Department for
Business, Energy
& Industrial Strategy

Community Engagement and Benefits from Onshore Wind Developments

Good Practice Guidance for England

December 2021

Contents

About these Guidelines

This document provides updated good practice guidance for community engagement and benefits from onshore wind developments in England.

The guidance has been prepared to help communities, developers, and local authorities work together effectively and for the mutual benefit of all involved.

The guidance reflects the range of approaches that developers and communities are taking to engage with each other, and the range of benefits that are now available to communities who host onshore wind developments in all parts of Great Britain.

Contained within the guidance are the first-hand testimonies and real-life examples from developers, community groups and local authorities, from across Great Britain, who have been at the forefront of developing new onshore wind projects.

This guidance does not seek to provide specific advice on the planning application process in England.

Part 1 of this guidance focusses on good practice in community engagement.

Part 2 of this guidance focusses on good practice in identifying, agreeing and managing the realisation of community benefits.

Ministerial Foreword

The transition to a net zero economy will involve a fundamental change in how we produce and consume energy.

The Net Zero Strategy committed government to take action to fully decarbonise our electricity supply by 2035, subject to security of supply. This will require substantial new, low carbon power sources to be built over the next decade. A low-cost, net zero consistent electricity system is most likely to be composed predominantly of wind and solar generation alongside nuclear and power CCUS and flexible technologies such as interconnectors, electricity storage and demand-side response.

All parts of society will have a part to play in meeting this ambitious goal. As the energy landscape changes, proactive and increased engagement with local communities across the UK will be key to ensuring that the local impacts and benefits of new energy developments are proportionate, measured and reflective of the local environmental and economic context.

Appropriately sited, locally supported, low-cost onshore wind generation has an important part to play in a responsible and balanced UK energy policy. It is a proven, low-carbon technology that delivers growth, investment and jobs across the UK and protects consumers against the volatile cost of fossil fuels.

Whilst BEIS surveys indicate that the majority of people support onshore wind, government recognises that some may have concerns about the pace of development in their local area. Government is clear that if onshore wind is to be successful it must be developed in a way that is truly sustainable – not only economically and environmentally, but also socially.

This new guidance provides a framework to help communities and developers engage constructively during the whole lifetime of an onshore wind project and deliver the types of benefits that local people truly want, in a way that is fair to all concerned.

The Rt. Hon Greg Hands

Key Terms

Community

In the context of this guidance, community refers to groups of people who share in common the place where they reside, work, visit or otherwise spend a considerable proportion of their time.

Developers

An onshore wind developer is the organisation that takes an onshore wind project from being an idea to becoming a reality. Normally this will be a commercial organisation, however, some communities have also been instrumental in developing their own onshore wind projects and taken up options for shared ownership.

Key tasks include identifying a suitable location for the windfarm, designing the windfarm, getting planning permission, securing investment, and building the windfarm.

In some cases, a commercial developer's objective will be to sell the windfarm once it is built and operational or when planning permission is received. In other cases, the developer may continue to own the windfarm for a period of years, or even its entire lifetime.

Local authorities and local planning authorities

The local planning authority will determine whether planning permission should be given to develop a new windfarm. As part of this they will review the quality of developer's engagement and conduct their own public consultation process. They are also responsible for developing local plans in which suitable areas for the development of onshore wind turbines are identified and where relevant planning policies are set out.

In most cases the local planning authority will be the same body as the local authority responsible for delivering most public services locally. In some cases, the local planning authority will be a separate public body. For example, in national parks, a national park authority will act as the planning authority across several local authority areas.

The local authorities' roles may vary considerably. In some cases, the local authority could be the developer or the landowner. They may work proactively with local communities and commercial organisations to create opportunities and support for an onshore windfarm.

Community engagement is about being a good neighbour throughout the lifetime of an onshore wind project

(Image: Thrive Renewables Windfarm Open Day).

Community Engagement

Community engagement, in the context of these guidelines, is not only about meeting the consultation requirements associated with a planning application process. It's also about being a good neighbour throughout the lifetime of a project. It requires effective communication and engagement, from liaison about construction plans or operational issues to ensuring the community benefits of the project are effectively realised.

Part 1 of this guidance focusses on good practice in community engagement.

Community Benefits

It is common for renewable energy projects to make financial, or in-kind, contributions to local communities. These arrangements are variously described as 'community benefits'. These packages are separate and additional to any other direct economic benefits from construction and development, such as employment or associated upgrades to local infrastructure. These packages are not material considerations in planning decisions.

Government has no formal role in enforcing or statutorily requiring community benefits. These are voluntary and a matter to be decided between the community and the developer.

Part 2 of this guidance focusses on good practice in identifying, agreeing, and managing the realisation of community benefits.

Introduction to the onshore windfarm development process

Processes for community engagement and the agreement and realisation of community benefits will closely relate to what is happening in the development of the onshore wind project overall.

Process

Typically, onshore windfarm development processes can be divided into 6 phases:

1. Scoping

2. Project development

3. Planning permission

4. Construction

5. Operation

6. End of the project

Timeframes will vary but typically the first three steps will be completed over a period of several years, construction will generally take between six and 12 months depending on the size of the development, and the life of the project is likely to be at least 25-30 years. Planning for the end of the project should begin long before it is due to come to an end.

The table below provides a summary of these stages and highlights the corresponding guidance on good practice for community engagement and community benefits outlined in the document.

Stage 1: Scoping	
Onshore windfarm development process:	*Good practice guidance on community and community benefits provided in this document:*
• A site is identified for an onshore wind project based on its theoretical potential. • Engagement will usually begin between the landowner and the developer. • Preliminary technical and feasibility studies will be commissioned to establish development potential and concept. • This might include the erection an anemometer (for measuring the actual wind speed over a period of time). • The developer will design and begin pre-application consultation with the local community.	• A community engagement plan is developed and consulted on (see Good Practice Topic 1). • Engagement starts early (see Good Practice Topic 2). • The community is identified (see Good Practice Topic 3). • Community priorities are identified (see Good Practice Topic 9). • Different types of benefits are considered (see Good Practice Topics 10, 11 and 12).
Stage 2: Project development	
Onshore windfarm development process:	*Good practice guidance on community and community benefits provided in this document:*
• The developer will undertake pre-planning application consultation with the local community. • The developer will also begin to commission a range of detailed technical studies to inform the design of the site and planning application. These might include studies related to the local ecology, network connection options or what options and opportunities there could be for community benefits.	• Engagement needs to reach the whole community (see Good Practice Topic 4). • Engagement continues using multiple methods and platforms (see Good Practice Topic 4). • Initial feedback from the engagement process is shared with the community (see Good Practice Topic 5).

	• Community is consulted on community benefits (see Good Practice Topic 9.)

Stage 3: Planning Application

Onshore windfarm development process:	*Good practice guidance on community and community benefits provided in this document:*
• The local planning authority will make the planning application public and begin a public consultation. • Taking into account the consultation results, the local planning authority will review the application and determine whether the project can go ahead. • Planning permission may only be granted for a limited period, e.g. the expected operational lifetime of the project, and come with specific conditions attached.	*Community consultation on the planning application takes place, led by the local planning authority.* *The planning system itself is not covered in detail in this guidance.* *Further information on the UK planning system can be found at www.gov.uk or directly through your local planning authority.* *Note: the planning permission decision-making process does not take into account community benefits (see Introduction to Community benefits).*

Stage 4: Construction

Onshore windfarm development process:	*Good practice guidance on community and community benefits provided in this document:*
• The full construction process will generally take between six and 12 months depending on the size of the development. • Construction commences with the windfarm infrastructure, including access tracks, turbine bases, cable corridors and onsite substation. • Once all this is in place, the turbine manufacturer may send its own	• Careful management and consultation on the timings and expected duration of construction activity and of the approach routes to the site that will be used is vital to ensure that the impact on the community is minimised (see Good Practice Topic 6.

specialised crew and equipment to erect the turbines.	

Stage 5: Operation

Onshore windfarm development process:	*Good practice guidance on community and community benefits provided in this document:*
• The site becomes operational when it is connected to the electricity network. • Once the project is operational it is likely that activity on the site will be reduced with occasional inspection and maintenance of the site. • In time it is possible that ownership of the windfarm could change.	• It is important to maintain clear and regular lines of communication between the developer and community (see Good Practice Topic 6).

Stage 6: Planning for the end of the Project

Onshore windfarm development process:	*Good practice guidance on community and community benefits provided in this document:*
There are three likely scenarios for what will happen next: • Decommissioning – the infrastructure is removed. • Repowering – the existing infrastructure is replaced. This may mean new turbines. • Life-extension – the existing infrastructure continues to be used.	• The community should be engaged with early on in end of project life decisions (see Good Practice Topic 7).

Part I: Community engagement

Introduction to community engagement

Why is community engagement important?

Image: Hagshaw Hill Windfarm Repowering Community Exhibition.

"For communities, engagement means a chance to understand what is proposed, to explore how a development can bring value to an area, to identify which options would work best within a local context, to help shape solutions and to have their say on a scheme."

Developer

Good community engagement can help communities, the developer, and local authorities to:

- Build and maintain support for new projects.
- Identify community concerns and ensure that they can be addressed.
- Improve project plans, leading to better decisions and outcomes overall.
- Identify and create new opportunities and benefits for local communities.
- Increase public knowledge and awareness of the importance of renewable energy.
- Maintain the positive reputation of the UK's onshore wind industry.
- Inform the design, size, and location of windfarms.
- Minimise the disruption of construction of windfarms.

What is good practice in community engagement?

Ensuring that local authorities, developers and communities are able to work together effectively requires good practice in community engagement.

This section of the guidance focuses on eight key topics:

Good Practice Topic 1: Community engagement plan

Good Practice Topic 2: Starting early

Good Practice Topic 3: Identifying the community

Good Practice Topic 4: Reaching the whole community

Good Practice Topic 5: Feeding back and following up with the community.

Good Practice Topic 6: On-going engagement

Good Practice Topic 7: Repowering, decommissioning, and life extensions

Image: Grannell Community Energy celebrating the final construction of their turbine.

Good Practice Topic 1: Community engagement plan

A community engagement plan will usually be drafted by the developer at the outset of the project. The plan should include engagement activities related to both the development and community benefits.

A good community engagement plan will evolve and develop, both over time as the project moves through its different phases and in response to the engagement itself.

At the outset it should, as a minimum, outline:

1. The purposes of specific engagement activities

These are likely to evolve throughout the engagement and include: letting people know about the development plans; helping people to understand the development plans; getting people's input into the development plans; getting input from those in the community who are less likely to engage; discussing the priorities for community fund allocation and/or the potential for shared ownership; and maintaining productive relationships between all stakeholders throughout the lifetime of the project.

2. The key stakeholders to be engaged

The community engagement plan should identify key stakeholder groups to be engaged and what their engagement needs and preferences are likely to be (see Good Practice Topic 3). It should identify who are likely to need extra support and bespoke opportunities to engage due to health, access, language, and other factors. It should differentiate between statutory consultees and the wider community and seek to establish clear contacts within the community via some form of liaison or contact group.

3. The engagement techniques that will be used

The plan should outline the range of engagement techniques that will be employed to meet the needs of different stakeholder groups (see Good Practice Topic 4). Engagement techniques should also be appropriate to the outcome sought, whether it involves informing, consulting, or involving the local community. Effective consultation should identify how, and on what, people can influence the final outcome.

4. The timetable for engagement

The timetable should provide transparency about what is happening and when, including basic milestones for the project and key target dates. The timeline should ensure that sufficient time is allowed for feedback and be kept up to date. It should also include details of when key pieces of information will become available throughout the process.

5. How engagement will be monitored and responded to

The community engagement plan should ensure steps are in place to review the results, to identify gaps and inform actions to widen the process and ensure the views of people from across the broad spectrum of the community are heard. It should be updated and then publicised if things change, so the community can keep up with developments.

In developing and using the community engagement plan, good practice includes:

A. Consulting the community on the engagement plan

"We have found it really valuable to share our plans for consulting before we go out and do it. The community have really appreciated it as well. We've just asked for feedback about how we can reach all of the community. What we want is as much feedback as possible as we're going through the design process. Consulting the community representatives has helped to identify new ideas" (Developer)

A good engagement plan will be built on local knowledge. Sharing the plan with community representatives for feedback and input at the outset can help to improve the plan, ensure community buy in and build trust.

B. Keeping the engagement plan responsive to feedback

"Feedback was really clear after our first exhibition. There were three things that people were constantly raising: ecology, shared ownership and broadband. So then at our next exhibitions we had our specialist there to talk in detail about ecology or broadband or shared ownership. That worked really well, it responded to what people really wanted to talk about" (Developer)

The engagement plan needs to be flexible and remain responsive. Adapting the plan to provide bespoke information about local concerns is important.

Good Practice Topic 2: Starting early

Starting the community engagement process as early as possible is likely to be beneficial to all stakeholders:

> *"The earlier you start that, the more trust that you create early on, the more chances you've got of things running well into the future"*

(Community representative)

> *"I think there is sometimes some frustration from communities that they can't really change things and they can't get involved but the pre-application process and that early engagement [makes] it better because there's still some scope for the developer to amend the proposals before they're finalised. So it's really important to involve people from quite an early stage."*

(Local authority representative)

> *"There is no substitute for time spent, getting to know people, getting to know an area and speaking to people directly. You can get a lot of information through statistics and available data, but actually getting in there and quantifying it by speaking to people, is important"*

> *(Developer)*

Early engagement is important because:

- It is important to be transparent – communities have the right to know when a new development is being considered in their area.

- Having undertaken preliminary research, it allows developers to get a holistic, first-hand understanding of a community.

- It enables communities to raise concerns, for early dialogue to commence, and allows any potential misconceptions to be addressed.

- It means the community can begin to understand the details of the project and the benefits it could bring.

- It can help to build trust, as communities understand how and when they can expect to be engaged in the development process.

Early-stage engagement in Practice

In practice, initial engagement is likely to be best done in person and focussed on sharing plans and getting to know the community. This includes:

- Identifying who needs to be engaged and the most appropriate forms of engagement.

- Understanding the challenges and the benefits a wind project could bring to the area.

- Identifying local issues that the developer needs to take into account.

Good practice means going-about these steps in a way that demonstrates integrity and shows genuine interest, respect, and sensitivity towards local communities:

> *"I think developers are quite adept at not being particularly discerning about communities. We sometimes hear 'You've seen one community you've seen them all'. No. I think that's fool-hardy. It's about really doing your homework, understanding the geography of that community. It's important that they [the developer] find a way to build rapport based on having a genuine interest rather than it just being a place they've got to get consent." (Community Representative).*

Sometimes it might not be possible or even appropriate (for instance, if a development is not 100% certain to go ahead) to conduct full community engagement in the first instance. However, it can be helpful to consider the following groups as part of early engagement:

- Residents living close to the proposed windfarm location.

- Local authorities and parish councils.

- Political stakeholders, MPs, councillors.

- Local social and community organisations; such as community trusts, social enterprises, organisations with an interest in economic regeneration or local clubs and sports teams.

- Local businesses.

Good Practice Topic 3: Identifying the community

Who are the community?

Identifying who constitutes the 'local' community is essential for clarifying who needs to be engaged in the development process and for clarifying the 'area of benefit' for any potential community benefits (see Good Practice Topic 9: Consulting on community benefits).

However, all communities are different and therefore the local community will need to be determined on a case-by-case basis.

There will often be a need to be flexible in defining the local community:

> *You're always up against the challenge that people don't define their lives by parish council boundaries so whilst I might be in parish council X my kids might go to school in parish council Y. So I think there's an argument for being a bit more fluid about thinking about how community is defined. (Community Representative)*

Key factors to take into account include:

1. How local people describe the make-up and boundaries of their communities.

2. The proximity to the windfarm site of where people live or work.

3. The area of visual impact.

   "I think the visual intrusion maps that are in the environmental statements are a good starting point, because they show the area that's going to be impacted." (Community Representative)

4. The likely impacts of the construction: for example, disturbances such as increased traffic and the impacts of site infrastructure such as pylons.

5. The impact on groups within the community who have a particular interest in the area, for example for recreational or conservation reasons.

6. Local administrative and political boundaries for example parish boundaries.

In identifying the community, it is also important to remember that:

- Virtually all communities will consist of a range of different groups of people with different needs and priorities, all of whose opinions need to be considered.

- In practice, communities are likely to straddle local geographically defined administrative units such as parish boundaries.

- That no one particular parish council or community group is likely to be representative of the full range of local opinion.

Good Practice Topic 4: Reaching the whole community

Reaching the whole community requires considering the needs of different and often disparate groups and tailoring a range of different engagement techniques to reach them.

> *"You want to try and design a process so that you engage with old people, young people, people who have got this viewpoint, people who are not so engaged. So that is a combination of traditional methods, face-to-face consultation events, working together with community councils, attending their events; working together with key people from the local authorities at having public events which are open to anyone."* (Developer)

Good practice for developers will therefore require particular attention to:

1. Identifying the differing communication needs and priorities of community members.

2. Ensuring that engagement methods are purposeful and correspond to the level and nature of feedback required from community members.

3. Using a range of different engagement methods

4. Establishing new platforms and forums for engagement if they do not exist.

5. Monitoring, understanding, and responding to different levels of engagement across the community.

1. Identifying the differing communication needs and priorities of community members.

Community members are likely to have different communication needs and priorities. For example, some people will be more able and likely to engage online rather than through face-to-face meetings. Others will prefer face-to-face meetings. Some community members are likely to be most able to engage during the evenings. For others it might be weekends or during the weekdays.

Good practice engagement means recognising that community members are different and selecting the most suitable communication channels – email, online platforms, social media, phone, or in-person group meetings. People should be offered a variety of options to communicate and provide their input.

Some groups of people will be more forthcoming and easier to engage than others. Stakeholders who are the most vulnerable and at risk of not being given an opportunity to share their expectations and opinions should be given special attention. This might include, for example, low-income groups, women, children, the elderly, people with disabilities and minority groups.

2. Ensuring that engagement methods are purposeful and correspond to the level and nature of feedback required from community members.

The engagement methods used will also depend on the stage of the process and purpose of the activities. Two examples are provided below: the first for letting people know about the development plans (likely to be at the beginning of the project), and the second for building a deeper understanding about the development plans and facilitating feedback (likely to be in the project development phase).

Example 1: Letting people know about the development plans – this will usually include an invitation to 'find out more' at a public briefing event.

Potential methods

- Face-to-face meetings with key stakeholders (e.g. parish councils).

- Door-knocking in the closest or most affected neighbourhoods.

- Press release to local media and advert in local paper.

- Setting up a website with clear contact information, including an opportunity to subscribe to updates or request a phone call or meeting with a representative from the developer.

- Posters on noticeboards, village halls, community venues, post offices, pubs.

Example 2: Building a deeper understanding about the development plans and facilitating feedback.

Potential methods:

- In-person exhibitions and online public briefing events with meeting spaces for private discussions to address individuals' concerns. Developers should vary the timing to ensure people with different commitments – such as work and family – can attend.

- Attendance at community meetings and events to follow-up on key topics.

- Parish polls and surveys to give people the chance to express opinions rapidly.

- The developer should make it as easy as possible for people to contact them by establishing a range of different communication channels: phone, email, social media, call-me function on website etc."

- Keep website updated with presentations, recordings, and videos from engagement events.

As engagement moves from consultation to involvement, potentially around community funds or understanding the interest in, or potential for, shared ownership, techniques should provide opportunities for discussion and deliberation. So, for example, moving from public meetings to facilitated workshops.

3. Using a range of different engagement methods

Using a variety of communication channels and engagement activities, in particular new innovative digital methods alongside the more traditional methods, is key to ensuring that a multitude of views are reflected and that the outcomes of an engagement process are representative of the local community's views.

Techniques that can be used include:

- Identifying local community representatives and working through them, and with them. For example, employing local people to gather community views.

- Using traditional methods of engagement, such as surveys, telephone polls, door knocking, and in-person events.

- Using digital methods, such as maintaining a project website, using 3d visualisations and multimedia, hosting webinars, and accessing social media.

- Using community outreach techniques and utilising established channels of communication to engage the community e.g., through local newspapers, magazines, and radio, identifying existing events and groups.

- Providing safe spaces for individuals to discuss and feedback, such as arranging ways for issues to be discussed on a one-to-one basis or establishing anonymous voting arrangements at key meetings; and

- Using independent experts to discuss specific concerns.

Developers exhibiting good practice will:

- Combine physical events with digital communications and engagement methods to reach a broad range of people.

- Where physical or online events happen, record and share the outputs. Use sub-titles and summaries to underline key points.

- Plan events around people's lifestyle patterns. Consider the timing and location of events and use existing channels or meetings that people already attend.

- Use innovative methods such as visual representations and 3D models, photomontages, site visits or even virtual visualisation headsets to bring the potential development to life.

Visits to windfarms can help to dispel common myths

Image: Thrive Renewables

<u>Going the extra mile to make it real:</u>

Online parish polls and coach trips to see other windfarms, are two examples of how developers can go the extra mile to make the development real for people, to reach beyond and supplement typical, traditional methods of engagement:

Coach trips to see other windfarms

> *"'We offered free coach trips to see windfarms. For some people, it was just a day out. It was just a free coach trip really, they didn't really care too much about our windfarm development.*
>
> *"But then when one or two letters appeared in the local newspaper saying that windfarms kill birds and stuff like that, some of the people who had been on coach trip wrote into the newspapers and said, no they don't, we've actually been to one and didn't see any dead birds." (Developer)*

Online Parish Poll:

> *"Parish poll is a good one […] that's not like being at a public meeting where people tend to put their hand up along with the majority. It gives people the chance to vote… a secret poll really, privately, and so if they want to do different from the majority opinion they're not identified. In our experience that did produce a very, very big turnout, about 70 or 80 per cent" (Community Representative).*

4. Establishing new platforms and forums for engagement if they do not exist.

In some cases, for instance where there are limited existing communication channels or a need to bring different communities together, it can be beneficial to establish new forums for discussion and platforms for engagement.

For example, developers can play an instrumental role in helping to establish liaison groups:

> *"What we do across a lot of projects we work on is establish a community liaison forum. You would go initially and meet each community council individually, you would present the proposal to them… the round table format is the best way to really get the ball rolling in a sort of unified stance."* (Community engagement specialist).

5. Monitoring, understanding, and responding to different levels of engagement across the community.

The results of engagement need to be clearly recorded and monitored in order to respond to the issues raised and to understand which parts of the community are not engaged.

There may be many reasons why people do not engage. For some it might be a lack of time or indifference, although it is important not to assume that this is always the case. For others it can be because onshore wind is an emotive subject that can sometimes be divisive within the community itself. Understanding why some people aren't engaging is crucial for understanding how engagement processes can be adapted and improved.

> *"Sometimes people don't really want to become involved because there might be different views within their group"* (Developer)

> *"Sometimes you may find that there is one very vociferous group that silences others. This could mean that those that are engaged are affluent and those who could really benefit are left out of the conversation. So it is important to find communication channels and events that help you connect with them"* (Developer)

In some communities, particularly those well suited to onshore wind, developers will need to be mindful of consultation fatigue:

> *"People can get involved by attending the public exhibitions, making their representations known to myself, or to the planning authority, or to the wind farm company. The problem is people don't bother. We've had so many, and people say 'Oh not another wind farm"* (Community representative).

Community-led engagement

Ambition Lawrence Weston (ALW), a community group based around a post-war housing estate on the Bristol Channel, undertook a door-knocking campaign to find out peoples' views on what was good and not so good about their neighbourhood. The residents' development plan that emerged from this process focused on local economic regeneration.

Renewable energy and climate change were not on the agenda, but finance was required to deliver the plan, and this is when the ambitious idea to develop a community owned wind turbine began to take root and Ambition Community Energy (ACE) came into being.

Image: Ambition Community Energy (ACE) team visit the site of their proposed community windfarm.

ACE have worked closely with residents to secure support for their windfarm. They approached people in person at community events, neighbourhood forums and business breakfasts. They ran stalls where they also offered advice about energy efficiency and saving money on energy bills. At these events, community members could ask questions, discuss their concerns, and express their views about the project. ALW also distributed the questionnaire via a door knocking campaign and as an insert to a local magazine delivered to 3,500 households.

In total, they engaged with 815 people. Out of 183 survey responses collected at face-to-face events, 96% expressed support for renewable energy and for wind turbines in their area. Out of 530 survey responses from the door knocking campaign, 68% of residents expressed support and 26% said they weren't sure.

Good Practice Topic 5: Feeding back and following up with the community.

Feeding back to the community

Once feedback from the community has been gathered, developers should demonstrate how feedback is being used to develop and influence the project.

It is therefore important for developers to share findings and any resulting changes. Several rounds of feedback may be required in order to refine any changes:

> *"We would say, 'This is what people in your area have told us.', so there's real transparency […] that's what people are talking about and so by acknowledging that we know that we can then start to answer and address that conversation."* (Developer)

Continuous feedback throughout the engagement process via a project website, community newsletters, and social media can help ensure communities know their views are being heard and carefully considered. Feedback should not be limited to the Statement of Community Involvement, or Pre-Application Consultation Report, submitted as part of a planning application.

Feedback on issues that have not been addressed and why is as important, if not more important, than issues where feedback has been taken onboard. Acknowledging what is not possible and why can help to build trust, even if it is not what local people want to hear.
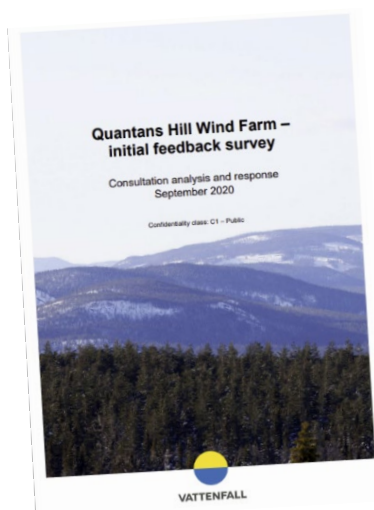
Transparency when sharing the range of views received can help to ensure and demonstrate that changes made to the development are in direct response to the wider views of the community.

(Image: Quantans Hill Wind Farm – initial feedback survey, Vattenfall).

Good Practice Topic 6: On-going engagement

Community engagement does not end once planning permission has been granted

Maintaining a positive relationship with the community through a project's operational lifetime requires continued engagement. Engagement should not just be left to the process of developing the project, or providing community benefits:

> *"You still need to have meetings to update the community, to tell them how it's going, and keep them as involved as possible."* (Developer)

Construction phase

As procedures are put in place to enable the smooth construction of the windfarm, the level of community engagement often needs to increase.

Careful management and consultation on the timings, approach routes, and expected duration of construction activity is vital to ensure that the impact on the community is minimised. Information about potential road closures, disruption or delays should be given to the local residents in advance of construction commencing along with details of who to contact if there are any issues.

> *"I thought it was a very, very good thing that during construction they [developer] had these liaison groups and I would recommend that for every community across the UK that when it comes to getting the thing built, have open channels of communication […] So it's courtesy to keep your neighbours informed that's how I look upon it and they certainly do"* (Community representative)

The on-going relationship

It is important that developers or operators of onshore wind farms maintain and make available a consistent, single point of contact. It is important for the community to feel that they can talk about the wind farm to the relevant person, and in a timely manner. This may be because they have noticed a problem or simply because they would like access to the site and want to know who to ask.

Developers who maintain and make available a single and responsive point of contact for the on-going relationship tend to have better relationships with the local community:

> *"One thing we've done is make sure that we've got one contact point with the company and that's been really a very useful thing to do so the community know that there's someone in [the organisation] – it doesn't matter whether*

their question is related to the operations or a problem at the site, or the fund
– [they feel] that it's not a big company with lots of different doors."
(Developer)

Change of ownership

Good practices in community engagement will remain relevant regardless of the ownership.

Where there is a change in ownership, additional community engagement will be required to build new relationships. As in early engagement, best practice uses a mixture of methods – from face-to-face engagement to publicising changes on digital platforms – in order to refresh relationships and ensure new owners or operators of the wind farm are made familiar with the local community, and vice versa.

Where the provision of community funds has been agreed, a legally binding and robust agreement should be drawn up, at the outset to protect all parties involved, particularly to ensure continuity of community benefits if ownership of the development changes (see Good Practice Topic 10).

Changes to the project

Throughout the lifetime of the project, a developer may consider expanding the windfarm. Generally, this will mean increasing the footprint of the site and number of turbines.

A developer may also consider 'repowering' a wind farm which, conversely, often means decreasing the footprint of the site, and replacing older turbines with fewer but more efficient models.

Good practice community engagement for the extension of windfarms and repowering may vary in form (due to an already established relationship with the community) but should follow the main principles outlined for engagement at the beginning of a project.

Good Practice Topic 7: Repowering, decommissioning and life extensions

Initial project life

Onshore wind planning consents generally range from 25-30 years, reflecting the expected operational lifetime of the site. However, there can be changes to the nature of the wind farm across its lifetime (such as repowering or site extension), or the lifetime can be extended itself. These changes can happen at any stage in the life of a project.

In these instances, it is important that the developers are transparent with their intentions and inform communities as early as possible.

What happens at the end of the project?

Developers have 3 options:

1. Decommissioning – the infrastructure is removed, and the land is returned to its former state. It is usually a requirement of planning to decommission the turbines at the end of their operational life or when they have stopped working for a set period of time and to remove all infrastructure.

2. Repowering – some or all of the existing infrastructure is replaced. In most cases this involves replacing existing turbines with newer, more efficient models. Sometimes this will result in a fewer number of larger turbines with an increased energy output, thereby increasing the overall capacity of the site whilst decreasing site footprint. A new planning application will be required.

3. Lifetime-extension – the existing infrastructure continues to be used, and the lifetime of the current project in its current state is extended by 5-10 years, or even more. An application to vary existing consent or a new application will be required.

Good relationships between the community and the developer will help when it comes to deciding what happens when a windfarm's time runs out. But local support for repowering and extending its life should not be taken for granted.

Early discussions about potential next steps are important to gauge opinion and get people involved. Good engagement can provide an opportunity to address community concerns with the existing site e.g. through changing the site layout.

End of life also provides an opportunity to change the form of community benefits. For instance, if a project repowers and increases the operational capacity of the site, then the amount of community benefits being paid may also increase. There may also be the opportunity for communities to seek an alternative form of community benefit, such as shared ownership or investment in infrastructure (see part 2 of this document).

Case study: good practice in community engagement

Location: Berry Burn windfarm in North-East Scotland
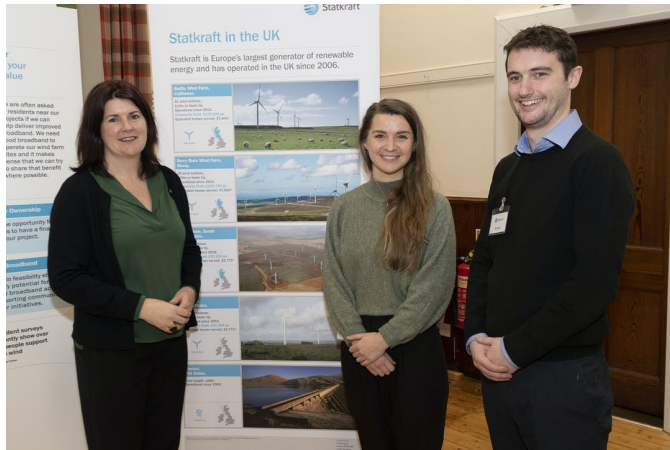Developer: Statkraft
Installation capacity: 37.8 MW

Image: Public exhibitions in Berry Burn (Statkraft)

A 3-stage engagement process enabled the community to influence plans and proposals at an early stage.

Initial communication and exhibitions

Public exhibitions were advertised on local notice boards, in direct mail-outs, in the local press, via geo-targeted digital adverts, and by notifying elected representatives. These provided information about the operational windfarm, the community benefit fund, the proposed extension, prospective local benefits, and anticipated next steps. Attendees were asked to complete feedback forms to share their views on the proposal.

The developer told local representatives about the development plans and asked for their suggestions on who they should try to reach as part of the consultation process.

A project website provided a way for residents to get in touch with the project team, view or download documents, subscribe for updates, and take part in online surveys. Following feedback from the exhibitions, the developer published a report on the project website which summarised the community feedback to date. It responded to stated views and questions such as 'We have got enough wind turbines in Moray' and 'Who will really benefit from this project?'

Follow up events and workshops

Follow-up events and workshops took place that focused on key topics raised by the community.

The choice of location, timings and contents of these events responded to community feedback from previous events.

At these events, the developer presented a revised proposal for the site. This included information on proposed habitat enhancement, and wildfire restoration and protection.

Online engagement (in response to Covid-19 restrictions)

The developer continued to engage with the community in 2020 despite the restrictions of the pandemic by making information available on the project website and by hosting or joining virtual meetings.

Information on the extension and about initiatives in the local area taken by the developer were presented to the community via videos and newsletters, including the donation of a defibrillator to a visitor centre and a proposal to bring superfast broadband to the area.

At this third stage, the developer committed to implementing environmental protection measures for the proposed extension, including rewetting damaged habitats.

These actions would help the land damaged by a recent wildfire to recover more quickly, minimise the impact of any future wildfires and lead to longer term improvements in the quality of the bog and heathland habitats.

Key aspects of good practice

Engagement followed a planned and well-structured engagement process. Community representatives and local groups were asked for their advice on who to involve and practical arrangements that make it easier for people to get involved.

The developer held virtual meetings and provided information in a variety of ways on a project website. These included videos, a document library, newsletters, and surveys.

A community liaison group was established to provide a consistent way for the developer to contact and engage with the community.

Feedback was shared with community representatives about what had been learned so far and how this was being used to shape the next steps for engagement and to make changes to the design of the extension.

Part II: Community benefits

Introduction to community benefits

From investment into the local economy to improved community infrastructure and the strengthening of biodiversity, there are many ways in which onshore windfarms can contribute to creating more resilient, inclusive, and prosperous local communities.

> *"It has brought benefits. We have broadband internet to every house in the community. We have funding to support winter fuel payments. We have a play park which we haven't had for years. So it has brought things for the youngsters as well as the older ones"* (Community representative)

Community benefit packages

It is common for renewable energy projects to incorporate financial packages that make payments directly, or in kind, to local communities. These schemes are a well-established part of onshore wind energy development. The onshore wind industry maintains a community benefits protocol which commits to ensuring that these benefits schemes are realised within local host communities. These packages are separate and additional to any other wider benefits of windfarms.

Wider benefits

These often derive from the way in which the construction and development is carried out, for example in employment of local people or upgrades to infrastructure (such as faster broadband). Preference can be given to local contractors in tendering processes, community cohesion and agency can be built through effective engagement processes (as outlined in Part 1), and investment opportunities can be provided for local people.

Community benefits and planning

Community benefit packages are not material considerations in determining whether planning permission should be given.

That said, a planning authority may require a development to undertake or make contributions towards a compensatory set of actions in order for planning permission to be granted. This might include widening a road to enable turbines to get to site, or initiatives or investments to counteract the direct losses of amenity or habitat. These actions must be deemed necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms; direct and related to the site development; and fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the development.

This section covers 5 key topics of good practice for delivering community benefits from onshore wind projects:

Good Practice Topic 8: Early engagement

Good Practice Topic 9: Consulting on community benefits

Good Practice Topic 10: Community benefit funds

Good Practice Topic 11: In-kind benefits

Good Practice Topic 12: Shared ownership

Pupils of Meidrim Primary School visit YnNi Teg community wind turbine near Carmarthen, South Wales (SFW Communications)

Good Practice Topic 8: Early engagement

First steps

- Developers should share their policy and outline the process and key principles for agreeing a community benefit package.
- This should include the overall value - typically determined per MW of installed onshore wind capacity - of the community package that is potentially available, and the types of community benefit that are potentially available.
- Communities should ensure they understand what community benefits are being offered by a developer.
- Communities should consider what their vision or aspiration for the local area is and whether this could be assisted by the wind development being proposed.

Deepening understanding

Each community has a different set of needs and aspirations and will need to decide themselves on what impacts a community benefits package should have. Early engagement from the developer is therefore best directed towards understanding local aspirations and understanding any issues that may affect different members of the local community.

There are different methods that can be used for involving communities in the design of a community benefits package including running community action planning workshops, visioning sessions, and focus groups, polls, and surveys.

Approaches need to be proportionate to the size and type of benefits on offer. For example, if a community is set to have a community benefit fund pot amounting to hundreds of thousands of pounds annually, then a detailed community action plan that clearly sets out the vision for the local community can be beneficial – and the developer should support this process. While it does take upfront investment, developing a community action plan can show people coming in and wanting to invest in the area where your priorities are as a community and has been described by some developers as the single most useful action they have supported (see case study: Kype Muir windfarm).

Consideration should also be given to local capacity and resources, and the most effective means of engagement and delivery of local benefits. This could potentially be supported by the establishment of a community liaison committee (see Good Practice Topic 4).

Good Practice Topic 9: Consulting on community benefits

Why is it important to keep conversations about community benefits separate to planning decisions and consultation?

There is a strict principle in the English planning system that a planning proposal should be determined based on material planning considerations, as defined by law. Planning legislation therefore prevents local planning authorities from taking into account contributions that are not necessary to make a development acceptable in planning terms.

While engagement on community benefits will inevitably be conducted in conjunction with engagement about 'if', 'when', and 'how' a development should go ahead, it needs to be both separate and secondary. Support for the project cannot be contingent on community benefits and community members should always be aware that they must treat each matter separately.

Who should be involved?

- Designing community benefit packages should be done through a consultation process between developers and local communities including individual community interest members, community groups, parish councils, and local planning authorities.

- Engagement on community benefit schemes should reach at least the same geographical area as the consultation on the development itself. The community affected by the wind farm will involve different, smaller communities - villages, towns, and districts that are often governed and represented by different organisations. Developers should consider how to involve these groups – whether to build on existing arrangements or establish new bodies.

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

- However, any decision to widen the area of benefit beyond the immediate community (see Good Practice Topic 3) should form part of the consultation process with the community living within the boundary of the development area.

How should consultation on community benefits be conducted?

Flexibly: The developer, communities, and others involved in the process should be as flexible as possible to ensure they find the best solution for their local area. This might include considering the communities wishes for the type of benefit, the feasibility of delivering this, and support required. Aligning benefits with arrangements from other local initiatives can maximise local benefit.

With opportunities for deliberation and discussion: This engagement will benefit from using more interactive techniques such as surveys and facilitated workshops rather than presentations. However, the developer should be clear and focussed as to what can and what cannot be changed, so that feedback can be properly integrated into the final package. For example, sometimes the level of financial support is non-negotiable (such as the total of the community benefit fund or the level of shared ownership), but priorities for allocation or the approach to delivery is.

With engagement from local authorities and councils: Local authorities and local councils (parish or community councils) will need to be part of these consultations. They can play an important role in helping to identify local needs and priorities and establishing links to existing initiatives and actors.

With a clear and transparent process for deciding how benefits are distributed: There can be a risk that communities fall out with each other over decisions on who benefits, and the geographical area to be covered by community benefits. It can be difficult getting agreement on how benefits are shared both within a community and across multiple communities. This is because different community members and communities do not always share the same concerns or have the same needs.

With broad community support and representation: The findings of the consultation should be shared with the wider community. Following this, there should be a process of review and discussion between the onshore wind developer and a group of local people nominated to progress discussions about confirming the community benefits arrangements. This group may involve local councillors or other mandated representative groups or individuals and may involve a relevant third party.

With access to support: There are two main reasons why it can be hard to engage with the design of community benefits. Firstly, the prolonged and often arduous planning and consent process can make it really challenging to retain community members who are also involved in discussions around community benefits. Secondly, communities may not be sufficiently well organised or have the skills and capacity to negotiate and organise community benefits. Third-party support to build community capacity and access professional advice, as well as to cover legal advice costs in these cases is extremely valuable.

Good Practice Topic 10: Community benefit funds

What is a community benefit fund?

A Community Benefit Fund is a voluntary commitment by a developer to pay into a fund which is then made available to finance community projects. Community benefit funds can offer an opportunity for the local community to access long-term, reliable, and flexible funding to directly enhance their local area, economy, society, and environment. They can take the form of a fixed annual sum paid per MW of installed onshore wind capacity, a variable annual payment linked to profit or electricity output measures, lump-sum payments, or a blend of all three.

What is required to successfully set-up and manage a community benefit fund?

Typically, there are three things required to successfully set-up and manage a community benefit fund

1. **A clearly defined purpose for the funds that correspond to local needs and priorities (as defined by the consultation process)**

This should outline the agreed parameters for the fund including who can apply to the fund, the types of projects that can be supported, and who is intended to benefit from them. It is good practice for the fund administrators to share the assessment criteria that will be used to assess applications with applicants.

2. **Clear and legally enforceable agreements about the provision of the community benefits by the windfarm owner**

Once planning consent has been granted, the details of the community benefit package should be firmed up. A legal agreement to provide the community benefits package should be drawn up to minimise the risk of disputes and problems further down the line.

The agreement should cover:

- The payments that will be made and what, if anything, this depends on.

- Any inflationary increases the payments will be subject to.

- If the payments are related to electricity production rather than installed capacity, how this will be confirmed, by whom and on what timetable each year.

- When the payments will begin and cease, and frequency.

- How payment will be triggered and what happens if there are any problems.

- What the fund may and may not be used for (for example, sometimes religious and political initiatives are specifically excluded) and who has liability and responsibility for its management once the money has been paid by the developer.

- How disputes should be dealt with.

- What obligations the community has to the windfarm owner in relation to the funds, such as reporting and auditing.

- Mechanisms for binding future owners to the same terms.

3. A well-defined, documented, and accountable approach to managing and distributing the funds involving local people.

This can be done either by using an established organisation e.g. a Community Foundation, which will typically take a share of the fund to cover its administrative costs, or by setting up an independent trust or panel to administer the fund, comprising local community members.

The mechanism for administering the benefits should be decided once all parties are clear on what they are trying to achieve. A community fund should be managed and controlled by a formal organisation. There are a range of routes for administering community benefit funds:

In all cases the administration should:

1. Be rooted in or answerable to the local community;

2. Be proportionate so the management of the fund is appropriate to the size of the fund;

3. Be transparent with robust and impartial procedures in place;

4. Be an organisation/body with sufficient capacity to engage fully and constructively with the developer and the community; and

5. Be managed by an organisation or body that is likely to still be in existence in the medium-long-term.

Good Practice Example: Establishing a Community Benefit Fund

Location   *Argyll & Bute, Scotland*
Developer   *Ventient Energy*
Installation capacity   *42.6 MW*

Once the A'Cruach windfarm in Argyll, Scotland, was consented, a community action planning process was undertaken with the four local community councils to secure funding from the development through a community benefit fund. Once each community had an action plan, they ran an exercise looking across the different plans and identifying unifying themes and issues. Out of this, they developed with the communities a fund strategy fine-tuned to the needs and ambitions of those four communities.

It was decided that the main purpose of the fund would be to support positive change by investing in a wide range of "inspirational, community-led activity that is strategic, positive and helps create a legacy of lasting impact". A few key outcomes and project areas were defined and applications to the fund are expected to address one or more of the following: (1) advance rural regeneration, (2) enhance infrastructure including affordable housing and transport, (3) establish new community services and improve existing ones, (4) develop and improve community facilities, (5) enhance leisure facilities, (6) capacity building for new and existing community organisations.

A Community Panel, made up of people who live, work or volunteer in the communities, makes recommendations on grant awards from the fund. The panel advises on overall fund strategy and is governed by Terms of Reference.

Project example: Funding from the A'Chruach Community Fund helped hire a qualified woodsman and purchase new tools to establish a woodworking club in Blarbuie woodland, Lochgilphead. Membership of the club is free to everyone in the community.

Good Practice Topic 11: In-kind benefits

What are in-kind benefits?

Whereas a community benefit fund makes additional investment available for communities to deliver local benefits, benefits in-kind are provided directly by developers to communities. They can include things like local energy discount schemes, or shared ownership opportunities (see Good Practice Topic 12).

What are the advantages of in-kind community benefits?

In-kind benefits can work alongside and in addition to other types of community benefits. Unlike community benefit funds, which require the community to consider and manage the apportion of funds on a case-by-case basis, benefits in kind can contribute directly to longer-term strategic aims, such as the funding of significant local infrastructure upgrades (see case study, below). However, it is important that they are responsive to community needs and priorities, have buy-in from the community and are defined and legally agreed in a similar way to community benefit funds.

Good practice example: In-kind benefits

Location	*Caro, Wales*
Developer	*Belltown Power*
Installation capacity	*24MW*

Tirgwtnt windfarm near the village of Carno in Mid Wales commenced in 2016, it was jointly funded by Belltown Power and the landowners, who continue to farm the land around the development.

Following extensive community engagement, the developer agreed to respond to the wishes of the Carno community and front load the Carno community benefits funding.

It enabled the community to fund a new school building and saved the school from closure. Tirgwynt windfarm holds an annual visit for local school children where they participate in workshops, familiarise themselves with the technology and gain an understanding of climate change.

Good Practice Topic 12: Shared ownership

What is Shared ownership?

Whilst it is currently most common for windfarms to be developed and owned by commercial organisations in the UK (due largely to the investment and expertise required), there are also opportunities for communities to benefit from community or shared ownership.

In some cases *(like Ambition Community Energy)* a community group will take on the role of a developer and seek to raise the investment required to take on full ownership of the windfarm by themselves. This is known as community energy.

Shared ownership represents a hybrid between the two models of community and commercial ownership whereby both parties have financial stake in the development.

Communities and developers should carefully consider the balance between the benefits to individuals that arise from shared ownership and the benefits to the wider community. Good practice models will ensure a secure and reliable benefit to the wider community. Usually this will mean that the commercial partner establishes some form of financial arrangement with a community group or community enterprise that can hold the benefit from the arrangement in trust for the community.

There are three main models:

1. Joint ventures, a model where the community and renewable energy business create an organisation to take forward a project together. The renewable energy business may or may not own a larger share of the joint venture company.

2. Shared revenue, in which a legally constituted community organisation buys the rights to a future virtual revenue stream which will be calculated on the basis of a specified proportion of the output of an installation (less agreed operating costs and generally less virtual debt service). This is calculated as if the community had acquired the underlying infrastructure.

3. Split ownership, in which a legally constituted community organisation owns a proportion of a development's physical assets, for example, the community organisation owns one wind turbine in a development of 20 turbines being installed by a commercial developer.

While a shared ownership opportunity tends to be led by the renewables industry, a community can take the initiative and invite renewable energy companies to participate with them.

What are the benefits of shared ownership?

When a local community negotiates or is offered a stake in the project, this can help to create a sense of participation within the local community and generate significant community benefit.

Benefits of shared ownership can include:

- The retention of a greater proportion of the rewards of onshore wind projects within the local community (but there are also greater risks for the community - see below).
- Greater co-operation, coordination, and collaboration at a local level.
- Raised local and community pride, leadership, and empowerment.
- A starting point for new ideas and strategies through the bottom-up approach to energy planning.

What is good practice in developing a shared ownership model?

The potential for shared ownership should be raised as early as possible, likely to be the point at which the project is launched publicly. However, communities should be aware that some of the details are unlikely to be available before planning consent. Discussions prior to this may therefore be relatively high-level.

Key activities include:

- Identification of the level of community interest in shared ownership.
- Exploration of different potential models of shared ownership and the clarification of preferences.
- Engaging with other communities who have/haven't taken-up the option of shared ownership.
- Establishing a community-led working party to take forward conversations with the developer on behalf of the community.
- Agreement of a timetable.
- Clarification of how and when key information will be disclosed.
- Clarification of how and when in the development process legal agreement will be expected.

Note: Each business will have its own policy on the timing of an investment offer to a community. For example, some investment opportunities may be available to communities pre-planning (these are typically higher risk), while others may enable the community to invest later in the development process, for example, at financial close or post commissioning. 'Financial close' is when all the project and financing agreements have been signed and all the required conditions have been met. It enables funds (loans, equity, grants) to start flowing so that project implementation can start.

After consent and financial close, more robust information on the opportunity should then be available by the developer within an adequate timescale to enable the community to engage professional advisors, assess the investment offer and approach commercial funders. Any offer of Shared Ownership must comply with Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) rules.

If the community intends to invest post-planning, an agreement of intent (Memorandum of Understanding) should be signed in advance of submitting a planning application (where appropriate). Clear and transparent public meeting minutes may suffice where both parties are content. Early dialogue with all concerned to explore the timing of the investment is encouraged.

Ultimately, developing an onshore wind project is complex. Communities should be enabled to seek independent professional advice to ensure that they have clear understanding of the legal and financial proposition they are entering into to. Developers exhibiting best practice will support local communities to access this.

Key points to remember

It is important for all sides to be aware that an offer of shared ownership is not a proxy for community participation in the planning decision-making process. This means communities have the right to object to a development but are still able to participate in discussions about commercial arrangements to be pursued in the event that planning permission is granted.

There are also risks associated with shared ownership:

- The return from the investment can go down as well as up.

- The investment should not be regarded as a short-term venture and a community group must be prepared to take a long-term view of their investment.

- Onshore wind projects can have significant construction risks including, delayed operation and commissioning, and costs escalation during the construction period.

- Changes in economic conditions and legislation can adversely affect investment.

Case study: Kype Muir windfarm

Location: Strathaven, Scotland
Developer: Banks Renewables
Installation capacity: 88 MW

Identifying local priorities

Local priorities for community benefits were identified through an extensive consultation process with local communities. A survey was jointly designed with communities and a market research company.

"That was, in hindsight, the single most useful thing we did. That allowed us, and the community councils and the politicians to say, with a high degree of certainty, 'These are the issues, therefore let's get round the table, let's workshop the issue and let's come up with a package that addresses, as well as it possibly can, those issues."
(Developer)

Survey respondents ranked creation of local jobs and education as top priorities to address in the area, and among their priorities for community benefits were energy-related projects, addressing unemployment, regeneration, apprenticeships, and facilities for young people.

Community Action Plans

The area of benefit was determined to reflect the four community council areas. The four community councils each developed a community action plan, using a one-off grant of £10,000 from the developer. These plans form the basis for how the fund is distributed.

Online surveys shared via social media proved successful, with a 35% household completion rate. This wider public participation in reviewing the plans helped to ensure that the fund is used to meet local priorities. Community Action Plans are regularly reviewed and updated.

Establishing the Kype Muir Community Partnership Fund

After the windfarm planning application was submitted it took two years to negotiate an appropriate draft community benefits package and to create a community partnership to deliver it.

Funding is split 50:50 between the local authority Renewable Energy Fund and the Kype Muir Windfarm Community Partnership Fund (KMCFP), established to support charitable, educational, benevolent, or philanthropic projects.

The fund is administered by a community foundation in consultation and agreement with the Kype Muir Community Partnership which consists of representatives from each of the four Community Councils plus two from South Lanarkshire Council. The fund is shared equally between the four councils but there is flexibility for any underspend to be re-allocated to another council year on year or to be paid into an endowment fund. This flexibility enables financing of more costly projects. Forming the Kype Muir Windfarm Community Partnership

"I have to say, it wasn't easy going. It was never smooth; there were always different points of view from the Community Councils...[We] formed a partnership where we met fairly frequently ever couple of months. We spent a fair amount of time bargaining with them. But we ended up with a really good deal. Then to provide sustainable employment for five years we put 50% of our monies into a scheme called Connect2Renewables along with South Lanarkshire Council …to try and sustain employment."
(Community representative, KMCP)

Connect2Renewables

An innovative aspect of the package agreed is the use of community benefits funding to improve local employment and enhance skills, through a partnership between KMCP and South Lanarkshire Council called Connect2Renewables. The partnership commits Banks Renewables to maximise employment of local businesses during construction, to encourage the local supply chain to employ local residents and to localise economic activity through the lifecycle of the development.

Acknowledgments

These guidelines have been developed by Centre for Sustainable Energy in partnership with ITPE Energised and SFW communications.

Lead author, Keith Hempshall

Additional contributors: Dan Stone, Megan Blyth, Tess Rushton (CSE); Sophy Fearnley-Whittingstall (SFW communication),Jenny Hazard (ITPE Energised).

The guidelines reflect best practice principles identified through a robust qualitative research process:

> Centre for Sustainable Energy, *Community Engagement and Benefits for Onshore Wind in England - Qualitative research on good practice* (2021).

As well as previous iterations of this guidance:

> Centre for Sustainable Energy with BDOR and Peter Capener, *The Protocol for Public Engagement with Proposed Wind Energy Developments in England* (2009)

> REGEN, Community Benefit and Engagement Best Practice guidance for Wind Energy (2014)

And learning from devolved authorities:

> Scottish Government, *Shared Ownership of Onshore Renewable Energy Developments* (2019)

> *Scottish Government, Community benefits from onshore renewable energy developments* (2019)