



## The transformative impact of community owned energy

Energy is a very hot topic, whether it's how we reduce its cost burden on individuals, the amazing potential of Scotland's natural resources and the challenges of ensuring they deliver a positive environmental and financial future for Scotland, or how Scotland is leading the way on new forms of power and energy storage.

The potential impacts on all communities could be transformative but the eye-watering financial benefits from Scotland's natural assets are not being fairly shared. Indeed in many respects, people are not at the heart of this renewable revolution. A coalition of community sector intermediaries have coalesced around this central proposition to form the Community Energy Coalition and are calling for a new approach to community benefits to ensure the value of Scotland's natural resources can be distributed more evenly. At its heart is the proposal for a National Community Wealth Fund – creating a legacy for Scotland and individual communities – that will ensure that Scotland learns the lessons of the fossil fuel revolution and creates positive forever impact across ALL of Scotland. It will provide support for communities to acquire a greater ownership share in the renewables revolution. It will ensure that long term sustainable revenue is retained locally to build community wealth and a fairer more prosperous Scotland.

The Scottish community ownership sector – be that in land, buildings, enterprises, renewables – is growing in strength and impact and is transforming local places. However what does this mean in practice? What really happens when you give local people ownership of their own local natural resources? What do they do with the income? Is it well spent? Does it meet local need? Does it build confidence and capacity for communities to do more? Does it support local jobs and business and build houses? Does it work to stem depopulation and attract young working age people? Importantly does it help local communities address the climate and biodiversity crises? We are presenting here a range of case studies to help answer some of these questions. We hope you find them as inspiring and exciting as we do.

**Ailsa Raeburn**  
**Angus Hardie**  
**Zoe Holliday**  
**Pauline Smith**  
**Morven Lyon**  
**Pauline Hinchion**

Community Land Scotland  
Scottish Community Alliance  
Community Energy Scotland  
Development Trusts Association Scotland  
Community Shares Scotland  
Scottish Communities Finance Ltd

## Gigha

The Isle of Gigha Heritage Trust developed the first community owned grid connected wind turbine development in 2004. Known as the Dancing Ladies the three turbines were complemented by a 4th in 2011. Over the years the turbines have delivered many hundreds of thousands of pounds net revenue to the community which has helped fund housing developments and restorations, business unit development, moorings and tourism accommodation.



They are currently supporting the development of 5 'all life' housing units on the island, as well as the development of a 22km path network and ranger service, a new camp and motor home site and the restoration of Achamore Gardens. The turbines also support a local Community Fund which funds community and social development on the island and in nearby mainland communities.

*"The turbine income has been absolutely essential to the success of Gigha. We have grown our population from 90 to 170; we have been able to build decent housing that has retained and recruited young families to live here; we are now able to protect and restore the famous Achamore Gardens and our new camping and motorhome facilities ensure we provide a much better visitor experience whilst reducing car borne traffic and protecting our beautiful island. Owning our own renewable energy gives us the confidence and capacity to talk to partners and develop projects that make Gigha a good positive place to live and work."*

**Jane Millar, IGH Development Manager**

## Rousay, Egilsay and Wyre, Orkney



Community owned REWIRED (Rousay, Egilsay and Wyre Renewable Energy Developments) installed and manage a 0.9MW wind turbine which generates a net surplus of £150-200,000 yearly for the local community. REWIRED is wholly owned by the "parent" community anchor organisation, the Rousay Egilsay and Wyre Development Trust (REWDT). REWDT then uses this surplus to deliver on a community led local strategy and plan, and either undertake work, or fund others to deliver, on a wide range

of activities designed to develop a thriving community and make it both more resilient and a good place to live. This includes energy efficiency work, inclusive access to infrastructure and services, offering resources for skills training and certification, providing electric vehicles, a car club and local transport services and charging infrastructure, subsidising travel and learning activities further afield. The Trust and wider community have also led on some pioneering work such as Heat Smart Orkney, developing a flexible integrated energy system on the island to provide decarbonised and affordable warmth to their community.

Their revenue is also used to directly support wider assets and lever in, and match, further resource from external bodies (such as the Big Lottery and the Scotland Land Fund) including supporting the sustainability of the local shop and pub/hotel and developing meeting spaces, and flexible accommodation in the community.

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Through our community-owned renewable energy initiatives, we're not just generating power; we're empowering our island communities to thrive, innovate, and shape a sustainable future together.

**Stuart Williams, Trust Manager at REWDT**

### Point and Sandwick Trust

The community owned Trust developed a 3 turbine 9MW scheme on common grazing land in Lewis, which became operational in 2015. It remains the largest community owned windfarm in the UK, returning £900k pa net to the community rising to £2m pa once all loans are paid off. Studies of the development have shown that community owned energy return **34 times the benefit** of a privately owned windfarm which pays the Good Practice rate of £5000 per MW (very few of which actually do.)



The revenue from the turbines is paid into a Community Fund which both funds individual projects but also provides a consultancy service that helps foster local innovation and ideas and builds local capacity. Projects funded include a 100,000 tree planting scheme, the restoration of Garrabost Mill heritage site, fuel poverty measures and advice, a coastal path network and Christmas lights and parties.

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With an expected operation life span of 25 years, our wind farm will generate millions of pounds which is to be used for **the sole benefit** of the local and wider community. It has been game changing for us as it has given us the power and confidence to be an equal partner in local developments and ensured our communities can grow and thrive.

**Calum MacDonald, The Point and Sandwick Trust**

### Strontian, Ardamurchan



The Sunart Community Renewables Community Benefit Society was established in 2014 to develop a 100KW micro hydro on the Allt nan Cailleach in Strontian. Largely funded by a Community Shares Offer, the hydro started operating in 2015 and to date has generated a net surplus of over £300k for the local community. This has been paid into the Sunart Community Benefit Fund whose constitution requires that all ages of the community are represented in decision making. Anyone over the age of 16 can be a member.



The Fund has supported the development of the Community school; provided start up grants for local businesses; supported the local angling club in its project to enhance the biodiversity of the Strontian River and in the cost of living crisis has given individual fuel poverty grants of £150 to almost 250 local households.

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I can honestly say that the community benefit fund has helped retain one part time job, create another, stimulated local enterprise, several community asset purchases, community resilience throughout covid and the cost of living crisis and supported a wide range of community activities. CB distribution of £316,000 will have unlocked projects worth almost £1.8million. Amongst a population of 420 people this is significant!

**James Hilder, Sunart Community Renewables Treasurer**

## Morvern Community Development

Morvern Community Development Company (MCDC) was established in 1999, initially with the purpose of purchasing the village petrol pumps which were in need of replacement. Subsequently MCDC has gone on to tackle a wide range of projects that have had a social, economic and environmental impact across the community.

In July 2021 after more than five years in the planning and construction, MCDC launched the Barr Hydro Scheme (Mor Volts). Mor Volts now generates electricity which is sold to the national grid, bringing in £200,000 annually. This is likely to increase as the debt on the project is reduced and continues to financially underwrite the implementation of the community's development plan.



With a long history of woodland acquisition, visitor moorings and harbour development and access upgrades – MCDC are now using this new income to support further projects, including:

- Delivering Phase 2 of the housing project which will include 10 new affordable homes for the community
- They have constructed and now operate the Morvern Community Business Hub which includes office space, meeting space and a café.
- MCDC also constructed 3 single person homes which are let via a 3rd party to two locals and the new schoolteacher.

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Mor Volts has been transformational in Morven. It has allowed MCDC to undertake a wide range of projects to improve our community and ensure we have the services and facilities we need to grow our population and make life better for people who live here.

**Lilia Dobrokhodova, MCDC Development Manager**

**Other smaller projects across rural and urban Scotland are also having significant impact in their local communities.**

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At Penpoint in Dumfriesshire, three local communities at Keir, Penpoint and Tynron formed the **KPT Community Hydro** in 2018. Funded via Scottish Power Energy Networks and over 2000 hours of volunteer time in the design, management and construction of the scheme, they have developed a 125 MWH micro hydro. Funds from the hydro are now supporting a community café and garden, a local business hub, access improvements and an e bike network.



**Buchanan Community Hydro Scheme** on Loch Lomond developed a 100KW run of river hydro which went live in Sept 2022. Surpluses are paid into the local Community Benefit Fund which supports local projects such as Scouts and youth groups. The Hydro project focusses on climate change impact and community benefit.

The **Greencraig Community Wind Turbine** near Falkirk was developed by a partnership of Bespoke Community Development Ltd and Locogen. The 900kw turbine commissioned in 2021 will help support local active travel and climate schemes and will deliver up to £1,200,000 in community benefit over its lifetime.

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