SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT FUND GUIDANCE

What is the Sustainable Development Fund?

SSE Renewables created the Sustainable Development Fund as part of its voluntary community benefit arrangements from its onshore renewable energy developments in Scottish Borders built from 2013 onwards, including Clyde Wind Farm.

Who can apply to the fund?

To be eligible for funding, your project must benefit communities that lie wholly within the Scottish Borders local authority area. You don't need to be a registered charity to apply, but your organisation must have a constitution, at least three board/committee members, and not be set up for individual profit.

What is the fund value and timescale?

In this round the fund is worth a total of **£250,000**. You can apply for a grant of anything from a minimum of £30,000 up to a maximum of the fund's total value in this round.

Round opens:	Friday 4 April 2025
Deadline for applications:	Monday 16 June 2025
Award decisions made:	early October 2025

What are the aims of the fund?

The fund provides support for strategic projects in the Scottish Borders region and any successful application must meet one or more of the following outcomes:

- **Creating opportunities:** Create opportunities for education and employment through activities that develop skills and improve an individual's chance of entering the workplace.
- **Empowering communities:** Empower communities to become more resilient through measures which demonstrate long-term social, environmental or economic improvements.
- **Sustainable places**: Stimulate meaningful regeneration to improve or enhance local infrastructure, landscape, biodiversity or heritage and make a lasting difference to the places we live, work and visit.

In addition, all applications are expected to consider and demonstrate how their project supports the following overarching ambitions of the Fund Panel:

- How the project will **help the region in its journey towards a net zero future**. For example, by improving energy efficiency, reducing waste, or delivering services in a way that reduces or removes the use of fossil fuels.
- How the project will **build the knowledge, skills and experience that the third sector needs** to support a sustainable region. For example, by developing and enhancing social enterprises, improving the sustainability of community assets, or increasing collaboration between community projects and services.

How can I apply?

Applications are made through our online Community Investment Portal. Visit the Sustainable Development Fund [webpage](#) and scroll to find the 'Apply' button. You will be asked to confirm your group's eligibility to apply before proceeding to the application form.

Who should I contact for more information?

Tom Black
Senior Community Investment Manager
01738 351799
tom.black@sse.com

Who sits on the decision-making Panel?

The SSE Renewables Sustainable Development Fund Panel will review applications and determine which projects should receive funding. The Panel comprises:

- Rt Hon Lord Jack McConnell (Chairperson)
- Damien Yeates, Chief Executive, Skills Development Scotland
- Professor James Hunter, Emeritus Professor of History, UHI
- Stuart Hood, Director of Business Operations & Performance, SSE Renewables

We are currently selecting two further Panel members.

What are the Panel looking for?

The Panel will review the application based on its relevance to the Fund outcomes and themes set out above and appraise the social, economic and environmental impact it could have to the local area. This will be the primary form of assessment. The Panel will be looking for projects with the potential to deliver transformational change.

Consideration will also be given to the extent to which applications demonstrate:
- **Value for money –** evidence that the project will have a significant impact for the amount requested.
- **Community involvement –** evidence that the relevant community is engaged in the development and implementation of the project. For example through surveys, service user involvement, community consultations, open days, letters of support or volunteering opportunities.
- **Financial viability –** evidence that the project can be maintained beyond the period of grant funding.
- **Evidence of need –** demonstration of a real financial need for the application and evidence that the applicant has leveraged other sources of external funding.
- **Match funding** – in exceptional circumstances, the Panel may consider applications up to 100% of total costs but would encourage groups to leverage other external funding towards the project.

What is expected of funded projects?

- Each funded project will gain the support of an SSE Renewables Community Investment Manager to provide advice and guidance as required.
- Successful applicants should begin drawing down grant funds within one year of being awarded. Long-term projects (such as building work or multi-year projects) will be released in stages and must demonstrate progress within one year of award.
- SSE Renewables is committed to understanding the social impact of the fund. One of the key requirements of successful applicants is to monitor and evaluate your project.
- We use an Outcomes Report based on Big Society Capital's Social Outcomes Matrix. Applicants will be asked to identify project outcomes at the start of the grant period and to confirm outcomes achieved at the end of project. We require successful applicants to provide copies of evaluation activity to SSE Renewables.
- We also ask that funded organisations develop and adopt a Climate Action Plan or Net Zero Action Plan. If your organisation does not have one already, you can find out how to put a plan in place here – climateconfident.scot

What cannot be funded?

- Projects which do not meet the Sustainable Development Fund criteria
- Projects which do not benefit people living within the Scottish Borders Council boundary
- Individuals, or groups without a constitution
- The advancement of religion or politics (including requests to support the core activities of religious or political groups)
- The repayment of loans or payment of debts
- VAT costs that can be recovered
- Trips abroad
- Costs already incurred or activities which will take place before we have made a decision on an application (retrospective funding).

How to apply

Applications to the Scottish Borders Sustainable Development Fund are made through an online application form. You can access the form **here**.

You will be asked to confirm your eligibility to apply to the Fund and will then need to create a user account for your group on SSE's Community Investment Portal, if you have not already done so, or to login if you already have an account.

About the online application process
The following guidance may help you in completing the application form:
- You must already have or create a user account (using the link above) for our Community Investment Portal in order to access the application form and submit it.
- Your draft application will save at key points, so you can log out of the portal and resume drafting it when you log back, should you not wish to complete and submit it in one session. Log back in

to the Portal homepage **here** and click the 'My Applications' button on the home screen, then 'launch' next to your draft application. Please do not use this same login page to create your user account - this must be done through the application link (above).

- We will send you an email confirming your application has been received after you have submitted it. This will contain a link to download a copy of your application and save this for your records.
- You can read **Frequently Asked Questions** about our online Community Investment Portal.
- If you have any problems in accessing or completing the application form, please contact the relevant Community Investment Manager (details above).
- You can view helpful **videos** on navigating the Community Investment Portal.

Guidance on completing the application form

We have provided guidance below on the information we are looking for under the questions asked on the application form, as well as any supporting information that we require.

Documents we will ask you to upload

We will ask you to upload the following documents during the application process, please ensure you have them to hand:

- Your group's constitution
- A recent bank account statement in the name of the group applying for the grant, dated within the past 3 months
- The group's most recent approved annual accounts
- The budget for your project (or you can use the budget template provided in the application form)
- Quotes for works or goods included in the project budget where these are over £5,000 in value
- The group's Child Protection/Vulnerable Adult Policy (if applicable)
- Any other documents which you think are required in support of your application. For example, a business plan, any architectural drawings, copies of any relevant consents / permissions, letters of support for your project, and/or your group's climate action plan / net zero action plan.

Please note due to data protection requirements we ask that you **do not include any photos that feature people** in any of your uploaded documents.

Group Details

Note: you will only need to register this information the first time you apply for a grant on behalf of your group, and it will remain on the portal for any future applications. (Once you have registered your group, you will be able to amend the details if necessary via the 'My Details' section on the Portal **homepage**).

- Name of Group:
  - o This should be the name that appears on your group's governing document and bank account statement.
- Type of group:

- You will be able to select from a list: Unincorporated voluntary or community organisation; SCIO; registered charity (other); Company limited by guarantee; Community Interest Company; Community Benefit Society; Community Council; Other
  - If your group has one, you will be asked to provide its registered charity and/or company number so please have this to hand.
- Phone number:
  - Please enter a phone number on which we can contact the above-named person.
- Website
- Number of people:
  - on your group's board or management committee – in total, not just office bearers
  - employed by the group
  - who volunteer for the group.
- Date established:
  - Please provide the date that your group's governing document was adopted, or if it is a registered company or charity, the date it was registered with the regulator.
- What are your group's aims and objectives?
- Your groups' main activities including any previous community projects:
  - Provide a summary of the main activities or services your group delivers and/or has delivered to-date.
- Communities your projects or activities support:
  - State which communities or beneficiary groups your group supports. For example, all residents in the community your group is set up to benefit, or young people, or people who are not in education, employment or training.
- Constitution:
  - Upload the latest version of your group's governing document adopted by the members.
- Correspondence address
- Registered address:
  - This is the address at which your group or organisation is formally registered, which may differ from the correspondence address.

About the Project

- A short summary of the project or activity that you are applying for funding towards:
  - Please give a summary (no more than 25-words) of the project or activity you are requesting a grant towards – what it will deliver and for who.
- The geographic area the project will be delivered in:
  - Please provide a postcode / Eircode that best represents the project's delivery location.
- A description of the project you are looking for funding for (Suggested word limit - 400 words). We suggest you cover:
  - what you want to do
  - How you will do this – e.g. the activities you will deliver, where/ when/ how often you will deliver them, how you will reach those you are seeking to benefit, any equipment needed, and how it will be used
  - How the community has been and/or will be involved in developing and delivering the project
  - Who will lead the project – their role(s), skills and experience

- o How you will monitor and evaluate the success of the project
- o The proposed start and end dates for the project.
- How will you maintain / sustain your project after the period of our grant funding is finished?
  - o If the project will continue beyond the period for which you are seeking grant funding, please let us know how you intend to continue it, including how you will secure any funding, volunteers, or other resources needed to do so.
  - o Please also include relevant details if the project will help to make your organisation more self-sustaining.
- How have you identified a need for this project within the local area? (Suggested word limit - 300 words):
  - o Your project should address a current need and gap in local provision.
  - o Where possible please provide relevant local data that demonstrates this e.g. from a local community plan, survey of your intended beneficiaries, labour market statistics, and/or neighbourhood statistics.
- How many people will benefit from the project?
  - o Only include those who will benefit directly from the project. This may include any volunteers involved in delivering it. Please ensure the number you give is realistic.
- How have you calculated the above figure?
  - o Please tell us how you arrived at this figure.
- Will any jobs be supported by the project?
  - o If yes, we will ask how many.
- Will any community assets (e.g. community hall, footpath) be built and/or improved as part of the project?
  - o If yes, we will ask how many.
- Will this project help improve energy efficiency or climate change?
  - o If yes, please provide details of the energy generation or carbon reduction potential of the project, where you know this.

UN Sustainable Development Goals

SSE Renewables community programme supports the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. We will ask you to identify the primary UN Sustainable Development Goal that your project contributes to and will allow you to also identify secondary goals. You can find out more about the UN SDG's at Sustainable Development Goals | United Nations Development Programme (undp.org)

The Goals we will ask you to select from are:

- Goal 3 - Good health and well-being e.g. your project will improve people's well-being, physical health or emotional health including community care services, sports classes, befriending services.
- Goal 4 - education and training e.g. your project will support people to enter work, will help schools to deliver new activity or would help community members learn new skills.
- Goal 7 - energy efficiency - your project helps communities to have affordable and modern energy e.g. insulation measures, new heating systems.
- Goal 8 - supporting jobs, tourism and economic growth - your project will enhance the local economy e.g. projects which employ people in the local area, the development of social enterprise activity, projects to increase tourism to the area.

- Goal11- Sustainable communities - your project will help enhance the local community e.g. improving a community hall, building new community sports Centre, running a community event
- Goal 13 - climate action - your project will help to combat climate change e.g. community renewables.
- Goal 15 - Life on land - projects which help the local environment e.g. community owned forests, community gardens, community nature paths."

Project Aims and Success

- What are the intended outcomes of the project and how do you anticipate measuring success? (Suggested word limit - 300 words):
    - Outcomes are the economic, social and/or environmental benefits/changes that you seek to make from your programme
    - Where possible make sure your outcomes are clear, achievable, specific and realistic.
    - Make sure your outcomes link logically to the needs gap you have identified.
    - Please limit the number of outcomes to a manageable number (we suggest no more than 5 outcomes)
- Explain how your project achieves the Fund aims and priorities outlined on page 1 of this guidance document. (Suggested word limit - 300 words)
- Will your project contribute to the local economy?
    - If it will, explain how the project helps enhance the local economy e.g., creation of jobs, encouraging new businesses to area.
- Please tell us whether the project is new.
    - If it is not, tell us how it has been funded to date.

Project Bank Details

- If your project is in the UK, we will require your group's bank sort code and account number:
    - Please ensure the details you provide here are correct as this information will be used to make grant payments if you are successful in securing a grant.
- If your project is in the Republic of Ireland, we will require your IBAN number:
    - Please ensure the details you provide here are correct as this information will be used to make grant payments if you are successful in securing a grant.
- Bank account holder's name:
    - This is the name that your group's bank account is held in, as it appears on bank statements - it should be the name of your group.
- Upload a copy of a recent (within the past three months) bank statement
- Upload a copy of your group's latest accounts (as approved by your board or management committee)
- Additional authorised bank signatory:
    - Provide the name, e-mail address and position of a second person who is authorised to use your group's bank account. Please ensure you enter these details correctly as this person will be e-mailed any grant offer letter for their countersignature.

Group Finances

- What are the main sources of income for the group?

- Please provide brief details of how the group normally raises most of its income e.g. from local fundraising, grants, charges for services, etc
- Total income and surplus/deficit from the uploaded financial accounts:
  - The figures you provide should match those in the group's approved annual accounts that you uploaded earlier as part of your application
- Current unrestricted reserves and why they cannot be used for this project:
  - Unrestricted reserves are monies that are not restricted (e.g. by a donor or lender) for any particular use. If your group's unrestricted reserves cannot be used towards the project you are seeking a grant for, we will ask you to explain why.

Project Budget

- Select an option to add your project cost details:
  - You will have the opportunity to insert the information into a list/ table in the form or to upload your own budget template. Please **do not do both**.
  - If you enter costs in the list / table option then decide to upload a budget file instead, please ensure you delete any entries in the list / table before continuing.
  - Please provide an accurate list of all costs involved in the work, services, or items required for **the project**. This should include any project costs that you are not requesting a grant towards.
  - If you enter costs in the list / table option, these will automatically be totalled.
  - If you have chosen to upload a budget file, enter the total project cost (as stated in the file) into the box provided.
- Explain how you have costed the project.
  - For larger capital items (e.g. building work, vehicles, equipment) of more than £2,500 in value we expect you to have sought at least two quotations, for such items of more than £10,000 in value we expect you to have sought at least three quotations. Please upload any quotations you have received towards such costs.
  - If you are seeking a grant to cover salary costs, please tell us what hourly rate will be paid. SSE Renewables is a Living Wage Friendly Funder; therefore, we require any roles paid for through our funding to meet or exceed the Living Wage.
- Tell us how much you are applying to the Scottish Borders Sustainable Development Fund for.
  - Only non-recoverable VAT costs should be included in any grant amount you are requesting from SSE Renewables.

Project Funders

- If your total project cost requires other funding (including where your organisation is contributing its own funds), you will be asked to list all of the other funding sources, including the amounts being applied for and whether this funding is confirmed.

Checklist

We will ask you to tick yes, no or not applicable to the following checklist:

- That the group has the appropriate procedures in place to carry out your project safely
- That the group has at least three unrelated people serving on its management committee / board.
- That the project doesn't require retrospective funding

- That, if requested, you can provide the details of an independent referee.
- That any salaries are paid at, or greater than, the Living Wage

Whether the project requires your group to secure permissions, such as planning permission, a building warrant and/or listed buildings consent, prior to starting work. If it does, tell us whether these have been applied for / granted. If they haven't been applied for or granted yet, tell us when you expect this to happen.