

# **An Suidhe Wind Farm Community Fund**

## **Grant Making Report January - December 2024**



# Highlights...



**Total number of grants paid in 2024:**  
10



**Total amount of grants paid in 2024:**  
£48,894.56



**The annual donation to the fund in 2024:**  
£48,352.67



**There has been an overall 69.6% increase since the first payment in 2012 of £28,500**



**Total number of awards since the fund opened in 2011:**  
139



**Total amount awarded since the fund opened in 2011:**  
£483,685.27

## Introduction

This report covers the period from the 1<sup>st</sup> of January to the 31<sup>st</sup> of December 2024 of the An Suidhe Wind Farm Community Fund, which Foundation Scotland delivers under an agreement with RWE.

During this time, there were two rounds of grant-making, resulting in ten awards to nine organisations.

Awards this period have included small microgrants (£300 and under) distributed by Dalavich Improvement Group, Furnace Community Council, Inveraray Community Council and South Loch Awe-side Community Company, directly to community groups in the area and six larger grants (over £300 and below £9,000) that were awarded following a decision-making meeting by the community panel.

## Making a Difference

The following case studies illustrate the positive impact that funding from the An Suidhe Wind Farm Community Fund has had on the wider community during this time. The case studies demonstrate how the availability of community funds has helped to build the capacity and potential in the communities within the fund's area of benefit.

## Case Study: Clearing the Way for the Avant Gardeners



In late 2023, the community garden on the outskirts of Dalavich faced significant encroachment from scrub willow, brambles, rushes, and bracken along its boundary areas. The invasive vegetation was reducing growing space, limiting light to the garden, and creating additional maintenance burdens for members who lacked the physical capacity to undertake the extensive clearance required.

The Avant Gardeners were awarded £2,340.00 to pay for contractors to help get the garden back under control.

The project began with employing a local contractor to cut and chip the encroaching vegetation on all four sides of the garden. This initial clearance work was completed early in the project timeline, creating the foundation for subsequent maintenance activities.

From May 2024 onwards, a local gardener was employed for two hours a week to maintain the enlarged garden area through mowing and preventing regrowth. This was challenging due to the size of the garden, and the gardener shared his work schedule with members, which successfully motivated volunteers to join him for strimming and hedgerow pruning. This achieved substantially more work than just the funded hours would have.

The project encountered a significant challenge with stump removal. The original plan to use horse-powered extraction became unfeasible when the contractor determined that stumps had been cut too close to ground level for chain attachment. In response, the team developed an innovative alternative approach. They could prevent regrowth by drilling holes in the willow stumps and filling them with Epsom salts.

Volunteers stepped forward at the Annual General Meeting to research and implement this experimental solution, and the results remain under evaluation.

The project directly benefited 30 individuals through the improved garden facilities and expanded accessible areas. Beyond the practical outcomes, several unexpected benefits also emerged.

The identification of effective volunteer coordination capabilities within the team created a lasting resource for future community initiatives. The project also provided meaningful social benefits, notably for two long-term residents, one of whom gained renewed focus during ill health by participating in the project, and their partner found valuable respite and produced excellent vegetables.

Key learning outcomes include the importance of detailed contractor briefings to prevent communication gaps, the value of a flexible approach for unforeseen challenges, and the potential for community assets to emerge unexpectedly and prove more valuable than anticipated resources.



## Case Study: Portsonachan Village Hall from Drab to Fab



Portsonachan Village Hall had not been decorated for over twenty years, and its wooden exterior was showing significant signs of wear. Whilst the committee's long-term vision involved a complete refurbishment, the local authority planning approval process would take at least another year, and the hall required immediate attention to remain wind and watertight, secure, and welcoming for the multiple user groups who depend on this vital community space.

The £3,000 award aimed to improve the aesthetic look of the hall, ensuring the hall could continue serving the community safely and comfortably whilst major redevelopment plans progressed through the approval process.

After securing the grant, contractors were contacted and instructed to proceed with the work. However, careful consideration was given to minimising disruption to hall users. The committee agreed to delay the work until the summer months when usage typically decreases, with joinery work scheduled to precede painting activities.

The joinery work proceeded as planned, completing in April 2024. The painter had agreed to delay their work until August 2024 to align with the reduced summer usage.

Unfortunately, circumstances beyond the committee's control prevented the painter from commencing until November 2024, resulting in two weeks of compromised hall usage during a busier period.

Despite the timing challenges, the phased approach proved effective. The joinery work addressed critical security issues with the back door and restored functionality to windows that had been inoperable, allowing them to open once again. This improvement not only enhanced security but also improved ventilation and natural light access.

The painting work transformed the hall's appearance, creating a brighter, fresher environment that immediately impressed users. The refreshed decoration exceeded expectations, with community members providing overwhelmingly positive feedback upon reopening. The transformation helped users recognise the potential benefits of future hall improvements, generating increased support for the committee's broader redevelopment plans.

The project successfully achieved its dual objectives of maintaining security and creating a more welcoming environment. The improved stability of windows enhanced both functionality and safety, whilst the fresh paintwork addressed the decades of accumulated wear and made the space significantly more appealing.

The project was promoted via the local newsletter and notices on internal and external noticeboards. As required by the grant conditions, the committee maintained photographic records documenting before and after conditions, creating a valuable archive of the transformation.

Contractors were specifically requested to use environmentally friendly materials wherever possible, reflecting the committee's broader commitment to sustainable practices that would inform future redevelopment plans.

The project revealed the depth of community attachment to the hall and reinforced the importance of the committee's redevelopment plans.

Seeing the dramatic impact of relatively modest improvements helped community members understand how future proposals could reduce the building's carbon footprint while creating a more usable, friendly, and warm space for all residents.

The experience also highlighted the importance of flexible scheduling when working around community facility usage patterns, even when external factors create unexpected delays.

The committee's willingness to accommodate timing constraints, whilst occasionally challenging, ultimately preserved positive relationships with user groups.



## Case Study: "Breathing New Life into Inveraray's Historic Waterfront"



The historic Inveraray Wooden Pier, built in 1877, had become unsafe and was closed to public use. Inspire Inveraray recognised that regenerating this community asset could significantly boost local tourism and provide enhanced facilities for both visitors and residents. The pier's restoration would improve berthing access for small cruise ships like the Hebridean Princess, increase private boat visits, and create local leisure opportunities for fishing and water sports on Loch Fyne.

With a total project cost of over £250,000, the first step was to secure £9,000 from the An Suidhe Wind Farm Community Fund towards essential preliminary work, including surveys and detailed drawings.

The project emerged from comprehensive community consultation, with Inspire Inveraray's Community Action Plan surveying 167 residents, representing 28% of the local population. This consultation provided clear evidence of community support for the pier's restoration.

Inspire Inveraray appointed MHB Consultants to produce detailed designs and drawings for the restoration work. These technical documents would serve multiple purposes: providing accurate cost estimates, demonstrating the project's feasibility to potential funders, and ensuring all work met appropriate safety and environmental standards.

Throughout the planning process, Inspire Inveraray maintained close liaison with Marine Scotland and other relevant authorities to protect the local environment. The organisation is committed to using environmentally sustainable methods and materials, reflecting their broader responsibility to enhance community assets whilst respecting the natural setting of Loch Fyne. The initial grant funding was allocated slightly over budget, with total costs reaching £9,758.46 against the £9,000 award. This minor overspend had been anticipated and demonstrated the organisation's realistic approach to project planning and financial management.

The process proved invaluable for developing the volunteer trustees' and administrators' grant application skills. Through experience of both successes and setbacks, the team gained a practical understanding of funding timescales, governance requirements, and the importance of building positive relationships with funders.



Beyond the practical outcomes of obtaining professional drawings and costings, the grant award generated significant community confidence.

Residents saw tangible evidence that the ambitious pier restoration was achievable and that external funders recognised the competence and commitment of the volunteer-led organisation.

This boost in community belief proved as valuable as the financial support itself, creating momentum for the challenging fundraising phase ahead. The successful grant application demonstrated that Inspire Inveraray could deliver professional project management whilst maintaining a strong community. The detailed drawings and technical specifications now provide a solid foundation for approaching other funding bodies. The project was designed with long-term sustainability at its core, ensuring that once restored, the pier would remain operational for decades whilst delivering cumulative benefits to the community.

The next phase focuses on leveraging the professional drawings and detailed costings to secure the remaining £250,000 needed for full restoration. The technical documentation provides credible evidence for funders, whilst the proven track record of successful grant management strengthens future applications.

## Fund Distribution

The An Suidhe Wind Farm Community Fund is an open grant programme that has two rounds per year. One that closes in March for a meeting in May and one that closes in October for a meeting in November each year.

In 2024, 12 applications were received, of which ten were awarded a grant and two were rejected. This gives a conversion rate from application to award of 83 %. The two applications were rejected because one was outside the area of benefit, and the other organisation had not yet completed its previously associated funded project.

The fund continued to support projects that improve community assets, with £29,909.40 awarded to three projects. In addition, £4,485.16 was awarded to organisations to distribute as microgrants and £3,000 was awarded to contribute to the salary of a greenkeeper and £2,500 towards transport costs for a Pipe Band to attend competitions. The diagram below shows the rounded-up breakdown of awards per local priority for each year.



Foundation Scotland adopted twelve of the UN Sustainable Development Goals to understand the impact of its grant distribution and how its work contributes to achieving a more inclusive, equitable, prosperous and sustainable future for people and planet.

The diagram below shows Sustainable Cities & Communities as the dominant focus area, receiving over 72% of the c£49,000 total funding, with Quality Education receiving nearly 16% of the funding distributed, Decent Work and Economic Growth receiving 6.14% and Good Health and Well Being receiving 5.11%





In early 2025, Foundation Scotland undertook a review of the Fund since its beginning in 2011, and the main conclusions were as follows:

The An Suidhe Wind Farm Community Fund has demonstrated a significant positive impact across its area of benefit since its inception in 2011. With £483,685.27 awarded across 139 grants, the fund has successfully supported diverse community initiatives while maintaining a strong leverage ratio of 64% for match funding.

**Key achievements include:**

- Strong focus on sustainable community development, with 72% of overall funding aligned with SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities)
- Successful support of community facilities and services (37% of total funding)
- Effective micro-grant scheme implementation across all four communities
- Flexible response to community needs during COVID-19
- Consistent annual funding increases in line with RPI (69.6% increase from 2011 to 2024)

## Awards Summary 2024

Funding Request	Offer Statement	Awarded Amount
Dalavich Improvement Group	To provide a fund for distribution in the form of micro-grants for general charitable purposes to benefit the local community.	£1,121.29
South Loch Awe-side Community Company	To provide a fund for distribution in the local community in the form of microgrants for general charitable purposes.	£1,121.29
Furnace Community Council	To provide a fund for distribution in the local community in the form of microgrants for general charitable purposes.	£1,121.29
Inveraray Community Council	To provide a fund for distribution in the local community in the form of microgrants for general charitable purposes.	£1,121.29
Inveraray Golf Club -	To support the costs of a part-time greenkeeper during the coming season to ensure the grounds are kept in a good condition, providing satisfaction to members and encouraging more visitors to play and thereby contributing to the Club's continued viability.	£3,000.00
Inveraray & District Pipe Band	To support the group's transport costs with their schedule of competitions in 2024, enabling the Band to continue to represent their community and share their music with regional, national and international audiences.	£2,500.00

Funding Request	Offer Statement	Awarded Amount
Dalavich Improvement Group	To fund the repair and upgrading of the kitchen store and access area in Dalavich Community Centre, improving its overall condition and making it fit for purpose for the medium term.	£7,200.00
Inspire Inveraray	To contribute to the costs of surveys and drawings to progress with the next stage of the Inveraray Pier Project, which, it is hoped, will bring the pier back into full use and increase access to and use of the facility	£9,000.00
Portsonachan Village Hall	To fund a full planning application for the renovation and refurbishment of Portsonachan Hall.	£15,000.00
Cairndow Community Childcare Limited	To purchase a variety of communication, educational, and play resources aimed at improving communication with parents/carers and the overall experience of children at the nursery.	£7,709.40
Total		£48,894.56

## Finance

### Fund Statement Summary 1<sup>st</sup> January 2024 to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2024

Opening Balance	£39,104.59
Total Donations received	£48,352.67
Grants Paid	£50,113.27
Grants Pending	£2,242.58
Total Grants Cancelled	£1,121.29
Interest Payments Received	£860.56
Available Balance	£37,083.26

It is important to note that the grants paid figure reflects grants that have been awarded in previous years, but released for payment during this year.

## The Community Panel

A Community Panel, made up of people who live, work or volunteer in the four communities, makes recommendations on grant awards from the fund. The Panel also advise on funding strategy and helps to promote the fund locally. The Panel has up to eight members. One representative is appointed by Dalavich Improvement Group and each of the community councils for Furnace, Glenorchy & Innishail, and Inveraray. One member of the wider community from each of the four areas may also be appointed.

Each member of the wider community serves a minimum of one and a maximum of three years, with members retiring on a phased basis to ensure knowledge and expertise are retained. Opportunities to become a Panel member are openly advertised when these arise, both locally and on this website, and are selected through a fair and transparent process. Previous Panel members may stand again.

### The Panel members for 2024 were:

Dalavich	Eredine	Furnace	Inveraray
Carol Thomas	Catriona O’Keeffe	Martin Wilson	Jacqui McDonald /Linda Divers
Chrissie Sugden	Vacancy	Sarah Nixon	Julie Hendry

In 2025, the Panel will be supported in having training about the IVAR principles (See Appendix 1), and recruitment for any vacancies will be carried out to encourage new members to participate.



## Publicity

The fund is now part of the monthly funding bulletin distributed across Argyll and Bute by the local authority. In addition, a press release was shared in December 2024, and posters were distributed by the Panel.

The fund has a dedicated page on the Foundation Scotland website which includes information on how to apply as well as details on fund balances, panel members, projects funded, case studies and recent news items. The webpage for the fund was updated with all the awards from the year.

During the year, the webpage had a total of 726 views, up from 406 in 2023, of which 344 were unique individual visitors (in 2023, that was 164) (average of 2.11 views per user). It is important to note that due to a change in the law in 2024, these figures relate to those individuals who accepted the cookies when using the website and may be higher in reality.

In 2025, a review of the communication plan for this fund will be undertaken to ensure that the opportunity to apply reaches a wider audience.

Read more about the fund: [An Suidhe Wind Farm Community Fund | Foundation Scotland](#)

## Conclusion

The An Suidhe Wind Farm Community Fund is now 13 years old and has celebrated some significant milestones, including giving nearly half a million pounds in grants and supporting 139 projects benefitting the four communities across the area of benefit.

The fund has leveraged additional funding of £1,040,809.37 towards total project costs of £1,478,158.88. This is a percentage leverage of 70.41% and a fund contribution of 29.59%.

Going forward, the fund will take into consideration the recommendations of the 2025 Fund Review, including the changing landscape regarding community benefit funds and the needs of communities within the area of benefit.

## Appendix 1: Institute for Voluntary Action Research (IVAR) principles

Foundation Scotland's work as a grant maker and fund distributor is underpinned by its commitment to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and the Institute of Voluntary Action Research (IVAR) principles around 'open and trusting' grant making.

The IVAR principles encourage funders to review and improve their practices that make their processes more transparent and efficient for the applicants and grantees. Funders are able to sign a pledge whereby they undertake to operationalise eight specific commitments. These are:

- Don't waste time – explain funding priorities clearly and be open and transparent about all requirements and exclusions
- Ask relevant questions- only collect information that is needed to make funding decisions
- Accept risk- accept a share of the risk, be realistic about how much assurance can reasonably be given. Explain how risk is assessed when funding decisions are made
- Act with urgency- seek to work at a pace that meets the needs of applicants, publish and stick to timetables and make decisions as quickly as possible
- Be open – be transparent about decisions, give feedback, analyse and publish success rates and reasons for rejection, share data
- Enable flexibility – respond flexibly to changing priorities and needs, give unrestricted funding, if this is not possible, make the funding as flexible as possible
- Communicate with purpose – be clear about the relationship from the start, be realistic about time commitments and ensure that contact is positive and purposeful
- Be proportionate- commit to light touch reporting and ensure that the formal reporting requirements are well understood, proportionate and meaningful

More information about the eight commitments can be found here:

<https://www.ivar.org.uk/flexible-funders/>

## Appendix 2: Background to the Fund

An Suidhe Wind Farm Community Fund supports community projects benefitting those living in the areas covered by the Community Councils of: Glenorchy and Innishail (Eredine only); Inveraray; Furnace, and by Dalavich Improvement Group.

The fund is provided by [RWE Renewables](#) and [Green Gecco](#), the owners of An Suidhe Wind Farm near Loch Awe.

The fund opened in 2011. An annual amount of £28,500, rising in line with inflation, will be paid into the fund for the operating life of the wind farm. In 2024, the annual contribution to the Fund was £48,352.

### Purpose of this fund

The fund will provide grants to support charitable activities that:

- Enhance the quality of life for local residents
- Contribute to vibrant, healthy, successful, and sustainable communities
- Promote community spirit and encourage community activity.

Grant requests to support a wide range of costs and activities will be considered, such as equipment costs, running costs for local groups, staff or sessional worker costs, consultations, and maintenance or refurbishment of community facilities.

### Further Information

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