

# Ray Wind Fund Community Research

Katherine Williams and Helen Crow

on behalf of the Ray Windfarm Fund Community Interest Company

February - July 2022



RAY WIND FUNDS

VATTENFALL 

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## **Acknowledgements**

We would like to thank all those who took part in and contributed to this research, including the Directors of the RWF CIC Board; Berry Jordan, Business and Community Investment Advisor at Vattenfall Wind Power Ltd; all the organisations who spoke to us on the phone; and all the community members who responded to our survey or attended the drop in event.

We would like to offer particular thanks to Jo Willis, RWF Community Development Officer, for all her support throughout the project and for answering our many questions.



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# Ray Wind Funds Community Research 2022: Executive Summary

The Ray Windfarm Fund Community Interest Company (CIC) exists to distribute funds from the Ray Wind Farm to benefit the communities within 10km of the wind farm. In 2022, Directors commissioned consultants Katherine Williams and Helen Crow to carry out a review of local needs which will inform how grants are distributed in the next five years.

## The research involved:

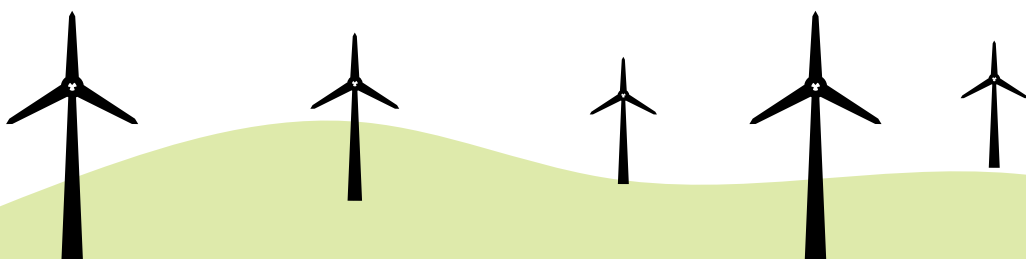
Phone calls, emails and virtual meetings with 18 organisations; a community survey which received 240 responses from the community, young people and grant recipients; a workshop with CIC Directors; a community drop in event at The Gun at Ridsdale (attended by ~40 people); desk top research to learn from other reports and publications

“...lack of good public transport is a perennial problem. There may be a time when I feel I must give up driving and be forced to move home! \*

“ I wish there was more going on after school and at the weekends \*

## We learnt that:

- ▶ People value this rural area for its **countryside, nature** and **sense of community**.
- ▶ Challenges in the area are poor connectivity to **broadband/mobile services**, limitations of **gas/electric supplies**, difficulties in **accessing services** and **employment** locally, and **limited opportunities** in the community (especially for young people and older people)
- ▶ In addition, the **impact of covid** is still with us, **cost of living** will hit rural communities hard (especially fuel costs), we need to **reduce emissions** and dependence on fossil fuels (harder in rural areas) and communities need to be **better prepared/resilient** to respond to future events
- ▶ Grant making by the Ray Wind Funds has benefited the community by providing facilities, services and opportunities. During the pandemic, the Covid Hardship Fund supported businesses to adapt and keep going through difficult times

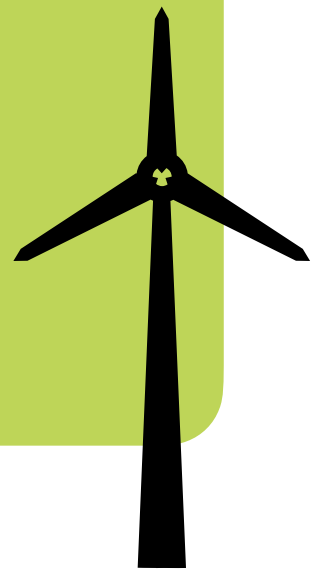


“ We are hampered by lack of fast broadband for shopping, banking, home working, studying and entertainment \*

**We recommend that the Ray Wind Funds support projects which:**

1. Facilitate community cohesion, resilience and action – keeping people in the area, increasing diversity in our communities, supporting employment, enabling volunteering etc
2. Recognise the crises facing communities now and mitigate the impact of food poverty, fuel poverty and other financial challenges
3. Respond to the most significant challenges identified by the community which are digital connectivity, things to do (particularly for older and young people), transport/access to services
4. Protect, conserve and promote our natural and cultural landscape in order to retain the rural character of the area which is much valued by the community
5. Demonstrate a commitment to the Northumberland Net Zero target by reducing emissions and sequestering carbon in the landscape
6. Add value by attracting additional investment (match funding).

We have suggested that the CIC board discusses new opportunities to support young people and contribute to increasing travel costs as well as adopting a pro-active approach to identifying projects which could meet local needs. We would like to see a clearer vision for the legacy of the CIC beyond the lifetime of the wind farm. Finally we have made recommendations about how the CIC can increase awareness of funding opportunities and their impact.



“ [The Ray Wind Funds] feels like a bit of a safety net for the community - it provides hope and encouragement that we can improve things when they go wrong or need improvement locally \*

Katherine Williams and Helen Crow, Consultants  
February - July 2022

\* Feedback from community and youth questionnaires

# 1. Introduction

The Ray Windfarm Fund Community Interest Company has commissioned freelance consultants Katherine Williams and Helen Crow to carry out community research which will help the Board to understand the needs of the community and inform strategy and decision making for the next five years. This builds on local research and consultation carried out by Community Action Northumberland (CAN) in 2015-16 when the fund was first established<sup>1</sup>.

This report presents the findings of this research, which engaged more than 40 organisations and at least 250 individuals, and makes recommendations for future funding priorities.

## 2. Background

The Vattenfall Ray Wind Farm comprises 16 turbines located on the Ray Estate in Northumberland. It has an installed capacity of 54.4 megawatts and will be operational for 25 years. For every year of its working life, Vattenfall will donate £5,000 per megawatt of installed capacity, index-linked, to the rural communities within a 10km radius of the Wind Farm. Approximately two thirds of the funds are distributed via the Ray Windfarm Fund Community Interest Company (CIC), known as the Ray Wind Funds (RWF), established in 2017 and managed by a voluntary Board of Directors which represents the local community. The CIC manages three funds: the Local Initiatives Fund (LIF) provides grants for projects which deliver tangible community benefit, it is not restricted to charitable activities<sup>2</sup>; the Small Donations Fund (SDF) is available to local groups and organisations

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<sup>1</sup> Community Action Northumberland (CAN), 'Ray Wind Community Fund Community Profile Report' 2016. <https://raywindfund.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/CAN-report.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> In practice, the LIF provides grants of any size to businesses and individuals and grants of £10,000+ to charitable and community organisations because charitable/community organisations can access smaller grants via the Small Grants Programme (Community Foundation)

up to a maximum of £500 per grant year<sup>3</sup>; the Legacy Fund is an investment fund intended to continue providing community benefit beyond the operational life of the wind farm. In the last two years, the CIC has also managed a Covid Hardship Fund to assist the community through the pandemic. To date, the RWF has distributed a total of £1.2million. The remaining funding is currently distributed via the Small Grants Programme managed by the Community Foundation for Northumberland and Tyne & Wear<sup>4</sup>. At the time of writing, the Small Grants Fund is closed (due to reopen 31/08/22).

The area of benefit for the RWF is a rural and sparsely populated landscape; much of the area is farmland or forestry and the villages, settlements and outlying farms within the area tend to be small and historic communities. The population is in the region of 6,000 people with a population density of less than 10 people per square km (compared to a national average of more than 400 per square km)<sup>5</sup>. Part of the area of benefit, to the north and west, is within the Northumberland National Park.

Two main roads (A68 and A696) run through the area but all other routes are minor or unclassified roads. There is no rail route through the area and the nearest train stations are Newcastle (approx. 20 miles from the east of the area of benefit) and Hexham (6 miles from the south of the area). Bus services are limited.

Bellingham is the largest settlement, lying on the 10km boundary in the west of the area of benefit. It is the only village offering a range of services including shopping, an ATM, and fuel station. In addition to Bellingham, there are Post Office facilities in Otterburn, West Woodburn, Kirkwhelpington and Hepple, and a fuel station at Scot's Gap. Many of the villages have an historic church and village hall and these community buildings are often an important focus for village life<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> Funding is allocated by parish with £1,200 allocated each year for projects within each of the six parishes represented on the CIC Board and an additional £2,800 total for the other seven parishes within the area of benefit.

<sup>4</sup> Abbreviated to "the Community Foundation" for the rest of the report

<sup>5</sup> In 2016, CAN stated a total population of 5,806; local population density of 7.8/km<sup>2</sup> and national population density of 406.9/km<sup>2</sup> based on 2011 census statistics. Detailed information from the 2021 census is not yet available to update this figure however the data released by ONS to date states a population increase for the whole of Northumberland of 1.4% so it is reasonable to assume that there is no significant change to the 2016 figures.

<sup>6</sup> Community Foundation (2017) *Northumberland's Vital Issues*

There are no banks in the area (the bank in Bellingham has closed since the CAN report but there is a mobile Lloyds Bank van which visits the village).

There is only one GP surgery within the area, at Scot's Gap, with practices at Bellingham, Humshaugh & Wark, and Rothbury also serving the community. There are no residential care facilities within the area.

Four school partnerships overlap with the area of benefit. Of these, two (Haydon Bridge and Ponteland) operate a two-tier system (primary and secondary) and two (Morpeth and Hexham) have a three-tier structure (first, middle and high schools). There are six first or primary schools whose catchment is at least partly within the area. All children travel out of the area to attend middle or high schools (with the nearest middle school just on the 10km boundary in Bellingham).

### 3. Consultation/Research Methodology

The starting point for this research was to revisit the previous community consultation (CAN, 2015-16) to understand the local needs at that time and how they informed the founding principles for the RWF CIC. We then went through a stakeholder mapping process, in consultation with the RWF Community Development Officer, to identify relevant organisations and groups operating in or around the area of benefit (including, but not limited to, grant recipients) who could contribute to our understanding of local needs. Over a 16-week period we consulted an initial 18 organisations/projects via phone calls, virtual meetings and emails<sup>7</sup>. Speaking with a range of community organisations and charities enabled us to begin to identify changes in the community since the 2015-16 research. Learning from these communications also informed the design of a community survey (see below).

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<sup>7</sup> AdaptNE, Belsay First School, Cambo First School, Citizens Advice Northumberland, Community Action Northumberland, Kirkwhelpington Youth Club, Natural England, North Tyneside Mind, North Tyne Youth, Northumberland County Council Climate Change Team, Northumberland Domestic Abuse Service, Northumberland National Park Authority, Northumberland Wildlife Trust, Red Squirrels Northern England, Revitalising Redesdale, Tyne Rivers Trust, Wark C of E Primary School, West Northumberland Food Bank

Early in the research period we also engaged with Berry Jordan, Business and Community Investment Advisor at Vattenfall Wind Power Ltd and the RWF's primary contact with the wind farm operator, to understand Vattenfall's needs and expectations. Berry has been kept informed throughout the research contract.

A workshop was held for RWF directors on 07/04/2022 (attended by 5 directors, plus a follow up call with one director who couldn't make it). The consultation approach was discussed and early findings from stakeholder communications were shared. The information presented at this workshop has been provided separately.

During May 2022 we carried out a survey to collect feedback from people living, working, volunteering and studying within the area of benefit. The survey comprised three separate questionnaires:

1. *Community questionnaire* – for anyone living/working/studying/volunteering in the area of benefit. Respondents were asked about their personal experiences and concerns as well as their awareness of the RWF and their attitudes towards climate change and the concept of Net Zero.
2. *Young people's questionnaire* – to ensure that the voice of young people (aged under 18) was not under-represented in our research. Questions mirrored the community questionnaire but some options/questions which were not relevant to young people (e.g. relating to household responsibility) were removed and some questions were simplified.
3. *Grant recipients' questionnaire* – for individuals, groups, organisations or businesses that have received funding either from the RWF directly or via the Community Foundation. The aim of this survey was to gather feedback about the process of applying for grant funding and the impact this funding has achieved.

The questionnaires were shared widely on social media (in particular, utilising community pages on Facebook such as North Tyne & Redesdale Community Hub, Northumberland Newsdesk and Parish Council pages) and by email. There was an item in the 'Redesdale and Three Kirks News'<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Issue 182, 2nd May 2022. The newsletter has an email subscription list of 226.

and copy was provided to Hexham Courant<sup>9</sup>. Grant recipients, Vattenfall, local first/primary schools and other stakeholders shared the questionnaire via their own social media pages, mailing lists and with their employees, volunteers, communities, users and wider networks. A promoted post was also paid for on Facebook (£16) but this proved unsuccessful and did not generate the reach that was achieved by sharing in community groups and pages. Posters and flyers were displayed or distributed in the community including Kirkwhelpington Post Office and a Phoenix 60 Club event (attended by approximately 25 people). Directors and the RWF Community Development Officer promoted the survey in their own parish/community. The questionnaire was provided in an electronic format (Google Forms) with hard copies available on request (none were requested). A prize draw (£100 cash for each questionnaire) was offered as an incentive.

All individuals/organisations who have previously received funds via the RWF CIC were invited to complete the grant recipients' questionnaire. We were unable to circulate the questionnaire directly to recipients of Community Foundation grants as there was no GDPR consent in place to contact them (although we are aware that some of these recipients accessed the questionnaire via social media or other communications).

251 responses were received via the electronic questionnaires: 194 for the community questionnaire, 40 for the young people's questionnaire and 17 for the grant recipients' questionnaire.

A community drop in event was held on 16/06/2022 for local residents to learn more about the funding available, hear from previously funded projects and contribute to discussions around how funding should be allocated in future. As part of our research, we provided scenarios and asked attendees to put themselves in the shoes of the RWF Directors and consider whether these fictional projects should receive funding. The responses to this activity (provided to the Board by email) have helped to inform our recommendations in Section 6. Hard copies of the questionnaire were also provided at this event so that people without access to the internet had another opportunity to contribute to the survey. A further two questionnaire responses were received

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<sup>9</sup> Redesdale Village Notes, 05/05/2022

bringing the total responses to 253. It was reassuring that most people attending this event had already seen and completed the questionnaire electronically.

Alongside the consultation activities, we have also completed a desktop research process to gather statistics for the area and to review other relevant research, including:

- ▶ Northumberland's Vital Issues 2017<sup>10</sup>,
- ▶ Vital Signs reports from the Community Foundation (Fairness & Inequality; Arts, Culture & Heritage; Environment; Safety; Healthy Living; Work; Housing & Homelessness; Learning; Stronger Communities; Local Economy)<sup>11</sup>
- ▶ Manager's Report for the West Northumberland Foodbank<sup>12</sup>
- ▶ Co-operative Community Wellbeing Index<sup>13</sup>
- ▶ Northumberland County Council Climate Change Action Plan 2021-23<sup>14</sup>
- ▶ Local Government Association, Health and Wellbeing in Rural Areas<sup>15</sup>
- ▶ DBEIS Community Engagement and Benefits from Onshore Wind Developments, Good Practice Guide (2021)<sup>16</sup>
- ▶ National Youth Agency, Overlooked Report<sup>17</sup>
- ▶ North Tyne Youth Six Parishes Project (supported by RWF in 2021)

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<sup>10</sup> <https://www.communityfoundation.org.uk/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Vital-Issues-Northumberland-2017-FINAL.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.communityfoundation.org.uk/vitalsigns/>

<sup>12</sup> [https://www.westnorthumberlandfoodbank.org.uk/uploads/1/1/9/2/119291827/project\\_report\\_year\\_8.pdf](https://www.westnorthumberlandfoodbank.org.uk/uploads/1/1/9/2/119291827/project_report_year_8.pdf)

<sup>13</sup> <https://communitywellbeing.coop.co.uk>

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.northumberland.gov.uk/NorthumberlandCountyCouncil/media/About-the-Council/Climate%20change/Climate-change-action-plan-2021-23.pdf>

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.local.gov.uk/publications/health-and-wellbeing-rural-areas>

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.local.gov.uk/publications/health-and-wellbeing-rural-areas>

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.nya.org.uk/overlooked-report/>

## 4. Participation in the Community Survey

People found out about the questionnaires through a variety of means. Exactly 50% of respondents to the community questionnaire had found out about it through email and almost a further 40% through social media. The vast majority of respondents to the young people's questionnaire (76%) had found out about it through their school or by email.

Of the 253 total questionnaire responses received, 196 were to the community questionnaire, 40 to the young people's questionnaire and 17 to the grant recipients' questionnaire. Responses were received from all 14 parishes, with the most coming from the parishes with the larger settlements like Bellingham and Otterburn which is to be expected.

Parish	Live	Work	Study or go to school	Volunteer
Bavington	19	9	2	5
Bellingham	26	19	4	7
Birtley	17	7	0	2
Capheaton	1	3	0	1
Chollerton	9	2	0	2
Corsenside	25	12	0	3
Elsdon	22	12	0	0
Hepple	2	3	2	2
Hollinghill	2	3	0	1
Kirkwhelpington	12	7	0	3
Otterburn	34	13	3	6
Rothley	2	2	0	0
Wallington Demesne	16	6	3	3
Whittington	2	1	0	0

The community and young person's questionnaires also asked people to provide information about protected characteristics so that we could monitor participation and inclusion. Out of 232 responses to the questions about age<sup>18</sup>, 19% were under 25, 57% were between 25 and 65, and

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<sup>18</sup> We have also included in these figures 18 people who responded to the young people's survey but didn't give their age as they were asked if they were under 18 before being invited to complete the rest of the questionnaire.

24% were over 65. According to the Census data for 2021<sup>19</sup>, the breakdown for the population of Northumberland as a whole is 24% under 25, 50% between 25 and 64, and 26% 65 and over.

64% of respondents were female and 36% were male (total 213 respondents). No respondents were non-binary or other. Anecdotally, more female responses is regarded as 'normal' for public consultation surveys.

For ethnicity (213 respondents), 93% were white British, 3% any other white, 1.5% white Irish and 0.5% white Gypsy, Roma or Irish traveller. 2% said they would prefer not to say. In a report from 2013, the population of Northumberland as a whole was 98.4% white<sup>20</sup>.

For disability (213 respondents), 7% said they did have a disability, 92.5% didn't and 0.5% preferred not to say. According to Northumberland County Council (based on 2011 Census data), 9.8% of all residents in Northumberland felt their day-to-day activities were limited due to long-term health problems or disability<sup>21</sup>.

Finally, we asked respondents whether they identified as LGBTQI+. 93% (of 208 respondents) said no, 3% yes, 1.4% preferred not to say and 3% didn't know or didn't understand the question. There are currently no data available on sexual orientation at local authority level<sup>22</sup> but the ONS has a dataset by region for 2020 which shows that 3.7% of the population identifies as gay, bisexual or other in the North East.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates/datasets/populationandhouseholdestimatesenglandandwalescensus2021> released 28/06/2022. Please note, the categories for the census included people aged 65 in the 65 and over bracket whereas we've included them in the 25-65 bracket.

<sup>20</sup> Ethnicity and Religion Statistics for Northumberland March 2013, p.6, <https://www.northumberland.gov.uk/NorthumberlandCountyCouncil/media/Northumberland-Knowledge/NK%20people/Demographics/Ethnicity-and-Religion-March-2013.pdf>

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.northumberland.gov.uk/Northumberland-Knowledge-and-JSNA/Our-Health-and-Wellbeing/Health-and-Wellbeing-1.aspx>

<sup>22</sup> Census 2021 will be the first national census to include a question on sexual orientation but the results haven't been published yet. <https://www.ons.gov.uk/census/censustransformationprogramme/questiondevelopment/sexualorientationquestiondevelopmentforcensus2021>

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/culturalidentity/sexuality/datasets/sexualidentityuk>; note that the Northumberland Vital Signs report says 1.5% of people in the NE identify as gay, bisexual or other but we have chosen to use the ONS dataset

We have compared the equality data to population data for the county as it is difficult to find reliable information at parish level for the area of benefit due to the sparse populations. Even taking into account that the rural area is likely to be, on average, older and less ethnically diverse than the rest of Northumberland, we are confident that our survey is representative of the demographic of the population in the area. By also consulting with organisations and carrying out wider research, we have been able to place community responses in context and reinforce local concerns with relevant statistics and wider experiences.

## 5. Learning

In this section we present key themes arising from all the consultation methods described above.

### 5.1. What is important to people? What do they value?

Through all our consultation, it is overwhelmingly clear that people value the area's rural setting.

In the responses to both the community questionnaire and the young people's questionnaire, almost every response to the question "What do you like most about the area?" mentioned the natural environment. People love the area for its natural beauty, the countryside, the rural feel and amazing views. They enjoy having access to nature and wildlife on their doorstep, the opportunities for walking and recreation and a strong sense of connection to nature. They

**"I love our community and its willingness to be supportive, the incredible surroundings, the peace,"**

*Community questionnaire*

**"I enjoy the natural landscape around as it gives many opportunities to get outside,"**

*Young people's questionnaire*



"It is fun and not many people live here so you get to know everyone well,"

*Young people's questionnaire*

## 5.2. Challenges in the area of benefit

Whilst the remote and secluded nature of the area is what people like most about living, working, volunteering or studying here, this also brings significant challenges. Most, if not all, of the concerns highlighted in our research arise from the fact that the community is so dispersed across a large rural area. Many of these challenges are typical of other sparsely populated and rural areas across Northumberland and more widely in the UK.

Just as local community values were echoed in our wider research and reading, we have also found that the concerns identified through the community surveys are shared by other stakeholders. The challenges identified as most important are:

- ▶ Lack of mobile and broadband connectivity
- ▶ Limitations of utilities supplies (gas, electricity and alternatives)
- ▶ Difficulties in accessing services and employment locally
- ▶ Limited opportunities in the community, especially for young people and older people

These challenges are discussed further below.

"Cost of living (less efficient older properties, travel costs associated with living rurally), reliance on fossil fuels (oil for heating/hot water), absence of statutory services (services not stretching beyond urban centres), challenges to digital connectivity impacting work and leisure,"

*Community questionnaire*



As an example, when entering an address close to the centre of the area of benefit into Ofcom's "mobile and broadband checker"<sup>24</sup>, the results show that only standard broadband is available with maximum download and upload speeds 7 Mbps and 1 Mbps respectively (superfast and ultrafast broadband unavailable). Using the same tool, mobile data is patchy across the area with most of the area showing either "OK coverage", "some problems" or "no coverage". This is shown for the EE network in figure 3 (note that other networks showed a similar pattern).

**"We are hampered by lack of fast broadband for shopping, banking, home working, studying and entertainment,"**

*Community questionnaire*

**"The broadband is so slow and bad, it makes it hard for me to work, my business is based at home and it is a national and international business, "**

*Young people's questionnaire*

The need for effective and consistent broadband/mobile connectivity is increasing with more services now dependent on this and some of the digital interventions introduced in response to Covid-related lockdowns now clearly here to stay. Digital communications are now increasingly the norm: e-consults for GPs and other medical appointments are now common place; schools provide homework, revision aids and parent communications digitally; and many community organisations and charities operate digitally. For example, prior to 2020 the RWF Board had only ever held face to face meetings, now approximately half of their meetings are carried out virtually.

### ***Limitations of utilities supplies (gas, electricity and alternatives)***

In consultation, CAN<sup>25</sup> described one of the challenges of living in rural Northumberland as being 'at the end of the line' with respect to both the national grid, high-speed broadband and mobile

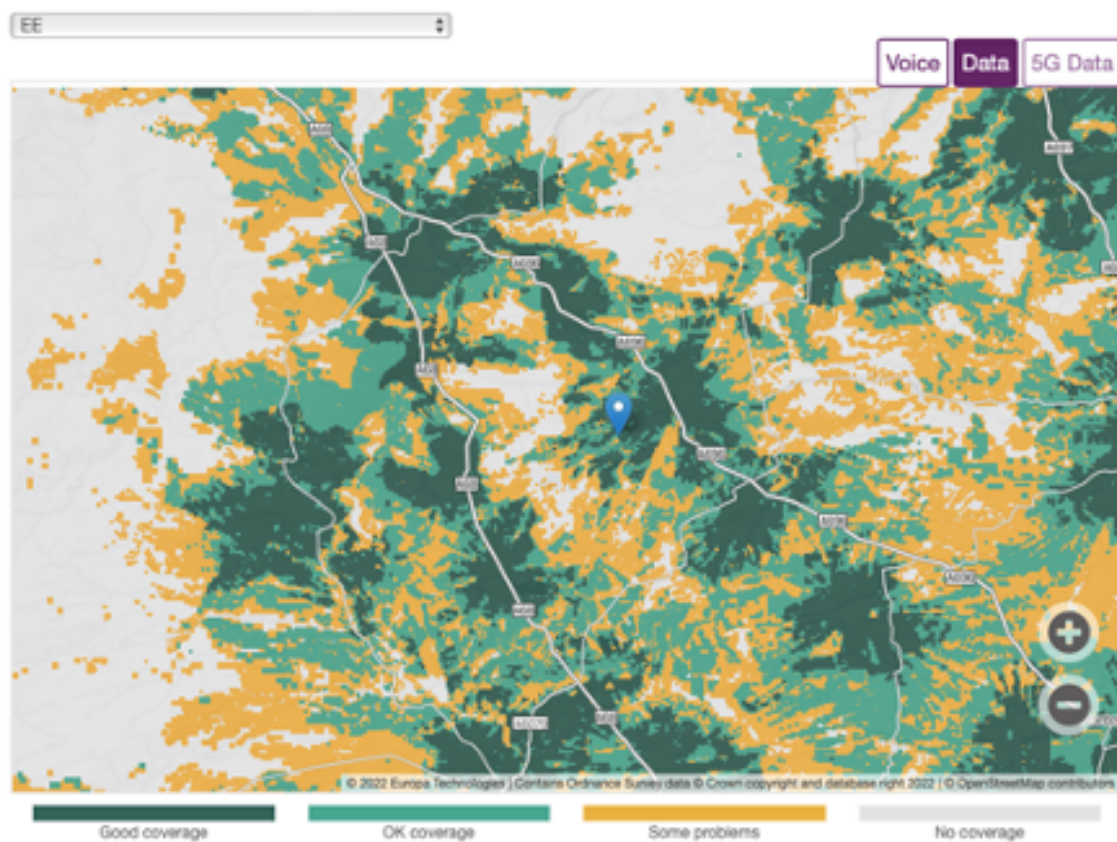
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<sup>24</sup> <https://checker.ofcom.org.uk> using postcode NE19 2RE

<sup>25</sup> Community Action Northumberland, [ca-north.org.uk](http://ca-north.org.uk)

connectivity. The location of smaller, rural settlements, at the outer reaches of the network, means that they are vulnerable to disruption and there are few, if any, “back-up” options; when lines are damaged, the distances and terrain involved to carry out repairs create difficulties which can leave households and businesses without power or other utilities. When asked about the impact of Storm Arwen (November 2021), more than half of respondents to the community questionnaire (52%) said they were without power for more than 3 days.

A significant number of rural properties in Northumberland, including within the area of benefit, are not connected to the gas network and depend on an alternative fuel for heating. In *Northumberland's Vital Issues* (2017)<sup>26</sup>, the Community Foundation attributes the higher levels of fuel poverty in the county (compared to the national average) to the higher cost of oil-fired heating and the number of older houses with poor insulation. Five years later, fuel prices are rising significantly and there are concerns that this will hit rural properties (businesses and homeowners) hardest. In an open letter to the Secretary of State<sup>27</sup>, Action with Communities in Rural England



**Figure 3:** Screenshot from Ofcom website showing mobile data coverage for EE network

<sup>26</sup> Community Foundation for Tyne & Wear and Northumberland (2017) *Northumberland's Vital Issues*

<sup>27</sup> Open letter from ACRE, March 2022, <https://acre.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Letter-to-BEIS-Re-Fuel-Prices-17-March-2022.pdf>

(ACRE) identify that the cost of heating-oil has more than tripled in rural areas. This has also been the experience of the OilCAN project (led by CAN) which facilitates shared purchasing of oil in rural villages and settlements.

### ***Difficulties in accessing services***

In recent years local services, including public health services, youth services, libraries and other activities delivered by the public and voluntary sectors, have contracted or been withdrawn altogether. The recent *Overlooked* report by the National Youth Agency<sup>28</sup> recognises that investment in youth services has fallen nationally in the last ten years and identifies that the withdrawal of services is greatest for those young people living in rural areas. Our consultation with a range of community organisations suggests that other services are experiencing similar issues. Charities have told us about the challenges of delivering services in rural areas and how funding often dictates that they prioritise more densely populated areas where they can provide greater impact to more people.

One in three survey respondents (30%) said that they had had difficulties accessing health and wellbeing services in the last five years. In response to the question about challenges in the area, several respondents mentioned the distance they had to travel to access GP or dental services and how difficult this was for those people relying on public transport.

The survey also highlighted a general lack of services and facilities, with people needing to travel some distance for banks, shopping, hairdressers, exercise classes and fuel, for example.

### ***Limited opportunities in the community, especially for young people and older people***

Lack of opportunities for young people and lack of services for older people were two of the biggest concerns to respondents of all ages (69% and 73% respectively).

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<sup>28</sup> National Youth Agency (2021), *Overlooked: Young people and rural youth services*

As above, organisations based out of town are experiencing challenges in bringing their services to these rural communities. The number of participants in rural settings does not always justify the time and cost of travelling, particularly as fuel prices escalate.

Opportunities to bring more people together or to enable residents to access services in nearby villages are limited due to the poor provision of public transport (this was identified as the 2<sup>nd</sup> most popular response to the question, "What one thing would you change about the area?" Where public transport does exist, it tends to operate between villages and larger towns outside the area (e.g. Morpeth, Ponteland or Hexham) rather than connecting villages within the RWF area of benefit. For those without access to a private car, the range of activities available locally is limited (even more so for those in the smaller settlements). Consultees have described this as particularly impacting older people, citing examples where older residents have chosen to move out of the area in order to feel safer and better supported.

**"Otterburn is 25 miles from any reasonably large town. This isolates many - especially the elderly or those who don't drive. Public transport is dismal,"**

*Community questionnaire*

Even those with access to cars are starting to feel the impact of rising fuel prices and this is limiting opportunities for them to do things outside of the area. As ACRE sets out in their letter (2022)<sup>29</sup>, "people living in rural areas must travel further to access many essential services and are therefore feeling the impact of increased road fuel prices. This impact is being felt immediately by individuals and families who have no choice but to use private transport."

We have heard from families and individuals locally who are making regular journeys to school/college (not funded by the Local Authority) and are finding it harder to meet increasing costs. Likewise, some families are cutting back on trips to cultural and recreational experiences out of the area and the wider range of activities in nearby towns is becoming less accessible.

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<sup>29</sup> <https://acre.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Letter-to-BEIS-Re-Fuel-Prices-17-March-2022.pdf>

"...children in our area have far less access to culture and sport, other than travelling long distances. We really struggle to encourage people to come and run clubs and events in our schools due to travel expenses and time issues. We would love help to bring in different visitors to give our children as much opportunity as children living in towns and cities,"

*Feedback from a headteacher*

Schools in the area are also struggling to provide enrichment and extra-curricular activities. With school budgets determined by the number of pupils, there is very little room for additional activities in a small village school. This, together with the increasing cost of bus/coach hire means that trips outside the area are getting prohibitively expensive. They have told us that, for example, a bus that would have cost them £350 to hire a couple of years ago would now be £700.

North Tyne Youth's Six Parishes Project<sup>30</sup> highlighted that young people's recreational interests can be broadly summarised as "somewhere to go" and "something to do". When asked what is missing from their lives, young people's responses included clubs (e.g. baking club, weekend clubs), play parks, transport and more things to do.

"It can be too far to travel to an activity that's only an hour long,"

*Young people's feedback quoted by NTY Six Parishes Project*

Responses to the young people's survey mirrored the findings of the Six Parishes Project and a common theme was the lack of opportunities available locally. For example, in response to the question about anything you dislike about the area, one young person said "how far we have to travel to go anywhere...I wish there was more going on after school and at the weekends".

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<sup>30</sup> North Tyne Youth (2021) Six Parishes Project Interim Report

### 5.3. Emerging challenges since the CAN report 2015-16

Throughout our research, we have reflected on how local needs have changed since the previous consultation in 2015-16. We have identified the biggest changes as:

- ▶ Covid-19 pandemic
- ▶ Cost of living crisis
- ▶ Climate crisis
- ▶ Importance of stronger and more resilient communities

These are discussed below.

#### ***Covid-19 pandemic***

The Covid-19 virus began circulating in the UK in early 2020 and as of June 2022 there have been over 22 million confirmed cases in the UK<sup>31</sup> and almost 197,000 deaths<sup>32</sup>. Over the last two years, life in the UK has, at times, been very different from what we would consider “normal”. National lockdowns were imposed during March-May 2020, November 2020 and January-March 2021. At the height of the first lockdown, residents of the UK were restricted to only leaving the house in exceptional circumstances (e.g. keyworkers, essential shopping, medical needs and maximum one hour exercise per day), meeting socially with others was banned and even funerals were extremely restricted. Schools were closed for all apart from vulnerable children and children of key workers with other pupils learning from home. Older and clinically vulnerable individuals and households were advised to “shield” and stay away from others. For almost two years, some level of restriction remained in place, whether that was a full “lockdown”, “social distancing”, limited social gathering or a requirement to wear a face covering.

Nationally, the pandemic has had a lasting impact on people’s livelihood, health and wellbeing. Mind (2021)<sup>33</sup> found that people with poor mental health before 2020 and young people have

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<sup>31</sup> <https://coronavirus.data.gov.uk/details/cases>

<sup>32</sup> <https://coronavirus.data.gov.uk/details/deaths>

<sup>33</sup> <https://www.mind.org.uk/media/8962/the-consequences-of-coronavirus-for-mental-health-final-report.pdf>

experienced the greatest impact on their wellbeing and that the pandemic has also heightened inequality with more people facing financial challenges which have led to “increasingly severe and complex problems”.

**"Isolation and loneliness have made people's mental health worse – with young people particularly badly affected,"**

*Mind (2021)*

In rural areas, where many were already isolated, the impact of further limitations and withdrawal of services has hit hard. In our community survey, 46% of respondents experienced reduced access to health services or delayed healthcare, 25% saw their household income reduce (with 13% getting into increased debt) and more than one in five (26%) experienced mental ill health (e.g. anxiety, depression, loneliness).

**"Sometimes my parents couldn't get shopping and I couldn't get out to see my grandma and grandad. I missed them a lot,"**

*Young people's questionnaire*

**"No one to talk to. Scared we might run out of money as my parents weren't working as much,"**

*Young people's questionnaire*

Research in Northumberland from Newcastle University (2021)<sup>34</sup> found that rural communities were severely impacted economically during lockdowns because of their dependence on tourism and hospitality. In our survey, 25% of respondents experienced reduced household income during the pandemic and 13% had increased debts. 30% said they had had time off work and 5% (10 individuals) had experienced redundancy or their business had ceased trading.

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<sup>34</sup> <https://www.ncl.ac.uk/press/articles/archive/2021/05/covidruralpoverty/>

**“The challenges faced by people living in rural communities mean that many will be at risk of falling on hard times,”**

*Rebecca Graham, Programme Manager at Standard Life Foundation, quoted by Newcastle University (2021)*

Other consequences of the pandemic include a far more rapid shift to remote and hybrid working than could ever have been envisaged, an increase in the number of people accessing services and communicating digitally, a much stronger sense of the value of access to outdoor space and changes in visitor/tourism habits (for example, more people visiting the British countryside from urban areas).

NCVO<sup>35</sup> report that fewer people took part in formal volunteering during the pandemic but there was a notable increase in informal volunteering (offering unpaid help to someone who is not a relative).

**"The covid-19 pandemic and the resultant lockdown has led to the most rapid changes in volunteering patterns since the survey began in 2013,"**

*NCVO (2021)*

### ***Cost of living crisis (including fuel and food poverty)***

In 2017, both the Local Government Association<sup>36</sup> and the Community Foundation<sup>37</sup> published reports which highlighted how pockets of deprivation are not obvious in the statistics for rural areas. Five years later, we are experiencing unprecedented economic pressures with inflation at its

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<sup>35</sup> NCVO (2021), What Happened to Volunteering During the Pandemic? <https://blogs.ncvo.org.uk/2021/08/05/what-happened-to-volunteering-during-the-pandemic/>

<sup>36</sup> Local Government Association (2017) *Health and Wellbeing in Rural Areas*

<sup>37</sup> Community Foundation (2017) *Northumberland's Vital Issues*

highest rate in 40 years<sup>38</sup>. As mentioned above, people within the area of benefit have already experienced financial losses including increased debt as a result of the pandemic and they are now facing more financial challenges, not least the significant increase in energy prices which will disproportionately impact those living in rural areas.

**"One of our concerns is that, while poverty, deprivation and the ill health that accompanies them look much the same everywhere that they exist in England, they can nonetheless be more difficult to identify in the official statistics for rural areas ... this is because the statistics are often not sufficiently fine grained to pinpoint the pockets of deprivation that exist among rural affluence,"**

*Local Government Association (2017)*

Whilst fuel poverty has not been strongly identified as a challenge locally in the community survey, almost every organisation that we spoke to highlighted this as a significant and growing concern in the area (increasing costs of both transport and heating for households and businesses). Some practitioners suggested that the impact of this has yet to be felt by many but schools and youth/community services are starting to see changes in behaviour which indicated that people and families are starting to experience rising costs. It is widely agreed that this winter will see more people, many already extremely vulnerable, facing hardship.

**"Fuel costs make it expensive now to get to work because of the distances involved getting to decent wage earning jobs,"**

*Community questionnaire*

We know from our research that there are households in the area experiencing food poverty. West Northumberland Food Bank have weekly visits to Otterburn and Bellingham to drop off food parcels. Headteachers are also witnessing more and more families in financially difficult situations.

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<sup>38</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-61891649>

We have also heard that poverty is often “hidden” in rural communities both because isolated households experiencing hardship don’t show up in statistics and because people in need may be reluctant or embarrassed to ask for help. Both these issues have been mentioned in conversations with stakeholders and the latter is reinforced in research by Newcastle University (2021)<sup>39</sup> which has observed that “issues of visibility and stigma are more severe in small rural communities”.

It is reasonable to assume that more and more households are going to find themselves in need of additional support over the next five years. This will have knock on impacts on people's mental health and wellbeing. This is summed up by a response to the community survey:

**“As a headteacher in the community...I have never had so much of my time taken up with trying to find support for parents/ community members and children for social/emotional health and fuel poverty. I can only see the situation getting worse,”**

*Community questionnaire*

### **Climate crisis**

157 respondents (67%) said they are concerned about climate change and 42% thought that RWF funding should be used to support the community to prepare for severe weather events<sup>40</sup>. As a result of climate change, the MET Office says,

*“In the future, we project that the UK will see:*

- ▶ *Warmer and wetter winters*
- ▶ *Hotter and drier summers*
- ▶ *More frequent and intense weather extremes*<sup>41</sup>

This means that events like Storm Arwen are likely to become more frequent.

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<sup>39</sup> <https://www.ncl.ac.uk/press/articles/archive/2021/05/covidruralpoverty/>

<sup>40</sup> This was the most popular answer to the question, “Which of the following do you think would best address the problems you have identified in your community?” where respondents were asked to choose up to three options (note, this question only appeared on the Community Questionnaire)

<sup>41</sup> <https://www.metoffice.gov.uk/weather/climate-change/effects-of-climate-change>

Northumberland County Council declared a *Climate Change Emergency* in June 2019 and have committed to achieve net-zero by 2030. The Northumberland Climate Change Action Plan for 2021-23<sup>42</sup> sets out their priority areas for action which includes priority actions to make homes more energy efficient, implement renewable heat sources in rural areas, reduce transport emissions, support renewable energy solutions, invest in natural resource-based carbon sequestration and reduce waste.

Our survey suggests that local people would be supportive of measures that help communities to achieve the targets listed above. 93% of respondents think it is important to invest in alternative energy sources to reduce use of fossil fuels and carbon emissions and 80% are already aware of the net zero target.

Several schools also expressed an interest in further engagement with the wind farm to teach the children about wind energy and tackling the climate crisis.

**"[The children]...would love to work collaboratively to find out more about wind energy and the changes we could make. We would love to set up wind/solar power terminals in school to support our systems if this is anything that can be worked on together,"**

*Headteacher*

**"Possibly utilising the skills of the wind farm to bring greener technologies to our schools,"**

*Headteacher*

Previous grant recipients were supportive of using RWF funds to support measures which would reduce emissions and/or mitigate the impact of climate change. Suggestions included feasibility studies or paid consultancies to look at alternative heating sources (moving off oil) and recommend other positive actions such as green roofs, electric vehicles and improved insulation.

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<sup>42</sup> <https://www.northumberland.gov.uk/NorthumberlandCountyCouncil/media/About-the-Council/Climate%20change/Climate-change-action-plan-2021-23.pdf>

## ***Importance of stronger and more resilient communities***

Alongside the clearly expressed needs to mitigate the cost of living and climate crises, our consultation indicates the value of local community spirit and the need to support resilience in communities which enables them to adapt to and cope with upcoming changes or an unforeseen public emergency.

In the last two years these communities have faced unprecedented events. There is an opportunity to learn from and respond to these. For example, through consultation, local people have asked, how can we increase awareness of who our most vulnerable residents are? How can we support and mobilise community volunteers, so they are ready to help in a crisis? How can we equip community buildings to provide spaces where people keep warm, get some food, have company, charge phones and get information? How can we ensure that communication with remote or vulnerable households can be maintained when the grid and internet connectivity is down?

Directors have also raised concerns about whether the financial challenges which disproportionately effect rural communities, together with house prices, lack of transport and other challenges mentioned above, will mean that more people move away or feel unable to remain in the area. We have found these concerns are echoed in the wider community.

**“...lack of good public transport is a perennial problem. There may be a time when I feel I must give up driving and be forced to move home!”**

*Community questionnaire*

In 2020, research by the National Housing Federation<sup>43</sup> found that only 8% of homes in rural areas were classed as affordable, compared to 19% in urban areas and analysis by the Council for Protection of Rural England (CPRE)<sup>44</sup> found that over nine in ten rural areas were unaffordable for care workers in the private rented sector. Those that may be able to afford a home often work out

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<sup>43</sup> <https://www.housing.org.uk/news-and-blogs/blogs/martin-collett/affordable-rural-homes-prosperous-communities/>

<sup>44</sup> <https://www.cpre.org.uk/about-us/cpre-media/homes-for-heroes/>

of the area and face challenges associated with poor transport networks and lack of childcare (local people and stakeholders have highlighted how limited childcare makes it difficult for working parents).

The challenges of living in rural areas mean that they tend to be less diverse in terms of age, life experience, economic wellbeing and ethnicity. Arguably, a more diverse community is more resilient, and a community with a breadth of skills and experiences, not to mention time available, is better able to cope with some of the challenging circumstances we have experienced recently.

**"There is absolutely no diversity, we're all white and speak English. I do sometime worry that our children will not be very open-minded when they're older,"**

*Community questionnaire*

#### **5.4. Awareness of the Vattenfall Ray Wind Farm and the Ray Wind Funds**

Our survey shows that awareness of the Ray Wind Farm is very high. 95% of respondents said they were aware of the wind farm itself, with just 3% saying no and 2% not sure. In the community survey we also asked if respondents were aware of the RWF CIC. Awareness was still high with 85% saying yes and 15% saying no or not sure.

72% of the respondents to the community survey were aware of projects, businesses, individuals or organisations that had benefited from funding from the Vattenfall Ray Wind Farm (4% not sure and 11% not aware). Awareness was much lower in the youth survey with only 19% familiar with funded projects, businesses, individuals or organisations (57% not aware and 24% not sure).

During our own exploration of the area we did not find any acknowledgements to the RWF at any of the projects that we visited including village hall improvements, one play area and churches. Directors confirmed that they are aware that their "brand presence" within the area of benefit could be improved.

Grant recipients have provided feedback about how they have promoted their grant(s) and this includes local newsletters, project/business websites, their own social media and the RWF Facebook page. Three respondents out of 17 said they had not promoted the grant at all or had only promoted by word of mouth and one person did not respond to this question.

The community surveys provided through our contract have started to grow the RWF profile on social media. The questionnaire was shared 24 times on local group pages and by individuals<sup>45</sup> The RWF Community Development Officer has reported an increased interest in funding and more new grant applications received since the questionnaire was promoted. This suggests that publicity has reached new audiences.

A recent press release celebrating the CIC passing the £1 million mark in its grant-making was printed in the Hexham Courant and promoted online.

102 people left contact details because they wanted to be further involved with the consultation, wanted more information about grant funding or were interested in getting more involved for example as a Director or a member of a grants panel.

### ***The difference made by the Ray Wind Funds***

In the community survey we also asked about how much of a positive impact people thought the RWF had had in their area. Only 56% thought the fund has had either 'a fair amount' or 'lots' of positive impact, while 23% are not sure, and 20% saying only a little or no positive impact.

However, feedback from grant recipients indicates that, for those that responded at least, the funding has made a significant difference. 63% of respondents had received less than £10,000 with 25% receiving between £10,000 and £50,000 (one had received more than £50,000 and one wasn't sure). Responses to the question "*Please summarise the difference that funding from the Ray Wind Fund has made for you or your organisation*" were all extremely positive. Some examples are given below:

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<sup>45</sup> Note that the paid for "promoted" post on Facebook yielded almost no interest

"We have been able to support victims of domestic abuse in the area and raise awareness of domestic abuse and how to recognise the signs,"

*Grant recipient questionnaire*

"It has allowed me to start my business with a bang offering local people driving lessons whom may of had to travel to Hexham,"

*Grant recipient questionnaire*

"The Ray Wind Farm Covid emergency fund had a huge positive impact on our business helping towards funding for a delivery van and run a home delivery service during lockdown when pubs were closed. We have recently been successful in our application for the Local Initiatives Fund to help with development and expansion of our business. This project is still ongoing but the funding will help us to make our business sustainable and support us to create more local jobs,"

*Grant recipient questionnaire*

"Life saving, life changing, in an era where there is just no funding around. As a small school it gives us the opportunity to do the impossible. Social inclusion, mental health and wellbeing, isolation, We are able to bring the outside to school and take the school outside. invaluable is the word,"

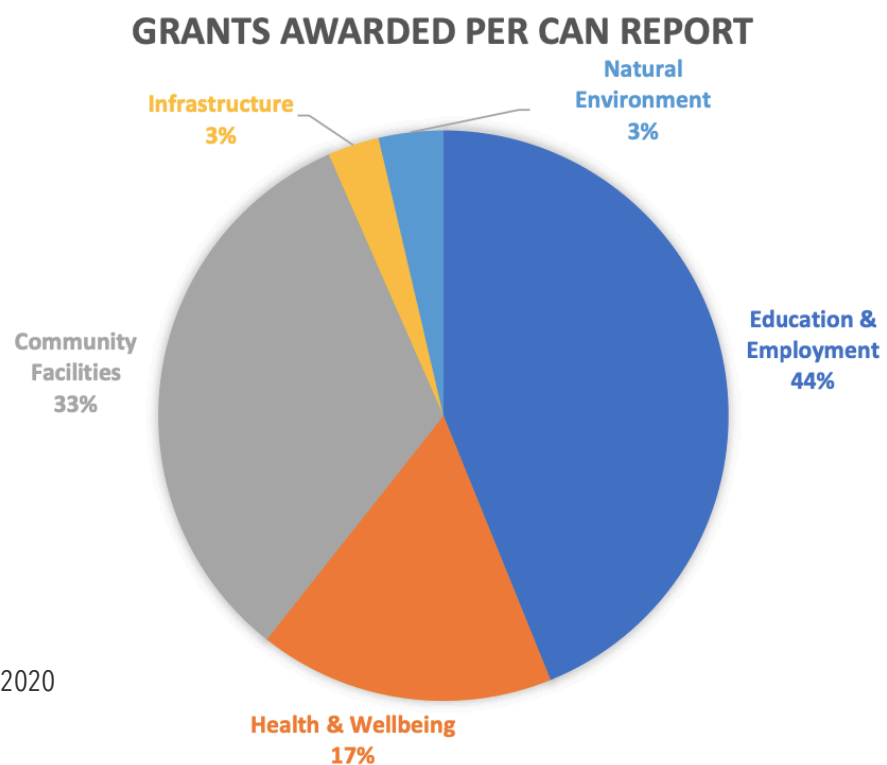
*Grant recipient questionnaire*

"It feels like a bit of a safety net for the community - it provides hope and encouragement that we can improve things when they go wrong or need improvement locally,"

*Grant recipient questionnaire*

Feedback from grant recipients indicates that 41% of projects which responded either would not have delivered their project at all or would have only delivered it in part without funding from the RWF. Almost half of respondents (47%) thought that they would have looked elsewhere for alternative funding to enable their project to go ahead. 12% gave "other" answers.

Although the funds are making a difference, they are not equitably addressing the funding priorities set out on the RWF website and literature. For example, in 2020-21, 44% of funding supported education and employment and 33% was given to projects which improved community facilities while infrastructure and natural environment received only 3% each. Of the five priorities identified by the CAN report in 2015-16, only one (health and wellbeing) was awarded close to a fifth of the funding available. There is no development capacity to identify potential projects or partnerships which could address particular needs or fill gaps in local provision.



**Figure 4:** Excerpt from RWF CIC 2020 Annual Report

100% of respondents agreed that it was easy to apply for and secure RWF funding (note that the questionnaire was only distributed to successful applicants) and all but one respondent (94%) said they understood the funding priorities. All respondents felt supported and would recommend the funding to others.

Consultees whom we met with during the consultation process indicated that multi-year funding would benefit their activities, provide consistency and enable them to continue providing services for longer. This was also the second most popular response to the question, "*What would make the biggest difference to you in the next five years?*" in the grant recipient questionnaire (most popular response was restricted funding for new projects/activities).

The longer term vision for the RWF is not clear and, although there is a Legacy Fund described on the website, how this will be built up to provide a sustainable source of funding after the life time of the wind farm is not explained. We understand that the value of the legacy fund in May 2021 was £49,141.

## 6. Recommendations for 2022-27

Having compiled all the evidence gathered through desktop and community research, we recommend that the CIC adopts a Theory of Change Framework to set out how funding programmes will meet the needs identified within the community.

A proposed Theory of Change is provided (right). This model sets out changes to the CIC vision (longer term impact) and outcomes which are described in more detail below.

### 6.1. Statement of needs

The area served by the RWF CIC is a rural and dispersed community. The needs identified by people living, working, volunteering and studying in this area are:

1. Lack of mobile and broadband connectivity
2. Limitations of utilities supplies (gas, electric and other)
3. Difficulties in accessing services and employment locally
4. Limited opportunities in the area, especially for older and younger people

Further needs identified through stakeholder consultation and research are:

5. Lasting impact of Covid-19 pandemic
6. Increasing cost of living
7. Climate crisis

There is also a need to protect and sustain local characteristics which are valued by the community:

8. Nature, wildlife and rural countryside
9. Strong and supportive communities

## 6.2. Vision – the difference the Ray Wind Funds can achieve

The Grant Agreement<sup>46</sup> states that a review of each five-year period could include amendments to the Business Plan and Governance Handbook. Based on our research and consultation, we recommend the Vision (included in both documents) should be amended slightly to better reflect the needs of the local area.

Suggested new wording:

Our vision is that, by the end of the Ray Wind Farm lifetime,

- i) Community resilience will be improved with more things to do locally, improved facilities, more reasons to stay in the area, more people volunteering (formally and informally) and better equipped to face unforeseen events;
- ii) Transport, communications and utilities infrastructures will be improved and the community will be better connected to each other and the wider world;
- iii) The local economy will have improved with more businesses, more prosperous businesses, more employment opportunities and improved facilities to support working families and home/remote working;
- iv) The community and the area of benefit will be making a positive contribution to the Northumberland Net Zero target (reducing carbon emissions and increasing opportunities to store carbon in the landscape);

Thus, the Ray Wind Funds will deliver benefit to the local area, supporting communities which are more resilient, better connected, more active locally, more diverse, better prepared for new challenges and more prosperous. And these improvements will be sustained beyond the lifetime of the Ray Wind Farm.

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<sup>46</sup> Grant Agreement between Ray Wind Farm Ltd and Ray Windfarm Fund CIC (2018)

### 6.3. How can grant making address local needs and deliver the longer term vision?

In order to achieve the outcomes set out in the Theory of Change, we suggest that the RWF Board adopts a new set of funding principles and that these are also adopted by the Community Foundation for as long as they operate the Small Grants Fund:

In order to address needs in our community, we will support projects which:

1. Facilitate community cohesion, resilience and action – keeping people in the area, increasing diversity in our communities, promoting aspiration and achievement, supporting employment, enabling volunteering etc;
2. Recognise the crises facing communities now and mitigate the impact of food poverty, fuel poverty and other financial challenges;
3. Respond to the most significant challenges identified by the community which are digital connectivity, things to do and access to new experiences/opportunities (particularly for older and young people), transport/access to services;
4. Protect, conserve and promote our natural and cultural landscape in order to retain the rural character of area which is much valued by the community. This includes creating, protecting or enhancing natural habitats, improving access to nature and wild spaces and celebrating local natural and cultural assets.
5. Demonstrate a commitment to the Northumberland Net Zero target by reducing emissions and sequestering carbon in the landscape;
6. Can make our money go further by attracting additional investment. Match funding is not a requirement for a grant from the RWF but we are keen that some of our grants add value to or enable bigger projects by enabling additional funding from outside the area.

Subject to approval by Vattenfall and in line with the conditions of the grant agreement, the Board could consider allocating a proportion of funds annually (or for a limited time) to support needs

A Theory of Change for the Ray Wind Fund					
Local needs	Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Outcomes	Impact
<p><b>Challenges identified through consultation:</b></p> <p>Lack of mobile and broadband connectivity</p> <p>Limitations of utilities supplies (gas, electric and other)</p> <p>Difficulties in accessing services and employment locally</p> <p>Limited opportunities in the area, especially for older and younger people</p> <p><b>Other challenges identified through stakeholder consultation and research:</b></p> <p>Lasting impact of Covid-19 pandemic</p> <p>Increasing cost of living</p> <p>Climate crisis</p> <p><b>Characteristics valued by the community which must be retained:</b></p> <p>Nature, wildlife and rural countryside</p> <p>Strong and supportive communities</p>	<p>~£300,000 annual funding from Vattenfall</p> <p>CIC board (time and skills)</p>	<p>Small grants Programme (CF)</p> <p>Local Initiatives Fund</p> <p>Small Donations Fund</p> <p>Legacy Fund</p> <p>Other activities include board meetings, social media, promotion etc</p>	<p>Board to consider defining outputs or targets (e.g. x number of different organisations supported; x people benefiting; x number of new organisations supported; x jobs created; x number of press releases; increase Facebook followers by x per year; x% of funds allocated to XXX, £X additional investment brought into the area etc)</p>	<p>Communities are stronger, more diverse and more resilient</p> <p>The impact of food poverty, fuel poverty and other financial challenges are lessened in our community because people have access to support</p> <p>People are better connected and better able to access services in the community</p> <p>More people, businesses and communities understand and are playing an active role in achieving the Northumberland Net Zero target</p> <p>The rural character of the area is retained; nature and wildlife is conserved and access to natural spaces is facilitated</p> <p>Funding from RWF has facilitated more investment in the community (through match funding).</p>	<p>Community resilience will be improved with more things to do locally, improved facilities, more reasons to stay in the area, more people volunteering (formally and informally) and better equipped to face future storms and other events.</p> <p>Transport, communications and utilities infrastructures will be improved and the community will be better connected to each other and the wider world.</p> <p>Local economy will have improved with more businesses, more prosperous businesses, more employment opportunities and improved facilities to support working families and home/remote working</p> <p>The community and the area of benefit will be making a positive contribution to the Northumberland Net Zero target (reducing carbon emissions and increasing opportunities to store carbon in the landscape).</p> <p>These improvements will be sustained beyond the lifetime of the Ray Wind Farm.</p>

identified in the consultation (which would address the priorities above). These “funds” could operate within the current grant structure. It is recommended that the board discuss the following grant-making opportunities to increase their impact in the community:

- ▶ Support for young people to access new opportunities and realise their aspirations. Such grants have been given in the past, but inconsistently. Rather than consider each application separately, and to avoid making judgements about an individual's longer-term intentions, a clear set of criteria should be set and a maximum amount of funding specified. This should then be equally applied to any applicant that meets the criteria (e.g. the same opportunity is not available inside the area of benefit; fees or transport costs are in excess of what the individual/family can afford; applicant will remain living in the area of benefit whilst in receipt of funding or will return to the area after funding);
- ▶ Support for travel costs incurred by individuals and families, including but not exclusively, to contribute to school transport (where costs are not provided by the Local Authority) and to support access to medical appointments;
- ▶ A short-term fuel fund to help organisations to continue to deliver services and activities within the area by paying for increased delivery costs arising from the rising costs of fuel;
- ▶ A designated fund for first and primary schools already exists and could continue, with updated guidelines linked to the new funding principles;
- ▶ Inviting projects/grant applications that would address a specific need (e.g. children’s activities over school holidays to provide more opportunities and support working parents; ideas that will support householders to reduce energy use to save money and reduce carbon emissions);
- ▶ Longer term and multi-year grants for charitable organisations and service providers which would enable organisations to commit resources longer term, provide consistency and embed their workers in the community;
- ▶ Small grants for fundraising events or activities. This would allow community groups to use RWF funding as a catalyst to securing more money (e.g. paying for hall fees at a fundraising

event or ingredients for a bake sale). Many funders do not support such activities but it would encourage local groups to explore other fundraising options and could promote entrepreneurship in young people.

As indicated in the *outputs* column of the Theory of Change, the CIC Board should discuss appropriate annual targets and KPIs (examples are provided both for funding outputs and communications/promotion). Once KPIs are agreed, the outputs can be monitored as a way of monitoring the progress and achievements of the CIC against the agreed Theory of Change.

The board currently adopts a “wait and see who applies” approach to grant-making. It is recommended that a more proactive approach to meet KPIs and deliver outputs would enable the CIC to make more of a difference in the community. Whilst it is acknowledged that capacity is limited, our consultation and research has shown that there are several organisations and individuals that would like to be more involved and would work collaboratively to deliver shared goals. Developing partnerships with infrastructure organisations such as Citizens Advice Bureau and CAN could enable new projects to be established, funded through grant funding. Promoting or inviting applications to meet local needs (e.g. children’s activities over school holidays to provide more opportunities and support working parents; ideas that will support householders to reduce energy use to save money and reduce carbon emissions) could be a way of increasing the impact of the CIC.

#### **6.4. Other recommendations**

It is also recommended that the Board discusses:

- ▶ Opportunities to raise the profile of the RWF and develop partnerships/build relationships which could further the aims of the CIC and deliver the funding priorities above;
- ▶ Building on the success of the recent Community Drop In event by holding regular grants “surgeries” (either on a drop-in basis or bookable via a platform such as Event-Brite);

- ▶ Opportunities to recruit new board members and increase diversity on the board or committees, particularly looking for people with lived experience of some of the needs and challenges identified in this report;
- ▶ Ways that the community can be more involved in decision-making. Perhaps by establishing a grants panel with both Directors and community representatives, or allocating a youth fund which would be considered by youth representatives;
- ▶ Using social media to increase profile and engage new audiences;
- ▶ Other opportunities to continue to build awareness and brand presence in the community;
- ▶ The potential to facilitate activities which enable the community (including school groups) to access and learn more about the wind farm. For example, working with Vattenfall to organise and promote visits, open days and talks;
- ▶ Opportunities to provide advice about other funding sources for example, sharing updates from the Community Foundation or VODA. This could form part of a regular newsletter or be promoted on social media pages;
- ▶ The potential to develop the role of the CIC and potentially explore opportunities to have a wider function in the community. This could include applying for additional funding from other sources to deliver new activities which are in addition to grant making but still within the permitted role of the CIC in its Articles of Association<sup>47</sup>;
- ▶ The potential of repayable grants for local businesses (not charitable organisations). This must be in line with the grant agreement and agreed by Vattenfall. It would offer an opportunity for funded businesses to repay a proportion of their grant to help other projects or to enable the RWF to continue for longer (investing in the Legacy Fund). Appropriate advice must be sought to draw up repayment agreements for this. As a starting point, it might be useful to look at the following examples: (i) Arts Council England

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<sup>47</sup> The CIC Objects stated in the Articles of Association are “to carry on activities which benefit the Community in the Area of Benefit and in particular (without limitation) to oversee a fund to deliver benefits to the Community; and to ensure that funding received by the Company brings long term benefit to the Community.

Cultural Recovery Fund (2020): Repayable Finance<sup>48</sup>, (ii) Film and TV Charity repayable grants for freelancers<sup>49</sup>, and (iii) Partnerships for Forests Repayable Grant Agreement<sup>50</sup>

- ▶ The longer term vision for the CIC beyond the lifetime of the Ray Wind Farm.

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<sup>48</sup> <https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/CRFrepayablefinance#section-3>

<sup>49</sup> <https://filmtvcharity.org.uk/news-event/repayable-grants-scheme-announced/>

<sup>50</sup> <https://partnershipsforforests.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/P4F-Repayable-Grant-Agreement.pdf>

# Glossary

ACRE	Action with Communities in Rural England
B4NTR	Broadband for North Tyne and Redesdale
CAN	Community Action Northumberland
CF	Community Foundation for Tyne & Wear and Northumberland
CIC	Community Interest Company
DBEIS	Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
LIF	Local Initiatives Fund
NCVO	National Council for Voluntary Organisations
NTY	North Tyne Youth
RWF	Ray Windfarm Fund Community Interest Company (known as the Ray Wind Funds)
SDF	Small Donations Fund



This research has been carried out by consultants Katherine Williams and Helen Crow on behalf of the Ray Windfarm Fund Community Interest Company, July 2022.

# Katherine Williams

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