More detailed information, material and relevant links are available at www.localenergyscotland.org/sharedownershipsupport

GLOSSARY



GLOSSARY

Area of benefit	The geographical area that any community benefits package is targeted at.
Capacity building	Identifying barriers to development and enhancing abilities to allow individuals and groups to achieve sustainable results.
CARES	Community and Renewable Energy Scheme, funded by Scottish Government and delivered by Local Energy Scotland.
Community action plan	Document outlining the community's priorities and the changes local people would like to see.
Community Benefits Scheme	A package of benefits that a renewable energy business may offer communities within the area of benefit for the development. These are voluntary arrangements.
Community Council	The most local tier of statutory representation in Scotland. They bridge the gap between local authorities and communities.
Community of place	A community of people who are bound together because of where they reside, work, visit or otherwise spend a continuous portion of their time. Such a community can be a neighbourhood, town, coffeehouse, work place, gathering place, public space or any other geographically specific place that a number of people share, have in common or visit frequently.
Consultation	A process undertaken to understand people's views and opinions on a topic.
Grassroots	Activity or movement driven by a community.
In kind benefits	Non-cash benefits.
Legal agreement	A contract that is exchanged between two or more parties which is enforceable by law.
MW	Megawatt: unit of power generating capacity in which renewable energy installations are measured.

ANNEX

MEMBERSHIP EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS

Chaired by Sue Kearns, Deputy Director, Consumers and Low Carbon Scottish Government

Organisation	Contact
EDF Energy	David Cameron Head of Scottish Policy
Scottish Power Renewables	Gillian Arnot Community Liaison Officer
SSE	Morven Smith Head of Community Investment
Vattenfall	Berry Jordan Business and Community Investment Advisor
Scottish Renewables	Stephanie Conesa Policy Manager
Triodos	Norrie Cruickshank Relationship Manager (Scotland)
Heads of Planning	David Mudie Energy and Resources Chair
Foundation Scotland	Rachel Searle-Mbulu Head of Communities
Valley Renewables Group	Margaret Porter
Girvan Community Council and Falck's Assel Valley CFP	Kenneth Johnstone
Harthill, Eastfield and Greenrigg	Angela McLaren
Kyle of Sutherland Community Development Trust	Helen Houston
New Cumnock Community Council	Eric Bennett

SECRETARIAT: Local Energy Scotland



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