CARES community benefits toolkit
Creating a lasting legacy

LOCAL ENERGY SCOTLAND

The CARES community benefits toolkit builds on the strategic overview presented in the Scottish Government's Good Practice Principles for Renewable Energy Developments. It provides guidance to communities looking to secure, set up and deliver community benefits that achieve maximum impact and are managed in an accountable way.

The toolkit is made up of six separate but linked modules. This module:

- Sets out the value in creating a community action plan
- Introduces the key elements of, and the practicalities involved in developing, a community action plan

In line with the Good Practice Principles the term renewable energy business is used throughout this document to mean the project owner.

This toolkit is relevant to communities being offered or managing packages of community benefits. Renewable energy businesses may also find it useful.

The previous prevailing model for community benefits has been the setting up of annual funds and as such many of the examples used within the toolkit relate to this. We expect to provide updated versions of the toolkit with new examples as further models are developed.

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1. A lasting legacy

The overall aim of the Scottish Government's [Good Practice Principles for Community Benefits from Onshore Renewables](#) is to achieve a lasting legacy for communities through of the set-up of the community benefits package. The Good Practice Principles set out that a key element in this is that "the community has ownership of a "plan", that it identifies key priorities to maximise impact, and has a process in place to update the plan on a regular basis. The plan should be viewed as a "live" document that can be adapted to meet the current and future priorities of the community".

It is important to ensure that the package of benefits that has become available to the community is used to make the greatest difference for the whole area, in terms of its long-term sustainability and social inclusion. This can be done by creating an action plan for the community, based on consensus around local needs and priorities.

Where annual funds are part of the package of community benefits on offer, these usually operate for the lifetime of the renewable energy project, perhaps 25 years if an onshore wind farm, or 40 years if a hydropower scheme. This means that, especially where large sums of money are involved, communities can begin to think about and plan for long term outcomes that the funding might bring about, and how it can support a lasting legacy for the community.

Informed by the community action plan, the community can develop a strategy to guide effective distribution of the funding towards activity that will contribute to the community's vision. This strategy will ideally set out the Fund's aims and priorities, based on the community action plan. It will also provide details about who can receive funding – whether that means constituted or un-constituted community groups that are working to bring about benefit locally, registered charities, private businesses, individuals, or a mixture of these. The *Developing a fund strategy* annex provides further details on a methodology for this.

The Fund strategy should also set out how funding will be made available in the community. There are various approaches to this (again, see the module *Developing a fund strategy* for an overview of some of these). However, most community benefit funds of any size tend to feature an open grant programme in some form. The *Guide to open grant making* annex provides examples and outlines of some of the things to think about.

2. What is a community action plan and why have one?

The Good Practice Principles encourage communities to develop community action plans that can support them in articulating their aspirations and ambitions in discussions with renewable energy businesses. Such plans will ideally demonstrate some consensus on what the benefits package will be used for and how it will be made available. A community action plan can then provide an evidence base that supports discussions, and informs decisions, about the most meaningful package of benefits that may be offered by renewable energy businesses.

Moreover, once the community benefit package has been agreed, the plan can provide a rationale for decisions made about the use of community benefits, providing accountability for those decisions back to the community. For example, as noted above, where an annual fund features, a community action plan can be used to shape the strategy for the disbursement of that fund and ultimately to determine what will (and wont) be funded.

Community action planning work is generally welcomed by renewable energy businesses, as it can help ensure the community benefits package is viewed positively by the community. Ideally the process will remain community-led, with the outputs supported by the renewable energy business as well as the community.

In most communities there will be a plethora of ideas about, and aspirations for, the area's future. To be credible, a community action plan needs to be genuinely backed by the wider community and reflective of their views. It should therefore be informed by a process of meaningful local consultation and engagement that reaches deeply into and across the community, as well as involving other stakeholders with an interest in or commitment to the area.

The findings of that consultation process can then be used to flesh out a long-term (minimum 10 years) vision for the area and a number (perhaps up to six or seven) of broad themes or outcomes that contribute towards that vision. Where there is some consensus around priority actions that can contribute to those themes or outcomes, these should also be set out and might useful be categorised as short (1-3 years), medium (3-10 years) and long (10 years +) term.

Plans may be refreshed or updated in line with changing needs, aspirations or priorities.

Community action plans will usually combine findings from the consultation activity with some basic socio-economic information, providing an objective profile of the area (with data on demographics, health, employment, the local economy, statutory and community services etc.). Sometimes the document also lists or maps existing local assets, such as community organisations and groups, statutory services, local facilities and so on. Some communities may want this to be an in-depth and comprehensive document analysing their local area's needs and opportunities, for others it may provide more of an overview.

A well-run, inclusive community action planning process can deliver a range of outcomes. It can:
- Build local consensus on the priority needs and opportunities that the community benefit package (and any other resources available to the community) should be directed towards
- Help local people / groups to identify a range of skills, interests and assets that exist locally, and encouraging them to build on these
- Build connections between individuals / groups and encourage further community action
- Provide an early prompt to get local groups thinking about projects they might wish to develop, and start planning those out

- Where an annual fund is involved, get some feedback on how local people see the community benefit monies being made available and on how decisions on distribution of funds might be made
- Result in a tangible output (e.g. a report, website, booklet, or a map) that can be used as a reference by local groups, for example in applying for funding, influencing the provision of services by the local authority, and so on
- Engender the widest sense of 'ownership' over, and support for, the community benefit package, and
- Help local people see their community, and its future, in a positive light.

The community action planning process shouldn't simply focus on the community benefits that are now, or soon to become, available to the community, as that may narrow or skew the community's response. It may also mire the consultations in any residual feelings around the renewable energy development in question - perhaps in an unhelpful way.

Indeed, the plan may influence a range of resources that are, or could become, available to the community. These might include, in addition to community benefits:
- Funds that may be brought in, such as Scottish Government, lottery, or charitable trust and foundation monies;
- How public services are configured or targeted;
- Local voluntary efforts, and potentially;
- Community share or bond issues to support local projects.

These type of plans, developed through a grassroots process led by the local community, should not be confused with the statutory community planning process, led by the Community Planning Partnership (CPP), which is a collaboration of all public services in a local authority area. Each CPP is responsible for developing and delivering a Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP), which covers the whole council area and a Locality Plan for smaller areas within the CPP area, setting out how public services will be configured and delivered.

The image shown is taken from the Scottish Borders Community Plan (the LOIP) and illustrates the link between this and the Locality Plans being developed.

An example of where both the LOIP and locality plans have been published is available on the Glasgow City Health and Social Care website.

Community action plans and the statutory community planning process don't necessarily have a formal relationship with each other. Usually the local community action plan will be deemed to have more direct relevance to the local community,

having been developed by them and being focussed on action that they themselves can take rather than outside agencies.

The effective delivery of community action plans may involve collaboration with, or influencing the provision of, statutory services. It may be appropriate for community benefits to at times be aligned to statutory spend where that adds significant value and reflects a shared vision. However, there is some consensus[1] that community benefits should not directly replace or offset statutory spend, especially on statutory duties (rather than discretionary activity).[2]

In the same vein, community action plans, and community benefit packages, should ideally complement other relevant local and regional initiatives, plans and strategies so as to maximise synergies and strategic impact. Be sure to ask the local authority and others, such as the Third Sector Interface, for these and any other relevant reports regarding the area.

Examples of community action plans, demonstrating varying approaches, are available here:
- Coalburn, Douglas and Glespin Community Action Plan
- Three Villages (Arrochar, Tarbert and Ardlui) Community Action Plan
- Dalavich Community Action Plan
- New Luce Community Action Plan
- Watten Community Development Plan
- Fairlie Community Action Plan
- Muirkirk Community Action Plan

All of the community action plans funded by CARES are available to view here.

3. How to produce a community action plan
3.1 Resourcing the process

The consultation and planning work could be designed by the community and/or delivered by them, or by independent professionals on behalf of the community. The latter can bring expertise in, for example, planning consultation activities, facilitating events or workshops, administering surveys, and drafting the plan.

There are pros and cons to each approach, as shown in Box 1, so consider carefully which is most appropriate. One option is to try and get the best of both worlds by hiring an external consultant to support the delivery of the work – but also using local volunteers so as to enable the widest possible engagement of local people through their efforts and networks. A good consultant should be able to work well with volunteers and support this approach.

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[1] See for example the Firm Foundations report at https://www.foundationscotland.org.uk/media/345969/Comunity-Benefit-Charter_FINAL.pdf
[2] Public bodies in Scotland have both statutory duties (for example, social care services or aspects of road safety and provision of street lighting) and discretionary powers (for example, health promotion activities or provision of traffic calming measures on non-trunk routes).

Box 1: Some factors to consider in deciding how to resource the process

External Consultants	
Advantages	**Disadvantages**
Clear independence – no specific agenda or perception of such	Will need to be brought 'up to speed' on local context, purpose behind the commission, etc.
Can free up local volunteers to focus on engagement through existing connections/ networks	Risk that heavy reliance on external consultants leads to missed opportunities for wider engagement through volunteers
Should bring professional facilitation, research and plan / report writing skills	Time and effort required to commission and manage contract
Should bring experience and knowledge of what has worked elsewhere	Risk of poor quality consultant, impacting on process and outputs.
Paid resource – should be able to focus on work as and when required	Requires resourcing, usually through securing grant funding.

Local People	
Advantages	**Disadvantages**
Already well informed on local context, purpose behind the process, etc. so can hit the ground running.	May be seen as having own agenda, could impact credibility of process
Strong existing networks / connections to facilitate engagement (although these can still be used along with external consultant)	Risk of burn out / may not have capacity (time) to deliver if volunteers only
In depth knowledge of the community can provide for quality information/ outputs (although this can still be input if using external consultant)	May lack right skills and experience / knowledge of what has worked elsewhere.
If involved on a volunteer basis, only sundry expenses require to be sourced.	Risk of poor co-ordination if roles not clear.

Either approach will require some resourcing (money or in-kind), with possible sources being an existing community benefit fund, the owner of the renewable energy project, or the Scottish Government's CARES programme, which provides an Enablement Grant for such work.

Occasionally the renewable energy business is interested in supporting this stage of development activity as a further demonstration of their commitment to the area and to ensuring the community benefits package works well for the community. It is worth approaching them to see if they will contribute to these costs. In some contexts, the local authority or some third sector support organisations may provide staff to support the process in some way or may in fact already be tasked to provide such a process to local communities.

To pay consultants to support the work, there will need to be a process to appoint them, known as procurement. This process could be carried out by a Steering Group of local representatives (see section 3.2 below), bringing wider local buy-in and accountability.

The procurement process usually involves the following steps:

- Agree a specification for the work;
- Issue this as part of an 'invitation to tender' to a short list of prospective consultants;
- Select a consultant from the tenders received. It may help to interview each of the prospective consultants to get a better sense of their experience and how they would deliver the work;
- Formally appoint (i.e. enter into a contract with) them. Normally the contract will need to be between the consultant and a local organisation that will receive and manage any funds for this purpose.

A number of consultants with skills and experience in this area can be found in the CARES [Framework for Services in Community Engagement](#).

[Guidance](#) and templates to support the commissioning process are available through CARES, including a sample specification and invitation to tender, a sample scoring sheet for selecting tenders, and a template consultancy agreement. [Pointers](#) on managing the contract effectively are also provided.

3.2 Undertaking the community consultation

It is recommended that the community engagement process is designed and delivered in line with the good practice principles enshrined in the seven *National Standards for Community Engagement*. These are illustrated in Diagram 1 below. More detail on them can be found [here](#).

Diagram 1: National Standards for Community Engagement

A useful starting point is to **draw up a clear purpose statement** for the consultation exercise, setting out what it aims to achieve. This can ensure everyone is clear on what is and isn't being consulted on. It can be referred to at key points during consultation events and as a preface to questionnaires. It can also be communicated to the renewable energy business. An example is given in Box 2.

Be clear about who is driving this activity, and who has therefore defined the purpose statement. One option is to set up a **Steering Group** comprising representatives of local groups or interests (see below) and have that group define the consultation purpose statement, as well as informing the design and delivery of the consultation process.

The Steering Group may be an existing group, such as that established to take forward the initial discussions with the renewable energy business, although it may be worth re-visiting the membership of that group for this purpose.

Identify local groups and other stakeholders who may have a particular interest or view, on the development of a community action plan and invite them to be involved. While all local community members and groups must be stakeholders in the process, involving some closely the outset will ensure broader 'ownership' from the start and a more robust process and clear community mandate for it. Communities are likely to engage more productively when they have some level of ownership of the process. In any case, whether or not those stakeholders engage at this stage, it is useful to provide a targeted invitation to key groups, agencies, local politicians and so on to include them in the process.

If commissioning consultants to help with the process, this group will ideally be involved in agreeing the specification for their work and managing the commission.

It is also important to keep the renewable energy business informed of the timescale required to conduct a robust consultation and action planning process (at least four to six months), and to keep them updated on progress.

Once the Steering Group is in place, they can begin to **identify the different groups and interests** (for example, social and recreational clubs, health and education services, local businesses, etc.) to be engaged with, and plan how to this. It can be useful to split these into those that have the most interest (and perhaps influence) and those that have less (e.g. some external agencies) but need to be kept informed of the process. This is called **stakeholder mapping and analysis**. A simple tool for this is available here.

There may have been some **recent community consultation** or even action planning carried out in the community previously. If that's the case, all that may be required is a re-fresh of that work, checking for its relevance now. In addition, as noted above, the plan

should link with and complement other relevant plans that may exist for the local area and wider region.

A **range of communication channels** should be employed to ensure everyone has the opportunity to find out about the consultation and how they can input to it. Displaying posters in prominent locations, leafleting through doors, the community council mailing list, local websites, and social media are good places to start.

It is important to provide **good quality, accessible information** on the process up front so that people are aware of the context for the consultation. This should include:
- The consultation purpose statement
- Information on who is running and supports the consultation process (i.e. those on the Steering Group)
- What opportunities there will be for people to provide input, and when,
- What the results will be used for (to create a community action plan), and
- How the process will be evaluated and the results fed-back to the community.

There is an extensive range of **methods and tools for engagement** available, from those aimed at gathering statistical data to those that can be used to gather more narrative information. Questionnaire surveys, facilitated public events, photograph competitions, social media, games, design competitions, and more. Try to adopt a blend of these. Remember that, in line with the National Standards for Community Engagement, good engagement is inclusive, and that everyone has a preference as to how they like to receive and give information. Not everyone is online regularly or on specific social media platforms. Similarly, not everyone is comfortable contributing views in a public meeting. So a variety of methods or tools will usually help to reach more people. **Useful guides to engagement tools** can be found here and here.

It will almost always be appropriate to **run at least one open public event** – to gather views and try to find areas of consensus, to feedback initial findings, or a mix of both. For example, a door-to-door survey may be run, with the emerging results fed back at an event and further discussion to identify themes, refine these, and get consensus on any order of priority. Or it may be possible to gather initial views through a structured event, perhaps with group work at tables, and then feedback the results later on at a second event.

Consider all the resources the community has at its disposal, and how these might be marshalled to **most effectively and efficiently engage people** in the process. As noted above, while the community may be able to commission a consultant to plan and help run various consultation activities, the process can reach more people, generate a greater sense of 'ownership', and perhaps bring about wider outcomes where the community's own volunteer resources are used.

Think about which local groups might run their own events to engage their members or beneficiaries. For example, could a local primary school or youth club be approached to support a survey of their pupils or young people? The exercise could become a learning opportunity for those involved, through **peer-to-peer** administration of a questionnaire and

the group then collating and analysing the results. A short presentation could be made by those involved to their peers and/or the wider community, for example at one of the consultation events. Sports clubs, heritage and arts groups, the elderly lunch club, and so on might also be approached.

Some questions to consider:
1. What are the needs in the community and what evidence of these is there? Think about all different sections of the community including different age groups, social demographics, and so on.
2. What local assets are there that can be built on? What skills, resources, services and facilities already exist and where are the gaps? (see the module *Understanding the Community Context* for some asset mapping tools)
3. What actions need to be undertaken to address the needs or build on the assets identified? And who may be best placed to do so?
4. What timescales are involved?
5. Who should be able to receive the package of benefits? Non-profit organisations and community group only? Local (small) businesses too? Individuals?
6. Given the source of the community benefits, should the plan prioritise action on energy efficiency in households and community buildings, to reduce energy bills and environmental impact?

Asking people to respond to **some initial ideas or options** can help stimulate their thinking about activity to best serve the community's future. There may be areas of activity where community benefit packages can add value to whatever the local authority or other public bodies can provide on a discretionary basis. An example of this is school education, where providing school-aged children with the mandatory elements of the Curriculum for Excellence is the duty of the local education authority, but discretionary or extra-curricular activity like cultural or sports trips will enrich local pupils' learning and development. Provision of play equipment in school grounds is also discretionary, and many community benefits are used to improve whatever the education authority can provide in this regard.

For any kind of face-to-face engagement, **good facilitation and support** are essential to enable participants to think clearly around their aspirations and priorities, and how community income can help achieve optimum impact. As noted above, such a skill set may be available locally, although expertise brought in from elsewhere may be viewed as more independent.

Encourage as many contributions and ideas as possible initially without worrying about their feasibility. This can be tested with participants at a later stage, and anything that looks unlikely to succeed at present can be omitted or placed under the heading of 'longer term aspirations' or 'community wish list'.

An outline of the key milestones and average timeline involved in producing a community action plan is given in the diagram below.

COMMUNITY ACTION PLAN: MILESTONES AND AVERAGE TIMELINE — LOCAL ENERGY SCOTLAND

- Developer has approached the community with a community benefit offer
- Identify whether a community action plan is required - has there been a similar process recently?

If professional support is needed:
- Identify or establish an accountable community body to apply for funding
- Secure funding to pay for appointment of professional consultants
- Issue tender documents and appoint professionals

- Collate and analyse the data, identifying key findings
- Feed back to the community and refine as required
- Produce a community action plan
- CAP then informs a strategy for fund disbursal, making sure local needs and opportunities are met

ESTABLISH NEED FOR COMMUNITY ACTION PLAN > **PURPOSE & RESOURCE NEEDS** 1 - 4 weeks > **COMMISSION PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT** 1 - 8 weeks > **COMMUNITY CONSULTATION** 12 - 14 weeks > **COMMUNITY ACTION PLAN** 6 - 8 weeks

- Form a steering group for the Community Action Plan process
- Agree a purpose statement
- Identify resources needed and potential sources - volunteers, professional support, funding

- Consultation planning: agree who will be consulted, how, when and by who
- Conduct a thorough community consultation in order to identify local needs, opportunities and aspirations

CARES SUPPORT AVAILABLE:
- Development Officer experience, guidance and support throughout
- CARES online toolkit with detailed guidance on consultation and action planning process
- CARES Enablement Grant can pay for professional help with setting up a community body and/or the action planning process
- CARES Framework of Contractors is available to help the community select the right professional support

3.3 From consultation to plan

Once all the information has been gathered through the engagement and research work, it needs to be **collated, analysed and shaped** into a draft community action plan.

If a questionnaire has been used, it may be easy to tally up the resulting preferences or opinions, especially if an online survey tool that provides that functionality has been used. Where events were held and participants were asked to provide responses on post-it notes or using sticky dots to vote against statements, for example, then these can be grouped according to themes. It is always a good idea to photograph these for future reference and inclusion in relevant reports or supporting materials.

The analysis of data is a really important stage of the process and the more inclusive it can be the better. However, whilst it can be time consuming and less dynamic than the actual consultation activity, it's a really critical stage in building consensus because the process of considering responses, grouping and analysing ideas and shaping them into themes, trends, and possibilities for action is actually quite a subjective – and therefore influential – process. Whilst any external consultants leading the process will play a critical role at this point, they should have the skills to engage at least the Steering Group actively in reviewing the data and drawing conclusions in a manner that is balanced and inclusive.

At this stage it is worthwhile checking how the emerging themes and ideas relate to the needs and opportunities presented in any **socio-economic statistics** available for the

area. Do these match? If not, why might that be? Has the engagement been wide enough? Is the socio-economic data up to date?

From the outset it is helpful to focus on **long term and strategic goals and activities**. For example, supporting local enterprise and apprenticeships, housing provision, conservation of natural and cultural heritage, key community facilities, services for children and families, intergenerational connections, and opportunities for renewable energy generation.

However, there may also be **some 'quick win' projects** that can provide tangible results in the short term, and that may also help to keep people engaged and the momentum going. The community action plan should therefore feature a mix of these along with larger and longer-term projects that may bring more of a lasting legacy from the Fund.

Once the information received has been analysed, it can be compiled into **different formats** for circulation to the community. This may include a formal report, an abbreviated or summary report, some kind of leaflet or more creative ideas like a map of the area or a sets of postcards with images and quotes from the consultation activity. These can also be developed into a marketing tool for the plan and indeed for the local area.

Whatever format or formats are used; it is important to:
1. Sketch out the **context** for the community action planning process, stating the drivers behind it and the purpose statement
2. Provide any **socio-economic profile** of the area.
3. Create a **record of the process**, who was engaged, how many and what they said
4. Set out the **themes or outcomes** that people prioritised as well as any **specific projects** (existing or new) that were supported
5. Distil the themes or outcomes into a **long-term vision** for the community
6. Ideally give some sense of **timescales** for delivery of the plan, and
7. Identify which groups might take **responsibility** for that.

One way of organising actions is to use the following categories[3]:
- What can we (the community) do for ourselves?
- What do we require some help to deliver?
- What do we need outside agencies to provide for us?

Once the consultation outputs have been drafted, it may be helpful to check in with key stakeholders and the wider community (e.g. through a presentation and feedback event) on the broad conclusions. Once finalised, the report and resulting action plan should be circulated to those who took part and made available online for future reference.

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[3] From Nurture Development "About ABCD" http://www.nurturedevelopment.org/about-abcd/

Further resources

The Scottish Government's Community and Renewable Energy Scheme supports communities across Scotland on various aspects of community benefit funding: www.localenergy.scot

Development Trust Association Scotland is the community-led regeneration network and trade association for community development trusts: www.dtascot.org.uk

Foundation Scotland works with renewable energy businesses and communities to facilitate arrangements for establishing and implementing community benefit funds. Foundation Scotland also directly administers community funds in partnership with communities: www.foundationscotland.org.uk

Argyll and Bute Council has produced a Community-led Action Planning toolkit to help people decide if the process could help them and how they can implement it: https://www.communitytoolkit.net/

Joseph Rowntree Foundation and Alan Caldwell Associates, Re:Sourcebook, Planning for your Community, provides information on community action planning: www.jrf.org.uk/publications/resourcebook-planning-your-community

Scottish Government Investment in Rural Development: A Community Capitals Approach, gives more information on using a community capitals approach: www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2012/03/8336/0

The National Audit Office provides a Successful Commissioning Toolkit for public sector organisation, however much of the guidance and principles hold true for any sector looking to commission services: https://www.nao.org.uk/successful-commissioning/