



Overview of Good Practice Principles for Developers for Community Benefits

Scottish Government Good Practice Principles for Community Benefits from Onshore Renewable Energy Developments



Introduction

This guidance note summarises what good practice looks like in relation to community benefits from onshore renewable energy developments. It is based on the Scottish Government's [Good Practice Principles for Community Benefits from Onshore Renewable Energy Developments](#) which provides a detailed description of the Government's expectations from renewable energy developers in relation to community benefits.

This document covers the following key points:

- Key principles of Community Benefits
- Roles and Responsibilities
- Principles of consultation & consulting local stakeholders
- Community Benefits Agreement & Governance Arrangements
- External links to additional resources & guidance

Key principles of community benefits

Community benefits are a renewable industry led voluntary initiative to support communities. Community benefits packages can take many forms, and decisions on the details are best led locally based on consensus between the renewable energy business and the community/communities concerned.

The provision of community benefits (including flexible packages of benefits) is not a material consideration in the planning process and has no bearings on any planning decisions. Contributing to community benefits discussions does not affect an individual's, community or organisation's right to express a view on the development proposals, and objecting to or supporting the development does not affect their right to discuss the community benefits proposals. Some people may be opposed to the development but may still wish to have input on the community benefits discussions. This is one reason why a separate forum for consultations on the community benefits package is recommended.





The package of benefits that a renewable energy business offers may vary in line with the priorities of the community/communities involved, and the size and scope of the renewable energy project. It is important that community benefits relate to the specific needs and aspirations of local people, evidenced by some form of ballot or other mechanism to capture views, for example, in a community action plan.

The Scottish Government expects renewable energy developers to offer a community benefit value of the recommended national rate of £5,000 per installed megawatt per annum, index linked for the operational lifetime of the project.

Renewable energy businesses, regardless of technology type, are encouraged to consider what options or community benefits packages they may be able to offer in line with local community needs. Flexible packages of benefit should offer an element of additionality and go beyond the requirements of the planning process.

Once determined through consultation with local communities, the geographical area that any community benefits package is targeted towards is commonly known as the 'area of benefit'. Community benefits packages may benefit one or more communities within the area of benefit identified.

Principles of Community Benefits



Diagram source: [Good Practice Principles for Community Benefits from Onshore Renewable Energy Developments](#), p. 10

Roles and Responsibilities

The roles and responsibilities of communities and renewable energy businesses are summarised below:





Community

- Register interest with the renewable energy business if necessary.
- Engage constructively and regularly with renewable energy businesses.
- Recognise the complexity of energy projects.
- Appoint a lead organisation, could be a community council or other appointed representative group.
- Keep local people apprised.
- Utilise the support provided through Local Energy Scotland and/or The Highland Council's Community Support Officers for Renewables Engagement.
- Engage professional advice, as required.
- Development of a community action plan.
- If applicable, devise a strategy to effectively administer and manage a fund.
- Submit community benefits details to Scottish Register of Community Benefits from Renewables or contact Local Energy Scotland to assist.

Renewable energy businesses and/or their agents

- Engage with the Community Wealth Building team at The Highland Council to discuss Social Value Charter commitments.
- Establish geographical boundary for proposed benefit.
- Recognise local level capacity.
- Engage in early discussion openly.
- Engage in effective local consultation on any proposed community benefits.
- Appoint a single, key point of contact.
- Continue discussions post-consultation with community, as required.
- If applicable, utilise the support provided through Local Energy Scotland.
- Submit community benefits details to Scottish Register of Community Benefits from Renewables or contact Local Energy Scotland to assist





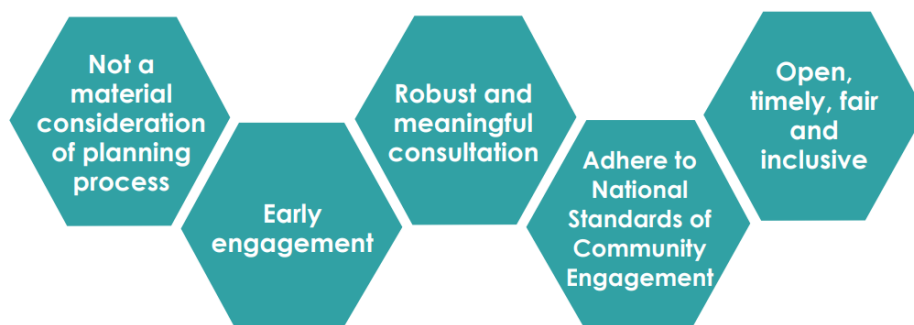
Principles of consultation

Consultation is an important component of identifying appropriate communities that will be involved in community benefits schemes. The Scottish Government encourages this process to begin at an early stage, pre-consent where possible, to allow community groups time to consolidate their available resource and build capacity, as well as to enable discussion and identification of an appropriate area of benefit.

Discussions on the provision of community benefits are not a material consideration in the planning process. To maintain this distinction, Scottish Government recommends that discussions on the development itself and community benefit discussions are held in two separate forums or at separate times in the development process.

However, it is recognised that this may not always be possible owing to the timescale of the project or available resource and capacity within a community. Therefore, when the concept of an approach to community benefits is introduced, it should be made clear to all stakeholders that it is independent of the planning process and is not a material consideration in deciding an application.

Principles of Consultation



Approach to consulting

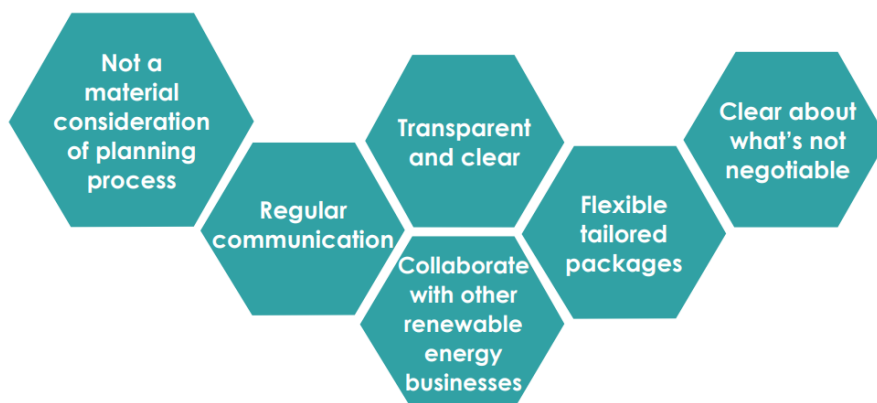


Diagram source: [Good Practice Principles for Community Benefits from Onshore Renewable Energy Developments](#), pp. 13-14





Consulting with local stakeholders

As a first step, the consultation on the specific area of the community benefits package should at least engage the same wider geographical area that formed the consultation on the development itself.

Discussions should:

- Initially involve every community council (where these exist).
- Where they don't exist, other representative community bodies within the geographical area should be approached.
- Similar organisations representing those communities directly bordering the application site should also be approached

Following identification of an appropriate geographical boundary for consultation, renewable energy businesses are encouraged to engage with other relevant local stakeholders in addition to the community council or representative body. These could include:

- Local residents.
- Local businesses.
- Land managers.
- Community councils or, if none exist, any other representative community body.
- Local authority officials.
- Thematic groups and clubs, for example youth groups, sports groups, heritage groups, or lunch clubs for the elderly,
- Community development trusts or community companies.
- Housing associations and tenants' associations.
- Other existing community groups.
- Local environmental bodies, and other national environmental non-governmental organisations with a local presence.
- Local Chamber of Commerce, Federation of Small Businesses, and/or Business Improvement District.
- Other key service providers, e.g. village hall committees, schools, colleges, healthcare facilities, residential facilities, care providers, community transport services, credit unions etc



Community Benefits Agreement & Governance

It is recommended that, when community benefits discussions between the renewable energy business and the community have concluded, arrangements agreed upon are formalised through a legal agreement between parties. These 'parties' will vary according to different contexts. For example, some renewable energy owners will want an agreement directly with a mandated community body and others will want to have the agreement with a relevant third party that will have overall responsibility for administering the community benefits package. Irrespective of the parties involved, at its most fundamental the agreement should detail:

- The proposed community benefits package, including the time period it covers.
- The proposed roles of all involved, including any third parties.
- The protocol for advising the community if a site is to be sold.
- A commitment to honour all agreements should the site be sold on with documents being passed to the subsequent owner.

The renewable energy business should also provide an ongoing clear point of contact. In some cases, this could be a third party appointed by the renewable energy business to deliver the community benefits package, to ensure that the community groups are able to access relevant support going forward.

Once the key features of the community benefits package have been determined, including area of benefit, value and types of benefit, as set out in the community benefits agreement, the renewable energy business is expected to consult further with the relevant communities about the implementation of the community benefits package.

Whatever administrative arrangement used, most communities are likely to want representation in, or ownership of, the decision-making process. However, communities may require support to do this from those with experience, such as other communities or specialist consultants or other third parties.

Glossary

Community Benefits: Additional positive outcomes for communities resulting from developments, often including financial contributions, employment opportunities, or social improvements.

Area of Benefit: The Geographic region or community that is intended to receive the benefits from a development or initiative.

Community Action Plan: A strategic document created by a community that outlines goals, priorities, and actions to improve local conditions and achieve shared objectives.

Community Wealth Building: An economic development approach focused on local ownership, inclusive growth, and retaining wealth within communities.

Scottish Register of Community Benefits from Renewables: An online, searchable database maintained by Local Energy Scotland providing details and examples of community benefits committed to communities across Scotland

Local Energy Scotland: An organisation that supports communities in Scotland to develop renewable energy projects and benefit from local energy initiatives.

Social Value Charter: a framework that sets out the community benefit expectations Highland has for companies wishing to invest in renewables in this area.

Community Benefits Agreement: A legally binding agreement between developers and communities that specifies the benefits that are to be provided to the community from renewable developments.

Index Linked: A financial term indicating that a value, such as a payment or benefit, is adjusted over time based on an index, typically inflation or cost of living.