

Scottish Government's Register of Community Benefits

Narrative Report February 2024

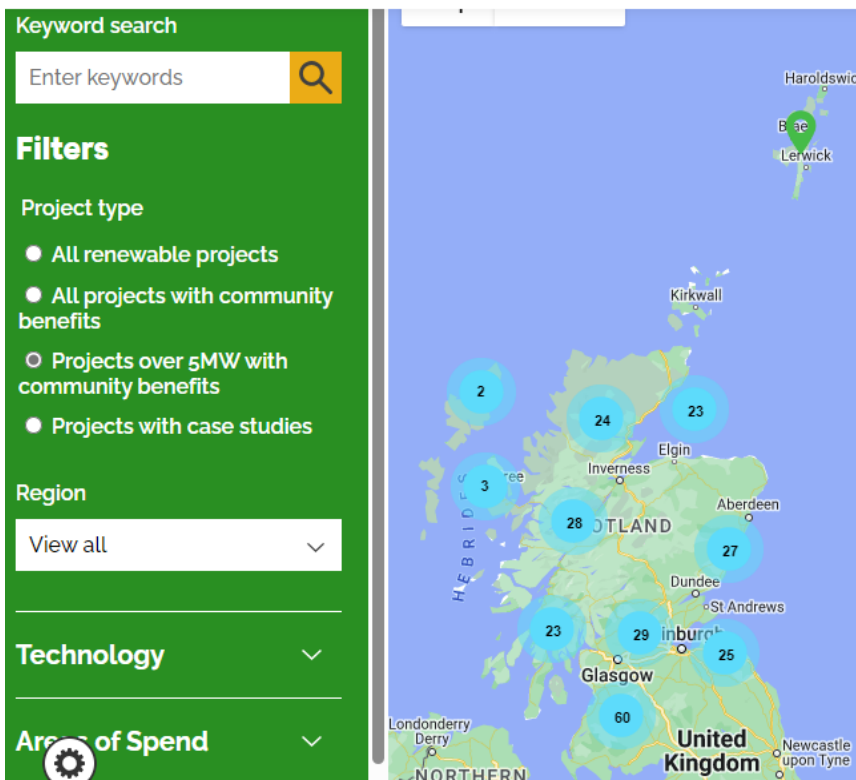


About the Register of Community Benefits

The Scottish Government's Register of Community Benefits (the Register) shows renewable energy projects in Scotland and allows renewable energy businesses and communities to upload details of any community benefit packages attached to these projects. The results are displayed in a searchable online map. The details can also be viewed as an A-Z project list.

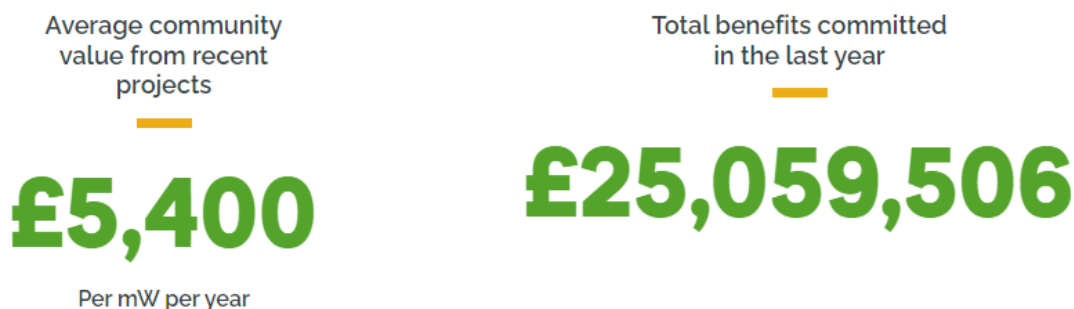
The Register is not an exhaustive list of all operational projects, although we do add in all projects listed as operational in the DESNZ Renewable Energy Planning database and where we are requested to by a community or renewable energy business.

The quality and accuracy of the information on the Register relies on the information provided by the community or renewable energy business submitting it. The Register may, therefore, hold inaccurate or outdated information and should be regarded as a guide to community benefit provisions across Scotland.



Headline figures

The public facing side of the website displays two figures. The first is an average of the value from recent projects (those projects that became operational in the last 36 months) in £/MW/Yr. The other is the total value from all recorded operational projects which have been offered to communities over the last year. As of February 2024, these values were an average of £5,400 and a total value of over £25,059,506. These figures do not include community wholly owned projects as these tend to skew the figures to a higher average value.



The average value of community benefits is currently higher than the Scottish Government's recommendation of £5,000/MW/Yr. This is due to a particular project offering £7,000/MW/Yr. In the last 36 months we have recorded 5 newly operational projects with community benefit packages of £5,000/MW/Yr or higher.

The average figure shown on the website may be higher or lower than £5k/MW/Yr for a number of reasons. You can find out more about how the average and total figures are calculated in the drop down on the [website](#).

Further information

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Community Benefits Register narrative report	▼
How are the average and total figures calculated?	▼
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Highlights from the last year

In the last year we [recorded a significant milestone](#) on the Community Benefits Register. For the first time ever, it was shown that £25 million worth of community benefits have been recorded as committed to be paid to Scottish communities from renewable energy businesses in a 12 month period.

We published a new resource on our website:

[Community benefits income for net zero](#) This guide explores the benefits of funding net zero projects from community benefit income and highlights three case studies from communities who have taken this approach, outlining recommendations for getting the most out of community benefit funds. The three case studies in this guide are from both developing and operational projects that are using community benefit income to reduce climate emissions from local homes.

We also published three new case studies relevant to community benefits:

- [Local Electricity Discount Schemes \(LEDS\)](#) A guide to LEDS focussing on the experience of RES in delivering this type of community benefit. Communities that RES work with can choose how they would like to distribute the funds from the community benefit fund. For example, a share of the fund could go towards LEDS and another share could go towards funding community projects. In 2022, 5,000 properties in the UK benefited from LEDS, and RES paid more than £1million to eligible properties on behalf of its clients.
- [Crossdykes wind farm](#) Project developers worked closely with the local community to set up a community benefit fund of £7,000 per MW per annum amounting to £322,000 per annum over 23 years.
- [The 9CC Group](#) The 9CC Group (a group of nine community councils) was established to become a dedicated single trust to manage, administer and distribute community benefit from newly consented and future wind farm developments in the area in a fair and equitable way.

The [Onshore Wind Sector Deal](#) was signed in 2023. This establishes a commitment to for the Sector and Government to collaborate with other relevant stakeholders to establish a standard approach to the financial management of community benefits funds by the end of 2024 to ensure:

- Transparency in how funds are managed and spent,
- Effective reporting of the impact of community benefit in Scotland's communities,
- That a national register of community benefit and community shared ownership is created and updated on an annual basis.

This will require collaboration between project developers, communities and key stakeholders through to the end of December 2024.

Potential future trends

In 2023, 14 windfarms were consented. All of these said they would be paying community benefits. Of those that provided the £/MW information, 11 said this would be £5k. While we don't know if and when all these schemes will proceed, it is positive to see so many proposing to fund community benefits at the £5k/MW rate promoted by the Good Practice Principles for onshore renewable energy developments in Scotland.

Further to this, eight solar farms were consented. Of these two said they would be paying community benefits, one provided further details saying that this would be at a rate of £1k/MW/Yr.

As part of the redesign of the register we will track areas of spend and will reflect on the data collected in future reports.

Working with developers and communities

Over the last few years we have built up relationships with several of the larger renewable energy businesses, providing them with a named contact to provide updates and making the process of providing updates as easy as possible – offering this via the online webforms, a spreadsheet of fields to update or a phone call. This has improved our ability to capture community benefits from larger projects. This more personalised approach also helps to convey the benefits of providing updates. As of February 2024, 88% percent of wind, solar and hydro projects over 5MW have data attached. Approximately 58% of all projects (any capacity and any technology) have data attached.

Community Benefits Register development considerations

We are currently redesigning the community benefit register to bring it in to line with the commitments made in the Onshore Wind Sector Deal. The redesign will make it easier for project owners (or their nominated agents) to update project details through online dashboards. It will also allow project owners to provide an annual update, which will help to show the impact of community benefits across Scotland, including actual spend as well as commitments.

As part of the redesign we will be capturing details at an earlier stage (eg in planning, consented and under construction), although the front facing figures of average £/MW/Yr and total community benefits committed will still only come from operational projects.

We are also adding a new questionnaire to the register to capture details of projects offering shared ownership.