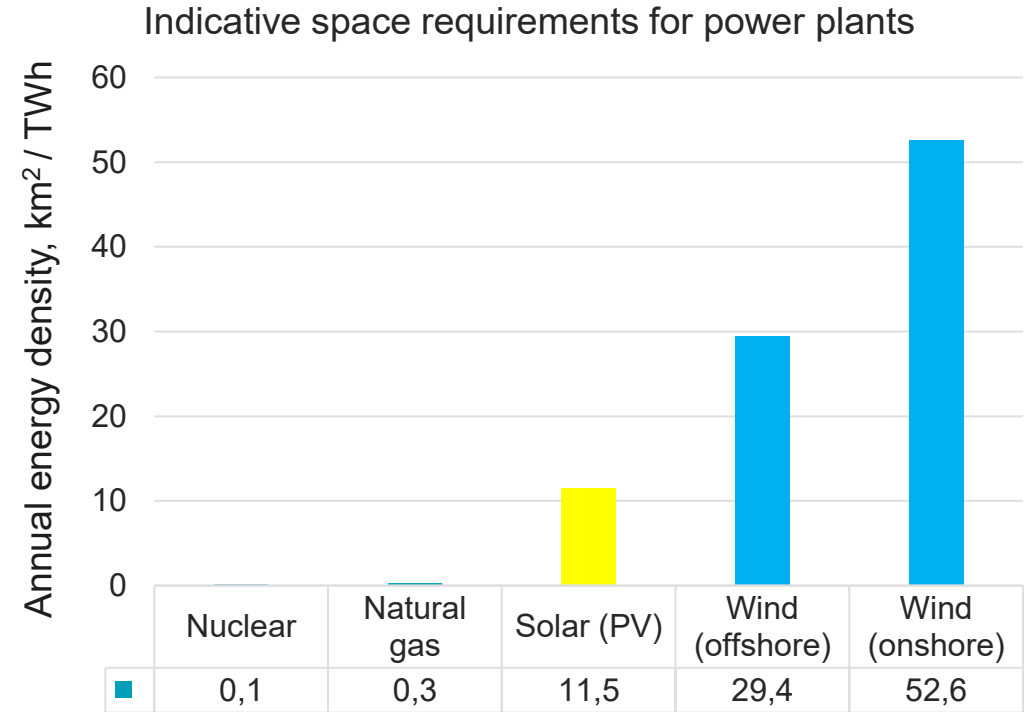
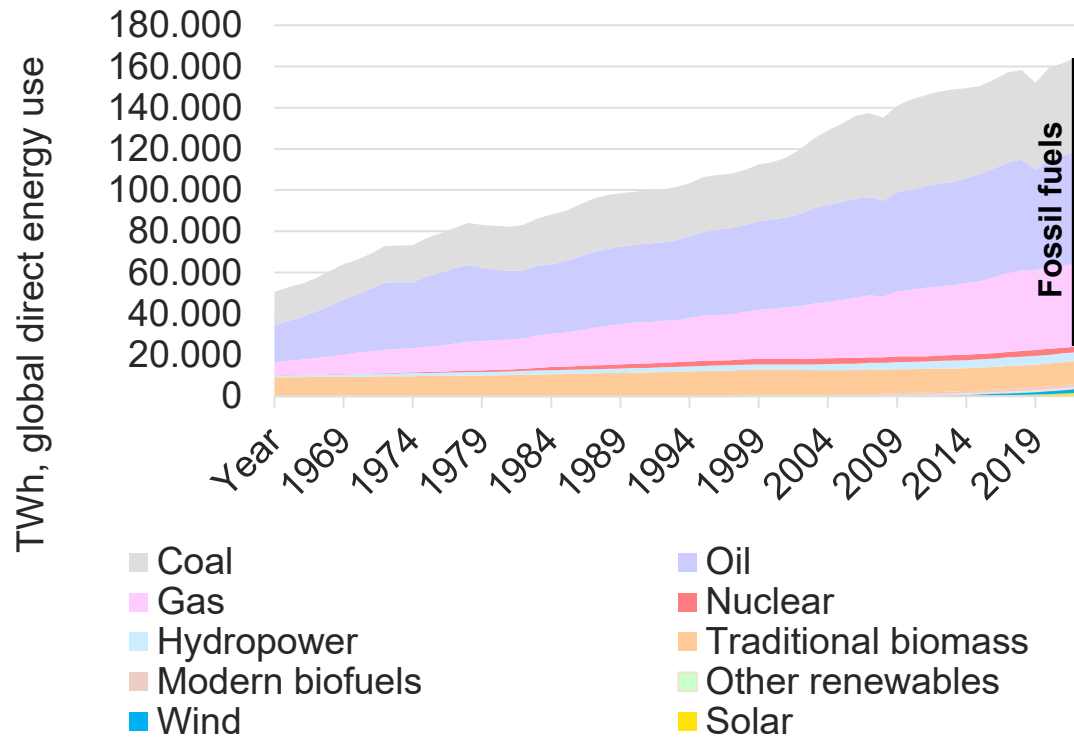


Who benefits from the resources of a place?

NORA North Atlantic & Arctic Neighbours: Building Sustainable Futures for Island Communities

Tom Wills, Co-founder June 2025

The scale and pace of new energy developments



- Renewables are expanding rapidly, but most of the world's energy still comes from fossil fuels – and demand is growing.
- Wind and solar require much larger areas for the same power – fuelling public resistance to prevailing business models.

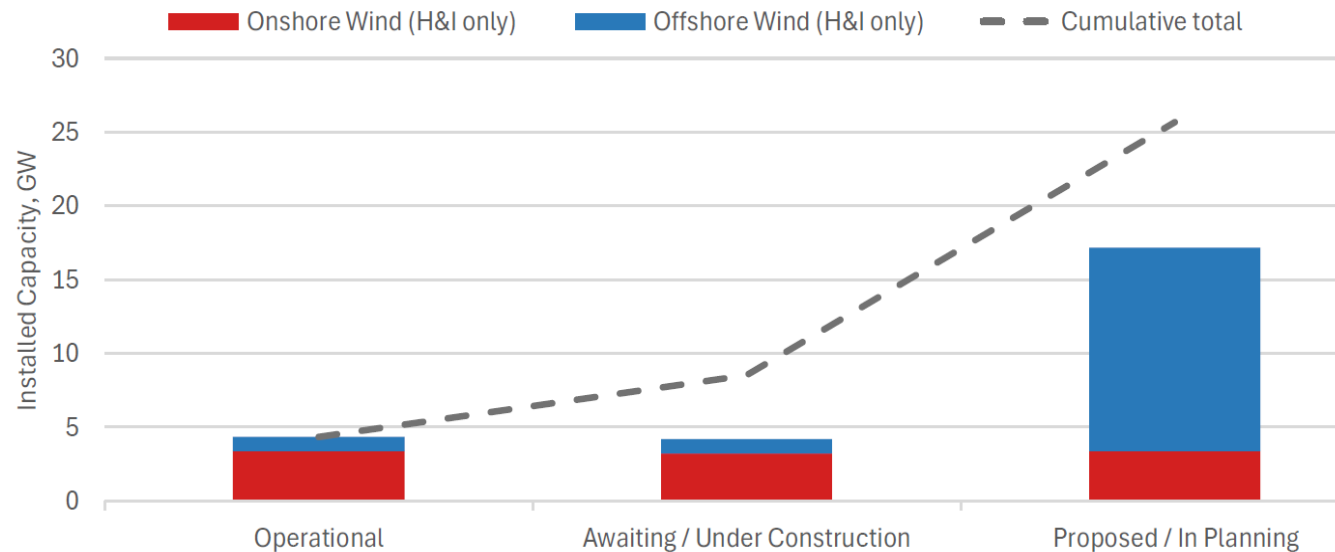
Equitable Energy Research

Equitable Energy Research is a Community Interest Company (CIC) set up to:

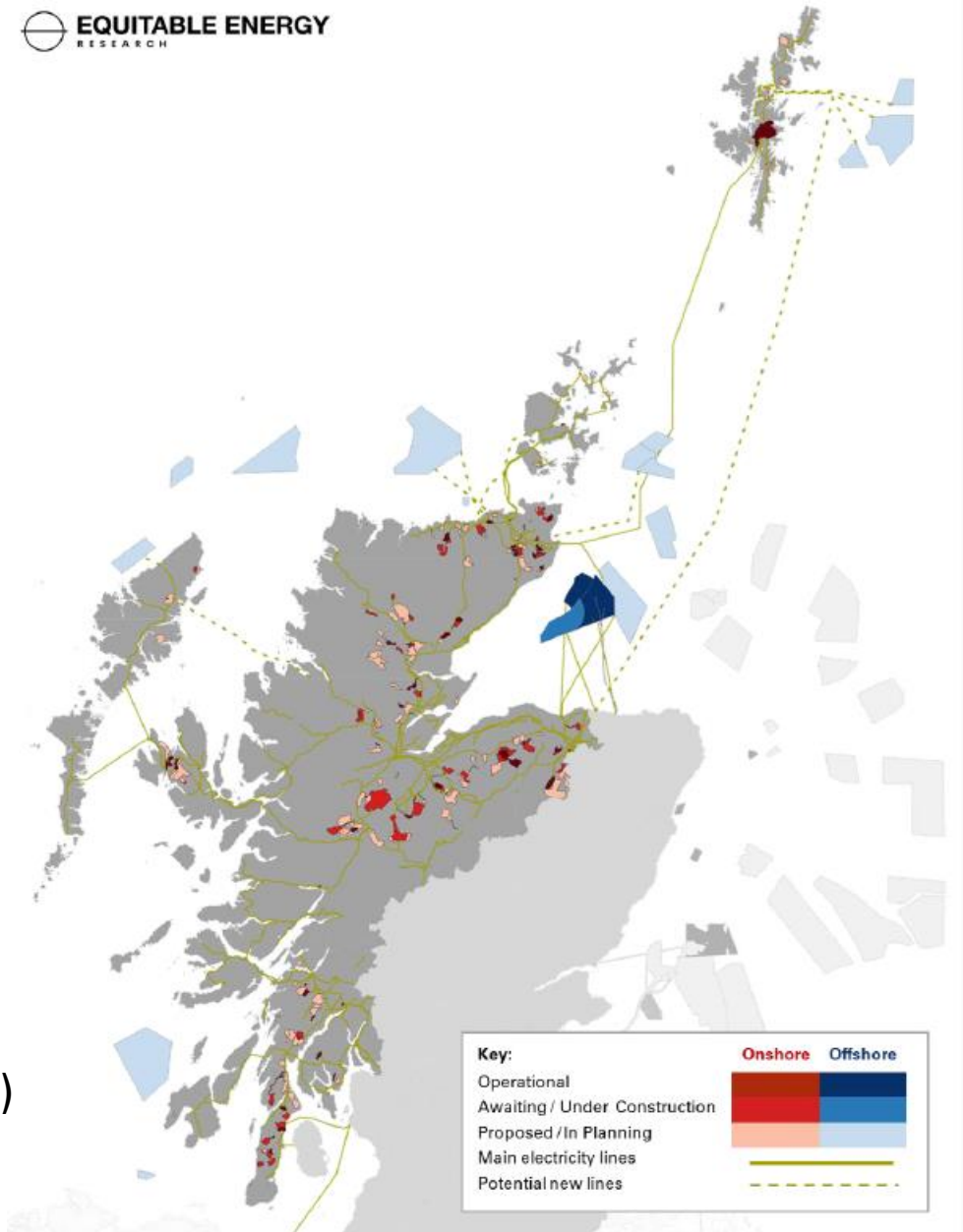
- Conduct research into international best practice examples of community ownership, participation and benefit from energy projects.
- Work with communities, project developers and government agencies to develop initiatives that deliver a fair share of value for all parties.
- Publish information and provide advice that supports communities and the public to develop their understanding of the energy sector.

Highlands and Islands overview (onshore and offshore wind)

- Approaching **5 GW** operational, **>20 GW** in the pipeline



- Developments are unlikely to be considered “just” unless projects deliver a fair share for host communities (and society)



Case study: Shetland energy developments

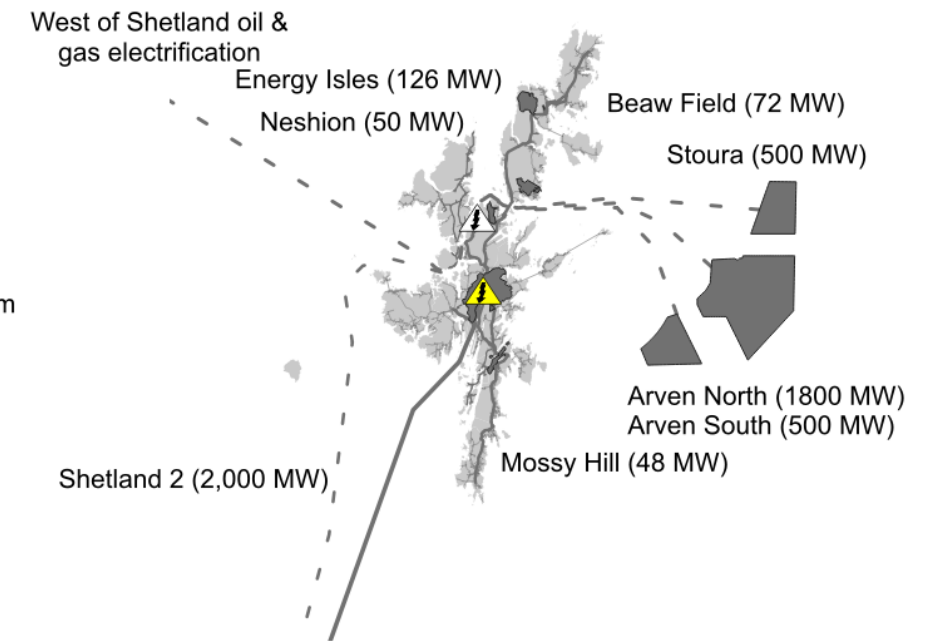
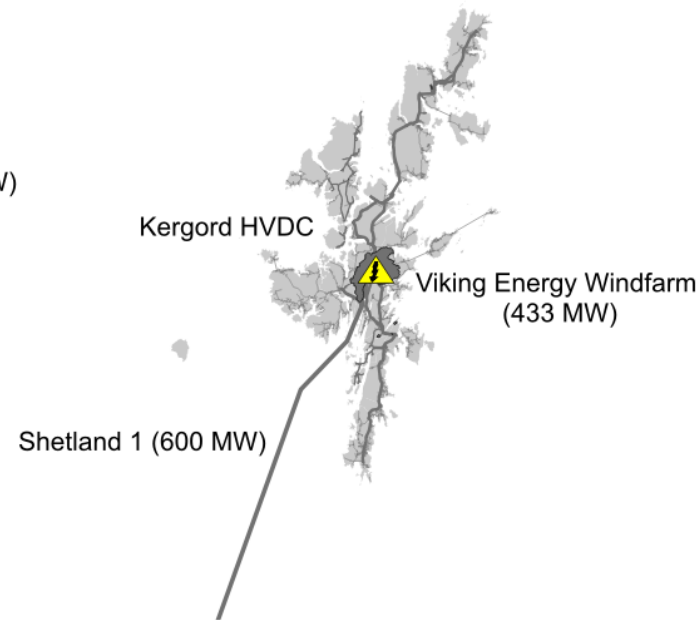
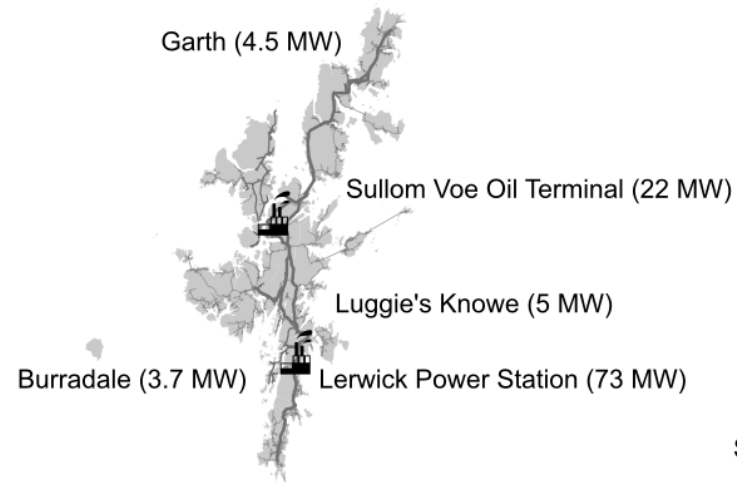
Pre-2020s





2024







2030s



Key

-  Fossil fuel generation
-  Onshore / Offshore wind projects

-  Transmission lines built /in construction
-  Built / confirmed HVDC converter station

-  Potential new transmission
-  Potential new HVDC converter station

Oil and Gas



Benefits to the community



Image credit: Shetland Recreational Trust



Image credit: Shetland Arts Trust



Viking windfarm (443 MW)



Garth windfarm (4.5 MW)

A spectrum of social value

Increasing social value →

Supply Chain
and Indirect Impacts

Community Benefit Payments
(CBPs) / other direct value share

Community / Municipal
Ownership (and/or taxation)



Image credit: Scottish Power Renewables



Image credit: John Coutts / Shetland Times

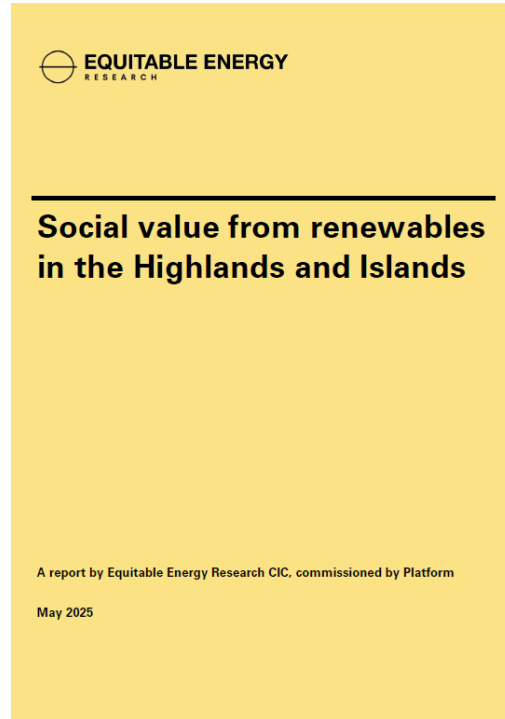


Image credit: SEV

- Similar looking projects can deliver vastly different outcomes for local communities.
- Existing projects across Scotland and the Nordic regions demonstrate the range of what's possible.

Social value from renewables in the Highlands and Islands

A study of case study projects and local government policies across six Scottish local authorities.



Case study projects (overview)

Area	Commercial project	Local authority ownership	Community-owned project
Shetland	Viking Wind Farm (443MW, SSE Renewables) £2.2m CBP pa = £5k per MW installed	No major projects to date. Viking was initially an SIC-led scheme which transferred to SCT. Community ownership was subsequently lost.	Garth Community Wind Farm (4.5MW, North Yell Development Trust) £0.5m to £4.9m pa = £100k to £800k per MW installed
Orkney	West of Orkney Wind Farm (2 GW, Corio Gen. + RIDG) £10m CBP pa = £5k per MW installed	Orkney Community Wind Farm (86 MW TBC, OIC) The only H&I local authority developing a major municipal energy project. All profits retained by OIC, plus estimated £432k CBP pa	Rossay Community Wind Turbine (0.9 MW, Rossay, Egilsay and Wyre Dev't Trust) £150k to £200k profit per annum = £170k to £220k per MW installed
Comhairle nan Eilean Siar	Druim Leathann Wind Farm (50 MW, Bayaa Energy) £350k CBP pa = £7k per MW installed	No major projects to date. The CnES currently pursuing alternative fuel creation via sustainable waste management.	Beinn Ghrideag Wind Farm (9 MW, Point & Sandwick Development Trust) £900k indicative average profits pa = £100k per MW installed
Highland	Creag Riabhach Wind Farm (92 MW, ENG UK E.) £462k CBP per annum = £5k per MW installed	No major projects to date. The Highland Social Value Charter has the potential to unlock significant opportunities.	Ben Akelli Wind Farm (13 MW, Isle of Skye R. Coop.) £3.5m indicative profits pa = £275k per MW installed
Moray	Clash Gour Wind Farm (225 MW, EDF Renewables Ltd) £1.1m CBP = £5k per MW installed	No major projects to date. Moray Council has developed some small-scale solar and wind projects for buildings.	Findhorn Wind Park (0.75 MW, Findhorn Ecovillage) Profitability figures not available at the time of writing.
Argyll & Bute	Beinn An Tuirc 1-2 Wind Farm (74 MW, Scottish Power Renewables) £185k CBP pa = £2.5k per MW installed	No major projects to date. A&B Council has developed small-scale solar and wind projects for buildings.	Tilley, the Tires Community Wind Turbine (0.9 MW, Tires Community Development Trust) £236k indicative returns to trust = £263k per MW installed

Note: financial estimates are referenced and explained in the previous sections.

Local authority positions (overview)

Region	Key Points
Shetland	Historical success in building community wealth from oil and gas. Examples of successful community ownership. Recent commitment to community wealth building principles. In 2025 the SIC voted to endorse a report recommending the following CBP positions: Onshore wind: 5% gross project revenue (GPR) with min. £7.3k/MW pa; Offshore wind: 2.5% GPR with min. £5.0k/MW pa; H2: 2.5% GPR with project-specific min. income
Orkney	OIC has a focus on public ownership and present the only example of major municipally-owned energy in the H&I region, planning to allocate location-specific community benefit funds. Efforts made to ensure that more wealth generated in Orkney is retained locally and shared more equitably to reduce poverty and hardship in the islands. Reviews of existing action plans will be made to further incorporate CWB principles. The OIC has endorsed a minimum of £5,000/MW per year from offshore projects.
Comhairle nan Eilean Siar	The Comhairle was one of the Scottish Government's five pilot CWB sites. A Major Development Oversight Board is pushing for a short-term special island tariff for the most vulnerable areas and long-term solutions to provide discounted electricity supply from wind turbine outputs in the same postcode. The Comhairle has endorsed a minimum £5,000/MW per year for onshore wind. The Comhairle is also advocating for a single island authority (SIA) model to ensure better outcomes for communities through whole-system decision-making.
Highland	HC's Social Value Charter is one of the more ambitious positions adopted by local authorities in Scotland and included a CBP target of £12,500/MW pa (£5k to local communities and £7.5k into a regional fund). For offshore developments in open waters, the Highland Council proposes 20% of benefit to coastal communities and 80% to the Highland Trust Fund. In September 2024, HC approved Community Wealth Building Strategy with the following five objectives: Maximising local spending; Fair employment; Land and Property; Financial Power; Inclusive ownership.
Moray	Moray Council has developed a comprehensive Community Wealth Building strategy encompassing a Social Value Charter; Social Value Delivery framework; Monitoring and measuring performance; Supply chain engagement; Reporting; Communication and engagement. The Moray Hydrogen Strategy outlines a spectrum of potential community benefits that could be achieved from developing a local hydrogen economy in Moray. As per Scottish Government recommendations, Moray Council adheres to the minimum £5,000/MW per year for onshore wind.
Argyll & Bute	Progressive approaches to Community Wealth Building in procurement and employment are also pursued. The A&B Council aims to embed a Community Wealth Building Approach to increase wealth and opportunity by improving local access to economic opportunity, including community ownership. Community ownership is recognised as a tool for CWB. A&B Council has endorsed £5,000/MW per year for onshore wind.



Equitable Energy Research analysis, commissioned by Platform.

Available at: <https://platformlondon.org/resource/community-ownership/>

Conclusions

- As the scale and pace of new energy developments increase, the need for host communities to retain a fair share of value will become ever more critical.
- Existing projects show what's possible: to innovate locally, we can replicate what others have achieved.
- Equitable Energy is looking to develop Nordic Atlantic collaborations and to study how different communities have retained value from energy / resource projects.

Thank you.

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<https://equitable.energy/>

