Wind farm generates £1m in community benefits

Monday 8 April, 2024

A wind farm between Longtown and Gretna has paid more than £1m in grants to the local community.

The nine turbines at Beck Burn began generating electricity in 2017 producing enough power for 18,000 homes.

As part of the scheme, operator EDF Renewables UK agreed to pay £155,250 a year tocommunity projects within a 10-kilometre radius.

This grant fund – administered by Cumbria Community Foundation – has passed a significantmilestone. A £10,300 grant to Springfield & Gretna Green Community Asset Trust, to replacewindows at Stormont Hall in Gretna Green, has taken the total paid to more than £1m.

Simon Ling, Asset Manager for Beck Burn Wind Farm said: "It's wonderful to see such a significant milestone be reached. We are thrilled to see such worthy projects receive funding to enhance the lives of those living in and around Longtown and Gretna and look forward to hearing more over the coming months."

Raydale Community Partnership is the single largest beneficiary, having received grants totalling £85,000 since 2018. The not-for-profit organisation was formed following the collapse of Gretna FC to buy back the club's ground, Raydale Park, for use by the community.

The grants have gone towards a 3G multi-discipline sports pitch for year-round use, the creation of a fitness and leisure space and new changing rooms. Stuart Rome, Facilities Manager at Raydale Community Partnership, said: "Gretna has lacked a safe space for children and teenagers to participate in sports. We now have more than 250 users of our facilities. "We're grateful for EDF Renewables UK's support for the mental and physical wellbeing of our community. We couldn't have done what we've done without them."

Across the border in Cumbria, Longtown Memorial Hall and Community Centre has received £28,000 with a further £20,000 just awarded. Centre Manager Steph Graham said: "Our reception area hasn't been touched for around 40 years. With this grant, we're going to open it up to make it much more welcoming with a community café and a seated area so people can come in, meet their friends and make use of the free wi-fi."

The Beck Burn Wind Farm Community Fund prioritises grants to volunteer-led or community groups within a five-kilometre radius, although groups up to 10 kilometres away can apply if they deliver benefits in the five-kilometre area.

These grants support charitable, community activities that are environmental, educational, sporting or community related. Awards are normally between £1,000 and £20,000 and can be for multiple years.

Part of the fund is ring fenced for education and training grants for individuals over 16 living within the parish/community councils of Rockcliffe, Westlinton, Arthuret, Kirkandrews-on-Esk, Springfield and Gretna Green, Kirkpatrick Fleming and District, Canonbie and District, and Gretna and Rigg.

Lisa Blackwell, Grants and Programmes Officer at Cumbria Community Foundation, said: "This fund provides a valuable, long-term, sustainable and reliable source of income for local communities."

For more information, contact Lisa Blackwell on 01900 825760, email: grants@cumbriafoundation.org or follow this link for the community fund –

https://www.cumbriafoundation.org/fund/beck-burn-wind-farm-community-fund/ – and this link for the education and training bursaries:

https://www.cumbriafoundation.org/fund/beck-burn-wind-farm-community-fund-educational-bursaries/

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