

## Bilbster Wind Farm Community Benefit Fund

Year 12, 1<sup>st</sup> November 2020 to 31<sup>st</sup> October 2021



Bilbster Wind Farm Community Fund is provided by RWE Renewables, owner of the Bilbster Wind Farm located in Caithness, in the north of Scotland. The Fund was established in 2009 with annual payments of £1,250 per MW of installed capacity (index linked). Payments will be made over the 25 years the windfarm is likely to be operational. The Fund benefits two Community Council area's: Tannach and District, and Watten.

Initially the funds were administered by each Community Council. In 2016, Watten Community Council made the decision that their fund should be administered by Foundation Scotland under the Watten Wind Farm Trust. In 2019, the Tannach and District Community Council decided that their fund should be administered by Foundation Scotland under the Tannach and District Wind Farm Trust.

The Bilbster Watten Fund launched in 2009 and has awarded 27 grants distributing over £45,000.

Since the Bilbster Tannach Fund was transferred to Foundation Scotland in 2019 it has awarded three grants totalling over £9,000.

The total donation received from RWE in year 12 was £6,776.34: £4,061.34 for Tannach and District and £2,715 for Watten.

The year 12 contribution to Foundation Scotland's fees was £1,080.68.

## Financial Transactions

Financial transactions (01/11/20 - 31/10/21)	Watten	Tannach
<b>OPENING BALANCE</b>	<b>£3,199.00</b>	<b>£1,576.15</b>
<b>FUND INCOME:</b>		
Developer Donation	£2,715.00	£4,061.34
Donation forwarded by CC	£0.00	£4,025.50
Grant returned to the Fund	£2,691.00	
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>£5,406.00</b>	<b>£8,086.84</b>
<b>FUND EXPENSES:</b>		
Awards Made	£5,071.97	£4,000.00
Foundation Scotland fee	£272.00	£808.68
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURE</b>	<b>£5,343.97</b>	<b>£4,808.68</b>
<b>CLOSING BALANCE</b>	<b>£3,261.03</b>	<b>£4,854.31</b>

*\* The grant made in 2020 to the Watten School Parent Council to purchase nine chromebooks to enable learning from home was withdrawn and the monies returned to the Fund.*

## Grant-making

Two awards were made in Year 12, one through the Tannach and District Wind Farm Trust and one through the Watten Wind Farm Trust. The Tannach and District award, at £4,000 resulted in 98% of the annual

donation being distributed. The Watten award, at £5,071.97 resulted in fund equivalent to 187% of the annual donation being distributed.

### Yarrows Heritage Trust

Yarrows Heritage Trust was awarded **£4,000** to contribute to the Swartigill Archaeological Dig in September 2021.



Yarrows Heritage Trust formed in 2002 to celebrate the rich history in the area. The group has carried out a wide range of projects

including archaeological research projects, lectures, festivals, the restoration of the old railway station, new footpaths and planted woodlands.

The potential for archaeological interest at Swartigill was first discovered when a walker noted walling and prehistoric ceramics at an eroding section which extended for around 10m along the southern bank of the Swartigill burn. The group arranged to run ground penetrating radar over the burn site and recorded a small section of a potential structure. In 2015, volunteers were invited to join a small excavation project led by the University of the Highlands and Islands which led to larger professional digs in 2017, 2018,

2019 and 2021 which were supported by volunteers and open to whole community including school children from four schools.

Excavations at the site have uncovered a complex of Iron Age structures, which are providing an important window into Iron Age society away from the monumental architecture of the Brochs found elsewhere in the region. The 2021 dig revealed several minuscule pieces of Iron Age jewellery that

could originate from recycled Roman glass described by UHI as very exciting and significant. The 2021 dig was attended by 112 school children, eight teaching staff and 28 volunteers with over 60 people joining the online presentation by UHI. The dig is likely to continue for another three to four years before deciding how the site will be displayed to the public.

### Watten Early Learning Centre Parent Council

Watten Early Learning Centre Parent Council was awarded **£5,071.97** to buy new toys and equipment to re-engage the children with outdoor play after lockdown.



Watten Primary School has a school roll of 36 pupils across two composite classes. The Parent Council was keen to increase its supply of outdoor play equipment to encourage children to spend as much time outdoors as possible being physically active, particularly after having to spend so much time at home throughout 2020. Previously, the only

equipment available to give out to the children during break and lunch were bats and balls.

The Parent Council, along with the staff and children selected a list of new outdoor equipment they would like which included a mix of team games and independent play. The new equipment included space-hoppers, skipping ropes, stilts, jumbo footballs, rolling rings, rocking tops, croquet sets, badminton equipment and so much more.

The parent council decided that the easiest and most accessible way to store the equipment was to buy a shipping container which would be sited on the playground. Staff would open the container at the start of breaks and children could select their toys from storage buckets.

## Local Fund Outcomes

Local Outcomes in **Tannach and District** were guided by the 2012 RWE Camster Wind Farm Community consultation:

- 1) There are more and better opportunities to take part in sports and recreational pursuits.
- 2) Access to and through settlements is safer.
- 3) People of all ages enjoy more, better and varied activities and services.
- 4) Community life is enhanced and maintained through a wide range of activities, events and improved amenity of settlements.
- 5) Economic activity is encouraged within the Fund area.
- 6) People have more vocational skills and experience.
- 7) The natural and cultural heritage is more valued, experienced and understood by both visitors and residents.
- 8) Energy use in homes and community buildings is more sustainable.
- 9) Tourism opportunities are promoted and created in the Fund area.

Local Outcomes in **Watten** were guided by consultation on a Community Action Plan which was undertaken in 2016:

- 1) Encourage community activity, promote community spirit, and increase opportunities for socialising.
- 2) Improve the ability of groups/organisations to meet local priorities.
- 3) Improve telephone and broadband connections.
- 4) Provide or improve access to, and enjoyment of, the local environment.
- 5) Provide or improve opportunities for people to develop as individuals, make connections and improve their life chances.
- 6) Provide or improve sports and recreational facilities or activities.
- 7) Encourage economic activity within the Fund area.

## Community Panels

Each Panel operates to two deadlines per year. The dates were selected to complement the deadlines of another, pre-existing Fund (the RWE Camster Wind Farm Community Fund) which also encompasses Tannach and District and Watten within a wider area of benefit.

Each Trust Panel is made up of up to 12 local residents, two of whom can be Community Councilors. The other (up to) 10 are people who responded to the initial call for volunteers, or subsequent calls through the local press, posters, notices and local word of mouth.

Tannach and District Panel members during Year 12:

- Holly Forbes (Community Cllr)
- Ian Giles
- Rhona Gill
- Sarah Rootes
- Catherine MacLeod
- Alice Miller
- Elizabeth Henderson

Watten Panel members during Year 12:

- Jim Macdonald (Community Cllr)
- Anne Alexander (Community Cllr)
- John Sinclair
- Lesley Anne Young
- Rosalyn Macdonald
- David Thomson
- Liam Swanson
- Helen Campbell
- Lindsay Wilson
- Louise Gunn

## Community Activity in The Fund Area

### Tannach and District

Tannach and District Community Council, which was in abeyance for a period of around two years, reformed with a dedicated group of volunteers with a new vision and project ideas. The group is consulting with the wider community and prioritising projects.

The Thrumster Development Association, established in 2020, is set to become a valuable resource to take forward strategic projects in the local area. Initially the focus was on providing emergency response support for isolated or vulnerable community members during the coronavirus pandemic, however the group is now keen to broaden out into other activity that has been on hold during this time.

### Watten

Watten Community Council covers a small area, with only one village and some outlying rural residences. Interest in the Community Council is strong with the 2019 call for volunteers seeing it oversubscribed and a community election being necessary. The local groups have been in place for a number of years and their work is valued. A community plan, undertaken in 2016, is still considered to be valid and current.

However, Watten does not have a Development Trust, or similar organisation. Foundation Scotland is currently working with the Third Sector Interface on a proposal for a Development Officer which will hopefully see some larger community projects begin to take shape.

## Conclusion

Year 12 has seen the following positive outcomes from the Fund:

- A high proportion of spend with Watten achieving spend at 187% of the annual donation and Tannach and District achieving 98%.
- One grant benefitting the children within the Watten area.
- One grant to a respected heritage group within Tannach and District providing activities for school children and the wider community while developing a unique historical site.

## Foundation Scotland

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