

Report

Report to:	Community and Enterprise Resources Committee
Date of Meeting:	16 June 2020
Report by:	Executive Director (Community and Enterprise)

Subject:	Community Benefit Funds – Renewable Energy Fund Grant Application
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1. Purpose of Report

1.1. The purpose of the report is to:-

- ◆ consider a grant application to the Renewable Energy Fund from Blackwood Estate Community Association

2. Recommendation(s)

2.1. The Committee is asked to approve the following recommendation(s):-

- (1) that a grant be awarded to Blackwood Estate Community Association of up to £117,200.00 from the Renewable Energy Fund to purchase 65 acres of woodland at Loch Wood, Blackwood as a community asset.

3. Background

3.1. Since 2004, the Council has collected and administered Community Benefit funding through Planning and Economic Development Services. The service is responsible for securing the contributions from developers, advising potential applicants, assessing applications and monitoring projects to ensure that the community benefits associated with each project are delivered. Processes are continuously reviewed to ensure the best practices in grant provision and monitoring are undertaken to ensure the necessary support is delivered to eligible communities.

3.2. Grant awards above £20,000 require approval from Committee, awards below this level are approved by the Head of Planning and Economic Development under delegated authority. All grants awarded are reported annually to the Community and Enterprise Resources Committee and this is subject to a separate report on the Committee agenda.

4. Grant recommendations

4.1. Application Number 270

Blackwood Estate Community Association– project value £234,400.00

Proposed Grant award £117,200.00 Intervention rate of 50%

Funds from Dungavel windfarm £35,200 and Kypemuir windfarm £82,000 which are both part of the Renewable Energy Fund.

4.2. Blackwood Estate Community Association is established as a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation with the following purposes:

- The advancement of citizenship and community development by providing an area of public access in which we can partner with other local community organisations, bringing local residents together and enabling greater community cohesion in our village.
- The provision of recreational activities, by enabling local residents to walk from their village on public paths to a wild, secluded woodland of natural beauty for general recreation.
- The advancement of environmental protection and improvement, by permanently safeguarding an area of natural woodland, situated in an extremely historic site from future housing development and habitat loss.

4.3 The charity has a membership of 70 and a management board of 8 trustees. The charity has consulted widely in regards to the project and has received 243 signatures of support prior to the COVID-19 lockdown.

4.4 The grant will allow Blackwood Estate Community Association to purchase 65 acres of woodland (see plan in appendix 1) near Blackwood as a community asset which will be developed as a public resource for the local community with outdoor learning and training asset. The Charity would manage and safeguard the mixed woodland including areas of ancient woodland providing long term environmental and habitat improvements on the site. The grant will specifically contribute to the asset purchase cost of £180,000 and other costs associated with the purchase of the site and make the woodland safe for public access.

4.5 The application scored 30 and 32 out of 53 by the two appraisers during the assessment process which averages as 31 and which permits an intervention rate of up to 55% of eligible costs.

4.6 The total cost of the project is £234,000 with contributions from The Scottish Land Fund £40,000, LandTrust £40,000, South Western Environmental Action Trust £17,600, Fife Environmental Trust £17,600, Falck Auchrobert Wind Farm £2,000 all to be confirmed. An award of £117,200 would therefore represent an intervention of 50%. All Renewable Energy Fund awards are subject to suitable match funding being secured.

4.7 The project is scheduled to commence in August 2020 and be complete by July 2021. Officers will work with the applicant to monitor progress and any impact on the timescales particularly resulting from the COVID-19 crisis.

5. Employee Implications

5.1. There are no employee implications arising from this report.

6. Financial Implications

6.1. The award is being split between two windfarm funds which both come within the Renewable Energy Fund to ensure sufficient reserves remain on both funds for future applications in 2020/2021. The funds have sufficient resources to meet the proposed grant award commitment detailed in this report.

7. Climate Change, Sustainability and Environmental Implications

- 7.1. The project scored 3.5 out of a possible 5 within the Sustainability Development section of the appraisal. The project will safeguard areas of natural and ancient woodland providing a secure and sustainable future for the natural asset.

The charitable aims of the applicant to support the community and increase community access to the countryside and to improve the woodland environment and habitat will help to deliver on local sustainable and environmental benefits.

8. Other Implications

- 8.1. The risks associated with the project are focused on the potential for cost overruns, delays to the projects or match funding not being secured and the long-term use of the assets. Work will continue with the applicant to help ensure match funding is secured and that projects are delivered broadly on time and within budget.

9. Equality Impact Assessment and Consultation Arrangements

- 9.1. This report does not introduce a new policy, function or strategy and, therefore, no impact assessment is required.

Michael McGlynn

Executive Director (Community and Enterprise Resources)

15 May 2020

Link(s) to Council Values/Ambitions/Objectives

- ◆ Accountable, effective, efficient and transparent
- ◆ Focuses on people and their needs
- ◆ Encouraging participation in physical and cultural activities
- ◆ Working with communities to promote high quality thriving sustainable communities
- ◆ Improve the road network, influence improvements in public transport and encourage active travel

Previous References

- Enterprise Resources Committee 8 August 2007
- Enterprise Resources Committee 23 November 2011

List of Background Papers

Completed REF Grant Application Form for application number 270
Completed REF Appraisal Scoring Sheet for application number 270

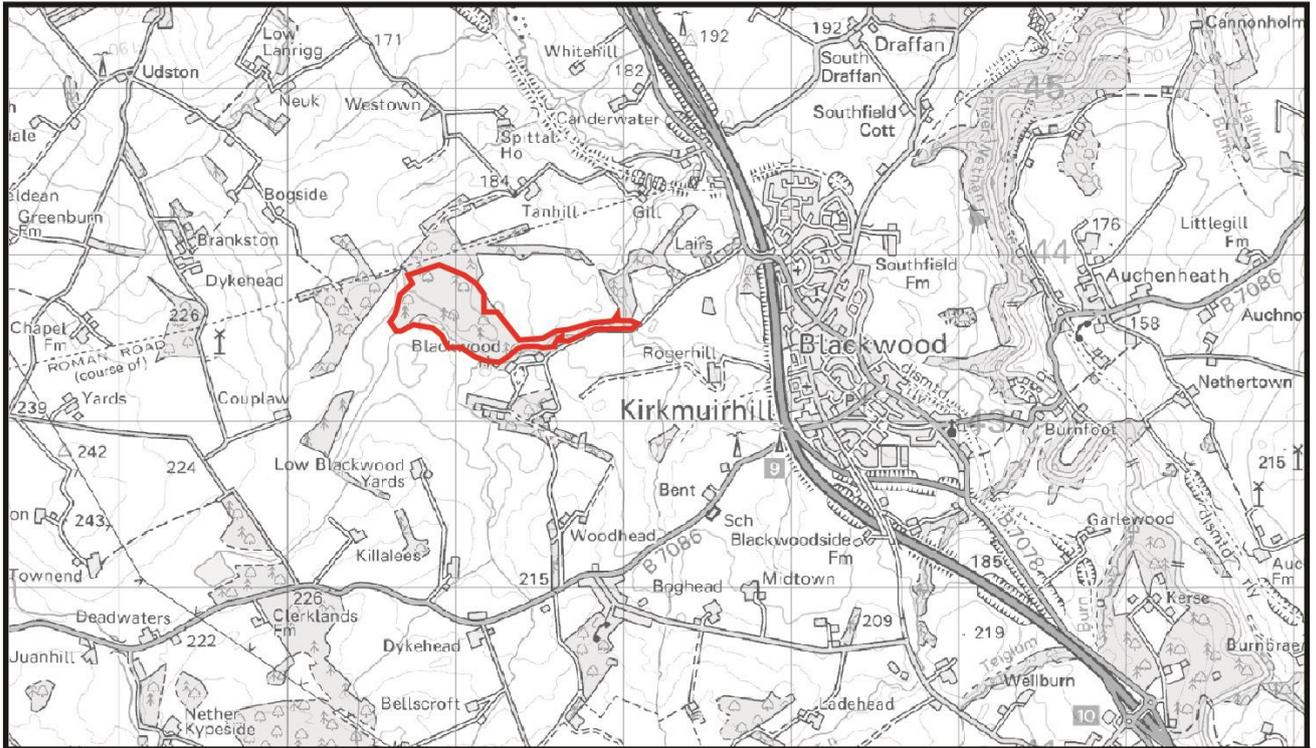
Contact for Further Information

If you would like to inspect the background papers or want further information, please contact:-

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