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CARES CASE STUDY

ANNANDALE & NITHSDALE COMMUNITY BENEFIT COMPANY

BACKGROUND

Annandale & Nithsdale Community Benefit Company Ltd. (ANCBC) funds charitable activities to benefit communities within Annandale and Nithsdale, two historic counties in Dumfries and Galloway. This diverse area covers the urban area of Dumfries town and rural communities across the wider area.

- Fund Name: ANCBC, distributing Harestanes Community Benefit Fund
- Fund Donor: ScottishPower Renewables
- Related renewable energy scheme: Harestanes wind farm
- Technology: Onshore wind
- Annual fund value (per MW installed): Equivalent to £2,205
- Annual fund value (total): £300,000 a year, index-linked. A one-off construction related benefit lump sum of £400,000 was paid in 2015
- Year of Fund commencement: 2015
- Fund Area of Benefit: 42 Community Council areas in Dumfries and Galloway
- Fund administrator: ANCBC, supported by Foundation Scotland in administration of the grant-making element of the fund

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Awards can support a wide range of activities which support the regeneration and sustainability of the communities. This could include equipment, running costs for local groups, staff costs, consultations, maintenance or refurbishment of community facilities and capital costs to purchase or develop community assets. To be eligible for a grant, local people must be able to become members of the organisation looking for funding, or to benefit from their services.

Applications that address any of the following issues are particularly welcomed:

- Community facilities, services, rural transport, affordable housing, community development
- Community or local events
- Environmental or heritage projects
- Skills, employment, tourism, reducing poverty and disadvantage, improving rural business opportunities, building the capacity of community and voluntary organisations, supporting innovation and social enterprise
- Sport, recreation and improving the health of residents
- Youth and education, tackling out-migration of young people and achieving parity with national educational attainment levels
- Promoting care and support of vulnerable people, improving community safety.

FUND ARRANGEMENTS

ANCBC is a company limited by guarantee, with two company members nominated by each of the community councils within the area of benefit. A voluntary Board of up to twelve Directors is elected from and by the membership.

ANCBC's area of benefit is split into three geographical sub-areas, East, South and West, and the company looks to make sure there's always a director from each area.

The company arrangements were established after consultation with Community Councils in 2013 and 2014. ANCBC registered as a company in November 2014, and the Board has been meeting regularly since. The Fund received its first donation from owner and operator of the Harestanes Wind Farm, ScottishPower Renewables, in April 2015. This £400,000 construction contribution meant funding could begin to be distributed that year.

Decisions on how the Fund is distributed and which projects it supports are made by ANCBC's Board of Directors. The Board are all local volunteers but professional support with grant-making activity is provided by Foundation Scotland, a national grant-making charity with expertise in distributing community benefit funding. Foundation Scotland act as a first point of contact for applicants, receive and assess of applications, run the Board's grant-making meetings and support Company administration.

The distribution of the Harestanes Fund is split between open grant-making across three funding rounds per year, and local grants made directly to Community Councils each year. Each established Community Council in the area of benefit is eligible for an annual grant of up to £2,000. Any Community Council looking for more than the annual local grant amount of £2,000 can apply for a grant from the remainder of the Fund.

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KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

During its first years of operation, the Board have funded an average of 28 projects a year directly through open grants and many more indirectly through local grants to Community Councils. Between April 2015 and March 2020, ANCBC supported 144 projects through open grant-making, distributing £1,300,927 to in total. The average award was £9,034.

The fund has supported a diverse range of projects including community transport provision, play parks, distribution of food parcels, local sports clubs, walking groups, music events, nature projects, support for disadvantaged community members, projects to help people with mental and physical disabilities, youth support, and local galas and shows. Applicants come in all shapes and sizes. Some groups are big and some are small, working in larger towns or smaller villages, so people from many different demographics are benefitting from the fund.



The smallest awards were of £500 each, awarded to Moffat Civic Pride in March 2017 to enhance the town through the provision of floral displays and to Johnstonebridge Centre and Community Development Trust Ltd to purchase petrol, oil and support lawnmower maintenance for the volunteer-maintained verges and public spaces in Johnstonebridge.

The largest grant, of £49,998, was awarded to Mossburn Community Farm in January 2016 over a three-year period, to provide equine therapies for people living with mental and physical disabilities.

A spokesperson from Mossburn Community Farm said, "The grant from ANCBC has helped our Learning with Horses Project at Mossburn Community Farm to provide access to its services for groups and individuals that couldn't previously benefit, such as the LGBT community and Alzheimer's Groups. It has also enabled the Farm to work with agencies such as Youth Justice and Social Work, who wouldn't otherwise have funding to provide their users with these therapeutic experiences that so benefit their health and well-being. We are truly grateful for the funding and it is brilliant to be able to make a difference to both young and old in our community."

The wife of a dementia sufferer who attends Mossburn Community Farm said, "I was quite anxious before coming the first week but I love it and look forward to my Thursday afternoons."

One of the most popular calls for funding comes from village halls and club houses. Since the Fund launched, ANCBC has supported 31 such community facilities across the area of benefit to the tune of just over £380,000, representing just under a third of

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the funds distributed through open grant-making over five years. These projects included new builds, maintenance, kitchen refurbishments, heating upgrades, accessibility improvements, extensions, flood prevention, replacement windows and doors, solar panels, pathways and parking facilities.

As an example, Durisdeer Village Hall has used funding from ANCBC and other community benefit funds to completely overhaul the venue, to the delight of the community. The Hall is now used on a more regular basis and is helping to keep the community's spirit alive.

LESSONS LEARNED

Because of the high demand on the fund during the first two years, the ANCBC Board had to make some difficult decisions on which projects to fund. Applications were often received totalling more than twice the funds available at that time.

Measures were put into place to manage this, including reducing the maximum award level (now £20,000); limiting the number of awards any one group can hold per year; and requiring some match funding for each application.

This enabled the Board to support more projects and has reduced the number of unsuccessful applicants. The match funding requirement also helps reduce over-reliance on the Fund, encouraging groups to diversify their sources of income and become more resilient and sustainable in how their services are funded.



Martin Brown, Chair of ANCBC, reflected:

"The Partnership between ScottishPower Renewables and the 30 community councils that now make up the company are now in a position to clearly say that we are fit for purpose and living up to our resolution in funding of projects that are making a real difference to the people's lives in Annandale, Dumfries and Nithsdale. The Directors managing the company are community councillors and, with the support of Foundation Scotland as our Fund Administrator, have been the bedrock of the structure that is now in place to administer grant applications for the next 20 years.

The original projection was that the contract with SPR would provide over £8,000,000 in Community Benefit in that period – the milestone for the first £1,000,000 was reached in December 2017."

Website: ancbc.co.uk

To find out more about community benefits from renewable energy projects, visit localenergy.scot/community-benefits

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