

Community shared ownership of wind farms should be mandatory

With regards the ongoing debate about wind farms in Kintyre, we – the leaders of the three most impacted communities – would like to express our viewpoint.

The development of wind farms across Kintyre is on an industrial scale, as demonstrated by the map on this page. This will, of course, change the landscape of Kintyre because the scale and size of these wind farms will result in visible impacts the length and breadth of the Kintyre peninsula, and beyond.

Argyll and Bute Council's landscape study categorically states there is no scope for wind turbines over 150m, which recognises the need to balance local tourism with wind farm developers' profit and the need for renewable energy.

Yet, the majority of developers are proposing to breach this with heights of 180m to 230m – similar to those used off-shore and two to three times the height of the majority of the existing Kintyre turbines.

Turbines of this size will automatically require navigation lights, impacting the dark skies as well as the day time visual amenity. Developers are doing this simply to maximise their profits.

Pockets of wind farm community benefit funding have been appreciated by Kintyre, but Scottish Government 2019 Good Practice Guide Principles have now been introduced to try and ensure that all consented wind farms grant impacted communities at least £5,000 per installed MW in community benefit funds (CBF) AND offer an element of community shared ownership (CSO).

The funds incoming to the local communities will enable wealth-building, facilitate resilience, and empowerment through the delivery of local development plans.

However, experience to date is that the majority of commercial developers are NOT offering shared ownership meeting Scottish Government guidelines and some are not even offering CBF, which is completely unacceptable.

A petition has been raised through parliament promoting the view that CSO should be manda-



tory, using the Scottish Government's devolved land tax powers.

In the interim, all developers are being challenged by East Kintyre Renewable Energy Group (EKREG) on behalf of the communities affected. EKREG is a volunteer group with significant relevant experience which acts on behalf of all Kintyre community councils in relation to CSO negotiations.

To date, only one developer – out of 14 – has committed in writing to CSO which meets the Scottish Government's Good Practice Principles. This is RWE which is required to do so because of the terms of its lease with Forestry and Land Scotland.

PI Renewables/Escart Wind Farm have refused to interact at all, two other developers, RES and Blue Energy, have refused to offer CSO and another, EnergieKontor – with two of the tallest developments in the pipeline – says it may consider an offer at a later, as yet unspecified, date.

But, given this developer needed significant cajoling by EKREG to even grant CBF, it seems unlikely that it will make a CSO commensu-

rate with Scottish Government guidelines. ScottishPower Renewables (SPR), a distribution network operator, has recently powered-up its latest wind farm in the region – Beinn an Tuirc 3 – and two more of its developments are in the pipeline. SPR was a major stakeholder in developing, agreeing and signing up to the 2019 Scottish Government Good Practice Guidance. It promised the impacted communities that it would offer CSO and the template used would then be replicated across SPR's other Scottish developments.

Disgracefully, SPR reneged on its commitment to offer CSO and instead tabled a short-term investment with a pre-dictated rate of return.

While communities are pleased to have been able to secure CBF from SPR, eventually, for the lifetime of the wind farm, the offer made by SPR to the impacted Kintyre communities for CSO was extremely disappointing.

The communities' financial adviser, QMPF, stated that it failed to meet Scottish Government guidelines for CSO. The offer made little financial sense to the impacted communities and the community councils wholeheartedly agreed with this view. The reluctance to offer and facilitate the take-up of CSO is driven by the same purely profit-driven mentality that underpins the desire of the developers to cover Kintyre in off-shore-sized turbines that will devastate our tourism industry.

As a consequence, communities across Kintyre are missing out on the life-changing financial income that would be commensurate with an equity stake in these and other wind farms across the region.

This is an unfair and unacceptable situation, and a matter that appears to require strong and immediate action by the Scottish Government.

Our elected MSP and regional list MSPs all now need to step up and seriously support the residents of Kintyre by supporting the community-oriented petition presently with the Scottish Government that CSO should be mandatory and delivered using devolved land tax legislation.

Ian Brodie, convener of East Kintyre Community Council, Margaret Pratt, convener of West Kintyre Community Council and Valerie Nimmo, convener of Campbeltown Community Council.