

# Cross-sectoral statement in response to the UK Government's community benefits working paper

## Overview

Scotland's onshore wind sector has developed a mature ecosystem for community benefits from renewable energy developments, rooted in over two decades of practical experience and a thoughtful, collaborative approach to establishing good practice. This has been informed primarily by extensive operational experience in implementing transformational community benefits funding from onshore wind. The lessons learned have value for all technologies.

Scotland's evolution in community benefit funds has progressed from ad hoc schemes in the early 2000s to a national approach. This approach is based on the Good Practice Principles, established collaboratively between government, industry, administrators and community representatives in 2014. **The signatories to this statement represent a diverse range of stakeholders involved in the community benefits ecosystem, which have provided individual responses to the working paper.**

Accessible guidance, flexible structures and good governance have empowered communities and cemented Scotland's position as a global exemplar of good practice. The desire to do better and go further for greater impact, transparency and accountability remains.

However, what brings us together as signatories is support for the existing good practice that has developed in Scotland; and a desire to ensure that any future policy from the UK and Scottish governments builds from the foundation of this valuable body of hard-won learning and enables best practice to continue to evolve.

## Key Hallmarks

Community benefits represent a unique opportunity in the funding landscape, characterised by their longevity, community-led nature, and ability to build all forms of capital within and between communities over time – social, natural, human, cultural and financial.

Those involved in determining, shaping, and implementing community benefit arrangements with communities in Scotland now include a broad range of community-based organisations, as well as commercial, public and third sector organisations. All underpinned by a shared vision of maximising community benefit funds towards improved outcomes for Scotland's local communities and our future

Community benefits create impact when they are designed to respond to both immediate community need and longer-term, community-led strategic ambitions. There is an increasing awareness and evidence of the tangible social, environmental and economic returns from community benefits, including job creation, asset acquisition and development. Delivered and leveraged effectively, community benefits demonstrate how communities are addressing local priorities and, in doing so, actively contribute to national objectives.

Scotland's wealth of practice now includes a diverse array of activity, including multi-community arrangements of different geographic scales and innovative approaches to the use of funding beyond open grant-making. Alongside a range of other models, fund governance also includes a substantial number of incorporated community benefit organisations which manage and multiply the impact of community funds. Which of these approaches will maximise impact is specific to the community context.

**The Scottish experience has demonstrated the value of flexible arrangements, which, at their best, enable community strengths to be recognised, promoted, and harnessed, and decision-making to be inclusive, accountable and community-led.**

## The Future

As Scotland's energy transition gathers pace, it is right that community benefits also continue to evolve and grow. What has been learned to date will strengthen current and future practice. Additionally, as more projects are developed and new low carbon sectors mature, ensuring that each new project adopts good practice, in line with current and future iterations of the Good Practice Principles, is an ongoing task. Communities, working collaboratively with industry, will find ways to improve and innovate Scotland's mature ecosystem of community benefits, which already represents a global exemplar of best practice.

Achieving future growth will depend on a policy and regulatory environment that successfully enables the deployment of renewable energy and empowers local communities in the design, delivery, and decision-making of community benefit funds. Maintaining the national viability of projects and local influence over these funds is of collective importance.

**The signatories to the statement would welcome future policy from the UK and Scottish governments to be built on and respect Scotland's world-leading practice and experience on community benefits. This should be developed in collaboration with local authorities and other key stakeholders to enable community-led ambition from community benefit funds to be fully realised and recognised.**

## **Signatories**

Annandale & Nithsdale Community Benefit Company  
Awesome Energy Dalriada  
Berry Burn Wind Farm Community Fund  
BiGGAR Economics  
Borthwick Water Community Development Trust  
Cabrach Trust  
Cardenden Community Council  
Carrick Futures  
Coldingham Community Council  
Dalavich Improvement Group  
Dalmellington Parish Development Trust  
Duneaton Community Trust  
Duneaton Community Council  
East Lammern Community Council  
East Lothian Community Benefits SCIO  
EDF power solutions  
Fort Augustus & Glenmoriston Community Company  
Foundation Scotland  
Fred. Olsen Renewables  
Gargunnock Community Trust  
Glenkens Community Arts Trust  
Glenkens & District Trust  
Glenkens & District Community Action Plan Steering Group  
Kilgallioch Community Benefit Company  
Kyle of Sutherland Development Trust  
Low Carbon  
Moorfoot Community Council  
Muirhall Energy  
Muaitheabhal Community Wind Farm Trust  
New Cumnock Development Trust  
Parish of Stow & Fountainhall Community Council  
Reston & Auchencrow Community Council  
RWE  
Shetland Community Benefit Fund  
Southern Uplands Partnership  
ScottishPower Renewables  
SSE Renewables  
Scottish Renewables  
Statkraft  
Stow Community Trust  
The 9CC Group  
The Pairc Trust  
Tweedsmuir Community Council  
Vattenfall  
Western Isles Development Trust  
Zenobe

## **ANNEX**

### **Key Milestones**

#### **2013**

The Scottish Government promoted good practice support through the establishment of the Community and Renewable Energy Scheme (CARES) in 2013. CARES continues to provide communities and developers with advice, templates and case studies, as well as maintaining a public register of community benefit funds to enhance transparency and accountability.

#### **2014**

The Scottish Government's Good Practice Principles for Community Benefit from Onshore Renewable Energy Developments, first agreed in 2014, introduced the benchmark of £5,000 MW per annum of installed capacity for onshore wind projects consented after 2014, which the vast majority of developers have upheld.

Good Practice Principles were also developed in 2014 for Shared Ownership, capturing Scotland's ambition and commitment to driving up good practice about opportunities for communities to benefit from commercial-scale energy projects beyond community benefit funds. Research commissioned in 2014 to identify good practice in offshore went on to inform the 2018 Good Practice Principles that are currently under review.

#### **2015-19**

Between 2015 and 2019, community benefit funds experienced significant growth in both scale and sophistication, reflecting the rapid emergence of projects and the ongoing evolution of best practices. By the time the work to revise the Good Practice Principles was undertaken in 2018, over 214 schemes in Scotland were collectively distributing approximately £15.7 million per year, representing an increase from an estimated £6.92 million from projects in 2012.

During this period, the Good Practice Principles had a material impact on community benefit. In relation to payments, following the publication of the first iteration of the Good Practice Principles in 2014, the number of projects paying £5,000 per MW has increased exponentially to the current position, where no project consented subsequent to the second iteration in 2019 has listed a community benefits package on the CARES register with a value of less than £5,000 per MW.

#### **2019-20**

The Good Practice Principles were updated in 2019 to reaffirm best practice, broaden the scope of community benefits to align with local and regional plans and refine expectations on transparency and governance. The Scottish Government's Community Benefits Toolkit, published in 2020, continued to promote good practice.

#### **2023-25**

The Scottish Onshore Wind Sector Deal, signed in September 2023, reaffirmed the onshore wind industry's commitment to the 2019 Good Practice Principles. In 2024, £30.7 million in community benefits was paid from 283 projects.

**These milestones have shaped the current landscape, where communities, developers, and supporting intermediaries are developing tailored arrangements that, at their most evolved, demonstrate purpose, collaboration and strategic ambition.**