



Norfolk Zone Offshore Wind Farms Community Benefit Fund FAQs



VATTENFALL

This document details the frequently asked questions regarding the Norfolk Zone Community Benefit Fund. This has been developed following the community workshops held in 2022, as many questions we were asked resulted in people sharing insights that are of interest to others who will help to shape the Community Benefit Fund. This is a working document that will be updated regularly during the course of the ongoing dialogue with communities.

Q&A session

Here is a flavour of the key topics covered during the Q&A session and at other points during the workshop. We will capture these alongside questions raised by other communities during the course of the ongoing dialogue in a FAQ document, as many questions resulted in sharing insights that are of interest to others who will help to shape the Community Benefit Fund.

Q: Who decides how the Community Benefit Fund will be allocated?

A: Vattenfall will appoint an administrative body and recruit a local panel that will decide which projects will be allocated funding.

Q: What are the criteria by which they will judge proposals?

A: We are starting this dialogue now to shape these criteria, and they will be clearly formulated throughout the development of the fund. However, the primary criteria noted above, and in all material to date, form the basic outline of eligibility - namely the projects must support the delivery of lasting, climate smarter benefits to local communities.

Q: How much of the money is going to be allocated to specific villages/surrounding areas?

A: This is yet to be decided. We will be holding similar workshops with other communities along the cable corridor to understand their needs and interests. The £15 million fund associated with the Norfolk Vanguard and Norfolk Boreas projects will be one of the largest funds provided by offshore wind projects in the UK to date, so there will be plenty of opportunities for communities to benefit. The key now is for communities to start thinking about what they want and need to improve community life and achieve climate smarter community living.

Q: Is the administrative body funded by the £15 million?

A: Yes, an element of the fund will need to support its administration. Normally this is capped, and kept to a minimum, so that as much of the fund as possible supports beneficiary communities.

Q: How will the administrative body and local panel be chosen?

A: We will look at organisations that exist locally, and already administer similar schemes, and appoint a suitable administrative body. Using an experienced body helps to keep overheads down and improve efficiencies. A good administrative body can also help communities look for match funding and optimise the funding in other ways too. We welcome community views on this topic, but Vattenfall will appoint and manage the contract with the administrative body.

When the community consultation is more advanced, and we know more about community interests and needs and we have drawn up the fund criteria, we will advertise for local people to apply to join the award panel. These will be voluntary roles for fixed periods, to ensure the panel is refreshed periodically. In the past, we have invited respected local stakeholders to help us interview and select the first panel.

Q: Was the amount of money given to the Community Benefit Fund decided by Vattenfall or the Government? Is the fund part of a Section 106 obligation?

A: The Government/Planning Inspectorate has no involvement in deciding the amount of money included in the Community Benefit Fund because it is neither a consent condition nor part of the Development Consent Order application process. Vattenfall recently announced the fund would be worth £15 million, which is the largest funding commitment to a focused geographic area by an offshore wind company to date.

Q: Why can the fund only be used for climate smarter community living?

A: This theme aligns with Vattenfall's purpose, connecting people with the source of the funding - the Norfolk Zone projects, and we hope it will help you build forward-facing, legacy projects for your communities.

In the results from the first phase of community benefit fund dialogue, a unifying theme among those who participated in the survey was the recognition that the whole of society needs to make adjustments to prevent climate change from accelerating dangerously. Deploying offshore wind is an efficient, large-scale action that can enable the electrification of many of the services we take for granted today but we also know we all need to act on a community and on individual levels too. As good neighbours in Norfolk, Vattenfall want to support communities to play their part, and also to reconnect perhaps to what they love about Norfolk already. In some instances, it may be that communities need to adapt to the impacts of climate change, and this fund may also provide that kind of support.

Through our experience setting up successful funds elsewhere, we have found that most proposals can be adapted to be climate smarter. Requiring projects to do things a bit differently can help communities drive towards Net Zero, address climate change and build social capital by working together to do things a little differently.

Q: Can you provide some small grants to investigate the viability of ideas?

A: Yes, that is a possibility.

Q: Why does the Community Benefit Fund need stipulations?

A: We need to shape criteria that people develop their applications, and that can be used to help the local decision-making panel assess the merits of projects. We have found that stipulations can help communities get what they want while showing others that they can be climate smarter too. Our fund in Aberdeen has inspired other funds to focus on being climate smarter, and we have seen the ideas from that fund being rolled out into more generic funds.

Q: Who can apply for the fund?

A: We will continue to look at this criteria during our ongoing consultation. For now our consultation is focussing on communities closest to our infrastructure, and the Districts through which our onshore infrastructure passes, to gather their input, and inspire them to consider their applications for funding. Normally, on our other funds, applications must be made by a community group and/or registered charity.

Q: Can we partner with other funds/communities to deliver bigger initiatives?

A: Yes. We actively encourage that you work together to develop your ideas.

Q: How will you ensure applications from smaller communities will be given equal weighting to those from more prominent members of society?

A: The administrative body and local panel will develop a register of all applications received, of which all will be treated equally following the full review process. Over time we will consider whether certain communities need support to access the funding, and we would work with the administrative body to see how best to support applications from those groups or communities in certain geographic areas.

Q: Will local authorities be able to apply for funding?

A: No, the purpose of the fund is to support projects that are not/otherwise would not be funded by local authorities. We are seeking to ensure “additionality”. Our fund does present an opportunity for local authorities to contribute towards, or match the funding allocated to, specific projects, or in certain circumstances to work with communities to develop projects in partnership.

Q: Will the fund be distributed according to impact on communities? Will some communities have a ringfenced fund?

A: We are looking at this possibility. In our experience, it is not always beneficial in the long term, but we are open to it, including potentially for an initial period.

Q: How do we apply for the fund?

A: A few months before the fund opens for the first allocation round, we will advertise the process for applications to be made. There will be a transparent process in place, with criteria published, and the local administrative body will support applicants and the panel through the process.

Q: When will the fund be available?

A: The fund will be open to receive first applications from September 2024.