

Clyde Extension Wind Farm Fund Community Consultation.

Are you responding as an individual or on behalf of an organisation? If so, which organisation?

Delete are appropriate: Individual / Organisation: **Leadhills Community Council.**

1. What differences would you like to see between the new Extension Fund and the existing fund managed by South Lanarkshire Council? How can we ensure that the money reaches the best projects for the communities? To note: there will be less money available annually than in the existing fund, and it cannot replace funding for statutory things like roads, schools, etc.

See attached sheet

2. The fund will be worth around £300,000 annually. Would you prefer the fund to open once, twice or four times per year?

Once per year

Six-monthly

Quarterly

- 2a. What are the ranges of awards you would suggest? Choose one lower and one upper.

Lower threshold

Upper threshold

£300

£10,000

£500

£15,000

£1,000

£20,000

£5,000

£50,000

£10,000

No threshold

3. Who should make decisions on funding awards?

- a) **Same Panel as existing fund. Made up of two community councillors per area.**
- b) New Panel. Made up of representatives of each community. Not necessarily Community Councillors.
- c) Other. Please use the space in Q6 to detail.

4. SSE will generally allow applications of up to 100% of project funding, with the panel making the final decision on the size of award. Should the new fund have a cap on what % of the overall project costs an applicant can ask for? If so, what should that cap be?

No cap.

90%

80%

75%

50%

5. SSE is keen to make sure that as many people as possible participate in the fund in some way

5.

It is important that information on the availability of the Community Benefit Funds, the parameters which govern eligibility, the application process and the decision making process is readily accessible through a web site. Also the person/organisation administering the fund should be readily contactable and be capable of guiding people on eligibility and to assist them through the application process. Also we feel that the Community Councils have a role in promoting the scheme to organisations within their communities through their web sites, social media and newsletters etc. The local community representatives on the panel could have an initial role in explaining the application process would-be applicants. The micro grant system currently operated by the community councils provides a basic data base of some of the smaller organisations operating in their local area. In order to facilitate the transfer of info between Community Councils and local organisations it is essential that community councils operate in an open and transparent and accountable manner.

Should the experience of operating the fund throw up difficulties and inconsistencies, there should be sufficient flexibility to alter the parameters of the fund in a relatively easy manner, according to the consensus of the panel. We feel that it is essential that the fund best meets the needs of the communities which lie within the windfarm catchment area.

6. Finally, if there is anything else that you would like to add that has not been covered elsewhere, then please use the space provided below or attach a separate note.

6.

Because Biggar is a much larger community than the others within the wind farm area and there is a perception on the part of many people that it offers facilities to the other communities we feel that there should be an outreach component as part of any major projects approved within the town. In past years the approval of the major funding to Biggar Rugby Club and Biggar Museum has not resulted in these two institutions seeking to develop closer links with their hinterlands. This has led to the perception that those communities which are the greatest affected by the wind farm have not received any benefit from these investments. We would welcome that major investments in Biggar should in future indicate how other communities in the hinterland could benefit.

It is considered that the system set up to administer the fund should be transparent with details of both successful and unsuccessful applications being published on a web site.

In order to ensure complementarity between the Clyde Valley and the Extension fund, in our view it is essential that the representatives for each fund know what is happening in the other fund. Since the decision making body with the South Lanarkshire administered scheme comprises solely of community councillors, in order to simplify communication it is logical that community representatives on the decision making body of the extension panel should also be community councillors. The choice of who will represent the community councils on the grant giving bodies should be determined by the community Councils in an open and transparent manner.

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Question 1

Although Leadhills is in a wonderful setting in the Lowther Hills the village is bedevilled by major environmental and infrastructure problems. Many of these stem from the history of the village whereby the local landowner who was also the feu-holder refused to invest in improvements to roadways. Until recently house prices in the village were extremely low as were the income levels of many of the people that lived in the village were unwilling or unable to invest in their properties. We have sought to get SLC to reconstruct the unadopted roads and to acquire and demolish derelict houses to no avail. Similarly Scottish Water refuse to invest in extending mains sewerage to cover the whole village. Potentially we see the wind farm community benefit funds as a means of tackling the major issues which affect the community so that we can leave a legacy of improvements which will permanently impact on the functionality and appearance of the village and impact on the quality of life of the residents.

Leadhills is probably the community within the Wind farm community benefit catchment area which has the greatest environmental and infrastructure issues and it is our view that the Clyde Valley Wind Farm extension could provide funds to assist in the elimination or alleviation of some of our deep seated problems, which appear intractable without significant investment.

In order to be effective it will be important that the Clyde Extension fund should not be a carbon copy of the existing Clyde Valley scheme. The two funds should be complementary rather in competition. It is suggested that the extension fund should concentrate on projects which have a strong strategic component and should accommodate those projects which are ineligible for funding under the existing scheme, such as revenue projects and projects where it is unrealistic or impossible to obtain matched funding. Thus our experience of the operation of the Clyde Valley Wind Farm Community Benefit scheme operated by South Lanarkshire Council has strongly influenced our response to this questionnaire.

The SLC administered fund does not provide assistance towards revenue projects. However such projects can have a significant impact on the local community. At the present time our community's capacity to progress projects is constrained by resource issues. As a relatively small community we have a limited pool of residents who have the time and commitment to progressing community projects. Active participation in community issues has had a considerable impact on some of the most active people in the village. The employment of a development officer (together with support for associated costs such as office costs and work related travel), say for a period of three years could make inroads into getting things done. It is our intention to formulate a village plan to identify project priorities and to guide investment. This will provide a template for action and provide a base line against which progress can be measured. It is suggested that other communities may wish to formulate their own plans to reflect their views and perceived priorities.

Another instance of where revenue support could have a tremendous impact on the village would be the provision of money to cover the operation of the public toilets within the village. SLC has agreed to lease them to the Community Council for a peppercorn rent providing that we can show that we are able to raise the resources to successfully operate them. We are talking about £5-£7k per annum and whilst this is not a lot of money it is difficult for a small community to raise this amount year after year. The impact on the community would be significant since it would strengthen our local tourism product and provide toilet facilities for the children who use the play park adjacent to the school as well as for visitors.

Another issue which has arisen in the administration of the existing Clyde Valley Community Benefit scheme is the need to obtain matched funding for projects over £5,000 or £10,000. This can act as a considerable constraint since it can be difficult to obtain matched funding for certain types of scheme, notably infrastructure and environmental projects. Whilst it is desirable for projects to seek matched funding, an inability to successfully obtain matched funding should not necessarily be a requirement which prevents projects which are perceived to have merit being turned down. We would thus welcome an element of discretion when project sponsors have made genuine but unsuccessful efforts to obtain matched funding.

We would suggest that there is no upper threshold on bids. This would enable expensive projects which are perceived to have merit to be progressed. A good example of this was the Biggar Museum where the delivery of community benefit funds towards the project was spread over two years because of the high cost of the project.

Our preferred option would be for the fund to be administered by an independent body having experience in the organisation, management and dispersal of funding such as Foundation Scotland. It is recognised that administrative costs will have to be incurred but this would be the case whoever is administering the scheme. It could be that interested bodies could be asked to tender to administer the scheme.

It is suggested that applications should be considered on a competitive basis and assessed according to their ability to make an impact on the community in which they are located and how they relate to local priorities and wider policies operating in Clydesdale. Thought should be given to the introduction of a scoring system which would give a useful indication of the effectiveness of the projects proposed.

We consider that there should not be an imperative to spend all the money provisionally allocated for a specific round. If the quality of the applications is not regarded as being of sufficient quality money could be rolled over to the next round. Similarly, if there are good quality applications which require greater funding than the allocation for that particular round then it should be possible to bring forward a proportion of the allocation for the subsequent round.

In order to maintain a strategic component and to ensure that the majority of applications are of reasonable scale and have the support of the community it is suggested that there be a maximum of two application rounds per year, applications being determined on their perceived merits on a competitive basis. We are very conscious that the scheme will operate in tandem with the South Lanarkshire Council administered scheme where there is a rolling programme of grant applications. There is an ad hoc approach to the operation of the existing fund. *(This is a comment rather than a criticism!)* Many of the projects which are submitted and approved under the scheme, whilst they provide, improve and strengthen local projects and are greatly welcomed by the local communities they don't really make a long term strategic difference.

Within the proposed scheme community based organisations should be eligible for capital grants towards the purchase, rebuilding or conversion of buildings to create long term community assets. We also feel that costs for the preparation of bids where there is a technical component should be eligible for assistance. These could for instance include architectural or engineers' fees or the employment of specialists consultants.