



COMMUNITY BENEFIT IN ACTION: CASE STUDIES FROM THE ONSHORE WIND SECTOR

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

CBF	C ommunity B enefit F unds
CfD	C ontracts f or D ifference
DESNZ	D epartment for E nergy S ecurity and N et Z ero – UK Government
FID	F inal I nvestment D ecision (the point when a developer commits to building a project)
LEDS	L ocal E lectricity D iscount S chemes
LES	L ocal E nergy S cotland
ONWIT	UK O nshore W ind I ndustry T askforce
REMA	R eview of E lectricity M arkets A rrangements

INTRODUCTION

Rationale

This report, written by Scottish Renewables and RenewableUK, highlights how the onshore wind industry engages with communities and delivers local benefits through community benefit schemes. It is the first report to examine examples from across the UK, demonstrating what ‘good’ community benefit looks like.

Signed in 2023, the Scottish Onshore Wind Sector Deal is an agreement between the onshore wind industry and the Scottish Government setting out how both parties will work together to deliver onshore wind farms efficiently, sustainably and to the benefit of local communities while achieving Scotland’s net-zero targets. As part of this agreement the Scottish Government has made several community-focused commitments and in late 2024/early 2025, it held the consultation ‘Community Benefits from Net Zero Energy Developments’. This report supports Scottish Renewables’ response to the consultation and highlights examples of good practice in action while recognising the broader socio-economic benefits of onshore wind such as local jobs, tourism and biodiversity initiatives.

The report also supports RenewableUK’s work with the UK Government and the UK Onshore Wind Industry Taskforce to update the Community Benefits Protocol for England.

Given Scotland’s higher level of onshore wind deployment, most case studies focus on Scotland with additional examples from England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Background

The first commercial wind farm in the UK was Delabole Wind Farm, in North Cornwall, which started operating in 1991. In the 33 years since, the UK has developed a well-established and world-leading renewable energy industry, with onshore wind at its heart.

Net-zero targets from the Scottish and Welsh governments have supported the development of onshore wind in recent years. In 2022, the Scottish Government published its Onshore Wind Policy Statement¹, with an ambition of achieving 20GW of onshore wind in Scotland by 2030. This was followed in 2023 by the Scottish Onshore Wind Sector Deal², which set out the government and industry actions needed to meet this target. Although there is no specific target for the development of onshore wind in Wales, in 2023 the Welsh Government set a target for 100% of electricity demand to be delivered by renewable energy by 2035.

In April 2025, the UK had 15.8GW of operational onshore wind. The UK Government’s Clean Power 2030 Action Plan indicates that we will need 27-29GW by 2030 and 37GW by 2035 to decarbonise our electricity system and support the UK’s net-zero targets. Research by RenewableUK found that delivering 30GW of onshore wind by the end of the decade would boost the economy by £45 billion and create 27,000 jobs in the sector and many more in the supply chain.

A de facto ban on onshore wind had been in place in England since 2015, meaning limited development of onshore wind projects over the last decade. The UK Government lifted the de facto ban in June 2024. Following this, the UK Onshore Wind Industry Taskforce (ONWIT) was established to accelerate and streamline the delivery of onshore wind in the UK. The Taskforce will identify and deliver the actions needed to accelerate onshore wind deployment to 2030 and beyond.

Industry is now working with the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ) to update the Community Benefit Guidance for Onshore Wind Development in England, which is expected to be published in 2025.

¹ Onshore Wind Policy Statement. Available at: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/onshore-wind-policy-statement-2022/>

² Scottish Onshore Wind Sector Deal. Available at: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/onshore-wind-sector-deal-scotland/>



Working with communities

With a long history of supporting local communities who host onshore wind farms, the sector has committed to delivering various community benefit schemes over the lifetime of a project.

The founding rationale for community benefit was to partner with communities that host renewable energy projects and deliver long-term, tangible benefits in the areas surrounding the projects. This remains the rationale.

Benefits are delivered to communities in a number of ways but community benefit funds (CBFs) are most common. Other forms of community support include Local Electricity Discount Schemes (LEDS) and local or shared ownership.

A core principle of community benefit is that communities which host clean energy projects should be at the centre of discussions regarding the distribution of community benefits.

One of the key strengths of CBFs is that they create a significant fund that is in place over the operational lifetime of a project and is focused on a local area. CBFs provide certainty and allow communities to focus on large and long-term projects, such as acquiring a building and establishing a community hub, which can make a tangible difference to a community.

Levels of community benefit across the UK

Community benefit is voluntary and a unique feature of the renewable energy industry. No other industry has chosen to take on such a positive role in our society. The first Good Practice Principles, published in 2014 in Scotland and England, were developed collaboratively between government and industry. Since their publication, the provision of community benefit has become standard practice.

A RenewableUK survey estimated that communities across the UK currently receive around £75 million a year from onshore CBFs alone⁴, with £55 million in Scotland, more than £10 million in England, £6.5 million in Wales and £3 million in Northern Ireland⁵.

If the UK achieves its ambition of 37GW of onshore wind by 2035, up to £185 million could reach UK communities annually not including any wider socio-economic benefits of onshore wind development.

Community benefits in Scotland

The Scottish Government formalised Good Practice Principles for community benefits in 2014. These principles include a recommended benchmark of £5,000 per installed megawatt per year, index linked. For example a community hosting a 50MW onshore wind farm would receive £250,000 in community benefit for each year of the project’s operational lifetime. Since 1990, renewable energy developers have invested more than £200 million of community benefit funding into Scottish communities, most of which has come from onshore wind farms.

From the recent update of the Scottish Onshore Wind Pipeline by BVG Associates⁶, it is estimated that developers in Scotland currently pay £55 million in community benefit each year and this is expected to rise to £90 million by 2033 if the projects currently in development are built.

In April 2024, Scotland hosted almost 65% (10.2GW) of the UK’s onshore wind fleet and has the most experience of engaging with and supporting host communities. In 2025, the Scottish Government will update the Scottish Good Practice Principles to reflect changes in the renewable energy industry including the growth of offshore wind.

Potential impacts of onshore wind market uncertainty on community benefits

Despite a strong history in Scotland and the opportunity for increased deployment in England following the lifting of the de facto ban in 2024, the UK’s onshore wind industry is facing significant challenges. These include proposed electricity market reform, rising project costs and uncertainty around grid connections.

Without urgent policy interventions, these threats will undermine the UK’s clean power ambitions and the significant socio-economic benefits that renewable energy projects bring to the areas where they operate.



4 RenewableUK Onshore Wind Industry Prospectus. Available at: https://www.renewableuk.com/media/c55ckdrg/onshore-wind-industry-prospectus_2021.pdf
5 RenewableUK Onshore Wind in Wales: How our sector works with communities. Available at: <https://www.renewableuk.com/media/cjuijdbtd/how-onshore-wind-works-with-communities-wales.pdf>
6 Scottish 2030 Onshore Wind Pipeline Analysis (December 2024 Update). Available at: <https://www.scottishrenewables.com/publications/1805-scotland-2030-pipeline-analysis-december-2024>



In March 2024, the UK Government published the second part of its Review of Electricity Markets Arrangements (REMA), highlighting the need to reform the UK's energy markets to best facilitate our move to a decarbonised electricity system.

In the UK, the whole country currently operates as a single electricity market. Within REMA, zonal pricing is a proposed reform dividing the electricity market into 12 different geographical zones. Each zone would have a different wholesale electricity price based on its respective supply, demand and available grid capacity levels. The rationale is that locational signals, the incentives that influence the decisions of electricity market participants to site and operate at a given geographic location, would be sharper in a zonal market. In theory, this would encourage new renewable energy projects to locate near demand and vice-versa. In other

words, zonal pricing should incentivise new electricity generation, such as onshore wind farms, to develop sites in and around high-demand zones like London to take advantage of higher prices. In the reverse direction, large demand users like heavy industry would be incentivised to move their operations to where prices are lowest, like the North of Scotland.

However, many of these supposed benefits would be unlikely to materialise in practice. Many factors other than electricity prices determine where and how renewable energy projects are located and operated. For example, low wind speeds and a lack of available land mean wind farms cannot be built in and around London. As a result, market participants would often be unable to respond to such incentives, meaning the increased risks of a zonal market would translate to increased costs and missed economic opportunities from the clean energy transition.

At the same time, inflation and supply chain pressures have significantly increased project costs. Rising material, labour and financing costs have tightened project economics, making it harder for developers to secure the investment needed to build projects.

The UK is currently lagging behind major economies like Germany, Spain, Italy, Australia and the USA in investment in grid infrastructure. For every £1 spent on renewable energy in the UK, only 25p is invested in the electricity network. To tackle chronic underinvestment in the grid and achieve our clean power ambitions, the UK must build twice as much transmission infrastructure in the next five years as it has over the past decade.

As a result of this chronic underinvestment in grid infrastructure, renewable energy projects experience delays and uncertainty in securing grid connections, with some projects waiting over a decade. This uncertainty and any delays add significant costs and risk to projects, making it harder to secure the required investment.

Without urgent policy interventions, these threats will undermine the UK's clean energy and energy security ambitions as well as the socio-economic and community benefits renewable energy projects bring.

CASE STUDIES: THEMES

The 21 case studies featured in this report celebrate some of the unique benefits of community benefit funding that have emerged across the UK.

Each case study has been linked to a set of ten themes identified by Scottish Renewables, RenewableUK and the onshore wind developers who have contributed to this report. These themes are:



Area of benefit

CBFs support initiatives across a defined geographic area ensuring that nearby communities receive direct advantages. The area of benefit can range from local communities to larger regional projects with the aim of balancing local needs with broader shared benefits.



Developer collaboration

Effective partnerships between wind farm developers and communities enhance the impact of benefit funds. Collaboration can take many forms, including joint decision-making, ongoing dialogue and tailored support to ensure that funding aligns with local priorities and delivers meaningful, long-term benefits.



Education and training

With a wave of funds expected to reach communities in the coming decade, capacity building will be crucial in growing a community's ability to undertake more ambitious projects. This theme also covers investment in education and skills development which help communities develop. CBFs often support scholarships, apprenticeships and training programmes, particularly in renewable energy and sustainable industries, fostering local employment and economic resilience.



Large scale projects

CBFs can support transformational projects that have a lasting impact such as new community hubs, renewable energy schemes or major infrastructure improvements. These projects often require strategic planning and substantial investment demonstrating the long-term potential of community benefit funding.



Flexible funding

Offering flexible funding allows communities to address diverse needs, from emergency support to long-term strategic investments. Flexible funding frameworks can be distributed through small grants, multi-year funding commitments or reactive funding pots meaning communities can respond as their priorities change.



Community-led decision making

At the heart of CBFs is empowering local people to shape how funds are used and that they align with local needs. Whether through community councils, developer town hall meetings or local trusts, community-led approaches foster transparency, trust and greater engagement with renewable energy developers. Community-led decision-making can be aligned with Community Action Plans and Local Place Plans.



Longevity

Ensuring that CBFs deliver a lasting impact is crucial. Many funds incorporate long-term sustainability strategies and endowments to extend benefits beyond the operational life of a wind farm and secure financial resilience for future generations.



Matched funding

Leveraging CBFs to attract additional investment can enhance their impact. By using community benefit as match funding with other grant bodies, government programmes or private sources, communities can unlock greater financial resources and achieve more ambitious projects.



Community Shared Ownership

Beyond benefit funds, shared ownership models enable communities to invest directly in wind farms and generate long-term revenue streams. This approach fosters local economic empowerment, increases community buy-in and provides a sustainable funding source for future initiatives.



Local Electricity Discount Scheme (LEDS)

Some wind farm developers offer direct financial support to households through electricity bill discounts. These schemes provide a regular and tangible benefit to those living or working near an operational wind farm helping to offset energy costs and enhance local support for renewable energy development.



Rosehall and Achany - Working collaboratively in the Highlands

The Rosehall and Achany wind farms are adjacently located near Lairg in Sutherland. Achany is a 38MW wind farm owned by SSE Renewables and Rosehall is a 24.7MW wind farm owned by RWE. Since 2010, one community group has led community benefit funds for the two wind farms. This has maximised the benefits for local communities and ensured the onshore wind sector works collaboratively to enhance relationships with local people.

The funds provide around £170,000 annually to local community projects. The priorities for the fund have been developed through community consultation and include enhancing the quality of life for local residents, contributing to vibrant, healthy, successful and sustainable communities, promoting community spirit, encouraging community activity and supporting the projects identified in the Ardgay, Creich & Lairg Community Action Plan.

The Rosehall and Achany funds have sustained and built capacity in five leading local organisations. Building community wealth in these third-sector organisations has delivered a wide range of benefits, including:

- Establishing a local apprenticeship programme, enterprise training and community learning for more than 1,150 people a year.
- Providing 50 hours a week of elderly care in the local community through the Creich, Croick and Kincardine District Day Care Association.
- Developing the Kyle of Sutherland Hub which employs seven people.
- Supporting large capital transformation in the area from community-owned housing, heritage sites and community broadband.

In 2025, an independent evaluation by BiGGAR Economics found that the Rosehall and Achany wind farms have contributed a total of £2.8 million in community benefit since 2010. The report showed the funds have added £12 million to the local economy and supported 18 long-term jobs.

Connect2Renewables

Connect2Renewables (C2R) employment support is delivered in partnership with South Lanarkshire Council and was set up to help unemployed people who live within 10km of wind farms to get into work. The aim is to provide an ‘open door’, encouraging the people most in need to get in touch and take advantage of a flexible and responsive programme.

As part of the initiative, the council’s employability staff have the freedom to create hyper-local projects that are tailored to the needs of residents and solve individual problems. As well as non-financial support – such as CV advice or coaching – C2R supports local people in the following ways:

The employment incentive programme:
Since 2019, local employers have supported the programme by partnering with Connect2Renewables and working with local unemployed people. A wage subsidy is paid to the employer for up to one year as an incentive to take on someone from the local area. This has supported jobs in sectors including leisure, hospitality, retail, joinery, building and shop fitting.

Pre-employment support grant:
This £200 pre-employment support grant is offered to anyone moving into a job to help them overcome any challenges. The team also assesses any other training or support that might be needed to help them sustain the new post.

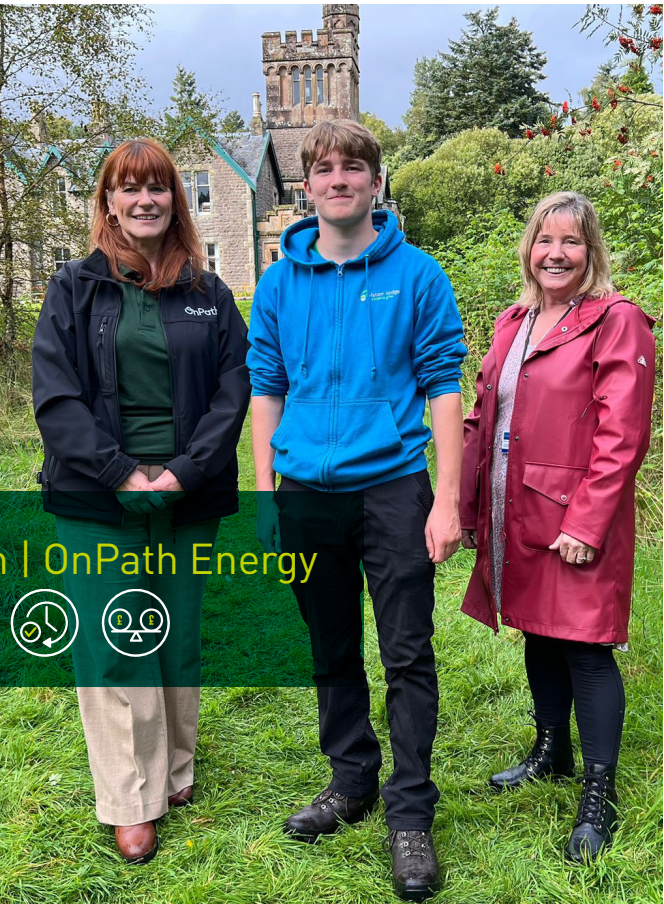
Grant towards college living costs:
This now stands at £500 for anyone starting college/ university for the first time who may need additional support to overcome any barriers they face. The grant can be used for travel, books, coursework equipment or IT equipment.

Tailored funding:
Not everyone wants or needs a formal college place – or they may face less obvious barriers to employment. For example, when a local mother wanted to go back to work, the fund paid the first month of childcare costs.

This enabled the mother to work until she was given her first pay cheque, at which point she had cash in the bank to start paying for childcare herself.

Up to March 2024, C2R has spent over £1 million to support over 1,700 people in South Lanarkshire with a range of tailored support. Of this number, over 180 individuals have been supported into full-time employment, over 500 applicants have received a further education grant while 70 people have accepted professional training with many more accessing support with college fees, travel costs and non-financial help and advice.

“People in different situations have such different needs. The C2R funding has meant we can tailor support”
Wilma Weir, South Lanarkshire Council,
Vocational Development Officer/
Connect2Renewables



Kype Muir and Middle Muir Wind Farm | OnPath Energy
51MW | Scotland



Camster Wind Farm | RWE
50MW | Scotland



Empowering a Rural Community – The Story of Watten Shop Group

In the small rural village of Watten, Caithness, the closure of the local shop presented a significant challenge. For a community reliant on its only shop and post office service for essentials and social connection, its loss threatened to increase isolation particularly for the elderly and vulnerable, while eroding the village’s sense of identity.

Faced with this reality the Watten Shop Group emerged. The volunteer-led initiative set out to save the shop and transform it into a community-owned hub that would sustain the village economically, socially and environmentally.

The group rallied the community, launching a share offer to raise funds for the purchase and renovation of the shop. Funding totalling more than £90,000 from the nearby RWE Camster Wind Farm was key to getting this project off the ground along with support from other funders including the Community Ownership Fund and the Plunkett Foundation. The wind farm funding helped with legal costs, wages, stock and equipment, the cost of leasing the shop for six months prior to purchasing and the purchase costs.

The local Community Development Officer, whose salary is also supported by wind farm funds, was a key resource

in supporting the shop group. The transformed shop quickly became more than just a place to buy groceries.

- Supporting the local economy: The shop prioritises local produce, reducing food miles and providing a market for nearby farmers and suppliers.
- Employment and training: It offers part-time jobs, including opportunities for young residents to gain valuable work experience.
- Social connection: There are plans to develop a small café area in the shop to provide a vital hub for connection where residents can gather, foster social bonds and reduce isolation.
- Empowerment: The project has fostered a sense of ownership and pride, showing what can be achieved through collective action.
- Reinvestment in the community: Future profits generated by the shop will be reinvested in local projects.

The Watten Shop Group is an example of the power grassroots initiatives can have in building community wealth. By saving and revitalising the village shop, the group created a sustainable, inclusive and thriving community hub. Their story is testament to what’s possible when communities unite around a shared vision, blending innovation and determination to create lasting impact.

Viking – Creating a legacy across communities

The collaboration of all communities in Shetland ensures that the benefit fund widens the beneficiary population and allows the fund to tackle priorities that cannot be resolved at a micro-community level.

During the wind farm’s construction, a £1.2 million fund was provided to support the community’s capacity to manage a renewable community fund. This enabled Shetland Community Benefit Fund (SCBF) to recruit local staff, to gain development support and for each community council to allocate funding to a total of 201 local projects.

The people of Shetland have identified six key priorities for the first five years of the fund. The priorities cover the key challenges being faced by Shetland and what is required to ensure the community has the social, economic and environmental capabilities to be a thriving local area:

1. Encourage more young people to stay and/or return to Shetland.
2. Better transport links within and between communities.
3. Reduce the cost of living in Shetland.
4. Better broadband and mobile phone connections.
5. Improved housing supply and affordability.
6. Preserve and enhance Shetland’s natural environment.

To ensure the fund focuses on the key priorities of the local community, an extensive community consultation was completed involving every household in Shetland, as well as specialist engagement with youth, business and third-sector stakeholders. This has resulted in a business plan which will direct the first five years of the fund. The business plan ensures the principles of the fund are for legacy, environmental sustainability and equity to help address some of the disadvantages that come from living in Shetland.

Early projects which have been supported during the first three months of the fund include:

- The Shetland Energy Efficiency Programme, helping to enhance the energy efficiency offering on the islands.
- The Shetland Apprenticeship Programme, enabling local SME businesses to recruit young people in growth industries.
- A scholarship programme, supporting students to live and study in Shetland.

“A tremendous amount of work by our volunteer directors and staff has gone into ensuring the smooth launch of the fund. We have learnt the lessons of planning, good governance and a straightforward application process and look forward to supporting many more initiatives that will help strengthen our local communities.”

Chris Bunyan, Chair,
Shetland Community Benefit Fund



Viking Wind Farm | SSE Renewables
443MW | Scotland



Greengairs East Investment Fund

Greengairs East Wind Farm is a 36MW, eight turbine development northeast of Airdrie, North Lanarkshire, operated by Muirhall Energy. Commissioned in 2023, the first community payment was made in December 2023 and benefits five community council areas: Greengairs, Upperton, Longriggend, Caldercruix and Plains.

Initial Investment Fund (IIF)

Muirhall Energy is committed to building and maintaining positive relationships in the communities where it works. The IIF was introduced at Crossdykes Wind Farm in 2019 with a value of £100,000 and is now a permanent part of the community benefit model across all projects from the start of construction. The IIF for Greengairs East was based on £5,000 per turbine, equating to £40,000.

From June 2022 until March 2023, the fund was open to applications from local community organisations, clubs and charities for grants up to £2,500. A final total of £42,411 was distributed throughout the designated area.

Twenty applications were successful ranging from community festivities to food bank donations. Examples of projects that the IIF helped to fund include:

- The development of a community heritage garden in Caldercruix, paying homage to the area's coal mining history.
- Plains Amateur Football Club converted pre-purchased portacabins into changing rooms and a clubhouse.
- Glengowan Primary and Nursery schools purchased equipment to teach STEM subjects and improve their outdoor play area.
- Phantom's Legacy further developed an equine programme to assist disadvantaged adults with mental health problems.

Greengairs East Wind Farm | Muirhall Energy Ltd
36MW | Scotland



- Greengairs Community Council repaired their community centre lift, which had been out of order for some time.
- Longriggend Village Association purchased IT equipment for its community cafe which provides internet access for those without IT facilities.
- Cumbernauld Model Flying Club upgraded its car park and purchased solar panels and batteries to provide lighting to the clubhouse and model battery charging.

During construction, a regular newsletter was distributed providing updates on the wind farm's progress and alerting residents to any upcoming traffic management. By managing the IIF in-house, Muirhall was able to build and maintain relationships with local groups and effectively disseminate important information during construction.

Community Investment Fund (CIF)

This equates to £5,000/MW installed capacity, £180,000 per annum, index-linked, for the 40-year lifetime of the project split equally between the five community council areas and paid annually in arrears.

The community can use this fund to realise projects that matter most to them. Of the five communities, one wanted full management of their portion of the fund, three wanted control but did not have the capacity to actively manage the fund while the community council in the fifth area had fallen into abeyance resulting in a divide in the community as to a suitable replacement.

It was agreed that Greengairs Community Council would receive and manage their portion themselves but Foundation Scotland would take on the management of the remaining portions with the community groups still having full decision-making powers.

To date, each group has received more than £54,800 giving a total of £247,035.54 paid in community benefit.



Clashindarroch Panel

Community-led decision-making puts local experts in the driving seat when developing and delivering community benefit funds. From the beginning they develop and decide their fund's purpose, strategy and priorities. This means that every community benefit fund is different, reflecting the specific needs of each community.

Vattenfall's Clashindarroch Wind Farm Community Benefit Fund supports the communities of Tap O' Noth, Strathbogie, Glass, Cabrach and the town of Huntly. A local panel leads the decision-making on behalf of their area. The panel recruits members from each local area through community councils or lay members who live within the benefit area. They hold three meetings annually to assess grant applications and visit projects to observe the fund's impact.

The local knowledge of panel members is crucial for making award decisions and fostering dynamic discussions where the impact of awards is considered deeply. Their expertise ensures that the fund's direction and decision-making align with community priorities. Foundation Scotland supports the panel with award administration, recruitment, monitoring and evaluation.

Every four to five years the wind farm engages with the panel and local residents to complete a comprehensive review of the fund's delivery to make sure the fund is

still relevant to local needs. This collaborative approach ensures that the fund remains responsive to the evolving needs of the community.

Number 30, The Square, Huntly Town Centre - Regeneration/Matched funding

Town centre regeneration is a priority for Huntly where local residents wanted to see vacant buildings on a lively town square brought back into use and draw people back in – locals and visitors alike.

One of these buildings is No 30, The Square which has been redeveloped by the Huntly Development Trust. The Clashindarroch Wind Farm Fund provided a grant to transform this former department store into a modern, multi-purpose community facility.

The Trust received £58,558 which acted as a catalyst for additional funding from Transport Scotland, the Scottish Government's Regeneration Capital Grant Fund and the local council amongst others. Altogether, the project drew in an additional £3.6 million in matched funding.

Today, Number 30 attracts visitors to Huntly from up to 40 miles away and provides a range of valued services to local residents with its café, cinema and co-working hub. The super-insulated building is designed to be energy efficient and is heated by air source heat pumps. In its first eight years, Clashindarroch wind farm has provided more than £1 million of community benefit grant funding to projects which has drawn in a further £12 million of funding into the local area.

Beinn Tharsuinn Wind Farm | ScottishPower Renewables

29MW | Scotland



Kyle of Sutherland Development Trust

Beinn Tharsuinn Wind Farm Community Ltd awarded £6,500 to The Kyle of Sutherland Development Trust (KoSDT) towards its 'Kyle FEEDS' (Food, Exercise and the Environment - Delivering Sustainability) project. The project aims to create an economically, environmentally and socially sustainable community by taking a holistic approach to health inequalities caused by poverty, isolation and lack of physical activity.

The community initiatives include a café offering nutritious meals on a donation basis, a food larder supporting more than 200 people per week with various essentials and a community growing project which provides fresh produce and

educational programmes on sustainability. Additionally, the "Keep Active Together" program promotes physical and mental health through free activities, aiming to reduce loneliness and social isolation. These efforts collectively enhance community health, reduce isolation and promote sustainability.

"The funding received by KoSDT from Beinn Tharsuinn Wind Farm helps build a real connection with all of the communities in the Kyle of Sutherland, allowing us to deliver activities to residents right across the area. This really helps us to combat social isolation and allows those who may not have access to transport to engage in social activity in their own communities."

David Watson, Trust Manager,
Kyle of Sutherland Development Trust

The Pen y Cymoedd Community Fund

Pen y Cymoedd wind farm is located between Rhondda Cynon Taff and Neath Port Talbot in South Wales. It is a 228MW project with 76 turbines which became operational in 2017. The Pen y Cymoedd Community Fund distributes more than £2.5 million annually to the local communities of the Neath, Afan, Cynon and Rhondda valleys.

The fund is managed by an independent, locally based, not-for-profit Community Interest Company run by local directors. Over £14.3 million has been distributed in funds during the first eight years which drew in a further £33.4 million matched funding into the area.

Examples of the types of projects the fund has supported include:

The IronWorX gym received more than £75,000 from the Pen y Cymoedd Wind Farm community benefit fund to help local resident Morgan fulfill his dream of opening and running his own gym and fitness centre. The centre has also created six new jobs for local residents including trainers, instructors and managers.

The Community Impact Initiative CIC was awarded £477,285 over five years by the Pen y Cymoedd Wind Farm Community benefit fund. It's project, Building Resilience in Communities (BRiC) was established to support 300 marginalised individuals aged 16+ in improving their health, confidence, skills and qualifications, moving them closer to the labour market through the regeneration of empty properties in the Pen y Cymoedd region. BRiC empowers participants to renovate and reintroduce disused properties, fostering community pride and resilience. Its aims are to:

- Encourage community members to take positive action and responsibility for their life journeys.
- Revitalise local communities by reducing empty property numbers.
- Inspire community pride, resilience and ownership.

BRiC supports socio-economic change by enhancing health and skills, promoting community regeneration and fostering social resilience. Ultimately, BRiC helps individuals lift themselves from poverty, develop new skills and contribute meaningfully to their communities, leading to increased employment opportunities and the regeneration of Pen y Cymoedd through innovative property use.



Pen y Cymoedd Wind Farm | Vattenfall

228MW | Wales



Delivering legacy across regions - The Sustainable Development Fund

For more than ten years, the SSE Renewables Sustainable Development Fund has had a positive impact across five Scottish Local Authority areas. The fund has invested more than £13.5 million to support projects that will have a lasting impact in the regions which host renewable energy .

A review of the impact of this funding found that a total of 28,189 people gained skills and qualifications and 119 local jobs have been created.

The stand-out project is the Scottish Green Energy Award-winning Highland Energy Efficiency Programme which supports households in extreme fuel poverty in the Highlands.

A key priority for Scottish communities is enhancing housing quality and reducing fuel poverty. SSE Renewables has contributed £1.85 million to support the Highland

Energy Efficiency Programme which is delivered by Highland Council and combines community benefit and Scottish Government investment to provide home retrofit measures, including solar, battery, air source heating and insulation to households in extreme fuel poverty.

Support from the Sustainable Development Fund will help 400 households have warmer and more efficient homes.

“Highland is experiencing some of the highest levels of fuel poverty in Scotland. We are delighted by the grant support from SSE Renewables which will help us deliver efficiency savings to those households most in need.”

Cllr Raymond Bremner, Leader,
The Highland Council



Penmanshiel Wind Farm | RES 28.7MW | Scotland



Cockburnspath Community Shop

Funding from Penmanshiel Wind Farm, owned by Cubico Sustainable Investments and managed by RES, supported the creation of Cockburnspath Community Shop in June 2021. Having established a community benefit society—a not-for-profit business entity run by the community for the community—sufficient shareholder and grant funding was raised to build the brand-new, purpose-built wheelchair-accessible community shop.

Run entirely by volunteers, the community shop has had a huge impact on the area including making the community more resilient, increasing social interaction and providing the socially isolated with a place for a

daily chat. The shop also provides a community space for local suppliers, makers and crafters to sell their products. Located at the end of the Southern Upland Way, the shop is also a focal point for walkers to enjoy a treat and engage with the different aspects the shop has to offer.

In the first 10 weeks, the shop processed over 9,000 transactions and it was estimated that over 235,000km of car journeys were saved by enabling people to shop locally instead of using the nearest supermarket some 10 miles away.

The community shop now offers a delivery service and provides facilities like a cash machine and prescription pickups.



Pauls Hill Wind Farm | Fred. Olsen Renewables
66MW | Scotland



Tomintoul and Glenlivet Development Trust

Tomintoul and Glenlivet Development Trust was formed in 2012 as a community body to address the regeneration of the local area. Spearheaded by a volunteer board and Operations Manager, Oliver Giles, the Trust successfully applied to the Pauls Hill Wind Farm Community Benefit Fund.

By accessing community benefit funding, this has helped the trust work towards its vision for a vibrant and sustainable community for Tomintoul and Glenlivet,

providing opportunities for employment, enterprise and cultural regeneration that can support the infrastructure necessary for a quality way of life.

The funding has supported the trust in employing team members, such as a Heritage Ranger and a Development Officer, driving forward development projects, ongoing initiatives and providing a warm welcome to visitors at important heritage sites such as the Scanlan Seminary, Blairfindy Castle and the DarkSky Discovery Sites at Blairfindy Moor and the Carrachs. Overall, the funding has helped to secure a sustainable and vibrant future for the area.

Kype Muir Community Partnership

Since the Kype Muir Wind Farm became operational in 2018, the Kype Muir Community Partnership (KMCP) has worked to deliver community benefit funds in the local area. It was necessary to ensure this fund fulfilled its potential and delivered tangible benefits by tackling the issues that matter most to the local community.

Since coming together to address this need, the KMCP, a community panel led by 10 representatives from five community council areas, has continued to grow and take on larger and more ambitious projects. It has awarded almost £800,000 in funding in the last seven years. With this funding, the KMCP's goal is to deliver the community action plans of the five areas represented by the panel. The KMCP has two funding pots: pot one works with smaller projects and pot two is designed to tackle larger projects that benefit the wider region. Overall, with the Kype extension funding in place, the KMCP will oversee £400,000 of community benefit funds annually. Guided by individual community action plans, the KMCP can respond to different local priorities and ensure that funding is targeted towards those projects which have the greatest positive impact. This local decision-making means the KMCP is well placed to address issues such as health and wellbeing, which has seen £371,840 of funding from the KMCP.

We have tracked the top three impact areas using the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as a reference:

- SDG 2 – Good health and wellbeing: £371, 840
- SDG 6 – Reduced inequalities £114,950
- SDG 7 – Sustainable cities & communities: £240,916

Building on this success and with additional funding available now that the Kype Muir Extension is operational, the KMCP can confidently look to a future of continued partnership with the local authority, community councils, grassroots organisations and other stakeholders to ensure that funding works hard for the local community.

By partnering with other funding sources, bigger and bolder projects can be encouraged to come forward and deliver transformational change across a range of local priorities.

For example, local transport across the region was boosted when the KMCP supported the 3C bus route linking Strathaven, Glasgow and the surrounding area, a project which provides a significant local service and displaces thousands of tons of carbon from the atmosphere.

“The benefits the bus service has brought our community cannot be understated, it has been genuinely transformative. There has been a need for this service for a very long time in South Lanarkshire and we are really pleased we were not only able to set up a bus service but we’re now in a position to expand.”

Alison Harley, 3C bus project team



Kype Muir Wind Farm | OnPath Energy
88.4MW | Scotland



Community of Arran Seabed Trust

Arran Community Council awarded £12,586 to the Community of Arran Seabed Trust (COAST), a community-led organisation whose mission is to protect and restore the marine environment around Arran and the Clyde.

Its work aims to improve the marine environment, ensure coastal communities are involved in decision-making that affects the coastline and support livelihoods dependent on fishing and tourism.

This funding allowed the Ocean Quest project to purchase its own vessel, RV COAST Explorer, and to deliver educational workshops to local schools. Pupils can take trips around the Lamlas Bay No Take Zone and Marine Protection Area and see first-hand one of Scotland’s largest maerl beds, a purple-pink hard seaweed that forms spiky underwater ‘carpets’ on the seabed. They learn about the importance of these zones and the positive impact they have in preserving marine life. These workshops raise awareness and provide examples of different STEM based careers that pupils can aspire to.



Beinn an Tuirc 3 Wind Farm | ScottishPower Renewables
50MW | Scotland

“The support from ScottishPower Renewables has been truly transformative for COAST’s Ocean Quest project. Their funding has enabled us to engage every primary school on Arran, reaching over 150 students with hands-on marine conservation and citizen science activities.

This project has inspired a new generation to understand and care for our marine environment, strengthening the community’s connection to the sea. We are deeply grateful to ScottishPower Renewables for their commitment to empowering communities and supporting vital conservation education efforts.”

Áine Purcell Milton,
Executive Director, COAST

Lynemouth Wind Farm | ScottishPower Renewables
26MW | England



“There have been a number of requests for such a facility by local residents. To see the ribbon cut is an important milestone. The Parish Council believes public health and well-being is very important. We are investing in leisure facilities to encourage people to get out there, be fit and be healthy and we’re grateful to ScottishPower Renewables for providing the ongoing funding to enable us to make a difference for local people and the community.”

Councillor Liz Dunn,
Chair, Lynemouth Parish Council

Lynemouth Wind Farm

Lynemouth Wind Farm is a 13-turbine project capable of generating up to 26MW of electricity. The project is situated approximately two kilometres north of Ashington in the north east of England and officially opened in May 2012.

The Lynemouth Wind Farm community benefit fund was used to create a community garden on previously derelict land which is now an important resource for local school children and other community members where they can visit, enjoy and learn about Lynemouth. The ScottishPower Renewables community team liaised with Lynemouth Parish Council when developing information boards in the garden that tell the story of this traditional mining village and its evolution to hosting green energy projects. This has helped create a legacy for Lynemouth as a mining town while embracing its new future as host to an onshore wind farm and producing green electricity which benefits everyone.

“The Lynemouth Centennial Garden is a brilliant example of how local communities are using our wind farm benefit funds to deliver projects that matter to local people and we’re proud to have played our part. For us, our wind farms are not just about producing clean, green electricity – being a good neighbour and supporting our local communities is important too and we’ve invested more than £45 million across the UK doing just that. The Centennial Garden is a fantastic celebration of the village’s history and heritage and creates a positive and lasting legacy that I’m sure will be enjoyed for years to come.”

ScottishPower Renewables

Meikle Carewe Wind Farm | RES
10.2MW | Scotland



Meikle Carewe -
10 years of LEDS

Residents living close to Meikle Carewe Wind Farm, near Stonehaven, have celebrated a decade of discounted electricity bills. In that time the wind farm, which is owned by The Renewables Infrastructure Group (TRIG) and managed by RES, has delivered nearly £250,000 of savings through RES's innovative Local Electricity Discount Scheme (LEDS).

In 2024, a total of 180 households, businesses and community buildings located within 3.5km of the Meikle Carewe turbines received a discount of £163 each. LEDS has been a popular benefit at Meikle Carewe, which was the first wind farm in Scotland to deliver such electricity discounts, where annual, index-linked, payments to eligible properties will continue until the wind farm is decommissioned.

“RES has been at the forefront of wind energy for over 40 years, driven by our passion to innovate, and we are proud to have been the first company to offer and deliver LEDS. Listening to communities to design this scheme, LEDS continues to offer a unique form of benefit to residents and businesses around our wind farms.”

John Boyce, Development Director for Wind, RES

“RES has been extremely good with its community communications and highly professional with its management of Meikle Carewe. The project has contributed to the security of power in the area and benefitted local residents like myself who receive discounted electricity through RES' unique LEDS Initiative.”

Bruce Molland, local resident

“Every year we receive a discount on our electricity, which does help especially nowadays with the rising costs all around us. It is nice that consideration is given to immediate residents and that we receive a benefit from the wind farm. I also understand that the local town benefits from the wind farm too.”

Jackie Littler-Gordon, local resident



Baillie Wind Farm | Statkraft
52.5MW | Scotland



Supporting Small Businesses - North Coast Watersports

The Caithness Business Fund was created after discussions between Caithness Chamber of Commerce and Baillie Wind Farm who had a shared vision for the Caithness and Sutherland economy to benefit from local wind farms. As a result, a quarter of the Baillie Fund is dedicated to supporting local businesses set up, expand and grow.

Baillie Wind Farm, operated by Statkraft, generates a £25,000 business fund for each year of its 25-year operating period. The fund's mission is to promote economic growth in the area by supporting new and existing businesses and developing a skills base to meet new challenges.

North Coast Watersports is one such enterprise that has received a helping hand from the fund. This successful surfing school based in Caithness was set up by world class young surfers, Iona McLachlan and her partner Finn MacDonald, who returned home from a trip around the world with a vision to share their passion for surfing.

The two budding entrepreneurs initially approached the Caithness Business Fund for guidance on putting together a business plan and were later granted £5,000 from the Fund to buy the equipment necessary

to get their business started. Since then, North Coast Watersports has proven highly popular among locals and tourists with around 500 aspiring surfers braving the waves in the first four months of operation. Caithness Chamber of Commerce has also recognised Iona's achievements awarding her with the 'Young Entrepreneur Award' in 2019.

Over five years, the couple ran 15 SWELL Weekend retreats with the Melvich Hotel. This three-night surf trip which included yoga, adventure trails, projected movies, pizza and a barbecue, attracted people from around the world. They now plan to run similar offerings in the future.

Iona and Finn now sell a range of branded T-shirts, hoodies, jumpers and beanies with different locally inspired designs and colours. They also built on their success by gaining the qualifications and equipment needed to offer stand-up paddle boarding in 2020 and RIB tours in 2023. In the long run, the ambition is to expand the business into an outdoor activity retreat with eco pods on offer for overnight stays.

The business fund has gone from strength to strength since it was established in 2013, with contributions being added by other local businesses, and the launch of a successful apprenticeship initiative in 2019.



Crossdykes Wind Farm | Muirhall Energy Ltd
48MW | Scotland

Community Shared Ownership at Crossdykes

In 2014, Muirhall Energy offered local communities near the Crossdykes and Loganhead wind farms a community benefit fund of £7,000 per MW per year and up to 10% in shared ownership. With guidance from Local Energy Scotland, Upper Eskdale Development Group explored the opportunity, securing a CARES grant to appoint consultants SCENE for support.

After Crossdykes received planning consent in 2018, financial advisors presented the investment opportunity to local representatives. Legal and financial advisors were appointed in 2019 to support the communities in assessing the offer.

By 2021, the original proposal for a 10% stake was revised to a 5% stake, secured partly against community benefit funds. This meant the loan repayment period

was over seven years, ensuring quicker returns for the community. Several local community councils approved the deal which was completed in 2022.

Later that year, Muirhall Energy sold the wind farm and the community chose to sell its stake, receiving a significant seven-figure sum. This allowed them to repay the loan immediately and reinvest the profits into local initiatives.

The six figure lump sum that the community received from the sale of their shares of Crossdykes (minus the outstanding balance for the share loan) will allow them to start off in a better financial position if they decide to take up the offer of shared ownership in Loganhead and Hopsrig wind farms.

This case highlights the challenges and successes of community shared ownership, demonstrating the value of expert guidance, collaboration, and long-term community planning in maximising local benefits from renewable energy developments.



Slieve Kirk Wind Park & Tievenameenta Wind Farm | SSE Renewables
73MW and 34MW | Northern Ireland

Northern Ireland Scholarship Fund

Providing training and education is crucial for preparing the next generation for skilled jobs. The SSE Renewables Community Benefit Fund Scholarship programme has, over the past decade, been instrumental in helping local students pursue their further education goals.

The Scholarship Fund is delivered in partnership with Ulster University, South West College and North West Regional College. The fund provides up to 50% of third-level fees up to a maximum of three years to students living in Co. Derry/Londonderry, Co. Tyrone, Co. Fermanagh and Co. Donegal.

Over the past decade, more than 500 scholars have been supported by the fund in courses as diverse as science, engineering and medicine. Once they have graduated the scholars have been the doctors, nurses and engineers at the heart of Northern Ireland's communities who are vital to the economy.

"I'd like to thank SSE Renewables for their continued commitment to our students as we grow the STEM workforce of the future."

Dr. Catherine O'Mullan, Director,
North West Regional College



Brechfa Forest Wind Farm | RWE

57.4MW | Wales



Brechfa Forest Wind Farm

Brechfa Forest Wind Farm is a 57.4MW project in Carmarthenshire and was commissioned in 2018. The RWE Brechfa Forest Wind Farm Fund was launched in 2018 by RWE and is worth £11 million over the lifetime of the wind farm. The fund aims to support the communities that neighbour the wind site. With a flexible approach, local knowledge and community support, the Brechfa Fund is transforming lives and proving that community-led initiatives can have a lasting impact.

During the consenting process, RWE engaged with an independent community development consultant to work with the local community to carry out a community profiling exercise. The aim was to raise awareness about the long-term funding opportunity, understand more about the community priorities and aspirations, as well as encouraging the community to build capacity and plan for the arrival of funds. Further consultation by the developer in 2017 provided the opportunity for everyone in the community to have their say and helped shape the structure of the fund.

The CBF is entirely community-led, with every decision made by a panel of local people who live, work or donate their time within the wind farm's 6km benefit zone. Their local knowledge is invaluable in making informed choices about what's important for the area. Applicants are supported and hand held by a locally based fund manager who works for Antur Cymru, an independent, local social enterprise, who was appointed as fund administrator following an open tender process.

The fund supports capital projects and revenue funding with several salaried roles benefitting from multi-year awards.

Over the past three years, as well as generating significant match funding, the fund panel has:

- Helped to create a new lunch club, cinema club and IT hub.
- Engaged community development specialists to help projects develop and build capacity.
- Given grants to much-needed community facilities, including community centres, church halls and provided long-term funding for public toilets.
- Reduced carbon emissions and running costs by funding electric vehicles for community transport schemes as well as solar panels and charging points on community buildings.
- Led the delivery of a strategic approach to supporting all the schools in their area.
- Responded to emergencies such as floods and the pandemic.
- Funded innovative projects like the purchase of a bunk house by their local hospice which is creating a long-term income stream for the hospice as well as boosting tourism opportunities in the area.

A panel member quoted: "I see the community benefit fund as the most incredible opportunity our community has ever had, this is a game changer for the next generation... truly a once in a lifetime gift horse. It's made me passionate and committed to get this right as this money holds the answer to creating jobs and retaining young people in our community."

Beck Burn Onshore Wind Farm

A 31MW project with nine installed turbines in Cumbria, this project delivers electricity to power the equivalent of 18,800 homes with £155,250 invested in the community every year.

The grant fund – administered by Cumbria Community Foundation – has passed a significant milestone. A £10,300 grant to Springfield & Gretna Green Community Asset Trust, to replace windows at Stormont Hall in Gretna Green, has taken the total funding paid to more than £1 million.

Raydale Community Partnership is the single largest beneficiary having received grants totalling £85,000 since 2018. The not-for-profit organisation was formed following the collapse of Gretna FC to buy back the club's ground, Raydale Park, for use by the community.

The grants have gone towards a 3G multi-discipline sports pitch for year-round use, the creation of a fitness and leisure space and new changing rooms.

Other investments include a project to clean up the local riverbanks, new facilities for the village halls and a three-year barnacle geese tagging programme with the local Wildlife and Wetland Trust. This project will provide important insight into goose ecology, migratory paths, habitat use and how the birds have responded to the operation of the wind farm.

"Gretna has lacked a safe space for children and teenagers to participate in sports. We now have more than 250 users of our facilities. We're grateful for EDF Renewables UK's support for the mental and physical wellbeing of our community. We couldn't have done what we've done without them."
Stuart Rome, Facilities Manager at Raydale Community Partnership



Beck Burn Wind Farm | EDF

31MW | England



Cloddach Bridge

Local communities have watched the Cloddach Bridge on a well-used route fall into disrepair for several decades. After several restrictive measures were imposed, the bridge's condition deteriorated, leading to its closure in February 2022 for public safety reasons, resulting in a substantial detour for the community.

Representatives from Heldon Community Council and communities affected by the bridge closure campaigned for the local authority to consider the bridge for structural repairs. Due to budget cuts, the local authority could not progress without a full business case.

Given the local impact and exceptional circumstances, Heldon Community Council utilised the community benefit fund to support the cost of a full business case. This resulted in the local authority agreeing to proceed with a view to securing match funding to make the essential repairs to the bridge and reconnecting the community.



Rothes Wind Farm | Fred. Olsen Renewables
92MW | Scotland



SUMMARY OF ONGOING WORK

As the landscape of onshore wind evolves across the UK, this report highlights the excellent standard of projects supported through community benefit funds.

- Through the Scottish Onshore Wind Sector Deal, Scottish Renewables supported Local Energy Scotland (LES) in updating the Community Benefits Register – a register of all community benefit schemes in Scotland. A developer Task and Finish Group informed LES on how best to revise the functionality of the register. Scottish Renewables is now supporting developers in uploading more projects to the register.
- To support a Sector Deal commitment to collaborate with developers on community benefit funding, Scottish Renewables has formed a Community Benefits Working Group which meets monthly. It provides a forum for developers in Scotland to collaborate on current issues and opportunities related to community benefits.
- The Scottish Government is reviewing responses to its public consultation on community benefits from net-zero energy developments and is expected to respond in the Autumn. To support this work, the Scottish Government has established a Good Practice Principles Advisory Group on which Scottish Renewables sits on.
- The UK Government is currently developing its Community Benefit Protocol for onshore developments in England. This is expected to be released in summer 2025.
- RenewableUK has established a Task and Finish Group to bring together expertise on community benefits for onshore wind which will support the UK Government's protocol and promote best practices in providing community benefits in England.
- The UK Onshore Wind Industry Taskforce expects to publish a strategy paper this year. This will include policies on communities and public perception. Scottish Renewables and RenewableUK are involved in the advisory process for developing these policies.
- In May 2025, the UK Government launched its consultation on Community Benefits and Shared Ownership for Low Carbon Energy Infrastructure. Scottish Renewables will be engaging closely with the UK Government as it develops these plans to ensure they protect the viability of projects and deliver a lasting, strategic legacy for local communities.



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