



Glenkens & District Trust (GDT) Response to Community Benefits Consultation by Department of Energy Security and Net Zero

Overview:

Glenkens & District Trust (GDT), a charitable organisation managing wind farm community benefit funds across ten Community Council areas in the Glenkens area of Dumfries and Galloway since 2018, has submitted a response to the UK Government's consultation on mandatory community benefit arrangements for low-carbon energy developments. This builds on our response to the recent Scottish Government Consultation on the Good Practice Principles which is summarised here <https://www.glenkenstrust.org.uk/news-1/scottish-government-consults-on-community-benefits->

Key Position:

GDT supports the principle of community benefit payments but has material concerns about the introduction of a mandatory, highly regulated framework along the lines set out in the Working Paper. Existing voluntary arrangements in Scotland—particularly the Onshore Wind Sector Deal and Good Practice Principles—are already delivering positive outcomes and trusted relationships and there is a danger that these will be eroded by a mandatory regime along the lines set out.

Concerns with Proposed Framework:

- **Risk to Community-Developer Relationships:** This compliance-led model risks eroding trust, reducing innovation, and is likely to lead some developers treating community benefit as a box-ticking exercise to ensure regulatory compliance rather than the foundation of a good long-term relationship between the developer and the community.
- **Loss of Flexibility:** Rigid regulation risks undermining the adaptability required for long-term, evolving community needs. These arrangements will often last more than 30 years so need to be able to evolve as need changes.

- **Disempowerment of Communities:** The proposed role of fund administrators risks eroding community influence and engagement and undermining the benefits of place-based decision-making which have been successful hallmarks of the arrangements so far.

GDT's Alternative Solution

- Embed an obligation in generation licences to provide community benefit payments with clear reporting, supported by good practice guidance, such as that already in existence in Scotland.
- Retain and strengthen community-led governance and skills, using high quality and strategic Community Action Plans to guide spend.
- Ensure community benefit funds support work tailored to local priorities. This should include what the community wants to retain as well as new projects and should pay for core and salary costs
- Avoid prescriptive national rules that risk disadvantaging smaller or less-resourced communities. Instead keep the decision making grounded in a local area, with the ability and means to engage and use expert support as necessary. Based on our experience we are confident this can and will deliver transformational change in rural areas.

Conclusion:

GDT advocates a light-touch, trust-based system that empowers and strengthens communities and builds on proven, locally driven models—ensuring community benefits are meaningful, sustainable, and responsive. Such a system would enable developers and communities to work together in the long term as equal partner to ensure good outcomes for all. It would support community wealth building and positive relationships and avoid regulatory compliance being the main driver of the relationship.