

GreenPower -- Millenderdale Wind Farm Community Fund Workshop -- Girvan 30/10/14

Summary

The workshop was hosted by GreenPower at the Carrick Centre in Girvan. 15 representatives of community groups and Community Councils including three South Ayrshire Councillors attended the event.

GreenPower outlined that the purpose of the workshop was to begin the consultation process around the operation of a community benefit fund connected to the proposed Millenderdale Wind Farm. The need for early engagement between the community and developers over such funds was highlighted in Scottish Government Good Practice guidance.

It was explained that the purpose of the meeting was not to discuss the merits or otherwise associated with the planning application for the wind farm. It was also mentioned that the fund was voluntary and was not in planning terms defined as compensation to communities.

A brief factual presentation of the project including locational maps was given and questions about access, landownership and planning timescale were answered.

GreenPower's Community Benefit Principles were then presented and discussed as below. These principles form the starting point for developing funds in partnership with communities:

- *GreenPower wishes to establish long term partnerships with local communities to work together to deliver community benefits for the lifetime of our projects;*
- *GreenPower will consult with local communities on the management, purpose and delivery of community benefits;*
- *As operational arrangements for delivering Community Benefits may vary between projects, GreenPower will consult with the local community to establish an effective system to allocate and administer any funds;*
- *GreenPower will endeavour to assist host communities to understand how our Community Benefit funds can help meet their needs. This might for example, involve the production of a community plan;*
- *Community Benefit funds must only be used for purposes of a charitable nature and for the public good;*
- *Community Benefit funds must not be used for political or religious purposes, to fund or supplant a service that is a core function of a state agency or local authority, or be used to fund any activity which is against renewables projects or would bring the project or GreenPower into disrepute.*

There was discussion about what constituted the delivery of a 'core function' in relation to funds and about how this could be interpreted. Statutory responsibilities of public bodies were considered to be core.

Three groups of attendees then considered three themes related to the operation of a potential Millenderdale fund.

1 . FUND BOUNDARIES

An introductory presentation outlined that there were no firm guidelines from Government or other bodies as to how boundaries for funds should be chosen.

Possible criteria used elsewhere included the visual or geographical connection between a project and community, construction disturbance, population density, social deprivation and need and the capacity of the community to spend funds through local bodies.

The use of boundaries based on a distance radius, Community Council boundary or no boundary at all were raised. The issues surrounding local and regional splits of funds between areas was also mentioned.

Group discussions that followed were fed back and the following main points and issues were raised:

- Importance of engaging early on the boundary issue and that some developers had left this too late by engaging with communities post---planning;
- Consensus that no particular wind project in the Carrick area had a perfect boundary model;
- Importance of rural areas receiving a substantial part of fund and the potential to be disadvantaged by population based criteria;
- Radius boundary considered fair with a weighting towards areas in closest proximity to the wind farm;
- Potential for Carrick Futures to manage distribution in closer proximity areas and extend reach to Kirkoswald, Maidens & Turnberry (KMT) Community Council area for areas further away but with some connection;
- Consideration needs to be given to a proliferation of funds from projects and how these can work together to avoid excessive numbers of bodies and meetings.

2 . DISTRIBUTION MODELS

A presentation looked at common wind farm benefit fund distribution models in operation today across Scotland.

The 'in---house' model adopted by GreenPower elsewhere was described, whereby GreenPower performed an administrative function for the fund, working with a Steering Group of nominated community representatives who make decisions on funding applications.

It was clarified that under this model GreenPower would not take a management fee from the fund and that in the event of any change of owner of the project, agreements over fund delivery would follow with the wind farm. It was pointed out that this was a flexible model and that GreenPower was responsive to community views on a preferred option.

A 'third party' model whereby funds are administered by another body such as Foundation Scotland was described. An independent community body model, whereby a Trust for example delivers one or multiple benefit funds was also described.

It was discussed how Carrick Futures incorporated different elements of these models.

Group discussions that followed were fed back and the following main points and issues were raised;

- Creation of new bodies is not desirable, as there are many existing bodies which require time and effort to manage;
- The GreenPower model brings welcome administrative support but there was concern about creation of additional body. Reduction of administrative burden on existing bodies would have benefit;
- There may be advantages in having Carrick Futures provide the distribution for some but not all of the Millenderdale funds, as it can provide long term stability, bring it together with other funds to help deliver larger projects and ring fence funds for certain areas if required;
- Rural communities have their own aspirations to develop capacity outside of the Carrick Futures model;
- There is benefit in having some smaller funds more readily available at Community Council level, avoiding the application process of Carrick Futures.

3 . COMMUNITY NEEDS

Groups were finally asked to consider what local needs were in the South Carrick area, what work had been done to identify these and what needs had wind farm funds been able to successfully address. Groups were also asked to consider where there were needs that funds had been unable to meet and whether there were needs that funds should not meet.

Group discussions that followed were fed back and the following main points and issues were raised:

- Community Councils have well developed action plans that identify need but these are considered out of date and in need of re---fresh;
- There is a need to utilise funds flexibly and innovatively (i.e up---front fund payments) to support initiatives working alongside more inflexible funding streams i.e Leader;

- Using funds to directly replace Council services is not appropriate, however there may be ways to use funds for more partnership working between bodies (i.e. community management of a council owned hall);
- There are gaps in terms of a lack of educational trust funds in South Ayrshire and support funds for business start-ups;
- Community transport is a strong community need alongside support for vulnerable and isolated individuals;
- Community Interest Company initiatives have been found to be good vehicles for delivering project work.

Attendees were thanked by GreenPower for sharing their expertise and local knowledge. GreenPower outlined that a wider consultation would be launched following the workshop and that attendees were invited to formally respond and encourage others to do so.

A summary report would be produced and made available on the project website and a working group would be established to take proposals forward should the project achieve planning consent.