

Cabinet Secretary for Net Zero, Energy and Transport
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Michael Matheson BPA/MSP



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Our Reference: 202300342055
Your Reference: -

23 February 2023

Dear Councillor Bremner,

Thank you for your letter of 23 January 2023, on behalf of The Highland Council, to request the Scottish Government consider legislating to allocate at least 5% of gross revenue from wind turbines to community benefits and to widen the areas in which funds are to be distributed.

The Scottish Government is committed to supporting communities to participate in and benefit from Scotland's energy transition in a way that helps generate lasting social and economic impacts. We encourage developers to offer community benefits – and shared ownership opportunities – to communities as standard on all new renewable energy projects, including repowering and extension to existing projects. However, the Scottish Government has no direct powers to oblige developers to pay community benefits through energy regulation as they are reserved to UK Government.

Our Good Practice Principles for Community Benefits and Shared Ownership from Onshore Renewable Energy Developments, updated in May 2019, set out national standards that we encourage renewable energy businesses and communities to observe. Although the Scottish Government has no powers to require a defined rate of community benefit, the revised guidance continues to promote a national level of community benefits equivalent to £5,000 per installed megawatt per year. It also recognises that some renewable energy businesses will seek to offer communities a more flexible package of benefits, not necessarily based on a rate per megawatt. This flexibility extends to determining the area to benefit from onshore developments, which remains at the discretion of the developer and local communities.

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Tha Ministearanna h-Alba, an luchd-comhairleachaidh sònraichte agus Rùnaire Maireannach fo chumhachan Achd Coiteachaidh (Alba) 2016. Faicibh www.lobbying.scot

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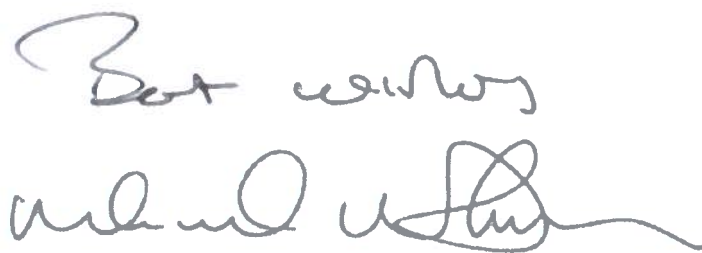


As set out in the recently published draft Energy Strategy and Just Transition Plan, our current priority is to conduct a review of our Good Practice Principles for community benefits from offshore renewable energy developments. While we have no plans at present to review the Good Practice Principles for onshore renewables, we will consider whether there is scope for any learning from the ongoing offshore review to be applied to the onshore guidance.

Alongside this, the Onshore Wind Policy Statement 2022 (OWPS), published in December last year, introduced a new ambition for a minimum installed capacity of 20GW of onshore wind in Scotland by 2030. It also restated our commitment to support and encourage shared ownership and community benefit from onshore wind, to ensure we maximise economic benefit for the people of Scotland. To support achieving our ambition, we set out plans to form an Onshore Wind Strategic Leadership Group (SLG) to take forward the aspirations of the policy statement and the development of an Onshore Wind Sector Deal. The first meeting of the SLG will take place later this month, and it will have a specific community energy lead.

It is vital that communities are strongly engaged and involved in agreeing the best approach for their area, one which fits their needs and aspirations. There are excellent examples from across Scotland of regional collaboration on community benefits and I welcome continuing engagement from The Highland Council and partners on this matter.

Yours sincerely



MICHAEL MATHESON

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