Frequently Asked Questions: A Guide for Highland Communities

Renewable energy in the Highlands

1. **What is Renewable Energy?**

   Renewable Energy is energy that is created by natural resources such as wind, water and sunlight. These resources are sustainable, clean and release minimal greenhouse gases.

2. **What are the different types of renewable energy developments?**

   Renewable energy developments include wind turbines, pump storage hydro, battery storage, solar farms, hydropower, biomass, air source pumps and ground source pumps.

3. **Why are the Highlands a popular location for its development?**

   The Highlands have abundant natural resources such as high wind speeds, access to water for hydro schemes and land mass for development.

The planning process

1. **How do I find current renewable energy development planning applications?**

   To find planning applications through The Highland Council, search for 'Planning permission: view planning applications', Click on the search for applications box halfway down the page. From here applications can be searched using the names, type or location of development.
   View planning applications | Planning permission | The Highland Council

The Highland Council have also produced an energy map which can be found through the link below, this shows energy projects that are currently in the planning process across Highland.
Energy Projects Mapping | Energy Projects | The Highland Council

2. **How do communities support or object to a renewable energy planning application?**

   Once a planning application has been submitted to The Highland Council it will be added to the public planning portal. This is where both statutory and non-statutory consultees can comment on the application showing their support or objection. For further information on the planning process follow this link – A Community Guide to the Renewable Energy Development Planning Process.

Community Support Officers – Renewables Engagement

1. **Why were these roles created?**

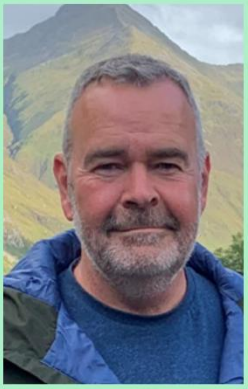
   These roles were created in response to the growing number of renewable energy developments in Highland. The roles will support communities to develop their knowledge and understanding around renewable developments and the planning process.

2. **What areas in Highland are covered?**

   The roles will cover all of Highland with each officer having a focus on each area – North and East, West and Mid, and Inverness and South.

3. **How can communities contact you?**

   Communities can contact their support officers through the Community Wealth Building email address cwb@highland.gov.uk.

Luci Ireland	Nick Brierley	Ross Mackillop	Jessica Boughey
			
CSO - RE North & East	CSO - RE Mid & West	CSO - RE Inverness South	CSO - RE Inverness South

4. **What other support can you offer to communities?**

   The Community Support Officers – Renewables Engagement can also guide groups to engage with the renewable developers to explore opportunities to maximise community benefits from the developments in their area.

The Social Value Charter

1. **What is the Social Value Charter and why was it developed?**

   The Social Value Charter was developed as a way of setting out what the area expects from renewables investment alongside what we, as public/private/community sector partners, will do to support and enable this contribution. The Social Value Charter aims to embed community wealth building into Highland by engaging with stakeholders and developers to ensure the economic benefits of renewable energy developments is maximised. Social Value Charter for Renewables Investment | Social Value Charter for Renewables Investment

2. **What forms of community benefits are there from renewable energy developments?**

Community benefits from renewable energy developments come in all shapes and sizes, it's very much decided on a case-by-case basis by the community and developers. These benefits can be financial, such as community benefit zones or strategic funding pots. There are also benefits such as infrastructure improvements through road works or building legacy housing for staff that can then be used as houses for the community. Developers can also offer accessible apprenticeships or commit to supporting the local supply chain by using local contractors or goods manufacturers.

3. **Where can I see what renewable energy developments are in the Highlands?**

   The Highland Council have developed an interactive Energy Projects Planning map that shows the current renewable developments in all stages of the planning process.

   Energy Projects Mapping | Energy Projects | The Highland Council

4. **Is the Social Value Charter mandatory for renewable energy developments?**

   No, the Social Value Charter is not mandatory for developers. It is currently a voluntary commitment to supporting Community Wealth Building in Highland. Should a developer sign up to the Charter they have the option to sign up to selective priorities, and do not have to meet all 9 priority points.

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6. **How do I find out what community benefits the developer is proposing in their application?**

   Renewable energy developers often share this information on their website.

Scottish Government – Energy Consents Unit

1. **What is the Energy Consents unit?**
   The Energy Consents Unit is the part of the Scottish Government that is responsible for administering applications for consent to energy infrastructure projects over 50MW and overhead power lines. When these applications go to the ECU, the Highland Council becomes a consultee on the application and not the deciding body. This means that any third-party representations should be made directly to ECU. The Highland Councils assessment of the application is independent and will be considered alongside other third-party assessments by the ECU during the applications process.

2. **How do I object to or support an application through the Energy Consents Unit?**
   Information on supporting or objecting to an application can be found here – Energy consents: how to support or object to an application - gov.scot

Marine Scotland

1. **What is Marine Scotland?**

   Marine Scotland is the party responsible for processing **all** offshore renewable energy planning applications. When these applications are submitted, the Highland Council becomes a consultee on the application and is notified. The decision is made at a Scottish Government level with the information processes by Marine Scotland.
   All applications | marine.gov.scot

2. **How do I object to or support an application through Marine Scotland?**

   Information on supporting or objecting an application can be found here - Marine licensing: applications and guidance - gov.scot