

## Wind Farm Funding Feedback Summary Paper

The Scottish Government made £725,000 available in 2012/13 to assist Local Authorities in processing the high volume of wind turbine applications. All 17 bids for funding were successful.

HOPS and Scottish Government held a workshop on the 17 September 2015 to gather feedback on the funding. 7 Local Authorities were represented from the 17 who were invited; Angus, Scottish Borders, West Lothian, Dumfries and Galloway, CnES, South Ayrshire and Moray.

### Feedback Summary

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Relative to the overall budgets, the methods employed by Local Authorities (LAs) were considered to be low cost relative to their effectiveness.

There was a general feeling that the funding came at the right time and was very useful in terms of reducing backlogs of applications, and increasing resilience within departments.

In some cases, the money was not spent exactly as the bid for funding but was always spent on action to help deal with wind farm/turbine applications, but the flexibility in being able to use the funding to respond to issues current at the time was appreciated.

### Lessons Learned

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#### Additional staff

Almost all the authorities used funding to secure extra staff resource, and all found this to be beneficial in reducing the backlog.

There were different approaches to securing extra resource including: recruiting externally, transferring staff from other departments, promoting internally, extending part time staff hours.

Those authorities that restructured internally, e.g. by appointing staff at a lower level to free up more senior officers, felt this worked particularly well. This appears to have a lasting benefit in enabling the development of existing staff and providing more secure employment.

Some of those authorities that recruited externally faced delays and recruitment difficulties. Organisational human resources policies needed to be managed.

### Noise

Some authorities directed the funding towards noise issues for example by securing noise modelling software, commissioning expert noise advice, or commissioning staff training on noise.

Some reported that they found the methods employed to speeded up the process of responding on noise issues and some reported increased expertise in-house as a result of these measures.

Where software was purchased, the associated staff training was crucial to its successful and beneficial use.

### Landscape

Some authorities used the funding to deal with landscape issues for example by commissioning a Landscape Capacity Study (or update), landscape advice, appointing a landscape officer, or undertaking training in landscape issues.

Preparation and updating of landscape capacity studies can be time-consuming and / or expensive exercises and where the additional funding was used to address this issue, it proved to be effective in terms of speeding up process, and increasing understanding in this area.

## **Legacy of the Funding**

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Those authorities that chose to restructure departments appear to have achieved a lasting legacy.

Some of those who appointed new staff have had / are hoping to have their contracts extended.

One Authority still retains some of the funding and intends to use it to fund on-going appeals.

One Authority has cascaded specialist training internally, thus increasing officer skills.

## **Current Situation**

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Some authorities had noticed a levelling off of wind farm application volume since the peak in 2012/13 whereas others we noticing increases again.

There seems to have been a change in the type of applications. There are now fewer applications for single turbines, most tend to be in clusters. There is an increasing size of turbines.

Retention of experienced staff members continues to be a problem.

Appeals continue to put pressure on resources.

## Other Issues Raised

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There has been reluctance from developers to enter into processing agreements. The reason seems to be because it removes the right for a deemed refusal after a 4 month period.

Wind farm repowering is seen as the next big issue to address. This is currently being investigated by the HoPS and energy resources sub-committee.

**If you have any comments on this summary, please contact**  
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**Annex A – What worked well / didn’t work well**

What Didn’t Work Well	What Worked Well
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Short timescale for deciding what to do with money in submitting the bid.</li> <li>– Existing internal HR process did not facilitate speedy recruitment of additional staff.</li> <li>– Difficult to retain temporary staff for full contract term.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Identifying dedicated time for more senior officers to process most significant wind farm applications (sometimes achieved by internal restructuring).</li> <li>– Recruitment of junior DM Officer (on temporary or permanent contract)</li> <li>– Recruitment of administrative officer</li> <li>– Paying for extra hours from existing part time staff.</li> <li>– Purchase consultant Landscape capacity study</li> <li>– Landscape capacity officer</li> <li>– Landscape capacity advice (consultant contract as and when needed)</li> <li>– Purchase of noise modelling software or consultancy advice</li> <li>– Noise modelling training</li> <li>– Landscape training for elected members</li> </ul>