

Questionnaire

Section 1: Offshore Wind Communities

Question 1

In the context of offshore wind development, what or who or where do you consider the relevant communities to be?

Those living and working near offshore wind development sites, as well as environmental stakeholders. This includes individuals impacted by construction activities, such as increased traffic and infrastructure changes, and those affected by long-term operational impacts. Additionally, communities with emotional ties to the land must be considered, particularly regarding long-term implications for future generations. These considerations highlight the broader social, environmental, and generational impacts of development.

Question 2

When defining the relevant communities to receive benefits from offshore wind development, which factors should be considered, and by whom? Are there any factors which are most important, and why?

Key factors for defining relevant communities include the level of impact throughout the project's lifecycle, proximity to the development, and the visual impact. These should be considered by local authorities, developers, and community representatives to ensure fairness. Additionally, the natural and environmental impact, scientific and historical significance, and the social importance of the land and view must be evaluated. It's crucial to avoid social bias, particularly ensuring low-income communities are not unfairly burdened.

Section 1: Maximising the impact of community benefits from offshore wind developments

Question 3

Who should decide how offshore wind community benefits are used (decision-makers)? Are there any groups, organisations or bodies you feel should have a formal role in this?

Community involvement should be inclusive, allowing all members the opportunity to participate, not just local councils or community groups. Developers should assist in facilitating engagement by covering costs and offering support to under-resourced groups.

Question 4

What are the best ways to ensure that decision-makers truly reflect and take into account the needs and wishes of communities when determining how community benefits are used?

To ensure decision-makers reflect community needs, direct consultation with diverse community members is essential. Given the varied needs of different groups, a one-size-fits-all approach is inadequate. The process should be open, transparent, and accessible for scrutiny by all, encouraging active participation. It should also be flexible, allowing for changes based on community input and the inclusion of volunteers.

Question 5

What could be done to help maximise the impact of community benefits from offshore wind? What does good look like?

We had no feedback on this issue.

Question 6

How do you think directing community benefits towards larger scale, longer term, or more complex projects would affect the potential impact of community benefits from offshore wind?

Directing community benefits to large, long-term projects can provide sustained, broader impacts, building community wealth and supporting local businesses. However, relying on overburdened community groups to manage these projects is short-sighted, and the Government, local authority and developers must provide the necessary support to ensure long-term sustainability.

Question 7

The development of offshore wind is often geographically dispersed with multiple communities who could potentially benefit. To what extent do you agree or disagree that a regional and/or national approach to delivering community benefits would be an appropriate way to address geographical dispersal of development and multiple communities? Please explain your answer.

A regional or national approach may overlook communities most directly impacted. A more localised approach ensures that those most affected, particularly rural and island communities, are prioritised for benefits. Simplified access to funding is also crucial.

Question 8

Are you aware of any likely positive or negative impacts of the Good Practice Principles on any protected characteristics or on any other specific groups in Scotland, particularly: businesses; rural and island communities; or people on low-incomes or living in deprived areas? The Scottish Government is required to consider the impacts of proposed policies and strategic decisions in relation to equalities and particular societal groups and sectors. Please explain your answer and provide supporting evidence if available.

The Good Practice Principles may unintentionally favour communities that are better resourced or more familiar with applying for funding. This could leave out disadvantaged groups, such as low-income or non-English speaking households. The community should be empowered to apply and manage funding on behalf of all residents.

Section 1: Determining appropriate levels of community benefits from offshore wind

Question 9

In your view, what would just and proportionate community benefits from offshore wind developments look like in practice?

Proportional community benefits should prioritise shared ownership where possible, followed by reductions in community members' energy fees. A set monetary target, starting at approximately £7,000 per MW, adjusted for inflation, would ensure fair and scalable community contributions.

Question 10

What processes and guidance would assist communities and offshore wind developers in agreeing appropriate community benefits packages?

Experienced external organisations, such as Community Energy Scotland or Local Energy Scotland, should support community groups in assessing and agreeing on benefit packages. A legal framework should ensure developers fulfil their commitments beyond merely passing the planning stage.

Section 1: Shared ownership of offshore wind developments

Question 11

What do you see as the potential of shared ownership opportunities for communities from offshore wind developments? Please explain your answer.

Shared ownership should be an opportunity for all local coastal communities and affected local authorities. Regional funds covering these areas could be established, with benefits shared across multiple communities, ensuring equitable access and contribution from larger wind developments or regional community shared ownership opportunities explored.

Question 12

Thinking about the potential barriers to shared ownership of offshore wind projects, what support could be offered to communities and developers to create opportunities and potential models, and for communities to take up those opportunities? Potential barriers include high costs of offshore wind development, community access to finance and community capacity.

The Scottish Government should make shared ownership a mandatory part of offshore wind development. Additionally, grid capacity for community projects must be prioritised, and adequate support for community volunteers is essential to overcome financial barriers and project management challenges.

Section 2: Extending the scope of the Good Practice Principles

Question 1

a) Which of the following onshore technologies should be in scope for the Good Practice Principles? Select all that apply.

- ☒ Wind
- ☒ Solar
- ☒ Hydro power (including pumped hydro storage)
- ☒ Hydrogen
- ☒ Battery storage
- ☒ Heat networks
- ☒ Bioenergy
- ☒ Carbon capture, Utilisation and Storage (CCUS)
- ☒ Negative Emissions Technologies (NETs)
- ☒ Electricity transmission
- ☐ Other – please specify in question 1b

b) Please explain your reasons for the technologies you have selected or not selected and provide evidence where available.

Renewable energy developments impact local communities and should provide tangible benefits. As Scotland transitions to renewable energy, it is crucial that local populations directly benefit, ensuring that profits do not exit the country as they did with the oil and gas industries.

Question 2

Should the same Good Practice Principles apply in a standard way across all the technologies selected, or should the Good Practice Principles be different for different technologies? Please explain the reasons for your answer and provide evidence where available.

A standard approach is preferred, ensuring fair compensation proportional to the scale of each project. While each development should reflect its unique impacts, a consistent framework is necessary to guarantee equity across all technologies. This approach will help maintain fairness and consistency in how communities are treated. Previous responses to offshore wind have been written with all renewable technologies in mind, and we advocate for these principles to be applied universally.

Section 2: Improving the Good Practice Principles

Question 3

Do improvements need to be made to how eligible communities are identified? For example, changes to how communities are defined at a local level, and whether communities at a regional and/or national level could be eligible. Please explain your answer and provide supporting evidence if available.

The responsibility should not lie with developers. To ensure the most affected areas are prioritised guidelines should focus on place-based communities, determined by proximity to the development site and infrastructure. Developers can seek quick solutions, overlooking the communities that need support most. A local approach should be emphasised, as regional or national solutions may unfairly benefit better-resourced areas, like the central belt, at the expense of vulnerable rural communities.

Question 4

Should more direction be provided on how and when to engage communities in community benefit opportunities, and when arrangements should take effect? Please explain your answer and provide evidence/examples of good practice where available.

Community engagement should begin long before planning applications are submitted and continue throughout the process. Sufficient time and resources must be given for communities to deliberate and address concerns before any decisions are made – they are less prepared for rapid, wide-reaching decision making and should be supported and protected through this very challenging process.

Question 5

How could the Good Practice Principles help ensure that community benefits schemes are governed well? For example, what is important for effective decision-making, management and delivery of community benefit arrangements? Please explain your answer and provide evidence/examples of good practice where available.

External, skilled third-sector professionals must be involved from the outset to support community decision-making such as Local Energy Scotland or Community Energy Scotland. Decisions should reflect the entire community's needs, with consultation processes ensuring diverse representation and inclusion.

Question 6

How could the Good Practice Principles better ensure that community benefits are used in ways that meet the needs and wishes of the community? For example, more direction on how community benefits should or should not be used, including supporting local, regional or national priorities and development plans. Please explain your answer and provide evidence/examples of good practice where available.

The Good Practice Principles should provide flexibility on how community benefits are spent, allowing communities to define their priorities. Guidelines should support community plans without dictating how funds are allocated but could support existing support structures such as the existing Climate Action Network Hubs.

Question 7

What should the Good Practice Principles include on community benefit arrangements when the status of a new or operational energy project changes? For example, reviewing arrangements when a site is repowered or an extension is planned, or when a new project is developed or sold.

The community engagement process should be revisited from the beginning, if the project undergoes significant changes, such as repowering or extensions. This ensures that affected communities are supported to have the opportunity to renegotiate terms, push for shared-ownership and continue to benefit equitably.

Question 8

Should the Good Practice Principles provide direction on coordinating community benefit arrangements from multiple developments in the same or overlapping geographic area? If so, what could this include? Please explain your answer and provide evidence/examples of good practice where available.

We had no feedback on this issue.

Question 9

What improvements could be made to how the delivery and outcomes of community benefit arrangements are measured and reported? For example, the Good Practice Principles encourage developers to record and report on their community benefit schemes in Scotland's Community Benefits and Shared Ownership Register. The register showcases community benefits provision across Scotland using a searchable map.

To measure community benefit outcomes effectively, the focus should be on community wealth building rather than just monetary values. Regular community consultations are essential to assess how benefits are improving quality of life and overall well-being.

Question 10

In addition to the Good Practice Principles, what further support could be provided to communities and onshore developers to get the most from community benefits? For example, what challenges do communities and onshore developers face when designing and implementing community benefits and how could these challenges be overcome? Please explain your answer and provide evidence/examples of good practice where available.

Restrictions on how funds are distributed hinder long-term project planning. Allowing multi-year funding would help facilitate more sustainable initiatives. Many community members lack the technical knowledge of the technologies involved, the potential impacts, and available benefits. The pressure on volunteers is increasing, as these groups struggle to recruit more members. Addressing the skill and capacity gap is essential to ensure fair and effective community benefit decision-making.

Section 2: Setting a funding benchmark

Question 11

Do you think that the Good Practice Principles should continue to recommend a benchmark value for community benefit funding? The current guidance recommends £5,000 per installed megawatt per year, index-linked (Consumer Price Index) for the operational lifetime of the energy project.

- ☒ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Don't know

Question 12

- a) Should the benchmark value be the same or different for different onshore technologies? Please explain your answer.

The benchmark value should be consistent across all technologies to maintain fairness. Communities will need legal and financial support to make their case effectively, with advice tailored to their specific circumstances.

- b) How could we ensure a benchmark value was fair and proportionate for different technologies? For example, the current benchmark for onshore is based on installed generation capacity but are there other measures that could be used? Please provide any evidence or data to support your preferred approach.

To ensure fairness, benchmarks should not solely rely on installed generation capacity. Other measures, such as the scale of community impact or localised economic needs, should also be considered.

Section 2: Assessing impacts of the Good Practice Principles

Question 13

Are you aware of any likely positive or negative impacts of the Good Practice Principles on any protected characteristics or on any specific groups in Scotland, particularly: businesses; rural and island communities; or people on low-incomes or living in deprived areas? The Scottish Government is required to consider the impacts of proposed policies and strategic decisions in relation to equalities and particular societal groups and sectors. Please explain your answer and provide supporting evidence if available.

The Good Practice Principles may disproportionately impact rural, island, and low-income communities. The current framework gives developers significant power, potentially allowing them to prioritise their interests over community needs once planning is approved. Many communities, especially those with limited resources or experience, may struggle to engage effectively. Greater support and legal protections are needed to ensure all communities, particularly vulnerable groups, can benefit from offshore wind developments and have their voices heard.