

Community Benefits from Offshore Renewables: Good Practice Review – Executive Summary

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Overview

This project evaluates existing practices in community benefit models for offshore renewables. We identify and evaluate national and international case studies of different community benefit models, and provide evidence of how community benefits are delivered and distributed. In particular we consider the key relationship between how communities are identified, how impact is perceived, and how benefits may therefore be apportioned. We then assess the different mechanisms and schemes of benefit-sharing to identify good practice and key points of learning for Scottish policy and planning. The full report can be found at [Community Benefits from Offshore Renewables: Good Practice Review](#).

Key findings

- Evidence for community benefits from offshore renewables is rare. The UK leads the way in delivering benefits, although this is largely ad hoc, voluntary, and varies between developers.
- The Scottish Government is alone in explicitly considering distribution of the local and national benefits beyond the delivery of supply chain benefits.
- The way in which community, benefit and impact are understood are crucial in determining whether or how benefit should be apportioned and delivered; and these definitions are closely connected to each other.
- We detail in the report the range of ways in which benefits are provided; and find that community funds are the most common approach.

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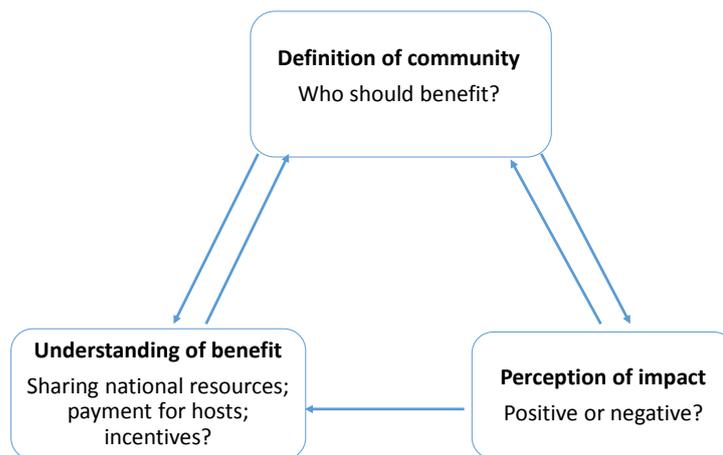


Figure 1: The relationship between community, benefit, and impact

For example, as we discuss in the report, if benefits are understood to be a way of spreading the rewards from national offshore wind resources, then a community will be defined very broadly (perhaps as the whole country), and the impact will be perceived to be positive. If however, a community is perceived to be suffering a negative impact (for example from hosting the onshore infrastructure), then benefits may be understood as a way to mitigate that impact, for a specific geographical community.

Although, in Scotland, community benefits should not be referred to as compensation measures and rewards for communities, we find that governments, developers, and communities often use different (and at times conflicting) understandings of community, benefit, and impact. Correspondingly, benefits are often delivered in different ways, depending on which set of definitions are being drawn upon; for example they may be focused on a local community or organisation, or delivered more widely.

Recommendations

- The current framework of non-restrictive guidance should be maintained to retain a high degree of flexibility for developers and communities.
- Reflecting on the interrelationship between all three dimensions (community, benefit, impacts) can provide a robust approach in developing community benefit models.
- Developers and local authorities should clarify the meaning and limitations of community benefits when entering negotiations with relevant communities;
- Early and thorough engagement with local communities should be a first step for assessing the needs and concerns of communities, discussing appropriate and desired benefit models, and determining potential beneficiary communities.
- Local authorities can play a useful role in linking the needs of communities with the willingness of developers to provide benefits; and community liaison groups or officer can help to establish more efficient links with communities.

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- Communities should be supported to build the capacity they need to maximise benefits.
- The benefits provided should remain flexible and be based on the needs of the community and characteristics of the site and project.
- Indirect benefits should be pursued as well as establishing direct community benefits.

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