

Lairg Wind Farm Ltd



Foundation  
Scotland

# Lairg Wind Farm Community Fund

---

Impact Report 2025

## Executive Summary

2025 has been a solid year for the fund, with 80% of the annual donation distributed in new awards. Funds paid out supported salaries, the annual Gala, improvements to the village environment, community education opportunities, and the delivery of community services. The fund continues to be a vital resource for key local groups, with organisations like Lairg Gala Week, The Lairg & District Learning Centre, Lairg Community Association and Lairg in Bloom continuing to benefit annually from the fund for repeat activity, core costs and investment in a new community asset.

### Year at a glance

- Annual donation from Lairg Windfarm Ltd: £35,620.30
- New awards made: £47,665
- Total awards paid out: £41,550
- Total costs of projects supported in 2025: £101,574

## About Lairg Wind Farm Community Fund

Lairg Wind Farm Community Fund is provided by Lairg Windfarm Ltd to the residents of the Lairg Community Council area, which covers around 200 square miles and has a total population of around 900. The area is rural in nature, and the community is economically fragile, with a net loss of population through out-migration – especially of young people – as well as low incomes, seasonal unemployment, and often poor access to services.

Grants of up to £5,000 are available each year from the main Lairg Farm Community Fund to support a range of community groups, activities, and projects. Grants can also be awarded for projects for more than one year (multi-year awards), with 2022 seeing the first such award made to fund a part-time administrator to run the Lairg Community Hall and coordinate bookings.

As well as grants from the main fund, a small proportion of the overall annual wind farm fund donation (2.5%) is given directly to the Community Council to distribute as Micro Grants of up to £250. These microgrants are for individuals and organisations to deliver projects, activities and equipment that benefit the community.

## Financial Overview

In 2025, Lairg Windfarm Ltd made a community benefit payment of £36,851.50 to the fund. The tables below show the financial headlines for the fund year, followed by a general summary of Fund finances for 2025.

*Table 1: Financial headlines 1 January 2025 to 31 December 2025*

<b>Financial Headlines 2025</b>	
Annual donation from Lairg Windfarm Ltd	£35,620.30
Total value of grants awarded	£21,550
Total grants paid out	£41,550
Total costs of projects supported	£101,574

*Table 2: Financial statement 1 January 2025 to 31 December 2025*

	<b>Balance in grant-making funds</b>
<b>OPENING BALANCE (1<sup>st</sup> Jan 2025)</b>	£30,463.13
Year 14 Lairg Windfarm Ltd Donation	£36,851.50
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£67,314.63</b>
<b>EXPENDITURE</b>	
Total Grants Paid Out	£34,920.33
Secretariat fee Lairg CC	£810.72
Year 14: Foundation Scotland fee	£3,685.15
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURE</b>	<b>£39,416.20</b>
Funds committed for future years	£20,744.67
<b>Available balance</b>	<b>£7,153.76</b>

## Grants awarded and paid out in 2025

Table 3: Applications summary

Applications summary	Number	value
Successful applications awarded	8	£47,665.00
Funds provided to Lairg Community Council	3	£6,000.00
Micro grants awarded by Lairg Community Council	11	£2,209.00

Table 4: New grants awarded in 2025

Funding request	Offer Statement	Awarded Amount
The Bradbury Centre	To contribute to the cost of painting the building inside and out, ensuring a safe and comfortable environment for clients, staff, and visitors for many years to come.	<b>£2,200</b>
Lairg & District Learning Centre	Funds towards the salary of a Deputy Manager principally responsible for delivering digital skills training to provide support to residents to help them access online information, fill in online forms, pay bills and access health and other services.	<b>£5,000</b>
Lairg and District Community Initiatives	To contribute to the cost of maintaining the green spaces in the village, to improve the local environment and enhance community life.	<b>£5,000</b>
Lairg Community Association	To contribute to the cost of funding the administrator role for 3 years, ensuring operational efficiency and community engagement at the community centre, community activities and events.	<b>£27,892</b>
Lairg Gala Week	Towards the costs of the 2025 Lairg Gala that brings together Lairg and district residents, residents of the wider area and visitors, for fun activities, events and performances, helping to promote positive community cohesion and engagement.	<b>£2,000</b>
Lairg Primary School PTA	Funds to cover the costs of transport for Lairg Primary pupils to attend swimming lessons in Sutherland Swimming Pool, Golspie, for 2 years, to become safe and confident swimmers.	<b>£4,300</b>
National Sheep Association - Scottish Region (NSA Scottish Region)	Towards the costs of hosting pupils and staff from Lairg Primary school for one day at the NSA Highland Sheep Show 2025 to enhance children's understanding of food, farming, and the countryside.	<b>£1,123</b>

<b>Funding request</b>	<b>Offer Statement</b>	<b>Awarded Amount</b>
Sutherland Women's Football Club	Towards the costs of a pilot player engagement campaign and a two-year travel support fund to enhance access and increase participation in women's and girls' sport among Lairg residents.	<b>£150</b>
Lairg Community Council	At the 2023 fund review, the community council requested rolling annual funds in addition to the existing microgrant scheme to support apprentice travel for up to £2,000 annually through a voucher scheme. This was to address the problem of retaining young people as local residents due to the costs of travel to work and the distances involved. A local improvements scheme of the same value was also set up to allow the community council to more easily carry routine village maintenance in a timely fashion as well as undertake small improvements without having to frequently apply for funds through Foundation Scotland. Due to late reporting, it drew down both the 2024 & 2025 funds in 2025.	
<b>Total Awarded</b>		<b>£47,665.00</b>

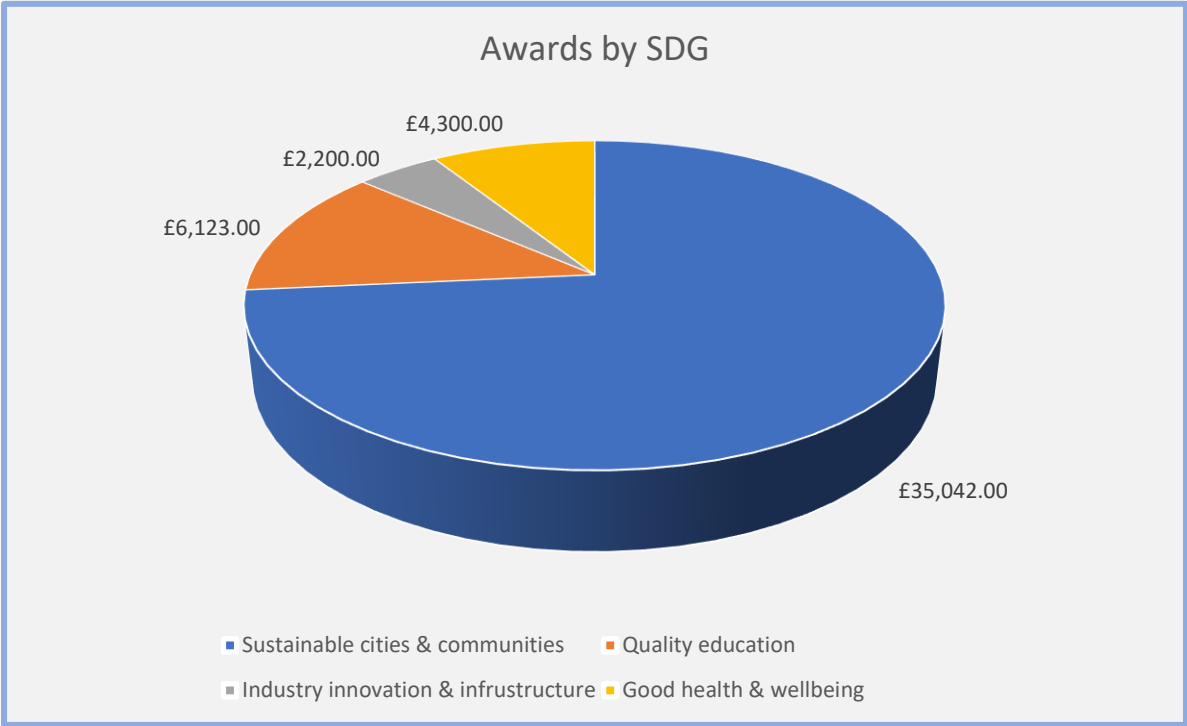
*Table 5: Devolved Funds for Distribution By Lairg Community Council*

<b>Micro Grants</b>	A fund for distribution in the form of small grants of up to £250 to groups and individuals for the benefit of the community.	<b>£2,000</b>
<b>Apprentice Travel Scheme</b>	An Apprentice Travel Scheme to support fuel costs for Lairg residents with apprenticeship placements outside of the Lairg CC area through a fuel voucher scheme, in order to retain younger residents for the long-term benefit of the community as a whole.	<b>£2,000</b>
<b>Local improvements fund</b>	To contribute to the cost of maintaining and improving the village environment, and to improve and enhance community life (2024 & 2025 payment).	<b>£4,000</b>
<b>Total</b>		<b>£8,000</b>

## Making a difference

To measure the positive impact which Fund monies are having for local communities and residents, the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) are used to identify the main benefits each project or activity supports. This helps to demonstrate how the Fund is contributing towards both global and local priorities.

The chart below shows awards that were paid out in 2025, and it can be seen that across the funds distributed, the main contributions have been towards improving the sustainability of the Lairg area, providing educational opportunities for residents and improving health and wellbeing through community services. Although these figures provide a good indication of the main impacts the fund is achieving, it should be noted that most projects contribute towards more than one SDG.



## Awards by local priority

Local priorities are set in partnership with communities, local organisations and community councils. This is initially done when a fund is set up and reviewed periodically to check whether the fund is still meeting local priorities and aspirations.

This process is supported by surveys and community action planning and helps to keep pace with changes and developments in the community to refocus fund impacts towards changing priorities.

The current priorities for the Lairg fund are for projects which:

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

The chart below shows awards paid out in 2025 by local priority; it should be noted that most projects do contribute towards more than one local priority.



## Fund case studies

### **Lairg & District Learning Centre: Digital Inclusion in Rural Sutherland**

*Lairg & District Learning Centre was awarded £5,000 to support the salary of its part time Digital Skills Tutor (DST) for one year.*



Lairg & District Learning Centre is an independent learning charity established in 2001 to provide adult education and community-based learning for Lairg and surrounding areas. Having secured its current property at the old schoolhouse in 2004, the organisation has grown from a volunteer-led initiative to a team of one full-time and three part-time staff, supported by over 30 freelance tutors and 15 volunteers. The centre serves over 2,600 individuals annually across Sutherland and beyond, delivering a broad range of learning opportunities — from creative workshops and digital support to online Gaelic classes, adult literacy programmes, and climate-focused projects.

Lairg sits in one of Scotland's most remote communities. There are no local banks, many shops have closed, and everyday services — from booking GP appointments to renewing prescriptions and completing government forms — have migrated online. For many older residents, this shift creates a significant barrier. People arrived at the Learning Centre seeking help, feeling embarrassed, anxious or frustrated. The fear of being scammed, locked out of accounts or excluded from essential services was causing genuine distress, and chipping away at confidence and self-worth.

£5,000 from the Lairg Community Fund supported the salary of its part time Digital Skills Tutor (DST) for one year. The Centre ran weekly drop-in sessions alongside one-to-one mentoring and urgent troubleshooting. The DST also made home visits to housebound residents — often outside normal working hours — helping people with online shopping, family messaging, prescription ordering, and device repair. The service expanded rapidly through word of mouth, drawing people from communities further north, and at times operated with a waiting list. Over the course of the project, 480 individuals received direct support.

*"People left feeling lighter. They discovered they could do it — they could shop online, speak to family with confidence. They felt that they mattered."*

The impact reached far beyond digital literacy. Mental health and wellbeing improved as people found a trusted place to resolve problems that had been causing real anxiety. Social isolation reduced as the weekly clinic became a social anchor — people stayed for coffee, connected with others, and found their way into the broader life of the centre.

Residents learned to recognise scams, manage online banking, and navigate complex processes such as digital verification for Companies House. In several cases, this directly prevented financial harm. People who had relied entirely on family members for digital help became independent, able to manage everyday tasks themselves.

One story captures the human impact of the project. A carer supporting her husband with dementia came to the centre during a short break. Her husband's music collection — his source of daily comfort — was on LPs and CDs he could no longer operate. The DST visited the family at home and helped set up streaming playlists on a tablet. The change was immediate and profound.

The project's evidence of demand directly strengthened the Learning Centre's case for further investment, leading to a successful Connecting Scotland grant from the Scottish Government to continue the work through mid-2026. The community now knows that trusted, local digital support is available — a meaningful alternative to a 100-mile round trip to Inverness. The centre's role as a community anchor has been reinforced, and the foundations have been laid to expand the service further, including plans to bring on an apprentice to build digital skills locally for the long term.

**National Sheep Association – Scottish Region: Connecting Young People with Highland Farming**

*£1,123 was awarded to cover the costs for 42 pupils from Lairg Primary School (P3–P7) to attend Highland Sheep 2025*

The National Sheep Association Scottish Region (NSA Scotland) is a membership-funded charity that represents the interests of sheep producers across Scotland. It works to promote a sustainable sheep industry and supports best practice in farming, whilst championing the contribution sheep make to the economy, environment, and rural communities. Its annual Highland Sheep event is a showcase of the sector, bringing together producers, trade, and the public at working farm settings across the Highlands.

Research consistently shows that Scottish children have limited knowledge of where their food comes from and little connection with the countryside and agricultural traditions on their doorstep. For pupils in rural Sutherland, sheep farming is woven into the landscape around them, yet few have direct experience of what it involves. Without that understanding, young people can feel disconnected from the land-based industries that shape their communities and could offer future employment. Travel costs mean that schools in more remote areas are often unable to attend events of this kind without financial support.

A grant of £1,123 covered the costs for 42 pupils from Lairg Primary School (P3–P7) to attend Highland Sheep 2025 at Midfearn Farm, Ardgay, as part of a wider event that welcomed 204 pupils from 11 schools across the area. Organised in partnership with the Royal Highland Education Trust (RHET), the day was structured around the Scottish Curriculum for Excellence, covering food literacy, land use, biodiversity, and sustainability.

The programme included a butchery and cookery demonstration with lamb tastings, sheep shearing, a Farm to Fork experience, sessions on animal welfare, farming and nature, and wool sustainability. Over 20 sheep breed societies were represented, and children explored the event in guided school groups, with RHET volunteer stewards supporting their learning throughout. A pre-event poster competition for primary pupils added a classroom dimension before the visit, and teachers received follow-up materials to continue the learning back at school.

Pupils left with a clearer understanding of food production, local ecology, and the working life of the Highlands. The sheep shearing demonstration was particularly popular— children were absorbed by the skill involved and came away understanding both the welfare and commercial reasons behind it. The cookery session brought the farm-to-fork message to life in a direct and memorable way.

"How rare it is for this event to take place so close. — Lairg Primary pupil"

Teachers described the day as well-organised and educationally rich. For many children it was their first time seeing livestock handled at close quarters, or understanding that wool has practical uses beyond clothing, from insulation and carpets to path foundations. The event also highlighted local career pathways in land-based industries — relevant for young people in communities where employment options can feel limited.

The visit strengthened the connection between young people and the farming heritage of their own area and gave schools and RHET a foundation for continued learning in the classroom. For NSA Scotland, the partnership model — with the grant covering transport and attendance costs that schools cannot absorb — demonstrated how events of this scale can be made accessible to the most remote communities.

The project will continue, with RHET supporting follow-on classroom activity and future school group visits to similar events.

## Conclusions

The fund continues to provide responsive and strategic support, a key feature of which is the partnership between the Community Council decision makers and Foundation Scotland; working together year-round to ensure that the fund supports valued and ongoing projects such as the Gala Week, Village Improvements Fund and Community Association salary costs, as well as being able to fund opportunity projects such as the school's visit to the National Sheep Association Highland Regional Show. A key feature of the fund's success relies on the community engaging in proactive partnerships between organisations and individuals to prioritise and share resources to benefit the whole of the community.

## Further Information

### **For more information, contact:**

Chris Lee, Community Funds Adviser, Foundation Scotland

Tel: 07912 759525

Email: [clee@foundationscotland.org.uk](mailto:clee@foundationscotland.org.uk)

## About Foundation Scotland

Foundation Scotland helps communities create positive change and deliver lasting impact. We support philanthropists to help their personal giving make the most difference. We work with donors to invest in community action that enables people and places to flourish. We work in partnership with communities to maximise opportunities from place-based funds. And we offer social investment opportunities to enable social enterprises, community organisations and charities to grow and deliver positive social impact.

We have distributed more than £220 million to grassroots organisations across the country since the Foundation launched in 1996. Our developmental approach and in-depth knowledge of charitable and community sectors ensure that funds entrusted to the Foundation make a real difference to people's lives nationwide.

Foundation Scotland is an independent Scottish charity (SC022910), one of 47 community foundations in the UK and part of a global network of over 1800 foundations worldwide.

For more information about Foundation Scotland, please visit:

<http://www.foundationscotland.org.uk/>

