

Carraig Gheal Community Benefit Fund Consultation - summary of key points – 11/9/2013

1. Introduction

The community fund consultation ran between the 17th June and 9th August 2013. A detailed consultation document was sent via email to Community Councils (CCs) in the surrounding area, local elected politicians and Argyll and Bute Council. In addition, the document was hosted on the Carraig Gheal website and two press releases received coverage in the Oban Times and Argyllshire Advertiser inviting responses.

We understand that as a result of the consultation, discussion took place between a number of CCs and at individual CC meetings open to the public.

A total of 15 responses were received including all CCs within the 10km of site, with the exception of Glenorchy & Inishael CC.

In addition to the CCs, seven individuals from the Inverinan area responded, alongside Dalavich Improvement Group and Argyll and Bute Council.

Key points made in responses to each question are summarised below.

2. Summary of responses

Q1. Do you consider there should be a specific boundary within which the funds must be spent (e.g. 10km from the Wind Farm, by Community Council boundary, by local authority ward boundary)? If so, why and on what basis?

Responses were unanimous in highlighting the view that funds should be spent in those communities closest to the site and those which have hosted construction activity, in particular Inverinan, Kilchrenan and Dalavich. The individual respondents from Inverinan focussed on their own community.

A distance based boundary of 10km was most favoured by individuals and Community Councils, with the exception of two CCs who suggested a 15km radius.

Argyll and Bute Council, while pointing out that CC boundaries were the norm for fund distribution, acknowledged the An Suidhe 10km distance boundary had been decided on after local consultation.

Q2. Is there a case for particular areas receiving a higher proportion of the fund than others? Why?

Again responses unanimously reflected the desire to benefit those

communities nearest the wind farm and those who may have experienced disruption during the construction phase. A number of CCs suggested criteria for the types of impact that could be considered.

Q3. How do you think members of the decision making body should be selected? Why?

Nine responses specifically expressed the view that representatives from CCs should be on the decision making body. No respondents made a case that CCs should not be represented on the body. In addition a majority of individual respondents wanted to see members of the wider public to be represented on the body.

The issue of ensuring transparency in decision making was raised a number of times by CCs and was an issue picked up specifically in three of the individual responses. The view was that there needs to be a distance between the funding body and groups with a direct interest in receiving funds.

There was support for Argyll and Bute Councillors having a role from two CCs with a suggestion that this is restricted to one representative.

One CC asked if there were existing bodies such as LEADER who could act as distributor, but this was not reflected in other responses.

Q4. Do you think there should be any “observers” providing independent oversight of the Fund? If so, how do you think they should be selected.

Views on the role of ‘observers’ was split. All but one CC expressed the view that there wasn’t a need for observers. One CC felt Foundation Scotland themselves could have an observer role.

Individuals all believed there was a case for observers, with several respondents saying they could be selected on the basis of a particular expertise i.e legal.

One suggestion was that the developer and/or a Cllr could provide oversight, although if particular skills were missing they could be advertised locally.

Q5. What have been your experiences, if any, in administering and/or applying for wind farm funds in your area so far?

As described under Q3. a number of individuals expressed concerns over transparency issues relating to the An Suidhe fund.

Two of the CCs have had some experience of wind farm fund administration alongside Dalavich Improvement Group.

Q6. What would be your preference for administering a fund for your community that could also function constructively with other funds in the area?

There was strong support behind the Foundation Scotland (FS) model with nine respondents offering positive comments on FS and only one CC suggesting that the LEADER funding body could be an alternative.

One CC stated that the FS model of representation needed revisiting.

An explanation was provided about how the Beinn Ghlas fund works to lever in other funds available in the area as match funding.

The Council indicated that they felt this should be up to the communities to decide.

Q7. What role do you think Argyll and Bute Council should play in distributing the funds?

There was no support for the Council to play a role in distributing the fund coming from either individuals or CCs.

The Council itself said it would be prepared to play a role in administration should the developer or community wish it to.

Q8. Do you think there should be other rules governing how the funds are used?

CCs agreed with the rules outlined in the consultation. One CC argued that the rules should not be so tightly drawn as to exclude innovative investments in housing for example.

Three individuals raised a concern that bodies that were community based but not legally constituted as charities could be excluded from the fund.

The Council suggested that there should be a legally binding constitution and that in time a community development plan should feed into the work.

Q9. How do you think funds should best be deployed to maximise the benefit to local communities?

Four individuals expressed a view that the fund should be used to reduce the energy bills for local people.

This was not mentioned by any of the CCs.

Two CCs discussed how funds could be used flexibly to be banked to fund

bigger projects over a longer timescale with one expressing an interest in an endowment fund beyond the life of the project.

One CC and the Council pointed to the need for groups and communities to have longer term business plans and community development plans.

Another CC and two individuals pointed to priorities around community infrastructure including communication and transport.

One CC expressed the view that only the involvement of CCs would ensure funds are put to the best use locally.

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