

EAST LAMMERMUIR CHRONICLE

News from East Lammermuir Community Council

Serving the villages of Innerwick, Oldhamstocks, Spott and Stenton

EAST LAMMERMUIR COMMUNITY BENEFIT FUND



Back in 2006, Fred Olsen Renewables offered East Lammermuir Community Council an annual benefit in recognition of the impact on local communities of their first wind turbines at Crystal Rigg. This amounted to a little over £10,000 per year, for the communities of Spott, Stenton, Innerwick, Oldhamstocks and the surrounding area.

As we all know, there are a lot more turbines now! We have all felt the impact - visual, inconvenience of road works, noise, etc. associated with the turbines, and the windfarm operators and Scottish Government have now agreed a voluntary code which suggests that local communities should be offered £5,000 per megawatt of electricity generated.

That new code, along with the large numbers of turbines within and visible/audible from East Lammermuir, mean that the amounts of benefits available to communities here is likely to reach £200,000 per year by 2020. This money is primarily from Fred Olsen Renewables, in respect of the Crystal Rig windfarms I - IV, and from Community Windpower, in relation to the Aikengall windfarms II and IIa.

Your community councillors have taken on a significant amount of additional work - in particular for our Treasurer, but for all members - and a shared responsibility for hundreds of thousands of pounds does not sit well with the formal status of a community council. For these reasons we have decided to set up a new Company with Charitable Status, to be called the East Lammermuir Community Benefit Fund. The Fund will be registered with both Companies House, and the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator.

Community Councillors are elected for four or five year periods, and then require to stand down and put themselves forward for re-election, if they wish to serve again. Where seats are contested, and an election held, it is managed by the East Lothian Council, exactly as elections for local council seats are managed. This strong democratic underpinning seems the right one for the membership of the Community Benefit Fund, so the membership of the Benefit Fund will be drawn from the community councillors, plus co-opted Directors with particular skill sets including Accountancy. Community Councillors will form the large majority of members.

The Directors of the Benefit Fund will wish to establish a separate website and means of communicating with the local communities. They may wish to review the criteria for deciding which projects should be funded, but there are strict rules associated with the Benefit Agreements, including using the funds for the benefit of people living in East Lammermuir, promoting sustainability, and not substituting for statutory bodies responsibilities (for example the Council, or the NHS). Any changes will be clearly communicated, and the emphasis on understanding what local communities want, and helping that to happen, will remain central.

Watch this space for further news as the Community Benefit Fund becomes a reality. In the meantime, six-monthly opportunities to apply for community benefit funding will continue as they have for the last 10 years or so. For more information about the current arrangements, see our website at: <https://eastlammermuircommunitycouncil.org.uk/apply-for-windfarm-funding/>