West Lindsey District Council

Guildhall Gainsborough
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AGENDA

This meeting will be webcast live and the video archive published on our website

Thriving Places Committee
Tuesday, 14th July, 2026 at 6.30 pm
Council Chamber – The Guildhall, Marshall's Yard, Gainsborough, DN21 2NA

Members:

Councillor Peter Morris (Chairman)
Councillor Jacob Flear (Vice-Chairman)
Councillor Trevor Bridgwood
Councillor Mrs Angela Lawrence
Councillor Maureen Palmer
Councillor Mrs Lesley Rollings
Councillor Moira Westley

1. **Apologies for Absence**

2. **Public Participation Period**

   Up to 15 minutes are allowed for public participation. Participants are restricted to 3 minutes each.

3. **Declarations of Interest**

   Members may make declarations of interest at this point or may make them at any point in the meeting.

4. **Public Reports for Approval**

iv) Committee Work Plan (PAGES 91 - 92)

Paul Burkinshaw
Head of Paid Service
The Guildhall
Gainsborough

Monday, 6 July 2026

Committee: Thriving Places
Date: 14 July 2026

Subject: Large-Scale Renewable Energy Community Benefit Policy

Report by:	Director of Planning, Regeneration and Communities
Contact Officer:	Steve Leary, Policy and Strategy Officer (Environment and Sustainability) – steve.leary@west-lindsey.gov.uk Claire Hill, Economic Growth Officer – claire.hill@west-lindsey.gov.uk

Executive Summary:

To adopt a policy to assist the Council in negotiating Community Benefit Agreements (CBAs) relating to large-scale renewable energy developments, including solar energy generation, on-site and standalone battery energy storage (BESS), and new grid connection infrastructure. West Lindsey hosts one of the largest concentrations of consented utility-scale solar Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs) in England, with a combined generation capacity exceeding 2.5GW. There is currently no statutory requirement on developers to provide community benefits, but the Government's May 2025 working paper proposes a mandatory scheme that could come into force by the end of 2027 at the earliest. Adopting a policy now, aligned with North Kesteven District Council, positions the Council to negotiate consistently and effectively in the interim period and to transition smoothly into the statutory regime once it takes effect.

Appendices to Report

- Appendix A - Policy Research
- Appendix B - Draft Large-Scale Renewable Energy Community Benefit Policy
- Appendix C - West Lindsey District Council Response to the DESNZ Working Paper (Community benefits and shared ownership July 2025)

RECOMMENDATION(S):

(a) That the Committee adopts the Large-Scale Renewable Energy Community Benefit Policy as set out at Appendix B.

(b) That the Committee delegates authority for minor amendments to the policy to the Director of Planning, Regeneration and Communities, in consultation with the Chair of the Thriving Places Committee.

(c) That the Committee notes the Government's intention to introduce mandatory community benefit requirements through primary legislation, expected to come into force by the end of 2027 at the earliest, and that this policy positions the Council to negotiate effectively in the interim period.

(d) That the Committee notes the financial implications arising from the potential scale of Community Benefit Fund income and agrees that officers explore appropriate fund governance arrangements, be that via a Special Purpose Vehicle, Community Investment Company or other entity.

1. Introduction

1.1 The role of Community Benefit Funds (CBFs) and Community Benefit Agreements (CBAs) has been the subject of increasing policy attention at national level since 2023. In May 2025, the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ) published a landmark working paper proposing the introduction of a mandatory community benefit scheme for low-carbon energy infrastructure across Great Britain. This followed earlier publications from DESNZ, the former Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) and the National Infrastructure Commission.

1.2 There is at present no legal requirement on the developer of a large-scale renewable energy development to offer a contribution to a CBF, and planning guidance prevents such payments from being made a condition of planning permission. However, the DESNZ working paper signals a clear trajectory towards mandatory requirements. Once a CBF has been agreed and a CBA entered into, the agreement is enforceable by the parties to it.

1.3 Emerging practice and the DESNZ consultation point to a solar rate in the range of £500–£1,000/MW/year. The wind industry has committed to £5,000/MW/year for onshore wind, and community energy bodies have proposed a revenue-based approach of around 4% of gross revenue. The proposed policy applies a base rate of £500/MW/year for solar, consistent with established English local authority practice (see Section 3) and aligned with the adopted policy within the Central Lincolnshire Plan area.

1.4 The proposed policy seeks to:

- Clarify that the Council is mindful of the potential receipts from, and the wider impacts of, large-scale renewable energy development across the district;
- Illustrate to Town and Parish Councils the scale of funding that might be secured within their area and the need to identify projects for investment;
- Support the Council's commitment to climate change and net zero through the Environment and Sustainability Strategy and the Central Lincolnshire Local Plan;
- Position the Council ahead of anticipated mandatory legislation, establishing governance and negotiation frameworks that can transition into the statutory regime; and
- Ensure alignment with the adopted North Kesteven District Council (NKDC) policy and provide consistency across the Central Lincolnshire Local Plan area and Greater Lincolnshire ahead of Local Government Reorganisation (LGR).

1.5 For the purposes of the policy, a large-scale renewable energy development is defined as one with an installed capacity of at least 5MW. This threshold aligns with the DESNZ proposed minimum for the mandatory scheme. The policy applies to qualifying proposals submitted to the Council under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (generally under 50MW), as well as to NSIPs determined by the Secretary of State under the Planning Act 2008 (50MW or over). It also covers battery energy storage and new substations.

1.6 For the avoidance of doubt, negotiation and the decision to enter into a CBA is not indicative of any support for a project. Rather, it is a means to secure benefits if the project receives permission or consent. A CBA will be supplemental to any Section 106 agreement required to mitigate the specific impacts of a proposed development and will play no part in the determination of any planning application or in the Council's representations on any NSIP.

2. Context

2.1 The adopted Central Lincolnshire Local Plan (April 2023) includes a suite of climate change policies; Policy S14 specifically addresses renewable energy and applies a presumption in favour of granting permission for solar development unless there is clear and demonstrable significant harm. The policy sits alongside the wider plans and strategies of Lincolnshire County Council and the emerging Greater Lincolnshire devolution arrangements.

2.2 At a national level there are significant drivers behind the shift to renewable energy generation, including the Government's Clean Power 2030 Action Plan, the Clean Energy Mission and the establishment of Great British Energy.

2.3 Since 2022 the Council has witnessed substantial growth in commercial large-scale solar development. Five NSIP solar projects affecting West Lindsey have sought or are seeking Development Consent Orders (DCOs). Their current status is as follows:

- **Gate Burton Energy Park (500MW)** – Development Consent granted July 2024;
- **Cottam Solar Project (600MW)** – Development Consent granted September 2024;
- **West Burton Solar Project (c.480MW)** – Development Consent granted January 2025;
- **Tillbridge Solar Project (500MW plus associated battery storage)** – Development Consent granted October 2025; and
- **One Earth Solar Farm (up to 740MW, cross-boundary)** – Examination closed January 2026; Secretary of State decision expected by July 2026.

2.4 The combined generation capacity exceeds 2.5GW. All include battery energy storage systems and grid connection infrastructure. Four have received Development Consent, making West Lindsey and its immediate surroundings one of the most concentrated areas for solar NSIP development in England. Construction has not yet commenced on any of them.

National policy developments

2.5 In May 2025, DESNZ published a working paper on "Community Benefits and Shared Ownership for Low Carbon Energy Infrastructure." This proposed a mandatory community benefit scheme, established through primary legislation, covering solar, wind, marine, nuclear, BESS, hydrogen-to-power, long-duration energy storage and power CCUS, at a minimum threshold of 5MW. The scheme could come into force by the end of 2027 at the earliest, with no retrospective effect. The Council submitted a detailed response to the working paper in July 2025

(Appendix C); the Government has not yet published its response to the consultation.

2.6 Key features of the proposed framework include transparent governance, with Fund Administrators appointed by developers and community-led governance arrangements in place at least one year before first payment, and enforcement through dispute resolution escalating to civil penalties. Developers would retain ultimate responsibility for compliance, including for the actions of Fund Administrators.

2.7 The Planning and Infrastructure Act 2025 (Royal Assent 18 December 2025) includes a bill discount scheme for households near transmission infrastructure (£250/year for up to 10 years) and community fund guidance (£200,000 per km of overhead line; £530,000 per substation). These provisions apply to transmission infrastructure specifically and are separate from the broader mandatory scheme for generation assets.

Local Government Reorganisation

2.8 West Lindsey is undergoing LGR as part of Greater Lincolnshire devolution, with shadow authorities anticipated around 2027 and vesting in 2028. Adopting a policy now, aligned with NKDC, contributes to a consistent Greater Lincolnshire approach. CBAs entered into under the policy will include transition provisions so that fund governance transfers smoothly to any successor authority, and the policy is framed as a contribution to a wider Greater Lincolnshire position rather than a standalone West Lindsey instrument.

2.9 Town and Parish Councils are central to the delivery of community benefit. The policy is intended to help local councils understand the scale of funding that could be secured in their area and to work with the District Council to identify projects for investment. Engagement with affected local councils, and with co-host district and county authorities for cross-boundary NSIPs, is built into the policy's operational principles.

3. Policy Research

3.1 Appendix A sets out the detailed findings from officer policy research, updated to reflect the DESNZ working paper and the latest local authority practice.

3.2 Within Greater Lincolnshire, North Kesteven District Council has an adopted Large-Scale Solar Energy Community Benefit Policy (January 2024). NKDC has now applied this policy in practice: following the grant of a DCO for the c.800MW Springwell Solar Farm in April 2026, NKDC confirmed that it would align a developer commitment of £400/MW of installed capacity, together with more than £2m for skills, education and biodiversity over the development's 40-year lifetime, with its adopted policy. This demonstrates both the value of having an adopted policy in place and that negotiated project rates may sit above or below the published baseline.

3.3 Beyond Lincolnshire, a small but growing number of authorities have moved towards explicit policies or guidance:

- **Suffolk County Council** adopted its Energy and Climate Adaptive Infrastructure Policy in May 2023 and issued supplementary guidance for large-scale solar schemes in April 2024, setting an expected rate of £500/MW/year (index-linked) with a 50% rate for co-located battery storage;

- **Essex County Council** applied its NSIP policy to the 500MW Longfield Solar Farm, securing £2.1m for education and skills, £50,000/year each to the two host district councils, and a £5.72m community benefit fund delivering around £130,000/year for 40 years via the Essex Community Foundation;
- **Shropshire Council** issued guidance for Town and Parish Councils in 2023 recommending a baseline of £500/MW/year for 40 years; and
- **Dorset** set a higher benchmark of £1,000/MW/year (20 years, RPI-linked),
- **Scottish** good practice recommends £5,000/MW/year, applied primarily to onshore wind.

3.4 Project-specific arrangements across England show a wide spread of negotiated outcomes (from c.£475/year for a 19MW scheme to multi-million-pound funds for NSIPs), underlining the value of a clear, consistent policy starting point rather than ad hoc negotiation.

3.5 Key consultation responses to the DESNZ working paper include Community Energy England, Scotland and Wales jointly proposing a revenue-based approach (approximately 4% of gross revenue), and Citizens Advice, the Energy Saving Trust and Sustainability First all advocating mandatory minimum standards to end the current “postcode lottery.”

3.6 The research supports a base rate of £500/MW/year for solar as consistent with established English practice and within the expected range for the mandatory scheme, with the NKDC model providing the strongest template for West Lindsey given the shared Central Lincolnshire Local Plan area and the LGR context.

4. Use of the Funding

4.1 Given the possible considerable sums involved, and the cumulative impact of schemes, not all funding could or should be spent in the immediate locality. Funds would be managed in the interest of directly affected communities and the wider district, on two threads: a local community share for the immediate area (within 5km of the site boundary) and a wider district share addressing cumulative impact.

4.2 It is anticipated that a Special Purpose Vehicle, Community Investment Company or an existing body would be the appropriate vehicle to manage funds. This is consistent with the DESNZ proposal for community-led Fund Administrators, with governance established at least one year before first payment. Officers recommend that engagement with existing bodies is taken forward as a priority, so that suitable governance is ready ahead of any mandatory requirement.

4.3 Consistent with the DESNZ framework, developers making funds available are expected to remain engaged in fund programming and distribution, and to retain ultimate responsibility for compliance, including for the actions of any Fund Administrator they appoint.

4.4 Eligible projects would be judged on a criteria basis, prioritising low-carbon outcomes and community health, wellbeing and vitality. They could include community renewable energy and Local Power Plan schemes; household retrofit and fuel-poverty measures; SME and commercial decarbonisation; green skills and apprenticeships; active travel; biodiversity and nature recovery; schools engagement; energy efficiency in historic buildings; agrivoltaics and agricultural co-benefits; providing opportunities for community investment in off-site renewable energy infrastructure (linked to the Central Lincolnshire Local Plan net-zero aims) and support for the district's low-carbon economy and associated supply chains, helping to ensure West Lindsey and Greater Lincolnshire are able to maximise the benefits of the Trent Valley Clean Energy Supercluster.

5. Policy

5.1 The draft policy for review and adoption is set out at Appendix B. It aligns with the policy adopted by North Kesteven District Council, offering consistency across the Central Lincolnshire Local Plan area, and has been structured to transition into the anticipated mandatory scheme once in force.

5.2 The policy applies a base rate of £500/MW/year for solar energy generation, a 50% rate (£250/MW/year) for associated and standalone BESS, and a flat rate of not less than £35,000/year for standalone substations. The £500/MW/year rate is a floor and a starting point for negotiation, not a cap; developers are expected to meet or exceed it, and the Council may negotiate where justified.

5.3 The DESNZ working paper illustrated figures of up to £1,000/MW/year. Officers recommend retaining £500/MW/year as the published baseline because it reflects established and defensible English practice (NKDC, Suffolk and Shropshire), maintains the Council's negotiating credibility, and provides consistency across Greater Lincolnshire. The rate will be reviewed when the Government publishes its response to the working paper and confirms the mandatory rate structure, and the policy expressly provides for this.

5.4 Key provisions of the policy include early developer engagement; the exclusion of the CBA from the determination of planning applications and from the Council's NSIP representations; engagement with affected Town and Parish Councils and co-host authorities; index-linking to protect value over the project lifetime; retention of unspent funds; encouragement of community shared ownership in line with the emerging mandatory framework; and LGR transition provisions.

5.5 The policy will be kept under review and updated as required in the light of practice, legislative change, or the introduction of the mandatory scheme, and in any event within six months of the Government's response to the DESNZ working paper and at least every three years from first adoption.

6. Alternative Options

This section sets out the alternative options available to Members, as opposed to the recommendations, with a brief description of why they are not being recommended. Doing nothing is always an option that has been considered.

	Option	Rational for not recommending
1	To not adopt a policy (do nothing) and continue to negotiate on a case-by-case basis.	This would leave the Council without a consistent, defensible negotiating position across the district's five NSIP solar developments and other qualifying schemes, risking inconsistent outcomes (a "community benefit lottery") and the under-realisation of very substantial potential fund income. It would also leave the Council poorly placed to transition into the anticipated mandatory scheme.
2	To adopt a policy but set a materially higher headline rate (e.g. £1,000/MW/year, the upper figure illustrated in the DESNZ working paper).	A higher opening rate is not supported by established English practice (North Kesteven, Suffolk and Shropshire all use £500/MW/year as the baseline) and risks being challenged as unreasonable, weakening the Council's negotiating credibility. The policy instead sets £500/MW/year as the expectation, with scope to negotiate and to review the rate once the Government confirms the mandatory rate structure.
3	To defer adoption until the Government publishes its response to the DESNZ working paper and the mandatory scheme is confirmed.	The mandatory scheme is not expected before the end of 2027 at the earliest and will not apply retrospectively. Deferring would forgo the opportunity to negotiate benefits during the voluntary interim period, when several local NSIPs are moving from consent into implementation, and would weaken the Council's position ahead of Local Government Reorganisation.

ASSOCIATED IMPLICATIONS

Legal: [MO reference to be inserted]

There is at present no specific statutory provision to require a developer to offer a contribution to a CBF, and planning guidance prevents such payments from becoming a condition of planning permission. Where a CBF is agreed voluntarily, the resulting Agreement will take form as a contract between the parties, and the Council would rely on the general power of competence provided in Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011 to enter into such an agreement until the specific statutory provisions are in force. Legal advice will be sought on the drafting of any Community Benefit Agreement negotiated, and this will include seeking advice and guidance on all standard provisions, including dispute resolution, enforceability, and consideration of contract transfer/novation clauses regarding local government reorganisation. The Council will follow the usual procurement requirements regarding the appointment of a fund administrator.

Financial: FIN/62/27/TPL/SL

There is potential to secure significant financial benefit to a CBF given the scale and operational lifespan of solar developments and substation infrastructure. By way of illustration, applying the policy rate of £500/MW/year to a 500MW project with associated BESS over a 40-year operational lifetime would generate in the order of £4.8m–£10m depending on configuration; across all five NSIP projects the total community benefit income over their operational lifetimes could be very substantial. The lead role in negotiating CBAs will be undertaken by existing officers (with external support as necessary as negotiations progress), and no new budget provision is sought through this report; fund governance and administration arrangements (including any administration fees) will be the subject of a further report. Members should note that community benefit income is distinct from, and additional to, business rates (NNDR) income from solar developments, which will be addressed separately through the Council's medium-term financial planning.

Staffing:

No staffing implications arise directly from this report. The lead role in relation to the negotiation of CBAs will be taken by existing members of staff across relevant service areas, as required (with external support as necessary as negotiations progress).

LGR implications:

West Lindsey is undergoing Local Government Reorganisation as part of Greater Lincolnshire devolution. Adopting a policy now, aligned with North Kesteven District Council, contributes to a consistent Greater Lincolnshire approach and improves the transitional standing of agreements reached in the interim. CBAs entered into under the policy will include provisions for the transfer of rights and obligations to any successor authority, and fund governance will be established to operate independently of any single authority to ensure continuity through and beyond the transition. Legal advice on assignment/novation is being sought (see Legal above).

Equality and Diversity including Human Rights:

The policy clarifies that the Council is mindful of both the immediate and the wider impacts of large-scale renewable energy development. An Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken for this new policy; no adverse equality impacts have been identified, and the policy is intended to direct benefit towards communities hosting infrastructure, including in areas of higher deprivation and fuel poverty.

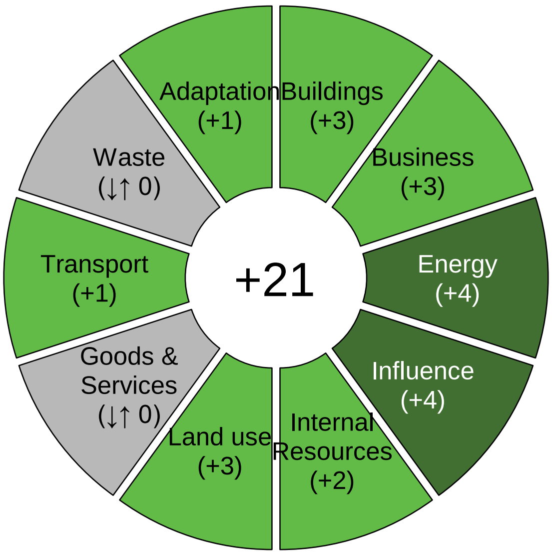
Data Protection Implications:

None identified. Should fund administration arrangements involve the processing of personal data (for example, in the administration of grants), the Data Protection Officer will be consulted at that stage.

Climate Related Risks and Opportunities: There is a recognised need to decarbonise power generation. Volatility in global energy markets adds further impetus to securing a home-grown energy supply. The Council has seen increasing large-scale solar activity within and around the district, with recent NSIP approvals now in place. Securing investment via CBAs allows funding for a range of schemes, including those that support local low-carbon and net zero outcomes; the sums involved are considerable and could underpin delivery of the Council's Environment and Sustainability Strategy.

A Climate, Environment and Sustainability Impact Assessment has been completed for this policy in accordance with the Council's standard approach. The assessment evaluates the effects of the decision to adopt the policy framework. The generation, land-use and carbon effects of the solar NSIPs are out of scope, as those flow from separate Development Consent Order decisions; the social and economic effects of the policy are assessed through the financial implications and Equality Impact Assessment.

The overall outcome is net positive across the ten CESIA categories, as illustrated in the diagram below. The strongest effects are in Energy and Influence reflecting the policy's potential to direct substantial external funding toward community renewable energy, demand reduction, fossil-fuel switching and off-site renewable infrastructure offsetting linked to the Central Lincolnshire Local Plan, and to embed the engagement and partnership working on which local low-carbon delivery depends. There are no direct negative environmental impacts. Impacts are contingent on take-up and on funds being directed to uses set out in our policy, with benefit accrual across project lifetimes of up to 40 years.



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West Lindsey District Council will be net zero by 2050 (23 years and 6 months away).

Section 17 Crime and Disorder Considerations: None identified.

Health Implications: Securing funding via CBAs allows for investment in a range of schemes that support the delivery of local infrastructure and community health and wellbeing, including measures to address fuel poverty in a district with above-average fuel poverty and a high proportion of off-gas-grid households.

Risk Assessment: Not adopting the policy risks the full value of potential Community Benefit Funds not being realised, and risks inconsistent outcomes across comparable communities. The policy makes clear the expectation and starting point for negotiations, seeks to formalise and protect ongoing annual payments and unspent funds, and ensures that benefits are realised beyond the immediate boundary of the developments. The principal residual risk relates to the voluntary nature of the current regime; this is mitigated by early engagement, a clear negotiating baseline, and alignment with the emerging statutory scheme.

Title and Location of any Background Papers used in the preparation of this report:

DESNZ, Community Benefits and Shared Ownership for Low Carbon Energy Infrastructure (working paper, May 2025). DESNZ Solar Roadmap June 2025. North Kesteven District Council, Large-Scale Solar Energy Community Benefit Policy (adopted January 2024). Central Lincolnshire Local Plan (April 2023), Policy S14. Planning and Infrastructure Act 2025; Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIP) Reforms Action Plan. Suffolk County Council, Large Scale Solar Schemes Supplementary Guidance (v1.0, April 2024); Essex County Council NSIP policy materials.

Call in and Urgency:

Is the decision one which Rule 14.7 of the Scrutiny Procedure Rules apply?

i.e. is the report exempt from being called in due to urgency (in consultation with C&I chairman)	**Yes**		**No**	**X**

Key Decision:

A matter which affects two or more wards, or has significant financial implications	**Yes**	**X**	**No**	

APPENDIX A

Policy Research – Community Benefit Funds for Large-Scale Renewable Energy Developments

1. Local Authority Community Benefit Policy Examples

Limited examples exist from English local authorities. Within Greater Lincolnshire, only North Kesteven District Council (NKDC) has an adopted policy. There is significant synergy between the NKDC and Suffolk County Council approaches. The following summarises key policies identified through officer research.

North Kesteven District Council

Adopted in January 2024, the NKDC policy places the District Council as the lead party for CBA negotiations with developers of large-scale solar energy developments (defined as those exporting at least 5MW annually to the national grid). It covers four development typologies:

- Energy generation per MW direct to the grid – £500/MW/year for the operational lifetime
- Energy generation for on-site BESS storage – 50% of the above rate (£250/MW/year)
- Standalone BESS for importing/exporting energy – 50% rate on installed storage capacity
- New standalone grid connection substations – flat rate of £35,000/year per substation over 40 years

The policy applies to both Town and Country Planning Act applications and NSIPs. Unspent monies are retained by NKDC. Fund management is expected through a Special Purpose Vehicle, Community Investment Company, or community foundation.

Suffolk County Council

Suffolk's expectations are set out in supplementary guidance alongside their Energy and Climate Adaptive Infrastructure Policy. Solar scheme rates mirror NKDC at £500/MW/year (index-linked) with a 50% rate for associated BESS. Suffolk also encourages community investment and shared ownership schemes. Benefits are aligned to Welsh guidelines published in 2022. Unspent monies are retained by Suffolk County Council.

Essex County Council

Essex's role in CBAs is set out within their NSIP Policy. The policy requires early engagement at pre-application stage but does not specify contribution rates, leaving these to negotiation.

Shropshire Council

Shropshire has not adopted a formal policy but has produced guidance for local councils. The guidance sets a suggested baseline of £500/MW per year for 40 years, aligning with NKDC and Suffolk. Shropshire Council itself does not act as a party to agreements or distribute funds; the guidance supports parish and town councils in their own negotiations.

Dorset County Council

Dorset published guidance setting a minimum benchmark of £1,000/MW per year for 20 years, index-linked to RPI (or a pro-rata lump sum). The County Council provides a dedicated Renewable Energy Development Officer to support local councils in negotiations. This is notably higher than the £500/MW baseline used elsewhere.

Scottish Examples

Scotland has national good practice guidance recommending £5,000/MW/year for onshore renewable energy developments. The Highland Council applies this as a minimum payment, RPI-linked from a 2011 baseline. North Ayrshire Council has a similarly comprehensive policy applying the national benchmark. However, Community Energy Scotland has noted that not all developers comply with the £5,000 benchmark in practice, citing examples of projects offering £2,500–£3,500/MW/year.

2. Policy Comparison Summary

Authority	Technology	Scope	Rate	Developer Role	Notes
NKDC	Solar, BESS, substations	5MW+ (TCPA & NSIP)	£500/MW/yr; BESS 50%; substations £35k/yr	Early engagement, remain involved in fund distribution	Unspent funds retained. SPV/community foundation model.
Suffolk CC	Solar, BESS	NSIP scale	£500/MW/yr index-linked; BESS 50%	Early engagement, mitigate construction impact, identify workforce implications	Shared ownership aligned to Welsh guidelines. Unspent retained.
Essex CC	Not specified	NSIP	Not specified	Pre-application stage engagement	Policy only, no rates.
Shropshire	Ground-mounted solar	Not specified	Baseline £500/MW/yr	Early engagement expected	Guidance to parishes, not policy. Council not party to CBAs.
Dorset CC	Ground-mounted solar	Not specified	£1,000/MW/yr (20 yrs, RPI)	Not specified	Higher rate. Dedicated officer support.
Highland Council	All onshore renewables	All scales	£5,000/MW/yr (RPI from 2011)	National good practice guidance	National Scottish benchmark. Wider area share included.

In developing their policy in 2023 NKDC also took examples of MOUs and existing developer commitments to find mean values for £/MW/YR (based on 40 yr operational life span).

Application	Capacity	Payment /Formula applied	£ per MW	Per MW/Year equivalent over 40 yrs Developer Role
Dengie Solar Park	19 MW	£1000/MW single payment	£100/MW	£25
Twemlows Solar Farm	10MW	£91,000 (2015 – 2023 at £11,375 per annum)	£1137/MW	Time period unclear
Neath Port Talbot	Various	£30,000 per MW – single payment		£750 based on 400MW NSIP scheme
Copper Bottom Solar	30MW	£400/MW/YR for lifetime of permission	£400/MW	£400

Speedwell Solar	40MW	£8,000 / Year for lifetime of permission	£200/MW	£200
Common Farm	49.9MW	£50,00/Yr for 20 years	£1000/MW	£500
Grimsby Solar Farm	49.9MW	£20,000/Yr for 40 years	£400/MW	£400
Draycott	5.03MW	£2000/Yr for 40 years	£397/MW	£397
Longfield (NSIP Essex)	400MW	£7.2m over 40 years (£2m for employment)	£450/MW (£325/MW allowing for employment)	£450
Springwell	800MW	£400/MW	£400/MW	£400 (£12.8m over 40 yr operational life style)

3. National Policy Context (Updated March 2026)

DESNZ Working Paper (May 2025)

In May 2025, DESNZ published a landmark working paper proposing the introduction of mandatory community benefit and shared ownership schemes for low-carbon energy infrastructure across Great Britain. Key proposals include:

- A mandatory community benefit scheme established through primary legislation, with secondary legislation and guidance setting technical details
- Coverage of solar, onshore/offshore wind, marine, nuclear, BESS, hydrogen to power, long duration energy storage, and power CCUS; district heat networks excluded
- Minimum threshold of 5MW installed capacity, with projects below encouraged to provide voluntary benefits
- Technology-specific thresholds being considered to account for different financial models
- Fund Administrators appointed by developers, community-led governance, with arrangements in place at least one year before first payment
- Developers ultimately responsible for compliance, including Fund Administrator actions
- Enforcement through dispute resolution escalating to civil penalties
- No retrospective application; a development stage cut-off for inclusion
- Scheme could come into force by end of 2027 at earliest

Consultation Responses and Rate Discussion

Key consultation responses include:

- Community Energy England, Scotland and Wales proposed a revenue-based approach at 4% of gross revenue, estimating approximately £8,000/MW/year for onshore wind
- Citizens Advice called for mandated and “hard coded” minimum levels to prevent a “postcode lottery”
- Sustainability First supported mandatory minimum standards with flexibility for existing local arrangements
- Energy Saving Trust supported mandatory shared ownership with impartial expert support for communities, particularly in England

- For solar, rates are expected to fall in the £500–£1,000/MW/year range, with the Scottish £5,000/MW benchmark applicable primarily to wind

Planning and Infrastructure Act 2025

Royal Assent: 18 December 2025. Key provisions relevant to community benefits:

- Bill discount scheme for households near new or significantly upgraded electricity transmission infrastructure: £250/year per household for up to 10 years
- Community fund guidance: £200,000 per km of overhead line; £530,000 per substation/switching station/converter station
- Framework expected in place by late 2026, first payments from 2027
- These provisions apply to transmission infrastructure only and are separate from the generation asset community benefit scheme
- Streamlined NSIP consenting process, with reforms to pre-application consultation requirements

Great British Energy and the Local Power Plan

Great British Energy (GBE) was established through the Great British Energy Act. The Local Power Plan supports local authorities in delivering local and community energy projects. In February 2026, Energy Minister Michael Shanks positioned the Local Power Plan as a mechanism to embed communities in clean energy projects. The Government has committed £180 million for public sector solar deployment on schools and NHS sites.

4. Implications for the WLDC Policy

The research supports the following conclusions:

- The £500/MW/year rate for solar aligns with the established English practice (NKDC, Suffolk, Shropshire) and sits within the expected range for the mandatory scheme
- The NKDC policy model provides the strongest template for WLDC given the shared Central Lincolnshire Local Plan area and the LGR context
- Adopting a policy now positions WLDC to negotiate effectively during the voluntary interim period before mandatory legislation takes effect
- The policy should be designed to transition smoothly into the statutory regime, incorporating governance principles from the DESNZ working paper
- Fund governance arrangements should be established in advance. One approach could be through a community foundation . This should be done now in order to be ready to meet the DESNZ requirement that governance is in place at least one year before first payment
- Shared ownership provisions should be signalled in the policy, even if detailed mechanisms await the Government's response to the consultation
- LGR transition provisions should be built into CBA terms to ensure continuity when successor authorities are established

Large-Scale Renewable Energy Community Benefit Policy

Adopted July 2026

Version 1.0

Purpose

1. This policy is intended to assist West Lindsey District Council in negotiating Community Benefit Agreements (CBAs) related to large-scale renewable energy developments. The policy includes provisions for community benefit from solar energy generation, on-site and off-site battery energy storage systems (BESS), and new grid connection infrastructure.

2. For the purposes of this policy, a large-scale renewable energy development is defined as one with an installed capacity of at least 5MW. This threshold aligns with the proposed minimum threshold in the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ) working paper on mandatory community benefits (May 2025).

3. A CBA under this policy will be relevant to both applications made for planning permission where the electricity generation capacity is under 50MW and for Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs) that seek a Development Consent Order for electricity generation at 50MW or over.

4. The policy will be used to illustrate to Town and Parish Councils the scale of funding that might be secured within their area. The District Council will work with local councils to identify projects for investment. The policy clarifies that the Council is mindful of the potential receipts and the wider impacts of large-scale renewable energy development across the district and, as such, a proportion of the funds secured will be made available for projects across the wider administrative area.

5. Since the funds for CBAs would be derived from renewable energy and given the Council's commitment to climate change and delivering net zero through the Environment and Sustainability Strategy, the funds will support both local communities and the delivery of the Council's wider environmental objectives across the district.

6. For the avoidance of doubt, negotiation and the decision to enter a CBA is not indicative of any support for a project. Rather, it is a means to secure benefits if the project receives permission or consent. A CBA will be supplemental to any s106 agreement required to mitigate specific impacts of a proposed development.

Key Operational Principles

7. The District Council will lead on the negotiation of CBAs and will seek to engage with the relevant local Parish or Town council(s) for the location of the proposed development. Engagement will be with those local councils where part or all the proposed site is within their boundary.

8. Where a site boundary corresponds to a local council area boundary, but no part of the proposed development is within their area, the Council will not be required to engage with that local council. However, good practice should encourage wider engagement where cumulative impacts are experienced.

9. Where a CBA relates to a planning application to be determined by the Council as Local Planning Authority, the Development Management team shall play no part in negotiations. The lead role will be taken by the Council's Policy and Strategy / Economic Development team, or such other officers as may be nominated. The presence and/or prospect for a CBA will not be a matter for the Planning Committee.

10. In the case of NSIP proposals, since the Council is a host authority and consultee and is not responsible for determination, there is greater freedom for the Council to nominate lead officers for negotiation.

However, the presence and/or prospect for a CBA will not be a matter for the Council's Local Impact Report (LIR), relevant and written representations, or the Planning Committee in the case of the LIR.

11. For NSIP developments, engagement with co-host authorities will be undertaken. The County Council and, where order limits extend beyond the district, neighbouring county and/or district councils will have host status.

12. Prospective developers and promoters of large-scale renewable energy developments are expected to engage with the District Council at an early point in the process, not just to seek a view on planning merits but also to begin discussions on the CBA with appropriate officers.

13. Initial discussions on a CBA will need to account for the core requirements below, depending on the nature of the proposals, and seek to agree heads of terms and relevant timescales for delivering community benefits.

14. The Council has identified four development typologies for CBAs relevant to both planning applications and NSIPs. These are to be read in combination; more than one may be engaged by a single proposal. The Council reserves the right to add to or revise the development typologies.

Core Requirements

15. The base rate to be applied to all individual CBAs for large-scale solar energy projects will be £500 per MW per year. Solar energy developers are expected to fund this figure, or greater if proposed, unless there are compelling reasons why a lower amount should be applied. This will be negotiated on a case-by-case basis. This rate aligns with the adopted North Kesteven District Council policy and the established English practice. The rate will be reviewed when the Government publishes its response to the DESNZ consultation and confirms the mandatory rate structure.

16. Each CBA will include appropriate provisions to protect the investment against inflation (index-linked). No provisions will be agreed to repay any unspent funds; such funds will remain available for use by the Council in support of the local community and/or projects across the wider district and will be rolled over to subsequent financial years.

Development Typologies

17. The four development typologies for funding will be based on the rate above, unless otherwise stated:

- **i. Energy generation per MW direct to the grid**
- **ii. Energy generation per MW for storage on site for later export to the grid**
- **iii. Proposals for standalone Battery Energy Storage Systems**
- **iv. Proposals for developing new standalone substations on the national grid**

Development Typology 1 – Energy generation per MW direct to the grid

18. This applies to all qualifying large-scale solar energy developments and is based on the declared and actual power generation exported immediately to the grid, with the rate in paragraph 15 applied. This reflects a payment per MW of energy exported.

Development Typology 2 – Energy generation for on-site storage for later export

19. NSIP solar energy developments increasingly include Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS) within the order limits. A BESS is treated as associated development and forms a significant part of the overall scheme.

20. Where a BESS is deployed, it can store additional energy generated on site for later release to the grid. In some cases, BESS can also import energy from elsewhere for storage and later release at times of peak demand.

21. A BESS resolves the intermittency of solar generation and should be welcomed as a means of meeting energy demands around the clock.

22. A BESS, whether within an NSIP or a planning application scheme, has an impact in terms of development and enables solar developments to generate additional energy output beyond the contracted grid connection. This additional on-site generation will be subject to a financial contribution via the CBA at a rate of 50% of the base rate (£250/MW/year), in addition to any sums levied through other typologies.

Development Typology 3 – Standalone Battery Energy Storage Systems

23. Freestanding BESS or equivalent facilities enable the National Grid to manage surplus renewable power and release it at times of high demand. A BESS performs an important national function in power supply.

24. A standalone BESS is a large-scale piece of infrastructure that, by its nature, has an urbanising and industrial character in a rural setting. Since it serves the needs of the national grid, it places an imposition upon the local host community. A CBA is warranted to compensate and/or mitigate this impact.

25. The rate for standalone BESS will be 50% of the base rate (£250/MW/year) applied to installed storage capacity for the operational lifetime.

Development Typology 4 – New standalone substations on the national grid

26. To meet the challenges of decarbonising power generation nationally, new substations are needed to enlarge and support the transmission network. Some new substation development falls under local authority jurisdiction.

27. New substations present an urban and industrial form of development, creating tensions with host localities particularly in rural settings. A CBA is merited to compensate and mitigate the host community for accommodating development of more than local importance.

28. The Council will seek a flat rate contribution of not less than £35,000 per year per substation over a 40-year operational lifetime. The Planning and Infrastructure Act 2025 provides for transmission infrastructure community benefits including lump-sum payments of £530,000 per substation. Where the statutory scheme applies to a particular substation, the Council’s policy will be reviewed for consistency with the statutory provisions.

Use of the Funding

29. Given the sums involved are considerable and some schemes have a cumulative and wider than local impact, not all funding could or should be spent in immediate localities. Funds will be managed in the interest of directly affected communities and the wider district.

30. The Council will explore appropriate fund governance arrangements. It is anticipated that a Special Purpose Vehicle, Community Investment Company, or an existing community organisation would be the appropriate means to manage funds. This approach is consistent with the DESNZ proposal for community-led Fund Administrators with governance established at least one year before first payment.

31. Developers making funds available are expected to remain engaged in programming and distribution of funds, consistent with the DESNZ proposal that developers retain ultimate compliance responsibility.

32. Investment principles include two threads:

- A local community share for the immediate area of the development, within 5km of the site boundary, supporting projects of all types judged on a criteria-based system with low-carbon outcomes and community health, wellbeing and vitality prioritised
- A wider district share addressing cumulative impact, focused on projects that deliver or contribute to low or net zero carbon outcomes, supporting the Council's Environment and Sustainability Strategy

33. Eligible projects include, but are not limited to:

- Community renewable energy schemes and Local Power Plan projects
- Grant funding for households moving off fossil fuels, alongside Government retrofit programmes
- SME support for greener solutions, clean productivity, and the circular economy
- Decarbonisation and energy efficiency in commercial premises
- Apprenticeships and green energy skills development
- Active travel schemes and sustainable transport
- Local biodiversity initiatives and nature recovery
- Schools engagement and education on net zero
- Sensitive energy efficiency measures in historic buildings
- The district's low carbon economy and associated supply chains, helping to ensure West Lindsey and Greater Lincolnshire are able to maximise the benefits of the Trent Valley Clean Energy Supercluster.
- Agrivoltaics and agricultural co-benefits
- Fuel poverty alleviation and community energy resilience
- Providing opportunities for community investment in off-site renewable energy infrastructure (linked to the Central Lincolnshire Local Plan net-zero aims)

Shared Ownership

34. The Government is consulting on the introduction of mandatory shared ownership for new renewable electricity generation projects of 5MW or more. Shared ownership includes any structure involving a community group as a financial partner for the lifetime of the project.

35. The Council supports the principle of shared ownership and will encourage developers to explore community investment and shared ownership opportunities alongside the CBA. Detailed shared ownership provisions will be incorporated into this policy once the Government confirms the mandatory framework.

Local Government Reorganisation

36. West Lindsey is undergoing Local Government Reorganisation as part of Greater Lincolnshire devolution, with shadow authorities anticipated around 2027 and vesting in 2028. All CBAs entered into under this policy will include provisions for the transfer of rights and obligations to any successor authority.

37. Fund governance arrangements will be established to operate independently of any single authority, ensuring continuity of fund management through the LGR transition period and beyond.

Review

38. This policy shall be kept under review and updated as required as a result of practice and use, legislative change, or the introduction of the anticipated mandatory community benefit scheme. The policy will be reviewed within six months of the Government publishing its response to the DESNZ working paper, and at least every three years from first adoption. Minor amendments may be approved by the Director for Planning, Regeneration and Communities in consultation with the Chair of the Thriving Places Committee.

WEST LINDSEY DISTRICT COUNCIL

Consultation Response

Community Benefits and Shared Ownership for Low Carbon Energy Infrastructure

DESNZ Working Paper: response from West Lindsey District Council

Submitted: July 2025

Officer lead: Steve Leary, Policy and Strategy Officer (Environment and Sustainability)

Submitted on behalf of the Environment and Sustainability Member Steering Group, following discussions with Group members and relevant officers.

Note on status: This response was prepared by the lead officer within the timescales set by the consultation. Given the length and technical complexity of the working paper, it has not been through the Council's normal approval process. It represents a considered, consensus position developed through officer and member discussions, but it is not a formally endorsed position of West Lindsey District Council. Other views may exist within the authority. Individual councillors, officers, and members of the public are free to submit their own separate responses to this consultation.

Foreword

West Lindsey District Council welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero's working paper on community benefits and shared ownership for low carbon energy infrastructure. The issues raised go to the heart of how the energy transition is delivered on the ground. And few districts in England are feeling that transition as acutely as West Lindsey.

Our district and its immediate surroundings host what is now, by consented capacity and pipeline, one of the largest clusters of utility-scale solar infrastructure in Western Europe. Five Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (Gate Burton, Cottam, West Burton, Tillbridge, and One Earth) represent a combined consented capacity exceeding three gigawatts. These projects sit within a predominantly rural district of 1,179 square miles, approximately 150 villages, and a population of around 95,000. They bring the national energy transition directly into the living rooms, fields, and parish halls of some of England's most sparsely populated communities.

That scale gives us a perspective that we believe adds value to the consultation. We are neither a metropolitan authority processing occasional energy applications, nor a small rural council with a handful of small-scale schemes. We are, uniquely, a district whose everyday planning, engagement, and community relations work is now substantially shaped by the cumulative weight of large-scale renewable energy development. What we say about social licence, rural capacity, and the relationship between developers and host communities is said from direct, continuing experience.

This response reflects that experience. It is evidence-based, pragmatic, and broadly supportive of the direction of travel proposed in the working paper. We agree that mandatory community benefits are necessary, that the current voluntary regime creates unfair and unsustainable outcomes, and that communities hosting the infrastructure on which the national grid increasingly depends deserve more than the current patchwork. Where we have reservations, particularly around shared ownership, rural governance capacity, and the role of local authorities, we have set these out honestly, with reasoned alternatives rather than blanket objections.

We have also, throughout, tried to speak to the implementation challenge. Consultations of this kind generate a lot of comment in principle; the harder question is how a scheme actually works on the ground, over 40-year project lifetimes, across communities with widely differing capacity, and in the context of significant local government change. We hope the response is useful in that regard.

A note on process: this response was prepared by the lead officer for the Environment and Sustainability Member Steering Group, working within the consultation's submission timescales. The length and technical scope of the working paper made it impractical to route a full draft through the Council's standard approval process. The positions taken here were developed through discussion with steering group members and relevant colleagues, and reflect a broad working consensus. They are not the formally adopted position of West Lindsey District Council, and I would not want them to be read as such. Members of the council, officers, and indeed residents remain free to form and submit their own views.

Steve Leary
Policy and Strategy Officer (Environment and Sustainability)
West Lindsey District Council

Executive Summary

This response is structured around the 47 questions posed by the consultation and reflects a broad consensus position developed through discussions with the Environment and Sustainability Member Steering Group and relevant officers. It is not a formally adopted position of the Council. The headline messages are set out below.

On community benefits (Part 1)

- We strongly support the principle that developers must be required to provide community benefit funds. The current voluntary regime produces inconsistent, sometimes invisible, and often contested outcomes. Mandatory provision is essential to secure the social licence on which the energy transition depends.
- We support a 5 MW threshold as broadly aligned with our own planning experience and with existing Contracts for Difference thresholds. Solar, battery storage, and hybrid sites should all be clearly within scope.
- We support a £/MW capacity-based calculation for simplicity and certainty, although we recognise the case for an output-based alternative and set out a compromise position.
- Index-linking is non-negotiable. Rural authorities have too much historical experience of planning obligations and Section 106 commitments losing real-terms value over 25 to 40-year project lifetimes.
- Local authorities must be given a clearly defined role in the governance architecture. Not necessarily as fund administrators, but as statutory consultees on boundary definition, administrator appointment, and scheme performance.
- The governance and capacity-building provisions need to be designed with genuinely small rural communities in mind. Parish councils in West Lindsey routinely operate with annual precepts of £5,000 to £50,000. A community benefit fund of £100,000 per annum or more is an order-of-magnitude change in scale, and the scheme must assume that additional support will be necessary.

On shared ownership (Part 2)

- We support shared ownership as a genuine and valuable option for communities that choose it, but we do not support making it mandatory. The financial risks, capacity requirements, and equity issues involved mean that it will not be appropriate or achievable for every community.
- The Community Electricity Right provisions in the Infrastructure Act 2015 provide a workable legislative foundation but require updating. This is particularly so on technology scope, stake sizes, and flexibility of structure.
- If shared ownership is expanded, substantial government support will be required for both communities and developers. Without this, an ostensibly empowering policy could concentrate benefits among more affluent, better-organised communities and exclude precisely those who most need the transition to work for them.

Cross-cutting observations

- The policy framework needs to work alongside, not instead of, existing planning obligations, Biodiversity Net Gain requirements, and developer Community Benefit Agreements. The risk of double-counting and confusion is real and should be addressed explicitly in guidance.
- Local Government Reorganisation is proceeding in parallel with this policy development. Arrangements must be resilient to structural change and must protect community benefit flows across transitions. This is an issue of direct and immediate relevance to West Lindsey and must be considered.

- The cumulative impact of multiple large-scale projects on individual districts requires specific recognition. A scheme designed around single-project dynamics will not adequately reflect the reality for host authorities like ours.

About West Lindsey District Council

West Lindsey District Council is the local planning authority for a predominantly rural district in northern Lincolnshire. Gainsborough is the principal town; the remainder of the district comprises approximately 150 villages and smaller settlements spread across 1,179 square miles. The council serves a population of approximately 95,000.

The district has characteristics that make it both a priority area for large-scale renewable energy development and a case study in the challenges that such development poses for rural communities:

- Approximately 17% of households in West Lindsey are estimated to be in fuel poverty, substantially above the national average. The district contains a high proportion of older, poorly insulated private-sector housing stock.
- Over 60% of the district's land area is off the gas grid. Many rural communities rely on heating oil, LPG, or solid fuel, exposing them to significant price volatility.
- The district sits predominantly on Grade 3b and Grade 4 agricultural land, which combined with proximity to the Humber Energy Estuary and existing grid infrastructure has made it one of the most sought-after areas in England for utility-scale solar development.
- Parts of Gainsborough and several rural wards fall within the 20% most deprived areas nationally on multiple domains of the Index of Multiple Deprivation.

West Lindsey and its immediate surroundings now host five Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project solar schemes with a combined consented capacity of over 3 GW: Gate Burton (500 MW), Cottam (600 MW), West Burton (approximately 418 MW), Tillbridge (800 MW plus 500 MW battery storage), and One Earth (740 MW). Four have Development Consent Orders granted; the fifth is expected to receive a Secretary of State decision shortly. Construction has not yet commenced on any of them.

This concentration of large-scale energy infrastructure within a single district is unusual, and it shapes every aspect of our engagement with the community benefits policy question. We have spent a great deal of time in recent years processing applications, engaging with developers, and, most importantly, fielding questions from residents and parish councils about what their communities will actually receive in return for hosting infrastructure that will operate for four decades. The current voluntary regime produces no consistent answer to that question. That is the experience this response is grounded in.

Part 1: Community Benefits

Question 1: Do you agree with the principle that developers must provide community benefit funds?

WLDC position: ***Strong support.***

We agree, and we consider this the single most important question in the consultation. The voluntary approach has had two decades to demonstrate that it can deliver consistent, meaningful, and trusted benefits to communities hosting energy infrastructure. It has not done so. Within our own district and neighbouring Authorities we have seen stark inconsistency between developers. Some offer substantive community benefit packages as a matter of course, others offer little or nothing beyond the bare statutory minimum. The result, predictably, is a “community benefit lottery” where neighbouring parishes experiencing comparable impacts are treated very differently.

The working paper’s own framing captures this well: the current voluntary approach means communities cannot be certain of receiving any package, and there is inconsistency across locations and sectors. Our experience confirms that observation in every material respect. Residents in West Lindsey parishes situated next to large solar projects are acutely aware that communities elsewhere - including just across our boundary - have received very different offers. That inconsistency is becoming a driver of planning objections in its own right.

Mandatory community benefits would achieve three things that the voluntary approach cannot. First, it would create certainty for residents that hosting infrastructure will be recognised in a tangible way. Second, it would level the playing field between developers, removing the competitive pressure on responsible developers who currently feel they are unilaterally raising costs by offering generous benefits. Third, and perhaps most importantly, it would help maintain social licence for the broader energy transition at a point where cumulative development pressure in places like West Lindsey is beginning to generate genuine community concern.

The international precedent cited in the working paper (in particular Ireland’s €2 per MWh approach) demonstrates that mandatory schemes are implementable without preventing deployment. We do not believe there is a credible argument that mandatory community benefits would materially delay or deter the energy transition; on the contrary, we believe they are increasingly necessary to sustain it.

Question 2: What types of low carbon energy infrastructure should be included within the scope of the policy?

WLDC position: ***Comprehensive scope, including all of the technologies listed in the working paper.***

We support the inclusion of offshore wind, onshore wind, solar, nuclear, Power CCUS, Hydrogen to Power, battery storage, Long Duration Energy Storage, and relevant marine technologies. From our perspective as a host authority, the scope should be technology-neutral to the fullest extent possible. Communities hosting battery storage sites, for example, experience real local impacts (visual, amenity, and in some cases safety) that should not be left outside the scheme because the technology does not fit a particular traditional generation model.

Solar is of particular importance given its current scale and future pipeline in our district. Historically, solar schemes have tended to generate lower per-MW community benefit offers than onshore wind, even where impacts on rural communities such as agricultural land loss, visual change, cumulative landscape effect, are significant. Bringing solar firmly within a mandatory scheme is essential to correct that anomaly.

We would also urge that associated infrastructure (substations, grid connections, BESS compounds etc) be considered within the scope where they are part of a single development or have material local impact. Our experience is that communities frequently feel these elements are the most visually and acoustically intrusive components of a scheme, and they should not fall outside community benefit provision because they are categorised as ancillary.

Question 3: What would be the impacts on specific low carbon energy infrastructure technologies of bringing them into the scope of this potential scheme?

We respond from the perspective of a planning authority rather than an investor, and offer three observations.

First, for mature technologies such as onshore and offshore wind, solar, and battery storage, the financial impact of mandatory community benefits at levels indicated in the working paper is modest relative to total project value and the underlying revenues secured through CfD, Capacity Market, or merchant arrangements. We do not believe the scheme will be a binding constraint on project viability for these technologies.

Second, for less mature technologies such as floating offshore wind, Power CCUS, and LDES, the position is more delicate. The working paper's approach of a single threshold creates the right direction of travel but may warrant transitional arrangements (see Question 7) to avoid deterring first-of-a-kind projects.

Third, we would highlight the solar-specific impact in our district. A large volume of solar capacity, predominantly on agricultural land, has triggered legitimate community concerns about cumulative landscape effect, biodiversity, and the relationship between food and energy land use. A mandatory community benefit scheme helps address these concerns directly by ensuring that communities see tangible return for hosting this transition. It therefore supports rather than impedes solar deployment in the long term.

Question 4: Do you agree that there needs to be provision for amending the scope of the policy in future?

WLDC position: ***Yes, subject to appropriate consultation.***

The energy sector is changing rapidly. A scheme designed in 2025 cannot reasonably anticipate the technological and commercial landscape of 2035 or 2045. Provision for amendment is therefore essential. We would emphasise two things.

First, amendment should require formal consultation with local authorities as well as developers. We are often the bodies most attuned to local impacts of new technology types and should be properly engaged before scope is expanded or contracted.

Second, amendment mechanisms should be clear and predictable. Rolling uncertainty about scope creates problems for developers doing long-term planning and for communities trying to form realistic expectations about what they will receive. We would prefer a scheduled review (for example, every five years) rather than ad hoc changes triggered by individual circumstances.

Question 5: Do you agree with the approach outlined for the provision of community benefits for co-located infrastructure?

WLDC position: ***Qualified support, with strong preference for coordinated community-facing delivery.***

We support individual treatment of co-located assets for the purposes of calculating contributions. This is the most transparent approach and reflects the reality that different technologies on a single site generate revenue through different mechanisms.

However, from a community perspective, fragmentation of fund administration across co-located assets creates confusion and is administratively wasteful. In our experience, communities do not distinguish between the solar and battery elements of a single site; they see one project, one site, one operator. We would therefore urge that where assets are co-located and commonly owned or operated, fund administration should be consolidated. The developer obligation remains separately calculated for each asset, but the community's interface with the scheme is a single point of contact, a single fund, and a single governance structure.

Question 6: Do you agree with the proposed mandatory community benefits threshold of 5MW for power generating and storage assets?

WLDC position: ***Support.***

The 5 MW threshold aligns well with our planning experience. Projects above 5 MW typically have impacts - on landscape, transport, amenity, or infrastructure - that generate meaningful community engagement from the pre-application stage onwards. Below 5 MW, the picture is more mixed; many smaller schemes are community-scale or locally-backed, and applying full mandatory community benefit requirements would be disproportionate both to the scale of local impact and to the administrative cost of running the associated governance.

The 5 MW threshold also aligns with the Contracts for Difference regime, which is helpful for administrative consistency. Based on the pipeline of applications we have handled and consulted on, a 5 MW threshold would capture the great majority of capacity while excluding schemes for which the benefit-cost ratio of full mandatory governance would be poor.

We note that in our specific context, all five NSIP projects are orders of magnitude above this threshold; the working paper's proposal is not, in practice, going to affect whether West Lindsey's current pipeline is in scope. But we recognise the threshold is structural and its appropriateness elsewhere matters.

Question 7: Should the threshold vary by technology in order to accommodate nascent technology?

WLDC position: ***Cautious; prefer transitional relief over differentiated thresholds.***

We see the case for supporting nascent technologies such as floating offshore wind, but we would prefer this to be delivered through transitional arrangements (for example, a lower initial benefit rate for a defined period after commercial operation) rather than a different headline threshold. Differentiated thresholds risk creating perverse incentives, gaming, and unnecessary complexity in the interface between the scheme and the planning system.

A uniform 5 MW threshold combined with technology-aware transitional arrangements would provide a cleaner, more defensible structure, and would make it easier for local authorities to explain the scheme to residents and parish councils.

Question 8: How should shared ownership arrangements interact with any mandated community benefit fund contributions?

WLDC position: ***Community benefits should apply regardless of shared ownership; adjustment, not exemption.***

We do not support treating shared ownership as a substitute for community benefit fund contributions. The two serve different purposes. Shared ownership provides a financial return to investing community members; community benefit funds serve the wider community, including residents who cannot or choose not to invest. Replacing one with the other would systematically disadvantage those least able to participate in shared ownership - typically lower-income, elderly, or less organised community members.

Where a community has taken a shared ownership stake, a proportionate adjustment to the community benefit contribution could be reasonable. For example, if a community holds a 10% equity stake, reducing the mandated benefit contribution by 10% could be defensible. But the remaining 90% contribution must still flow to the broader community benefit fund. This preserves the distinction between investor return and universal community benefit, and avoids shared ownership becoming a vehicle for developers to discharge their community benefit obligations to a narrower group.

Question 9: Are there any project types that should be exempt from a potential mandatory community benefits scheme?

WLDC position: ***Limited and clearly defined exemptions only.***

Exemptions risk becoming loopholes. We would support exemption only in clearly defined cases where the project is itself already a community benefit, namely:

- Wholly community-owned projects (for example, schemes owned by a constituted community benefit society with no external commercial stakeholder).
- Public sector projects where the generating entity is a local authority, public body, or NHS trust using the generation for its own operations or for direct community benefit.
- Pilot and demonstration projects with a clearly defined research purpose and a time-limited operational window.

We would not support exemption for repowering or life-extension of existing commercial projects. These represent continuing commercial revenues and should continue to support the host community accordingly. Indeed, the rationale for community benefit payments is arguably stronger for life-extended schemes, where the original host community commitment was made a generation earlier under very different assumptions.

Question 10: For those developers already offering community benefits on a voluntary basis, how are these funded?

Our direct experience of voluntary community benefit arrangements and research examples from elsewhere suggests three distinct funding approaches, each of which has implications for the design of a mandatory scheme.

Most commonly, developers treat community benefits as an operational cost, funded from project revenues - power sales, grid services payments, and government support mechanisms such as CfD receipts. The Welsh Brechfa Forest scheme is a well-known example of this model, with index-linked annual payments drawn from operational revenue. For larger, established developers, this approach is normal and well-understood internally.

A second group of developers appears to fund community benefits from development budgets or corporate community relations budgets, particularly at smaller scales or where community benefit commitments were made as part of planning negotiation rather than from a standing corporate policy.

A third category - smaller and less consistent - funds community benefits opportunistically, without a predictable source or commitment structure. These arrangements are the most vulnerable to renegotiation, non-delivery, or quiet attrition over time.

For a mandatory scheme to work, we would expect contributions to be set up as operational costs secured against the licence holder, drawn from project revenues, and protected by financial security mechanisms (see Question 17). This is the approach that has proven most durable in the voluntary context and aligns with the way developers already account for comparable obligations.

Question 11: Recognising the need for flexibility, are there any impacts or considerations of funding community-led projects that should be taken into account?

Community-led projects (whether funded through community benefits or other means) have a track record of producing outsized social value because they are designed around genuine local priorities rather than imposed from outside. We would urge that scheme design actively supports this.

Specifically, the scheme should allow communities to pool multi-year contributions into larger capital projects (for example, retrofitting a village hall or installing a community solar array) rather than forcing an annual spend pattern that tends to produce small, incremental grants. The Irish model provides some useful precedent on this.

We would also highlight two rural-specific considerations. Community-led capital projects in rural areas often face higher unit costs (for example, because of geographic dispersion, off-grid status, or planning complexity). Scheme guidance should not inadvertently penalise these projects by comparing headline cost-per-beneficiary figures without adjusting for rural context.

Question 12: Do you foresee any challenges for developers to fund mandatory community benefits?

For mature technologies with established revenue structures, we do not anticipate material viability challenges at the benefit levels indicated in the working paper. The relevant comparator is not corporate profit margin but project economics across a 25 to 40-year operational life; at that horizon, mandatory community benefits at the indicated levels are absorbable.

There are, however, genuine challenges for developers in specific circumstances:

- Merchant-revenue projects face greater income volatility than CfD-backed projects, and may find fixed-rate contributions harder to accommodate during low-price periods. Scheme design should consider whether suspension or deferral provisions are appropriate in extreme market conditions (see Question 16).
- First-of-a-kind projects in nascent technologies may face genuine viability pressure. Transitional arrangements could address this (see Question 7).
- Small developers may lack the internal governance and community engagement capacity that larger developers take for granted. Government-backed technical assistance could help avoid this becoming a barrier to market entry for smaller schemes above the threshold.

Question 13: How can significantly larger community funds be best managed?

This is an issue of direct relevance to West Lindsey. A 500 MW project at an indicated rate of £1,000 per MW per year would generate £500,000 annually - and we have five such projects of 400 MW or larger. If all five deliver at similar rates, the aggregate annual community benefit flowing to West Lindsey communities could reach £3 to 4 million. This has potential to be transformative, but would also an administrative challenge of a different order.

We believe the most workable approach is a tiered governance structure that distinguishes between:

- Very local funds (parish-level, typically under £50,000 per year) focused on immediate neighbourhood projects;
- District-level or multi-parish funds (£50,000 to £500,000 per year) supporting strategic interventions across a wider area; and
- Regional or aggregated funds (above £500,000 per year) capable of undertaking substantial strategic investment, community infrastructure, or shared ownership stakes.

We would caution against caps on individual project contributions. Caps reduce developer incentive to engage meaningfully with community scale and can create perverse incentives (for example, artificially phasing projects below cap thresholds). A better approach is to permit pooling into regional vehicles where local absorptive capacity is limited, with clear community oversight of how pooled funds are deployed.

Question 14: Do you have a preference for either of the proposed methods for calculating the level of contribution payable (installed capacity or generation output)?

WLDC position: ***Preference for installed capacity (£/MW), with reservations.***

From a local authority administration perspective, the installed capacity approach has significant practical advantages. It is transparent, predictable, and independently verifiable from public records. Community benefit payments can be calculated at project consent stage and budgeted accordingly. Index-linking can be applied straightforwardly.

The output-based approach (£/MWh) more accurately reflects the value actually generated by the project, but it imports complexity and administrative cost. Communities would need to rely on developer-reported output data (or pay for independent audit), and annual variability in payment levels would complicate budgeting for multi-year community projects.

A compromise worth considering would be a capacity-based payment with a true-up mechanism over five-year periods, in which output is measured and contributions adjusted against an assumed capacity factor. This combines the predictability of the capacity model with the fairness of the output model, at modest administrative cost.

Question 15: Do you agree with the principles of seeking to enable combining funds and utilising regional funds?

WLDC position: ***Yes - with safeguards.***

Combining and regional pooling is particularly relevant for districts like ours with multiple large projects and limited parish-level absorptive capacity. It enables strategic investment at a scale that no individual parish fund could achieve. We support the principle.

Safeguards are essential however. Pooling should not become a mechanism for diverting benefits away from the specific communities most directly affected. We would suggest three design principles:

- A minimum proportion (we would suggest at least 50%) of each project's community benefit contribution should remain under the control of the most directly affected local community.
- Pooling arrangements should require democratic endorsement from the affected communities and district at establishment and at regular intervals thereafter.
- Pooled fund governance should include formal representation from each contributing community.

Question 16: Do you agree with the outline proposals for a) when payments apply, b) index-linking, c) changes to project lifespan/capacity/ownership, and d) suspension of payments?

Taking each element in turn:

a) When payments apply

The Commercial Operation Date is an appropriate trigger. It aligns with the business rates and planning systems we already administer, and it ensures communities receive benefits once the project is actually delivering. We would suggest a requirement for developers to notify the local authority and fund administrator at least 30 days before the anticipated Commercial Operation Date, to allow governance structures to be ready to receive payment.

The scheme should also permit, but not require, early payments by agreement. Some communities (for example, those hosting particularly disruptive construction phases) may legitimately benefit from access to construction-phase funds for mitigation, training, or preparation purposes.

b) Index-linking

Essential. CPI is the appropriate index; RPI is now deprecated in most public finance contexts and would be an inappropriate choice. Annual adjustment on the anniversary of the Commercial Operation Date, using the September CPI figure, provides the necessary predictability for both developers and communities. We would oppose any discretionary element in the uplift calculation as these are invariably a source of disputes.

Our experience of historic Section 106 agreements where fixed nominal payments were locked in without index-linking is that the real value of the community benefit has frequently collapsed over the lifetime of the project. The scheme must avoid repeating this mistake.

c) Changes to project lifespan, capacity, ownership

Payments should continue for the full operational life of the project, including any extension through repowering or life-extension consenting. Where installed capacity increases or decreases through operational change, payments should adjust proportionately.

On ownership changes, see Question 17. The obligation must attach to the licence-holder and transfer automatically on change of control, without any requirement for the community or local authority to renegotiate.

d) Suspension of payments

Suspension should be available only in narrowly defined circumstances - in particular, extended operational cessation through no fault of the operator (for example, grid outage, regulatory suspension, or major unplanned maintenance). Routine commercial difficulty should not be grounds for suspension. Any suspension longer than 90 days should require notification to the local authority and fund administrator, and suspended payments should be made good once operations resume. A regulatory backstop (with enforcement powers, see Question 25) is needed to prevent "convenient" suspensions being used as a cost-management tool.

Question 17: Do you agree with the proposals to place the developer obligations for community benefits on the relevant licence-holder?

WLDC position: ***Strong support.***

Placing the obligation on the licence-holder is the correct mechanism and provides the clearest, most durable accountability structure. Ownership of energy assets changes frequently over project lifetimes. This includes things such as corporate restructuring, refinancing, asset disposals, and end-of-lease transactions. Communities cannot be expected to follow these commercial transactions, nor should they have to.

Within our own district this issue is live. Gate Burton Energy Park was consented under Low Carbon and subsequently acquired by EDF Power Solutions. A scheme that tied community benefit obligations to the original developer rather than the current licence-holder would create immediate uncertainty in such transactions. Licence-based obligations avoid this entirely.

We would recommend three additional protections to reinforce this:

- Financial security mechanisms (parent company guarantees, bonds, or insurance) should be required at commissioning stage to ensure community benefit obligations survive insolvency of the operator.
- Community benefit obligations should rank as priority claims in insolvency, equivalent to statutory landlord obligations or pension liabilities, to prevent communities losing benefits to secured creditors in a winding-up.
- Public registers of licence holders and their community benefit obligations should be maintained by Ofgem to provide transparency and enable independent monitoring.

Question 18: **Are there any other aspects on funding that should be considered?**

Three additional points:

- Subsidy control. The scheme should be designed to be compliant with the UK's post-Brexit subsidy control regime. Clear guidance from government on how community benefit payments fit (or sit outside) the subsidy control framework would prevent each local authority having to form its own view.
- VAT and tax treatment. Developers need certainty on whether community benefit payments are treated as business expenses for corporation tax purposes; communities need certainty on whether receipts are taxable income or exempt. Current voluntary practice is variable and creates unnecessary administrative cost.
- Interaction with other planning obligations. The scheme should make explicit that mandatory community benefits are in addition to, not a replacement for, Biodiversity Net Gain, Section 106 planning obligations, Community Infrastructure Levy, and any other existing obligations. Without this, there is a real risk that developers will seek to trade-off obligations against each other, to the detriment of the overall package delivered to the community.

Question 19: **Do you agree or disagree that we should not produce prescriptive guidance on what the fund can be used for?**

WLDC position: ***Agree; avoid prescriptive guidance but prohibit specific uses and provide strong indicative guidance.***

Prescriptive guidance would undermine the fundamental purpose of community benefits, which is to direct resources to what a specific community actually needs. Communities differ - a coastal village's priorities are not the same as a market town's, or an off-gas-grid rural parish's. National prescription would replicate the very problem that mandatory community benefits is designed to solve: imposing outside priorities on host communities.

That said, a short list of prohibited uses is essential to protect the integrity of the scheme. We would suggest:

- Political campaigning or party-political activity.
- Private profit or personal gain for individuals.

- Substitution for statutory services that local authorities or other public bodies are required to provide.
- Anything that undermines local planning policies or democratic planning decisions.
- Direct payments to individual households, other than through established grant schemes with transparent eligibility criteria.

Beyond prohibited uses, positive indicative guidance would help communities make good decisions without being prescriptive. Illustrative categories might include: energy efficiency and fuel poverty alleviation; community renewable energy projects; community facility improvements (village halls, sports facilities, community centres); rural connectivity and transport; skills and training; biodiversity and natural environment projects; and climate resilience measures.

Question 20: Do you agree with the suggested roles and responsibilities for the developer, fund administrator, administrative body, community representatives and community, and with the proposed governance structure?

WLDC position: ***Broad agreement, with proposed amendments to strengthen the local authority role.***

The proposed four-part governance structure - developer, fund administrator, administrative body, community representatives - provides a reasonable foundation. We do however consider that the role of local planning authorities is under-specified and should be clarified.

Local authorities should have explicit, defined roles in four areas:

- Statutory consultee on the definition of “community” for each project (see Question 29).
- Statutory consultee on the appointment of the fund administrator, including input on the procurement process and selection criteria.
- Formal observer role on the fund governance body, to provide continuity, institutional memory, and linkage with wider local strategy.
- First point of contact for community complaints where the fund administrator or community representatives are unable to resolve a dispute (see Question 26).

We would not seek to run funds directly. That role is properly for fund administrators accountable to the community, not for local authorities. But the local authority role is more than that of an interested observer, and the scheme should reflect that.

We would also note that the scheme must accommodate the reality of Local Government Reorganisation. Community benefit governance structures must be resilient to changes in local authority geography and responsibilities. Arrangements that depend on a specific council continuing to exist are fragile; arrangements that designate a role for “the relevant local planning authority from time to time” are more durable.

Question 21: Do you agree that some flexibility in the governance structure is needed? If yes, do you think the suggested ‘truncated’ governance approach would adequately capture the needs of smaller funds or communities with less capacity?

WLDC position: ***Yes to flexibility; partial support for truncated governance, with reservations.***

Rural communities vary enormously in their organisational capacity. A parish with an active community group, experienced volunteers, and a history of successful grant management is in a very different position from one with an ageing population, limited volunteer base, and no tradition of managing substantial funds. A one-size-fits-all governance model would either overwhelm smaller communities or provide insufficient rigour for larger funds. Flexibility is therefore essential.

The truncated model proposed in the working paper recognises this, but in our view risks under-representing communities where it is applied. Specifically, reducing the community voice in governance could allow fund administrators to dominate decision-making in precisely the communities that most need genuine local ownership. Our recommendation is that the truncated model should be conditional on:

- A higher minimum threshold for community representation (for example, community voting majority on all funding decisions, even where the formal structure is simpler).
- Capacity-building funding ring-fenced within the administration budget to help smaller communities develop the competence to move to the full governance model over time.
- Periodic review (perhaps every three years) of whether the truncated structure is still appropriate, with a clear pathway to escalation.

The goal should be to meet communities where they are, not to lock them into diminished governance in perpetuity.

Question 22: **Do you agree with the proposed approach to the decision-making process?**

Broadly yes. Key design principles we would emphasise are:

- Clear, published criteria for decisions, agreed with the community at the outset.
- Transparent meeting arrangements, with published minutes and decisions.
- Real conflict-of-interest protections -particularly important in small rural communities where many residents will have personal or family connections to potential beneficiaries.
- An appeals or review mechanism for unsuccessful applicants, proportionate to the value of the application and the size of the fund.
- Integration with the local planning authority's wider local strategy (for example, the council's Environment and Sustainability strategy, Local Plan, or emerging Local Nature Recovery Strategy) to ensure community benefit decisions complement rather than duplicate existing public investment.

Question 23: **Do you agree with the deadline of one year before payment is due for having governance structures in place?**

WLDC position: ***Support… but with flexibility for complex rural governance.***

A year is a reasonable period for most circumstances. It allows time for community consultation, fund administrator appointment, governance body formation, and initial training. It aligns with the commissioning timetable of most projects, which is typically known with reasonable certainty 12 to 24 months in advance.

For complex or multi-parish governance arrangements, particularly in rural areas with dispersed communities, we would ask for provision to extend this deadline by up to six months with the agreement of the administrative body, on demonstration that good-faith progress has been made. This should not be a routine extension - the default should remain 12 months - but the flexibility is important to avoid rushing arrangements that then have to be revised soon afterwards.

Question 24: **What would be an appropriate cap on spending from the fund for administrative functions?**

WLDC position: ***Sliding scale recommended; we set out indicative levels below.***

Administration costs do not scale linearly with fund size. Fixed costs (meeting space, basic governance, audit, administrator fees) apply similarly to small and large funds. A single percentage cap would either starve small funds of governance capacity or permit excessive overhead on large ones. A sliding scale is the right approach.

Based on our experience of administering grant schemes of various scales, we would suggest:

- Small funds (up to £50,000 per annum): up to 25% for administration, including capacity-building.
- Medium funds (£50,000 to £200,000 per annum): up to 20%.
- Larger funds (£200,000 to £500,000 per annum): up to 15%.
- Very large funds (above £500,000 per annum): up to 10%, with the expectation that regional or pooled administration is used.

Administration should be understood broadly - encompassing governance, application handling, monitoring, capacity-building, and community engagement. The Irish precedent of a 30% cap on smaller funds is a useful comparator; our proposed rates are somewhat tighter, reflecting the likely efficiency of a more standardised UK scheme.

Question 25: Do you agree with the suggested approach to enforcement of this potential scheme?

WLDC position: ***Support the tiered approach; strengthen local authority integration.***

The proposed tiered enforcement approach - dispute resolution first, civil penalties and public register as secondary tools - is correct. Most disputes arise from misunderstanding, capacity constraints, or changed circumstances rather than deliberate non-compliance, and a punitive-first approach would be both unfair and counter-productive.

We would strengthen the enforcement framework in four ways:

- Clear role for local authorities in identifying non-compliance through local knowledge and in supporting dispute resolution at the early stage.
- Explicit firewall between community benefit enforcement and planning decisions. Enforcement action on community benefits must not be used as a de facto planning sanction, nor should alleged community benefit shortfalls be treated as material considerations in future planning applications by the same developer.
- Civil penalty levels should be set with reference to project revenue, not fund size, to ensure they are meaningful for the developer. Fixed-sum penalties scale poorly against multi-hundred-million-pound projects.
- A public register of enforcement action, with due process protections, to provide reputational reinforcement of formal sanctions.

Question 26: Do you agree with the proposed chain for dispute resolution between communities and administrators?

WLDC position: ***Support the escalating chain; clarify triggers and local authority role.***

The escalating chain is sensible. The three-month timescales for each stage are reasonable in most circumstances but should allow limited flexibility for complex rural cases where geographic spread and limited local capacity affect resolution timelines.

We would suggest two additions. First, specific guidance on what constitutes an enforceable breach, to distinguish genuine non-compliance from legitimate differences of opinion about fund priorities. Communities and administrators will not always agree, and disagreement is not by itself a breach. Second, an explicit role for the local planning authority at the second stage of escalation, before formal enforcement is triggered - local authorities can often broker resolution through existing community relationships.

Question 27: Should consideration be given to imposing any of the proposed enforcement actions on other persons or groups under the scheme?

WLDC position: ***Focus primary enforcement on developers; limited enforcement against administrators in extreme cases.***

The developer is ultimately responsible for compliance, and primary enforcement should focus there. However, there are limited circumstances where fund administrators may themselves engage in serious misconduct - misappropriation of funds, systematic failure to meet governance obligations, or fraudulent reporting - where some enforcement mechanism is needed. These cases are likely to be rare but the framework should be in place.

We would not extend enforcement to individual community representatives or community groups. Their role is voluntary and lay; applying regulatory enforcement to them would deter participation and undermine the community-led ethos of the scheme. Professional misconduct by paid administrators is a different case, and existing professional, charity, and financial regulatory frameworks (Charity Commission, Companies House, FCA) should be used rather than duplicated.

Question 28: What do respondents think would be a practical use for any additional revenue generated from civil penalties?

We would suggest a hierarchy:

- Priority one: redistribution to the affected community that was the subject of the non-compliance. The community has already suffered from the breach; it should be the first beneficiary of any recovery.
- Priority two: a national capacity-building fund to support smaller and more disadvantaged communities in managing their schemes. This addresses the structural inequity that more affluent, better-organised communities find it easier to navigate the scheme in the first place.
- Priority three: fuel poverty alleviation programmes in communities hosting energy infrastructure, coordinated through existing delivery vehicles such as ECO4 Flex or the Warm Homes Plan.

Question 29: Do you think a case-by-case approach to defining the community is appropriate?

WLDC position: ***Yes, with structured local authority involvement and clear principles.***

Community definition cannot be done nationally, because it is inherently local. Parish boundaries, natural catchments, travel-to-school and travel-to-shop patterns, landscape setting, and grid connection routes all affect who a project genuinely affects. A case-by-case approach is the only workable option.

To prevent case-by-case becoming ad hoc, we would suggest:

- Clear national principles to guide case-by-case decisions (for example, a default primary zone defined by distance or visibility, with provision for extension where specific impacts warrant it).
- A formal role for the local planning authority as statutory consultee on boundary definition. We hold the evidence base — parish geography, visual impact

assessments, planning application consultation records — needed to inform credible decisions.

- Formal consultation with parish councils, ward councillors, and established community organisations before boundaries are finalised.
- A review mechanism at five-year intervals, since communities and their relationships to the project can evolve.

We would specifically recommend that the listed engagement bodies include parish councils (which are the primary tier of local democratic representation in rural areas and are frequently overlooked in national guidance) and recognised local community organisations such as village halls and community interest companies.

Question 30: Do you agree that capacity building will be required in communities? What do you believe this should look like and who do you believe is best equipped to carry this out?

WLDC position: ***Absolutely yes. Multi-agency delivery, with local authorities playing a coordinating role.***

Capacity building is essential, not optional. Most rural parishes in our district operate with annual precepts of £5,000 to £50,000 and volunteer governance. A community benefit fund of £100,000 per year or more is an order-of-magnitude shift in scale. Expecting communities to manage this without structured support is unrealistic and sets the scheme up to fail.

Effective capacity building should cover:

- Financial management - budgeting, reporting, audit requirements, safeguarding of funds.
- Governance - conflict-of-interest management, decision-making procedures, charity or CBS structures where relevant.
- Project development - identifying needs, designing interventions, measuring outcomes.
- Procurement and contracting - basic competence in engaging suppliers and contractors.
- Community engagement - consultation, feedback, inclusive participation.

No single body can deliver all of this, and we would advocate a multi-agency approach: local authorities for local context and coordination; community foundations (for example, Lincolnshire Community Foundation) for fund management expertise; established community energy bodies (for example, Energy4All, Community Energy England) for sector-specific knowledge; and professional bodies (CIPFA, NCVO, charity-sector training providers) for specialist skills. Local authorities are best placed to coordinate this support, drawing on our existing relationships with parish and town councils and with the voluntary and community sector.

Question 31: Do you agree that capacity building and engagement should be funded by the community benefit fund administration budget?

WLDC position: ***Yes, supplemented by a national capacity-building fund for smaller schemes.***

Funding capacity building through the administration budget is the right default. It scales with fund size, is accountable to the community receiving the benefit, and embeds capacity building within the fund's ongoing operation rather than treating it as a one-off external intervention.

However, the approach will not work for smaller funds where the administration cap (see Question 24) would consume too much of the available budget. Three supplementary mechanisms would address this:

- A national capacity-building fund, supported initially from government seed funding and subsequently from civil penalty revenue (see Question 28).
- Shared capacity-building across multiple small funds within a region, with economies of scale reducing unit costs.
- Graduated administration caps in the scheme's early years, recognising that setup costs are disproportionately front-loaded and that communities becoming experienced managers of benefit funds is a good investment over the long lifetime of the project.

Question 32: Do you agree community engagement should be led by the fund administrator? Do you believe our proposals have any unfair impacts on those with protected characteristics?

WLDC position: ***Agree; explicit safeguards needed for inclusive participation.***

The fund administrator is the appropriate body to lead community engagement. They have continuity, accountability, and the resources to sustain engagement across the project lifetime. Developers have an inherent conflict of interest, and local authorities cannot take on the ongoing operational role.

Equality impacts warrant specific attention. Our experience suggests the following groups are at particular risk of under-representation in community benefit governance, unless safeguards are built in:

- Older residents who may face barriers to digital participation or extended evening meetings.
- Disabled residents for whom accessibility of venues and communications may be inadequate.
- Working-age parents for whom meeting times and childcare arrangements can be prohibitive.
- Lower-income residents for whom volunteer time has a genuine opportunity cost.
- Recent arrivals to rural communities, including ethnic-minority residents, who may lack established local networks.
- Tenants and those without settled housing, who can be overlooked in parish-led engagement processes.

Scheme guidance should require fund administrators to take active, documented steps to make engagement inclusive - not just to avoid active exclusion, but to seek out participation from under-represented groups. This is a specific area where equality impact assessments should be embedded in scheme design from the outset.

Part 2: Shared Ownership

West Lindsey District Council supports shared ownership as a valuable option for communities that choose it and have the capacity to manage the risks and requirements involved. We do not, however, support making shared ownership mandatory for developers to offer or for communities to accept. Our responses to the shared ownership questions reflect this overall position.

Question 33: **Are you aware of evidence which suggests that shared ownership has or has not delivered the benefits referred to above?**

The available evidence on shared ownership in a UK context is mixed and, we would argue, not yet sufficient to support mandatory expansion. The Scottish and Welsh experience of shared ownership arrangements has shown that well-structured schemes can deliver real financial and social benefits to participating communities (particularly where community organisations are well established and where professional support has been available.)

International comparators are instructive but should be read with care. Denmark's 52% wind ownership rate operates within a distinctly different institutional and financial framework — including long-standing cooperative traditions, specific tax treatment, and different capital markets for citizen investment. It cannot be transplanted wholesale into a rural English context without substantial modification.

Evidence gaps we would flag include comparative analysis of shared ownership versus enhanced community benefit funds (which might deliver similar outcomes more simply), long-term data on community ownership sustainability, and differential outcomes between communities with and without existing organisational capacity. Until these gaps are addressed, we would caution against treating shared ownership as a proven policy intervention ready for universal application.

Question 34: **Are you aware of any evidence to support other benefits of shared ownership for either communities and/or developers?**

Potential additional benefits beyond those listed in the working paper include:

- Skills development and local economic participation; Here, community ownership creates opportunities for residents to engage with energy markets, procurement decisions, and technical operations in ways that are not available under pure developer ownership.
- Long-term stewardship incentive; Communities with ownership stakes may have stronger incentive to maintain positive relationships with projects and support their continued operation, including through repowering.
- Democratic participation in the energy transition; Ownership gives residents a genuine voice in the transition, not just as consumers or planning objectors.
- Developer reputational and relationship benefits; Developers with credible shared ownership offers are likely to find easier community engagement in future schemes, creating a virtuous cycle.

These benefits are real but are conditional on community capacity and appropriate structure. They are not delivered automatically by imposing shared ownership requirements, and risk being diminished or lost if shared ownership is applied in circumstances where the necessary capacity does not exist.

Question 35: **Are you aware of any risks arising from encouraging shared ownership schemes?**

Yes, and these risks need serious consideration. The principal risks we would flag are:

- Financial loss to community investors, particularly concerning in rural communities where investment capital is often represented by accumulated savings or small inheritances rather than disposable surplus.
- Community division between residents able to participate in investment and those unable or unwilling to. Shared ownership can accentuate rather than reduce inequality within communities.
- Democratic distortion where investor rights give disproportionate voice to wealthier residents in community energy decisions.
- Complexity and capacity demands that may exceed what small rural communities can reasonably sustain over a 35-40 year project lifetime, risking governance failure or effective takeover by professional managers over time.
- Delayed project deployment if shared ownership negotiations become protracted, potentially undermining the national energy transition timetable.
- Inequity between communities, with better-organised or more affluent communities benefiting disproportionately while disadvantaged communities are excluded or under-supported.

These risks do not mean shared ownership is inappropriate. They mean it must be voluntary, well supported, and accompanied by universal community benefit schemes that protect communities regardless of whether shared ownership is pursued.

Question 36: What are the barriers to shared ownership in Great Britain?

The principal barriers, We have little direct experience here but based on the evidence available, they include:

- Capital access - community organisations struggle to raise the investment capital required, particularly for meaningful stakes in large projects.
- Technical complexity - energy project finance, regulation, and operation are specialist fields that community volunteers rarely have direct experience of.
- Legal and structural complexity - establishing a community investment vehicle, negotiating terms with developers, and structuring governance all require professional support that is expensive and unevenly distributed.
- Risk tolerance - community organisations legitimately prioritise capital preservation over return, which is in tension with the risk profile of equity stakes in commercial energy projects.
- Administrative burden - ongoing shareholder obligations, annual reporting, meetings, and tax compliance are substantial for volunteer-run organisations.
- Developer appetite - some developers are reluctant to admit community shareholders, particularly where this complicates subsequent refinancing or disposal.

Question 37: Do certain communities face barriers to shared ownership more so than others?

WLDC position: ***Yes, substantially. Rural, lower-income, and less organised communities face disproportionate barriers.***

Our district encompasses communities that illustrate this clearly. Parishes with active community groups, experienced volunteers, and a history of managing grants are in a different position to parishes with small or ageing populations, limited volunteer capacity, and no prior experience of significant community finance.

Specific disadvantaged groups facing disproportionate barriers include:

- Rural communities - geographic dispersion, limited access to professional support, weaker digital infrastructure.
- Lower-income communities - limited investment capital, greater risk aversion, opportunity cost of volunteer time.
- Communities with ageing demographics - limited appetite for long-term investment commitments, capacity constraints in volunteer governance.
- Ethnic-minority communities - may have weaker ties to local community organisations through which shared ownership is typically channelled.
- Communities with poor history of developer engagement - trust barriers that are genuinely earned and cannot be assumed away.

A scheme that treats all communities as having equal capacity to engage with shared ownership will systematically advantage those already best positioned. This is an equity issue that needs to be addressed at the design stage, not corrected retrospectively.

Question 38: **How can government ensure that low-income communities, or those experiencing higher rates of fuel poverty, are able to engage with shared ownership offers?**

This is a difficult question because the honest answer is that, absent substantial government intervention, low-income and fuel-poor communities will struggle to engage meaningfully with shared ownership offers on commercial terms. That said, mechanisms that could reduce the gap include:

- Government-backed risk mitigation - partial loss guarantees, insurance mechanisms, or first-loss capital that reduce the downside for community investors.
- Matched funding or concessional finance - government funds matching community investment on favourable terms to lower the effective cost of participation.
- Non-financial participation models - “sweat equity”, land-based or skills-based contributions that allow participation without capital.
- Graduated ownership structures - allowing small initial stakes to grow over time, rather than requiring large upfront commitment.
- Direct government investment - where community capacity is limited, a government-backed body (for example, Great British Energy) taking a stake on behalf of the community.

We would note, however, that the combination of complexity and cost of these mechanisms suggests that enhanced community benefit schemes (those which deliver universal benefit without requiring capital investment from individual households) may often be a more effective instrument for supporting fuel-poor communities than shared ownership. Both instruments should be available; neither should be presented as universally appropriate.

Question 39: **Do certain developers and/or particular sectors face barriers to shared ownership more so than others?**

Yes. Larger, established developers with experienced community engagement functions are better placed to absorb the transaction costs of shared ownership than smaller developers or new entrants. We would expect that sectors with more complex financing structures (for example, offshore wind with its large initial capital requirements) face particular challenges in accommodating community minority shareholders, as do projects financed through project finance structures where additional shareholders complicate the security package.

This is relevant for policy design because it suggests that a mandatory shared ownership requirement would fall differentially on different parts of the sector. Small and mid-sized developers may be priced out, consolidating the sector into larger players. This is an outcome not obviously desirable.

Question 40: Does a particular barrier represent more of a barrier to shared ownership than others?

In our view, capital access and capacity are the two most significant barriers, and they are interlocking. Communities without capital access cannot meaningfully participate; communities without capacity cannot manage shared ownership well even if capital were available. Addressing either without the other is insufficient.

Of the two, capacity is the harder to address, because it requires sustained investment in community capability over years rather than a financial intervention at a single point in time. Any policy that takes shared ownership seriously has to take capacity building seriously as well.

Question 41: What actions can the government take to address these barriers and promote further uptake of shared ownership, particularly in England?

A package of measures would include:

- Standardised legal structures and documentation - templates for community investment vehicles, negotiation, and shareholder agreements, which would reduce the legal cost of establishing each arrangement.
- Dedicated financial support - grants for feasibility and setup costs, low-interest loans for community investment, and risk-sharing mechanisms to protect community investors.
- Capacity-building infrastructure - a national (or regional) body providing training, advice, and support to community organisations pursuing shared ownership, drawing on and extending bodies such as Community Energy England, Energy4All, and the community foundations network.
- Integration with Great British Energy - GBE's Local Power Plan provides a natural vehicle for many of these supports, and alignment between DESNZ community benefit policy and GBE delivery is essential.
- Honest public communication - shared ownership is complex and risky; government should not oversell it to communities that may lack the capacity to assess the offer critically.
- Regulatory clarity - on state aid / subsidy control, tax treatment of community returns, and the treatment of community investments under financial services regulation.

Question 42: How successful has a voluntary approach to shared ownership been? Should the government continue with a voluntary approach or consider expanding shared ownership, possibly via a requirement for developers to offer shared ownership to eligible communities?

WLDC position: ***Our research suggests that the voluntary approach has produced limited but real results. We do not support mandating developers to offer shared ownership universally; we would support a requirement to consider and consult on shared ownership, with enhanced supporting infrastructure.***

The voluntary approach has produced real examples of successful shared ownership, particularly in Scotland and Wales, but progress in England has been limited. Making shared ownership mandatory would be a significant step and in our view is premature. Communities vary substantially in their capacity to engage; developers vary in the suitability of their projects for shared ownership; financing structures are not uniformly compatible with minority community shareholding.

A proportionate middle path would be:

- Mandate developers above the community benefits threshold to formally assess and consult on shared ownership possibilities for each project, and to publish the outcome of that assessment. This stops short of requiring an offer but ensures the question is asked seriously in every case.
- Provide substantially enhanced support (see Question 41) so that communities wishing to pursue shared ownership have realistic means of doing so.
- Review the landscape within, say, five years of full scheme operation and consider whether mandatory offers are warranted based on evidence of what the enhanced voluntary approach has delivered.

This is a case where getting the sequencing right matters more than getting the end state agreed immediately.

Question 43: **If shared ownership is expanded, should regulations be made in accordance with the existing provisions relating to the 'Community Electricity Right' in the 2015 Act?**

WLDC position: ***Yes, but with meaningful amendments.***

The 2015 Act provides a useful legislative foundation and avoids the need to create a wholly new framework. However, it requires updating to reflect the current state of the sector and the practical lessons of the past decade. Amendments we would suggest:

- Expand the technology scope to include battery storage, LDES, hybrid projects, and emerging technologies not anticipated in 2015.
- Reconsider the 5% maximum stake - for some communities, 5% is too low to deliver meaningful voice or return; for others, it is too high to be financially achievable. Flexibility within a defined range would be better than a single fixed cap.
- Clarify the threshold - 5 MW remains defensible but should align with the mandatory community benefit threshold (see Question 6) for simplicity.
- Strengthen community capacity-building and support requirements in the regulations themselves, rather than leaving these to fall through the cracks of ancillary guidance.
- Provide explicitly for regional or pooled community investment vehicles, which the 2015 Act did not anticipate clearly.

Question 44: **If shared ownership is expanded, how will communities and developers need to be supported for a mandatory shared ownership scheme to be successful?**

If a mandatory scheme were introduced, the support required would be substantial:

- For communities: dedicated and professionally-staffed advisory support, accessible training, standardised legal templates, risk mitigation mechanisms, and access to affordable finance for community investment.
- For developers: standard documentation and process guidance reducing transaction cost; clarity on interaction between shared ownership and community benefit fund obligations; and regulatory certainty on subsidy and tax treatment.
- For the system: a national body capable of brokering, advising, and supporting both sides of the negotiation. Great British Energy would seem to be the natural home for this function.

- For local authorities: funding for our coordinating, hosting, and convening role, which is often the first point of developer and community contact on these matters.

The risk of a mandatory scheme without this supporting infrastructure is that the statutory requirement is technically met (eg developers make an offer, communities formally receive it) but no meaningful community ownership actually results. In our view, form without substance is worse than nothing, because it consumes scarce capacity and generates disillusionment.

Question 45: If shared ownership is expanded, should there be exemptions to the expansion?

WLDC position: ***Extensive exemptions would be required… which is itself an argument against mandatory expansion.***

If mandatory shared ownership were introduced, exemptions would legitimately be needed for:

- Community-owned projects (already community-owned, so no further shared ownership required).
- Small developers and first-of-a-kind technology projects where the transaction costs of shared ownership would imperil project viability.
- Projects with financing structures genuinely incompatible with minority community shareholding.
- Situations where no eligible community organisation exists within the defined community area and creation of one within scheme timescales is not feasible.
- Communities that have formally declined shared ownership through a proper democratic process - communities must retain the right to say no.

The breadth of exemption required to make mandatory shared ownership workable reinforces our view that a voluntary approach with strong supporting infrastructure is the more realistic policy. A scheme that requires extensive exemptions to be fair is a scheme that has not reckoned fully with the diversity of circumstances it applies to.

Question 46: If shared ownership is expanded, how should developers' engagement with communities take place?

Effective engagement would require:

- Early initiation - shared ownership discussion needs to begin at the pre-application stage at the latest; by the time a DCO or planning application is submitted, the opportunity for meaningful community shaping of the offer has largely passed.
- Professional community engagement expertise - dedicated community liaison roles, not bolt-on activity from planning or communications staff.
- Respect for existing community governance - parish councils, community land trusts, and existing community organisations are the natural primary interface, not ad hoc groupings convened for the purpose.
- Transparent documentation - offers, counter-offers, and negotiating positions should be documented and subject to community scrutiny.
- Equitable access to advice - communities should have access to independent professional advice funded by the developer, to redress the asymmetry of information and expertise.
- Time - community governance structures move slowly by necessity, and engagement timetables must accommodate that rather than forcing decisions before communities are ready.

Engagement of the quality described here is expensive and time-consuming for developers, which is a further reason why mandatory shared ownership requirements must be accompanied by realistic timetables.

Question 47: **Are you aware of any risks or potential adverse impacts arising from expanding shared ownership either in line with the 2015 Act provisions or otherwise?**

Yes. The principal risks of expansion, particularly mandatory expansion, are:

- Community financial harm from losses on investments that households cannot afford to lose, particularly in areas with low financial resilience.
- Community division between investors and non-investors, and between communities capable of organising for shared ownership and those not.
- Democratic distortion in community decision-making, where investor rights give disproportionate voice to wealthier residents.
- Delay to energy transition deployment if negotiation periods become protracted or litigation ensues over contested arrangements.
- Regressive distribution of benefits (an ostensibly progressive policy may concentrate benefits in already-advantaged communities unless actively counteracted.)
- Market consolidation if smaller developers cannot absorb shared ownership transaction costs.
- Institutional risk to community bodies taking on obligations they cannot sustain across 35-40 year project lifetimes, with attendant consequences for governance failure and asset stranding.

None of these risks are unmanageable. All of them require active policy attention. Expansion of shared ownership should proceed only where and to the extent that these risks have been adequately addressed in policy design, supporting infrastructure, and community capacity.

Concluding remarks

West Lindsey District Council supports the broad direction of the government's proposals. Mandatory community benefits are needed, overdue, and implementable. Shared ownership is valuable as a voluntary option and would benefit from enhanced supporting infrastructure, but is not yet ready for mandatory universal application.

Underlying our detailed responses are three principles that we would ask government to hold onto as the policy develops toward legislation.

Social licence is the real asset

The fundamental case for mandatory community benefits is not revenue distribution, but the sustainability of public support for the energy transition. We are seeing, in our own district, growing strain in the relationship between communities and developers as the scale of infrastructure becomes more visible and the inconsistency of community treatment becomes more evident. A mandatory scheme is the right response, but only if it is designed to repair trust, not just to redistribute money.

Rural realities must be designed in, not corrected for

Much of the policy discussion in this area assumes a level of community capacity, organisational infrastructure, and financial capability that does not exist in most rural parishes. A scheme that works brilliantly in well-resourced urban settings and then has to be retrofitted to rural context is unlikely to work well anywhere. Start from the reality of a small parish council with a volunteer clerk and an annual precept of £15,000, and then ask how the scheme can meet that community where it is? We feel this is the right starting point.

Longevity matters more than launch

A project consented today may still be generating community benefit payments in 2065. Very few policy frameworks operate on that timescale. The scheme needs to be designed for longevity: resilient to changes in local government structure, adaptable to technological evolution, protected against real-terms erosion through indexation, and with governance structures that can survive changes in personnel, politics, and priorities over four decades. This is a harder design problem than it looks, and it deserves specific attention rather than being left to implementation detail.

We would welcome the opportunity to contribute further as the policy develops. West Lindsey District Council is available to host site visits, participate in working groups, or provide further written evidence as may be helpful. We have considerable experience of the practical realities of hosting large-scale low carbon infrastructure, and our perspective may be of value in shaping both primary legislation and subsequent regulations and guidance.

For further information or to discuss any aspect of this response, please contact:

Steve Leary
Policy and Strategy Officer (Environment and Sustainability)
West Lindsey District Council
Guildhall, Marshall's Yard, Gainsborough, Lincolnshire DN21 2NA
steve.leary@west-lindsey.gov.uk

Agenda Item 4b

Thriving Places Committee	
Date:14th July 2026	

Subject: Subject: Pride in Place Funding – Quick Win Projects

Report by:	Director of Planning, Regeneration & Communities
Contact Officer:	Sally Grindrod-Smith Director Planning, Regeneration & Communities sally.grindrod-smith@west-lindsey.gov.uk

Appendices to Report

- Letter from Minister Caliscan- Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Devolution, Local Growth and Communities
- Update on engagement activity

RECOMMENDATION(S):

(a) Members approve the Neighbourhood Board's proposal to allocate the next available tranche of Pride in Place funding to a package of quick win projects, subject to each project meeting the programme guidance, subsidy control, and procurement regulations. Income and expenditure budgets will be created to reflect the grant being received and spend activity in both capital and revenue.

(b) Members delegate authority to the Director of Planning, Regeneration and Communities, in consultation with the Section 151 Officer and Monitoring Officer, to finalise the project approvals, funding agreements and any related due diligence required to enable delivery.

Executive Summary

This report follows the committee paper of 12 February 2026 which secured approval for the initial expenditure required to establish the Pride in Place programme in Gainsborough West, including programme mobilisation, board development and early engagement activity.

Since that decision, work has progressed to establish the Neighbourhood Board, begin engagement with residents and stakeholders, and identify early themes that can support visible improvement in the neighbourhood while the longer-term Pride in Place Plan continues to be developed.

Government guidance confirms that Neighbourhood Boards are the decision makers for funding decisions, supported by the local authority as accountable body and the local MP, and that flexibility is a guiding principle of the programme.

The guidance also makes clear that early funding can be used to deliver quick wins where these respond to local priorities and support momentum for the wider programme.

This report therefore seeks approval for the Neighbourhood Board to commit the next allocation of Pride in Place funding to a programme of quick win projects.

The purpose is to enable the Board to respond to issues raised through early engagement, demonstrate progress on the ground, and build confidence in the programme while remaining aligned to the developing 10-year vision and 4-year investment plan.

1. Introduction

1.1 On 12 February 2026, Corporate Policy and Resources Committee approved the initial arrangements required to mobilise the Pride in Place programme. This included expenditure to establish the programme, support governance, undertake early engagement and prepare the foundations for the Pride in Place Investment Plan.

1.2 Since that time, the programme has moved from mobilisation into the next stage of development. The emerging role of the Neighbourhood Board is to shape priorities for the area, informed by community voice, evidence and partnership working.

1.3 Alongside the preparation of the full Pride in Place Investment Plan, there is now an opportunity to deliver a small number of early projects that can provide visible local impact, test delivery arrangements and maintain confidence in the programme.

1.4 To date Gainsborough West has been awarded £117k capital and £135k revenue with a further £256k revenue due imminently. This funding will be allocated to 'quick win' projects identified by the Neighbourhood Board.

2 Policy and Programme Context

2.1 The Pride in Place programme prospectus states that neighbourhoods will receive up to £20 million over 10 years and that Neighbourhood Boards will co-create a Pride in Place Investment Plan with their communities, setting out the long-term vision and investment priorities for the area.

2.2 Funding profile guidance confirms that flexibility is a guiding principle of the programme and that Boards, supported by the local authority and MP, are the decision makers for funding decisions. Government guidance also encourages Boards to ensure that residents, businesses and grassroots organisations are actively involved in programme design and decision-making.

2.3 The prospectus and earlier guidance identify quick wins as a legitimate use of early programme funding, provided they are grounded in local need, support programme objectives and are delivered in a way that remains consistent with the wider development of the Pride in Place Investment Plan.

2.4 The governance guidance also confirms that the council, as accountable body, must ensure that public funds are distributed fairly and effectively and that legal, financial and compliance obligations are met before expenditure is released.

3 Why Quick Win Projects Are Proposed

3.1 There is a strong case for progressing quick win projects at this stage of the programme. Early engagement has begun to surface priorities which can be addressed through practical, visible and deliverable interventions. (see Appendix 2 Engagement Update).

3.2 Quick wins can help to demonstrate that the programme is responsive to local people, maintain momentum while the longer-term plan is being prepared, and create confidence in the Board's ability to turn community priorities into action.

3.3 They can also provide an opportunity to test delivery mechanisms, strengthen partnership working, and generate practical learning which can inform the 4-year investment plan and wider programme governance.

3.4 Quick wins are not intended to replace the strategic and community-led development of the full Pride in Place Plan. Rather, they are intended to sit alongside that process and support it by evidencing early change and maintaining local engagement.

3.5 In addition to the £150k set up allocation, Gainsborough West has been awarded £117k capital and £135k revenue, with a further £138k revenue due following the approval of the boundary and board submission. This funding can be allocated to 'quick win' projects identified by the Neighbourhood Board.

4 Proposed Approach to Approval and Delivery

4.1 It is proposed that the next allocation of Pride in Place funding is committed to a package of quick win projects identified and prioritised by the Neighbourhood Board.

4.2 Projects brought forward as part of this package should meet the following principles:

- they reflect issues raised through community engagement and local evidence
- they can be delivered within a realistic timescale and available budget
- they provide visible and tangible benefit to the neighbourhood
- they align with the strategic objectives of the Pride in Place programme
- they are capable of passing the council's appraisal, legal and financial checks as accountable body
-

4.3 The Neighbourhood Board will be responsible for determining priorities and recommending projects. The council will continue to act as accountable body and will only release funding once appropriate due iligence have been completed.

4.4 This approach will enable community-led decision making to continue, while ensuring that the council retains the assurance framework required for the proper stewardship of public funds.

5 Financial and Governance Considerations

5.1 Approval through this report will not remove the need for individual project appraisal. Each quick win proposal will require confirmation of eligibility, deliverability, affordability, monitoring requirements and any relevant permissions or contractual arrangements.

5.2 Where projects involve third party delivery, appropriate grant or funding agreements will be put in place. Where projects are procured directly by the council, this will be undertaken in line with the council's contract and procurement rules.

6 Next Steps

6.1 Subject to approval, officers will work with the Neighbourhood Board to finalise the proposed package of quick win projects and complete the required appraisal and assurance checks.

6.2 Delivery of approved quick wins will then commence at pace, with progress, expenditure and outcomes reported through the programme governance structure.

6.3 Learning from the quick win programme will be used to inform the ongoing development of the Pride in Place Plan, including future investment priorities, delivery routes and monitoring arrangements.

(No.) Alternative Options

	Option	Rational for not recommending
1	Do not release the funding for the Neighbourhood Board to carry out 'quick wins'	This would not be following guidance published in the scheme prospectus and information given in letter from Miniter Caliscan – See appendix 1 https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pride-in-place-programme-prospectus/pride-in-place-programme-funding-profiles-and-timelines

ASSOCIATED IMPLICATIONS

Legal:

West Lindsey District Council are the accountable body for the Gainsborough West Pride in Place programme. The Neighbourhood Board are responsible for leading community led decision making, in partnership with the Council.

Funding will need to be utilised to secure the provision of legal advice and guidance, including on matters such as Subsidy Control, procurement and contracting.

The council have contracts in place with Legal Services Lincolnshire and DWF Law LLP that will be utilised to provide necessary advice and guidance.

Any required procurement activity will be carried out in accordance with Contract and Procurement Procedure Rules.

(N.B.) Where there are legal implications the report MUST be seen by the MO

Financial: FIN/48/27/TC/SST

The programme will receive funding and support totalling up to £20 million. The funding will be split 63% capital and 37% revenue. This funding split will inform investment and expenditure.

The latest funding profile is set out below:

PHASE 2												
£s	Pre 26-27	26-27	27-28	28-29	29-30	30-31	31-32	32-33	33-34	34-35	35-36	Total
Total RDEL	285,000	138,462	691,638	691,638	766,638	767,396	766,638	766,638	766,638	766,638	766,638	7,173,962
Total CDEL	-	117,604	667,604	1,455,104	1,455,104	1,455,104	1,455,104	1,455,104	1,455,104	1,455,104	1,455,104	12,426,040
Totals	285,000	256,066	1,359,242	2,146,742	2,221,742	2,222,500	2,221,742	2,221,742	2,221,742	2,221,742	2,221,742	19,600,002

Approval has already been given for the initial £150k revenue funding by Corporate Policy & Resources Committee on 12 February 2026.

This paper seeks approval for the expenditure of the remaining £135k (revenue) received pre-26/27 and the £256k to be received in 26/27 (£118k of this has already been received for capital) on quick win projects.

Subject to approval, officers will work with the Neighbourhood Board to finalise the proposed package of quick win projects and complete the required appraisal and assurance checks.

Staffing:

This paper is not subject to any additional staffing implications not previously been identified.

LGR implications:

This paper is not subject to any LGR implications.

Equality and Diversity including Human Rights:

As accountable body the council are required to ensure that all activity complies with the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty.

As part of establishing the programme an Equality Impact Assessment will be required and will sit alongside the Pride in Place Plan any costs associated with this work will be covered as part of the expenditure of the initial revenue budget.

Data Protection Implications:

There are no direct data protection implications arising from this report. Any activity will be considered and reviewed by the Councils Data Protection and Freedom of Information Officer to ensure conformity with policy requirements**.**

Any cost implications can be met by the initial revenue budget.

Climate Related Risks and Opportunities:

There are no direct implications arising from this report. When the Neighbourhood Board are developing the 10-year vision and investment plan, there will be a consideration of the opportunities and risks relating to climate change.

Section 17 Crime and Disorder Considerations:

Policing interventions that target crime prevention and antisocial behaviour in specific locations, particularly town centres are included within the indicative interventions list as set out in the guidance.

Given the challenging nature of police funding in Lincolnshire and nationally it is considered likely that this is an area that the Neighbourhood Board may seek to establish ‘quick wins’

Health Implications:

Health and Wellbeing interventions are listed as approved interventions within the published guidance and can be developed as part of the Pride in Place Plan.

Risk Assessment:

The Pride in Place initiative has had a full project risk assessment, which was published in the business case previously agreed.

Title and Location of any Background Papers used in the preparation of this report:
3rd December prospectus published Pride in Place Programme prospectus - GOV.UK Accompanying detailed guidance on governance and boundaries Pride in Place Programme: governance and boundary guidance - GOV.UK Funding profile and timeline Pride in Place Programme: funding profiles and timelines - GOV.UK Information on Gainsborough Pride in Place including board membership www.west-lindsey.gov.uk/prideinplace

Call in and Urgency:

Is the decision one which Rule 14.7 of the Scrutiny Procedure Rules apply?

i.e. is the report exempt from being called in due to urgency (in consultation with C&I chairman)	**Yes**		**No**	

Key Decision:

A matter which affects two or more wards, or has significant financial implications	**Yes**		**No**	

Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

Nesil Caliskan MP
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

To: Council Chief Executives
Cc: Pride in Place Chairs

23rd June 2026

Dear Chief Executive,

I am writing to you to regarding the governance arrangements for the Pride in Place Programme. Over recent weeks, I have spoken with a large number of chairs, MPs and community representatives involved in the programme across the country. I have been greatly encouraged by the level of commitment, energy and ambition being shown by those working to deliver change in their local communities.

It is clear from these conversations that communities are eager to see quick and visible progress. Local authorities have an important role to play in ensuring that neighbourhood boards and chairs are supported effectively to turn local priorities into action.

As accountable body, you are responsible for ensuring that public funding is managed properly, transparently and in accordance with legal and financial requirements. I would like to thank you for the constructive support your local authority has already provided as the programme has developed.

However, I am also aware of concerns that in some areas, routine operational matters relating to the programme, which I would expect to be resolved at officer level – including accountable body arrangements, implementation of Board recommendations, and other operational decisions – are being unnecessarily delayed through referral to Cabinet or equivalent executive committees.

The Pride in Place Programme represents a deliberate departure from earlier local growth programmes. The Government has provided long-term funding and significant local flexibility because we believe decisions should be taken closest to communities. The accountable body's role is to provide the governance and assurance needed to release funding, not to determine which community priorities should be supported. Funding decisions should reflect the priorities agreed by the community partnership.

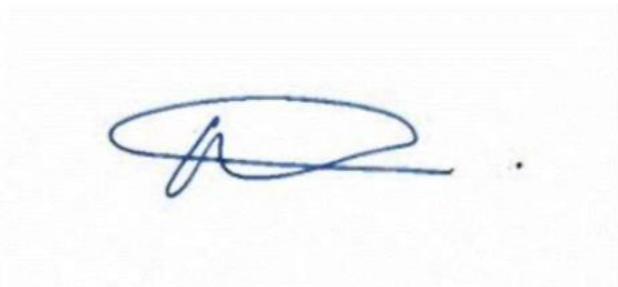
In that context, I do not expect programme matters to be routinely referred to Cabinet or equivalent committees. I instead ask that councils take a proportionate and pragmatic approach to decision-making.

MHCLG officials are available to support authorities and boards in resolving issues and ensuring the programme can move forward effectively. They will continue to update me so that we collectively are able to monitor progress closely.

Where progress is being unnecessarily frustrated or delayed, I will consider what interventions – including pausing funding – may be required. In those circumstances, it is local communities that stand to lose out. Local authorities should therefore recognise the direct consequences that delays or obstruction can have for the places they serve.

Thank you for your continued engagement and support.

Yours sincerely,



NESIL CALISKAN MP

Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Devolution, Local Growth and Communities

PRIDE IN PLACE
LED BY YOU – BACKED BY UK GOVERNMENT

Engagement to date…..

World of work day's - 300 students in Year 8 and Year 9 at The Gainsborough Academy
Illuminate – 417 residents and visitors
Flare Fair, 75 16–18-year-olds attended
Park Springs Fun day, 41 adults, 75 children attended
Chill Chat group - 12
Steeping stones - 37
Gainsborough Town Centre Business Networking Session 15
Pillard House (Supported Living) – 4
Digital Survey – (383 to date)
Adult autism group 5
Primary Schools Workshop – Gainsborough – past, present and future (2 schools) 340
Editorial in free local newsletter, delivered to every household in Gainsborough West
Engagement via patrolling team – 116
Men's Shed Birthday Event – 60
Go Fest - 50
Bookmarks for partners to support engagement (such as local health care practitioners who visit people in their own homes and Traveller Community Engagement Officer)
Total to date – 1,930 (18.3%)

Next steps

- Further Editorial in Gainsborough resident's newsletter – delivered to every household in Gainsborough West
- World of Workday (year 7) at The Gainsborough Academy
- Further workshops in Primary Schools – Gainsborough's past, present and future
- Vibe Fest
- Games on the Lawn (GOH)
- Curlys Athletics Event
- Ongoing attendance at Assemblies at The Gainsborough Academy

Thriving Places Committee	
Date: Tuesday 14th July	

Subject: Thriving Places Thematic Business Plan Progress Report – Q1 2026/27

Report by:	Director – Planning, Regeneration & Communities
Contact Officer:	Sally Grindrod-Smith (Director–Planning, Regeneration & Communities) sally.grindrod-smith@west-lindsey.gov.uk

Executive Summary:

The report provides an update for deliverables, performance and strategic risks aligned to the Thriving Places aim of West Lindsey District Council's Corporate Plan.

Appendices to Report

- Thriving Places Thematic Business Plan Progress Report – Q1 2026/27

RECOMMENDATION(S):

(a) That Thriving Places committee assesses the aligned deliverables, performance and strategic risks of the associated Corporate Plan aim.

(b) That Thriving Places committee approves the Quarter One Thematic Business Plan report.

Alternative Options

Not applicable

ASSOCIATED IMPLICATIONS

Legal: Not applicable

Financial: Not applicable

Staffing: Not applicable

LGR implications: Not applicable

Equality and Diversity including Human Rights: Not applicable

Data Protection Implications: Not applicable

Climate Related Risks and Opportunities: Not applicable

Section 17 Crime and Disorder Considerations: Not applicable

Health Implications: Not applicable

Risk Assessment:
Not applicable

Title and Location of any Background Papers used in the preparation of this report:
Not applicable

Call in and Urgency:

Is the decision one which Rule 14.7 of the Scrutiny Procedure Rules apply?

i.e. is the report exempt from being called in due to urgency (in consultation with C&I chairman)	**Yes**		**No**	**x**

Key Decision:

A matter which affects two or more wards, or has significant financial implications	**Yes**		**No**	**x**

THEMATIC BUSINESS PLAN QUARTERLY PROGRESS REPORT - THRIVING PLACES

"Enabling sustainable and inclusive economic growth in our towns and rural communities, preserving our heritage, delivering homes that meet local needs, and ensuring our places and spaces are clean, green and safe."

CORPORATE PLAN AIM: ENABLING INCLUSIVE LOCAL GROWTH AND REGENERATION

Corporate Plan Objectives:

1. Delivering our Economic Growth Strategy to unlock investment, support businesses and drive regeneration
2. Acting as a key partner and enabler, collaborating with public, private and community partners to diversify the economic base and support the creation of highly skilled jobs.
3. Collaborating with key partners to drive improved transport connectivity across West Lindsey and the wider region

CORPORATE PLAN AIM: DELIVERING HOMES THAT MEET LOCAL NEED

Corporate Plan Objectives:

1. Maintaining a sustainable Local Plan for Central Lincolnshire that meets housing need and drives regeneration and investment.
2. Refresh our Housing and Homelessness Strategy to deliver quality, affordable and sustainable housing that meets the needs of our communities.
3. Efficient collection, and effective use of, developer contributions to mitigate the impact of development on strategic and local infrastructure and deliver affordable housing that meets local need.

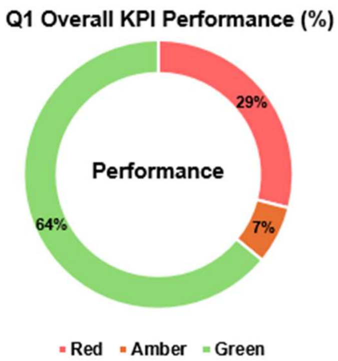
CORPORATE PLAN AIM: CLEAN, GREEN AND SAFE COMMUNITIES

Corporate Plan Objectives:

1. Delivering our Environment & Sustainability Strategy by working in partnership with communities to reduce carbon emissions and to mitigate the impacts of climate change.
2. Develop and enhance Council owned green spaces.
3. Using our statutory and regulatory functions effectively to ensure high levels of compliance in regulated areas, and low levels of antisocial behaviour and environmental related crime.

QUARTER ONE 2026/27 KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATOR OVERVIEW

PERFORMANCE BY SERVICE AREA									
				Red		Amber		Green	
	Not reported Q1	Statistic	KPI	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Markets	0	0	2	2	100%	-	-	-	-
Development Management	2	0	2	-	-	-	-	2	100%
Homes Health and Wellbeing	0	1	1	-	-	-	-	1	100%
Enforcement	0	0	2	-	-	-	-	2	100%
Street Cleansing	0	0	1	-	-	1	100%	-	-
Communities	0	2	0	-	-	-	-	-	-
Licensing	0	0	1	-	-	-	-	1	100%
Environmental Protection	0	0	1	-	-	-	-	1	100%
Food Health and Safety	0	0	2	1	50%	-	-	1	50%
Economic Development	1	0	0	-	-	-	-	-	-
Operational Services	2	1	2	1	50%	-	-	1	50%
Total	**5**	**4**	**14**	**4**	**-**	**1**	**-**	**9**	**-**
Previous Quarter Total	**-**	**-**	**-**	**-**	**-**	**-**	**-**	**-**	**-**



PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT PLAN – QUARTER ONE 2026/2027

The Performance Improvement Plan focuses on measures that have underperformed for two or more consecutive quarters. It provides additional context on the reasons for underperformance, associated impacts, and the actions in place to drive improvement, including expected timescales.

Portfolio / Service	Measure	Reason	Impact	When will we see an improvement?
Markets	**PLA-M01 - Average weekly number of general market traders on a Tuesday** **PLA-M02 - Average weekly number of general market traders on a Saturday**	Reduced number of stalls/traders - lack of town centre offering in terms of shops and change in habits.	Potential loss of historic market in the town.	The number of traders and stalls are increasing, with ongoing work to build on this positive trend.

Actions – what can we do to improve?

- Refurbished market stalls, supported by a clear brand and marketing plan, a strong focus on trader relationships, and high-quality street cleansing and CCTV provision, will help create a safe and welcoming environment.
- Improvements to the marketplace, delivered through the Levelling Up Fund, continue to attract new traders and increase footfall from shoppers.
- In the short term, ongoing activity will focus on trader retention, sustainability and satisfaction, supported by refreshed marketing materials, an updated communications plan, and continued delivery of events to drive footfall.
- New traders are being actively targeted through visits to competitor markets and enhanced social media activity, including real-time promotional posts.
- The application process has been streamlined to improve accessibility and consistency for traders.
- Pitch fees have been reviewed and reduced for vans, rather than stalls, to better reflect operational costs.
- Market performance progress report is due at O&S committee 08 September 2026.

KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATOR – QUARTER ONE 2026/2027

CORPORATE PLAN AIM: ENABLING INCLUSIVE LOCAL GROWTH AND REGENERATION

					Preceding four quarters				2026/27	
Service Area	**Ref**	**Key Performance Indicator**	**Perspective**	**Q1 Target**	**Q1 25/26**	**Q2 25/26**	**Q3 25/26**	**Q4 25/26**	**Q1 26/27**	**Trend**
Markets	PLA-M01	Average weekly number of general market traders on a Tuesday	More is better	20	9	10	11	12	**13**	↑
Markets	PLA-M02	Average weekly number of general market traders on a Saturday	More is better	10	5	6	6	6	**7**	↑
Economic Development	PLA-M03	New commercial floor space delivered	More is better	Stat	Annual					N/A

PLA-M01: The average weekly number of general market traders on a Tuesday is currently below target and has been included in the quarter one Performance Improvement Plan. However, performance is showing a positive upward trend, with trader numbers increasing. This is also reflected in the number of stalls, as many traders operate more than one, with an average of 29 stalls on a Tuesday compared to 21 in quarter one 2025/26 and 23 in quarter four 2025/26.

PLA-M02: The average weekly number of general market traders attending the Saturday market has improved compared with previous periods; however, performance remains below target for quarter one and therefore is included in the Performance Improvement Plan. An average of 15 stalls were recorded during the quarter, representing an increase from 12 stalls in quarter one 2025/26 and 13 stalls in quarter four 2025/26, demonstrating a positive upward trend

CORPORATE PLAN AIM: DELIVERING HOMES THAT MEET LOCAL NEED

					Preceding four quarters				2026/27	
Service Area	**Ref**	**Key Performance Indicator**	**Perspective**	**Q1 Target**	**Q1 25/26**	**Q2 25/26**	**Q3 25/26**	**Q4 25/26**	**Q1 26/27**	**Trend**
Development Management	PLA-M04	New homes delivered	More is better	Stat	Annual					N/A
Development Management	PLA-M05	% of affordable homes delivered	More is better	Stat	Annual					N/A
Development Management	PLA-M06	% of major planning applications determined within 13 weeks or within agreed timescales	More is better	90%	100%	92%	100%	100%	**100%**	→
Development Management	PLA-M07	% of non-major planning applications determined within 8 weeks or within agreed timescales	More is better	94%	99%	100%	97%	97%	**98%**	↑
Homes, Health and Wellbeing	PLA-M08	Long term empty properties as a percentage of all housing stock in the district	Less is better	2%	1.47%	1.52%	1.67%	1.66%	**1.68%**	↓
Enforcement	PLA-M09	% of planning enforcement cases closed within 6 months	More is better	75%	86%	98%	81%	78%	**80%**	↑

CORPORATE PLAN AIM: CLEAN, GREEN AND SAFE COMMUNITIES

					Preceding four quarters				2026/27	
Service Area	**Ref**	**Key Performance Indicator**	**Perspective**	**Q1 Target**	**Q1 25/26**	**Q2 25/26**	**Q3 25/26**	**Q4 25/26**	**Q1 26/27**	**Trend**
Operational Services	PLA-M10	Amount of residual waste (black bins) collected per household (kg)	Less is better	45kg	42kg	41kg	41kg	43kg	**37kg**	↑
Operational Services	PLA-M11	Amount of food waste collected per household (kg)	More is better	Stat	No data	No data	No data	No data	**3.15kg**	N/A
Operational Services	PLA-M12	Recycling rate	More is better	50%	Annual					N/A
Operational Services	PLA-M13	% of missed bins collected within 5 working days	More is better	95%	97%	95%	99%	96%	**TBC**	↓
Operational Services	PLA-M14	Garden subscription take-up	More is better	55%	Annual					N/A
Street Cleansing	PLA-M15	% of fly-tipping collected within 10 working days	More is better	90%	90%	88%	85%	94%	**86%**	↓
Food Health and Safety	PLA-M16	% of registered food premises rated 3 stars or above	More is better	96%	98%	98%	98%	97%	**97%**	→
Food Health and Safety	PLA-M17	% of Food Standard Agency inspections completed	More is better	22.5%	32%	N/A	N/A	N/A	**17%**	↓
Communities	PLA-M18	Incidents monitored by the council's CCTV Service	N/A	Stat	702	944	802	765	**927**	N/A
Licensing	PLA-M19	% of licensing applications processed within target time	More is better	96%	100%	100%	100%	100%	**100%**	→
Environmental Protection	PLA-M20	% of environmental protection cases closed within 6 months	More is better	75%	100%	100%	100%	100%	**100%**	→
Homes, Health and Wellbeing	PLA-M21	Number of properties with an improved energy	More is better	Stat	No data	No data	No data	No data	**15**	N/A

					Preceding four quarters				2026/27	
Service Area	**Ref**	**Key Performance Indicator**	**Perspective**	**Q1 Target**	**Q1 25/26**	**Q2 25/26**	**Q3 25/26**	**Q4 25/26**	**Q1 26/27**	**Trend**
		efficiency (SAP) rating following receipt of a Warm Homes Grant								
Enforcement	PLA-M22	% of housing enforcement cases closed within 6 months	More is better	75%	92%	92%	100%	90%	**89%**	↓
Communities **(Corporate Health)**	COR-M12	Number of safeguarding referrals	Less is better	Stat	No data	No data	No data	No data	**16**	N/A

QUARTER ONE PERFORMANCE COMMENTARY:

PLA-M10: A reduction in residual waste is reported. While this is based on early data, it indicates that the removal of food waste from residual collections is beginning to have the intended impact. Data will continue to be collected and reported to identify ongoing trends.

PLA-M11: The average amount of food waste collected per household in quarter one reports at 3.15kg, based on bins presented for collection. A total of 826 tonnes of food waste has been collected to date.

PLA-M13: Due to the five-working-day lag in collecting and recording missed bin data, the latest position will be provided as a verbal update at the Thriving Places Committee. Performance for missed bins reported below target throughout April and May, primarily due to driver shortages impacting service capacity and operational resilience.

PLA-M15: The percentage of fly-tipping incidents collected within 10 working days remained within the approved tolerance level for quarter one, achieving an overall quarterly average of 86%. Performance improved throughout the quarter, increasing month-on-month and reaching 90% in June. Performance impacted by larger incidents requiring JCB and staff reallocation impacting delivery.

PLA-M17: The percentage of Food Standards Agency inspections completed is a cumulative measure. The quarter target represents 22.5% of the annual 90% target, with performance compared against quarter one of the previous year.

The percentage of inspections completed is currently below target and is expected to remain below target into at least quarter three. Performance is currently 5.5% below target, equivalent to approximately 23 inspections, and is around 50% lower than the same period last year. The implementation of the new case management system has significantly impacted on inspection capacity, compounded by staff absences and a retirement during the reporting period. The team is also onboarding two new officers during June and July, who will require a period of training and development before being able to undertake food hygiene inspections independently. As demand and statutory obligations continue, a request for additional or agency resource may be required during quarter three to support delivery of the required inspection programme.

PLA-M18: This measure captures the total number of incidents monitored by the council's 24/7 CCTV service across the district. It represents a minor amendment to the originally approved measure, which focused on top-tier offences only; the revised measure now includes all CCTV incidents.

KEY DELIVERABLES PROGRESS UPDATE – QUARTER ONE 2026/2027

CORPORATE PLAN AIM: ENABLING INCLUSIVE LOCAL GROWTH AND REGENERATION

Ref	Key Deliverable	Head of Service	Status	Confidence	Commentary
PLA-D01 Project	**Heritage-led Commercial Centre Regeneration programme.** *To deliver heritage led- regeneration throughout the district, including villages, improving historic building condition, enhancing public realm, and strengthening cultural and economic vitality*	J Makinson-Sanders	Healthy	High	The Heritage-led Commercial Centre Regeneration programme continues to make good progress across multiple strands. Under the Gainsborough Townscape Heritage Initiative, 21 schemes have been completed, with 2 further schemes in progress. Preparatory work is in progress to review options to continue with the scheme, including cost analysis and review of funding options. Without further funding, this scheme will cease in September 2025. In Market Rasen, within the Heritage Building Grant scheme, the panel is due to convene shortly to allocate the remaining funding; works at 4–5 Market Place were completed in March 2026, with 16 King Street nearing completion. The West Lindsey Shop Front Improvement Scheme has most recently supported works at 16 Silver Street, which is on site, with minimal funds remaining.

Ref	Key Deliverable	Head of Service	Status	Confidence	Commentary
PLA-D06 Project	**Sector: Agri tech.** *A transformative, corridor-wide programme that delivers the infrastructure, spatial vision, and innovation ecosystem needed to unlock the A15 Growth Corridor and Ag-Zone as a competitive, sustainable, high-growth economic cluster.*	J Makinson-Sanders	Healthy	High	All live projects on track against programme profile. Stage 3: A15 Growth Corridor Stage 1: A15 Improvements Stage 1: Ag Zone Infrastructure & Innovation Accelerator (AZIIA) Stage 1: Ag-Zone Strategic Framework & Infrastructure Readiness Study (AZSF/IRS)
PLA-D07 Project	**Sector: Defence.** *Realise the potential of the former RAF Scampton site while delivering a district-wide Defence Vision that strengthens Greater Lincolnshire's role in defence-led growth, skills, and supply-chain development.*	J Makinson-Sanders	Healthy	High	All live projects on track against programme profile. Stage 3: Scampton Redevelopment Stage 3: Greater Lincolnshire Defence Vision
PLA-D08 Project	**Sector: Clean Energy.** *A coordinated programme to position West Lindsey and the Gainsborough–West Burton corridor as a leading Clean Energy Supercluster by delivering the vision, infrastructure, skills, innovation ecosystem and enabling works required to unlock investment, sustainable growth and high-quality jobs*	J Makinson-Sanders	Healthy	High	All live projects on track against programme profile. Stage 3: Clean Energy Supercluster Workstreams Stage 3: STEP Investment Plan Stage 3: GLCCA UKSPF Transport (STEP) Interventions
PLA-D09 Project	**Sector: Advanced Manufacturing.** A strategic framework delivering the vision, enabling works and investment proposition required to establish Gainsborough and North Lincolnshire as a competitive Advanced	J Makinson-Sanders	Healthy	High	All live projects on track against programme profile. Stage 3: GLCCA UKSPF Advanced Manufacturing Site Development Study

Ref	Key Deliverable	Head of Service	Status	Confidence	Commentary
	Manufacturing cluster linked to STEP and the wider Clean Energy Supercluster.				Stage 1: Somerby Park Advanced Manufacturing Campus Phase 1
PLA-D10 Project	**Delivery of UKSPF 2025-27 programme.** *Delivery of the UKSPF 2025–27 programme will ensure the effective implementation of funded projects that drive inclusive local growth, regeneration, and community benefit across the district in line with UK Shared Prosperity Fund priorities*	J Makinson-Sanders	Healthy	High	Stage 3: Three elements of the Council's 2025–27 UKSPF/REPF programme are currently live and progressing in line with planned delivery and expenditure profiles. Spend profiles have been updated to align with the extended programme delivery period through to September 2026. The Retail Business Advisor project has been fully delivered, while the 'Supporting Innovation' strand has now concluded its allocated UKSPF-funded activity. Several programme areas have already achieved or exceeded their forecast outputs and outcomes, and no significant delivery or expenditure risks have been identified at this stage.
PLA-D02 Strategy	**Markets Delivery Plan.** *Implementation of a market's delivery plan with the aim to increase market traders and footfall.*	C Thornhill	N/A	N/A	A standard operating procedure is being developed to ensure service quality and resilience. Annual review of fees to be part of the budget setting process. A policy review will be conducted in 2027/28, unless changes required prior to then.
PLA-D03 Policy/Funding Initiative	**Pride in Place Programme establishment.** *To establish and support a Neighbourhood Board to commence delivery of the Pride in Place programme in Gainsborough West in accordance with funding parameters*	J Makinson-Sanders	N/A	N/A	The Pride in Place Programme is progressing well, with regular Neighbourhood Board meetings helping to shape the emerging vision and priorities. Work to develop the investment approach is ongoing, supported by evidence, community insight, and local engagement. Extensive consultation has taken place, including engagement with local groups, events, and young people, with a strong level of community participation to date. Further analysis

Ref	Key Deliverable	Head of Service	Status	Confidence	Commentary
					of consultation feedback will be completed in July to inform the next stage of the programme. More information is available at: www.gainsboroughprideinplace.co.uk
PLA-D04 BaU	**Economic Growth Strategy action plan 2025-30.** *Delivery of the economic growth strategy (adopted 2025) through the associated action plan. The Strategy sets a clear vision for sustainable, inclusive, and innovation-led growth across the district from 2025 to 2030.*	J Makinson-Sanders	N/A	N/A	The strategy was approved by committee in July 2025, with agreement that an annual infographic update on progress would be circulated via the Members' Newsletter. Delivery is supported through a rolling medium-term Action Plan (https://www.west-lindsey.gov.uk/growth-regeneration/economic-growth-strategy), aligned to the strategy's key themes. The Action Plan is designed to be dynamic, enabling it to respond to changing economic conditions and capitalise on emerging opportunities. In line with committee requirements, the Action Plan will be reviewed annually and updated as necessary in terms of both composition and delivery timescales, with the first review scheduled for September 2026 (publication October 2026). Progress will be monitored and evaluated using a combination of overarching economic metrics, developed in partnership with the Greater Lincolnshire Local Enterprise Partnership, and project-specific analysis to demonstrate the impact of interventions. Monitoring arrangements are in place, including established

Ref	Key Deliverable	Head of Service	Status	Confidence	Commentary
					data tracking processes and scheduled engagement with contributors. Metrics will assess performance, trends and benchmarking against comparators, and will be reviewed annually to ensure continued relevance. Progress will be reported to stakeholders annually through summary infographics and, where appropriate, supporting case studies
PLA-D05 BaU	**Visitor Economy Strategy delivery of action plan.** *Delivery of the refreshed visitor economy strategy through the associated action plan. The Strategy strengthens the district's tourism offer, enhances place identity, and supports sustainable growth in visitor numbers, spend, and experience quality.*	J Makinson-Sanders	N/A	N/A	Delivery of the Visitor Economy Action Plan is ongoing, with progress being made across a range of actions. Activity during the reporting period has focused on enhancing the district's visitor offer, including the refresh of Viking Way walking leaflets and the installation of updated village tourist information boards. Promotion of local walking routes has also continued, with a new promotional video produced for the Tealby walk.

CORPORATE PLAN AIM: DELIVERING HOMES THAT MEET LOCAL NEED

Ref	Key Deliverable	Responsible Officer	Status	Confidence	Commentary
PLA-D11 Strategy	**Refresh of Central Lincolnshire Local Plan.** *To undertake a comprehensive refresh of the Central Lincolnshire Local Plan to ensure it remains up-to-date, evidence-based, and aligned with national policy, local priorities, and emerging spatial, economic, and environmental needs.*	R Hughes	N/A	N/A	The CLJSPC has agreed to review the Central Lincolnshire Local Plan (CLLP), recognising it can continue to cover multiple areas despite potential LGR changes, with separate plans for new unitaries possible in future. Recent NPPF proposals introduce a requirement to review plans every five years and adopt them within a 30-month timeframe, although preparatory work can be completed in advance. The CLLP team has already begun early work on evidence and priorities, with an indicative timetable including informal consultation from October 2026 and formal review starting in early 2027. Timescales may be adjusted depending on LGR outcomes, but joint working is ongoing to minimise impacts.
PLA-D12 Strategy	**Review and update the Housing strategy.** *Review, update and delivery of the Housing strategy*	S Elvin	N/A	N/A	The Housing Strategy has been reviewed and shared with Members. A new approach to housing delivery will be agreed and implemented in 2026, including the development of a Housing Delivery Plan setting out what can be achieved by March 2028.
PLA-D13 BaU	**Increase supply of affordable and appropriate housing.** *Work with the combined authority, registered providers, developers and Homes England to create a pipeline and deliver affordable and appropriate housing that meets local need.*	S Elvin	N/A	N/A	Work on the Gainsborough Housing Delivery Plan is progressing in partnership with Homes England. A review of the Housing Zone is underway and will be shared with Members upon completion. A paper outlining S106 options and priorities will be presented to Committee in September, setting out proposed approaches for the prioritisation of held S106 funding.

CORPORATE PLAN AIM: CLEAN, GREEN AND SAFE COMMUNITIES

Ref	Key Deliverable	Responsible Officer	Status	Confidence	Commentary
PLA-D15 Project	**Safer Gainsborough project.** *To support the delivery of targeted, place -based interventions in Gainsborough that reduces serious violent crime, strengthens community safety, and improves local wellbeing as well as an understanding of other projects in other areas of the district.*	A Gray	Healthy	Concerns	Stage 1: The Safer Gainsborough Programme continues to progress, with governance arrangements and programme support now established through Lincolnshire County Council's Safer Lincolnshire Partnership. Activity across the programme is being aligned to maximise impact and ensure effective use of available resources. During June and July, the programme is being refocused to strengthen delivery around support for young people and preventative initiatives. Supporting evidence and performance data are currently being finalised and will be shared with Members to inform future programme development and decision-making.
PLA-D16 Project	**Develop and enhance council owned green spaces.** *To improve the quality, accessibility, and biodiversity of council-owned green spaces, supporting wellbeing, climate resilience, and community enjoyment.*	G White	Healthy	High	Stage 1: Maintenance and improvement plan for 2026/27 are currently being updated. Routine green space maintenance and enhancement works are ongoing.
PLA-D19 Project	**Lea Fields Crematorium Memorial Garden.** *Carry out the work required on the Memorial Garden*	C Thornhill	Healthy	High	Stage 1: Awaiting the outcome of the Lea Fields Crematorium Market Analysis. The final report from Federation of Burial and Cremation Authorities (FBCA) is now expected in July 2026 and will be used to inform the development of a subsequent action plan. Further updates will be provided once the report has been received and reviewed.
PLA-D17 Strategy	**Joint Municipal Waste Strategy.** *To collaborate with Lincolnshire partners to refresh and deliver the Joint*	R Gilliot	N/A	N/A	Current legislative changes are shaping the work of the Lincolnshire Waste Partnership (LWP) and will continue to do so through to

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Ref	Key Deliverable	Responsible Officer	Status	Confidence	Commentary
	Municipal Waste Strategy, ensuring a consistent, sustainable, and future-proof approach to waste management.				2027. In response, the LWP is working collaboratively to implement these changes, with an updated version planned for 2027 incorporating recent data and outcomes. The partnership meets quarterly to review emerging changes and monitor current trends.
PLA-D14 Strategy	**Develop and adopt a renewable energy community benefit policy.** *To create a clear, consistent policy framework that ensures communities benefit directly from renewable-energy developments, supporting local investment, resilience, and fairness.*	E King	N/A	N/A	The committee report, policy appendices and legal briefing have now been drafted, and the item has been included in the Forward Plan ahead of the Thriving Places Committee. The draft policy is scheduled to be presented to the Committee on 14 July.

STRATEGIC RISKS PROGRESS UPDATE – QUARTER ONE 2026/2027

A strategic risk register is maintained to provide a structured approach to identifying, monitoring and proactively managing strategic risks, ensuring potential issues are understood, mitigated, and appropriately governed to support the successful delivery of council priorities.

Ref	Risk	Risk Owner	Direction of Travel/ Response	Risk Score	Planned Actions
PLA-R01	The threat is that the local housing market and our housing related services do not meet demand due to lack of suitable homes to meet local needs or a deterioration in condition of existing housing stock resulting in increased pressure on housing services	S Elvin	→ Treat	9	• Completion of Housing Stock Condition Survey to inform approach to Private Sector Housing action • Delivery of additional temporary accommodation across the district to meet growing demands • Continuation of S106 funding to deliver additional affordable housing • Delivery of specialist accommodation to meet identified needs • Review of Central Lincolnshire Local Plan • Deliver energy efficiency intervention
PLA-R02	The threat is that the local economy does not grow sufficiently due to lack	J Makinson-Sanders	→ Treat	9	• Delivery of the Economic Growth Strategy 25/30 Action Plan.

Ref	Risk	Risk Owner	Direction of Travel/ Response	Risk Score	Planned Actions
	of inward investment or loss of employers resulting in reduced job creation, lower economic resilience, reduced income to the council and greater pressure on Council services and resources				• Ensure profile and reputation of WLDC as place to invest and do business remains strong through networking and promotion of success. • Revisit economic evidence base in support of next phase of Local Plan review aligned with development of economic growth / development strategy. • Ongoing work to acquire and subsequently deliver the development agreement for the investment and regeneration of Scampton. • Submission of funding bids to organisations to support ongoing ED • Development and ongoing delivery of Pride in Place • Engagement with Greater Lincolnshire Combined County Authority to ensure Local Growth Plan and supporting work aligns with and represents the economic growth opportunities for the district. • Secure further funding for town centres heritage interventions.
PLA-R03	The threat is that we are unable to create a cleaner and safer district due to lack of capacity to respond to service demand or the ability to implement new legislation resulting in a lack of feeling safe, reputational damage or adverse effect on natural wildlife habitats and biodiversity	R Gilliot	→ Treat	8	• Continue to work with the Lincolnshire Waste Partnership (LWP). • Ensure continual review of the Municipal Waste Strategy. • Determine level of enforcement resources needed in advance of Fixed Term contract ending.
PLA-R04	The threat is that the review of the Central Lincolnshire Local Plan does	R Hughes	→ Treat	6	• Review timetable agreed - formal review planned Feb/Mar 2027 - CLJSPC signed off with

Ref	Risk	Risk Owner	Direction of Travel/ Response	Risk Score	Planned Actions
	not go ahead against the current timetable, resulting in a challenging supply of land and an inability to meet the needs of our residents, businesses and communities				oversight at their quarterly meetings • Preparatory work underway - HoPs leading & updates reported to CLSG monthly • WLDC officer and member engagement in review of Central Lincolnshire Local Plan.

Thematic Business Plan: Supporting Information

Thematic Business Plan: Introduction

The Thematic Business Plans sets out how we will deliver the Council's priorities for 2026/27, ensuring our services and programmes contribute effectively to the Corporate Plan aims. This plan provides a clear line of sight from strategic objectives through to delivery, performance measurement, and risk management.

The report presents three core components: Key Performance Indicators, Key Deliverables and Strategic Risks.

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs).

The plan sets out the KPIs for 2026/27, with performance assessed against agreed targets using a Red/Amber/Green (RAG) rating. Progress is also shown using trend arrows, indicating whether performance has improved, declined, or remained stable when compared with the previous quarter.

Trend (compared with the previous qtr)		RAG Ratings	
↑	Performance is improving	Green	Performance met/exceeded approved target
↓	Fall in performance	Amber	Performance within approved tolerances
→	No change	Red	Performance below target

The Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) forms part of the Council's performance framework and includes key performance measures that have been below target for two or more consecutive quarters. The PIP provides additional detail on the causes of underperformance, its impact, the actions being taken to improve results, and the expected timescales for recovery.

Key Deliverables - Projects.

Projects within the TBP are managed through the Council's Project Management Office (PMO), which provides a consistent and robust approach to project delivery. This ensures that projects are delivered efficiently, on time, within scope, and within budget. Projects are monitored using agreed principles and frameworks. Each project included in the TBP is assessed using the following measures:

Element	Green	Amber	Red
Status. An overall assessment of how effectively a project is performing against its agreed scope, schedule, cost, quality, and risk parameters.	**Healthy**. Project is progressing without any issues	**Concerns**. Potential issues that need monitoring	**Serious** issues. Critical issues or areas that require immediate action
Confidence. A measured level of certainty regarding the project's ability to successfully meet its objectives, based on current performance, assumptions, and known constraints.	**High**. On track; low risk; stable resources; credible delivery	**Concerns**. Some concerns; moderate risks; recoverable with action	**Low**. Major issues; high risk; low confidence in delivery

Projects follow a four-stage lifecycle to provide a structured and consistent approach with clear governance and expectations.

Stage one. Initiation – defines why the project is needed and whether it is viable

Stage two. Scoping / Planning – works out what needs to be done and how

Stage three: Delivery / Execution – carries out the work

Stage four: Closure – finalises the project and re-views benefits

Strategic Risks.

Strategic risks are considered as being those faced by the Council that, if materialised, would adversely impact the delivery of corporate priorities.

To ensure that these risks are updated consistently across the three areas, a matrix and guidance are used to score, assessed against the likelihood and impact of the risk.

Score	RAG Ratings
1-3	Green
4-9	Amber
12-16	Red

The four risk responses -Tolerate, Treat, Terminate and Transfer - are used to determine how a risk should be managed to reduce its likelihood or impact. Planned actions set out the specific measures to be implemented.

Response	What it means
Treat	Accept & monitor
Tolerate	Reduce likelihood/impact
Terminate	Stop the activity entirely
Transfer	Pass to third party

Reporting of the Strategic Risks will also continue to be reported to the Governance and Audit Committee on a six-monthly basis.

Contacts.

For further information or to discuss the report further please contact either:

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Thriving Places Committee Work Plan (as at 6 July 2026)

Purpose:
This report provides a summary of items of business due at upcoming meetings.

Recommendation:

1. That Members note the contents of this report.

Date	Title	Lead Officer	Purpose of the report	Date First Published
14 JULY 2026				
14 Jul 2026	Thriving Places Thematic Business Plan Progress Report	Sally Grindrod-Smith, Director Planning, Regeneration & Communities	To present the progress report for the Thriving Places Thematic Business Plan	
14 Jul 2026	Renewable Energy Community Benefit Policy	Claire Hill, Economic Growth Officer, Steve Leary, Policy and Strategy Officer - Climate and Sustainable Environment	To review and adopt a renewable energy community benefit policy	
14 Jul 2026	Pride in Place update	Wendy Osgodby, Economic Growth Team Leader	Pride in Place update and next steps	
3 NOVEMBER 2026				
3 Nov 2026	Proposed Fees and Charges 2027/2028	Sarah Scully, Finance Business Support Team Leader	Proposed Fees and Charges to take effect from 1 April 2027.	
3 Nov 2026	Thriving Places Thematic Business Plan Progress Report	Sally Grindrod-Smith, Director Planning, Regeneration & Communities	To present the progress report for the Thriving Places Thematic Business Plan	
3 Nov 2026	Pride in Place Investment Plan	Wendy Osgodby, Economic Growth Team	Pride in Place Investment Plan review ahead of submission	

		Leader	
26 JANUARY 2027			
26 Jan 2027	Thriving Places Committee Draft Budget 2027/2028 and estimates to 2031/2032.	Sarah Scully, Finance Business Support Team Leader	The report sets out details of the Committee's draft revenue budget for the period of 2027/2028 and estimates to 2031/2032
26 Jan 2027	Thriving Places Thematic Business Plan Progress Report	Sally Grindrod-Smith, Director Planning, Regeneration & Communities	To present the progress report for the Thriving Places Thematic Business Plan
26 Jan 2027	Central Lincolnshire Local Plan Issues and Options Consultation Response	Rachael Hughes, Assistant Chief Executive - Policy, Strategy and Performance	Committee review of WLDC Local Plan Issues and Options Consultation Response
26 Jan 2027	Review of NSIP scheme of delegations	Russell Clarkson, Head of Planning	To provide an update on NSIP activity and review NSIP scheme of delegations
20 APRIL 2027			
20 Apr 2027	Thriving Places Thematic Business Plan Progress Report	Sally Grindrod-Smith, Director Planning, Regeneration & Communities	To present the progress report for the Thriving Places Thematic Business Plan
20 Apr 2027	Housing Strategy Review	Sarah Elvin, Head of Housing, Health and Wellbeing	Update of the Housing Strategy and Action Plan
20 Apr 2027	Visitor Economy Strategy Refresh	Wendy Osgodby, Economic Growth Team Leader, Faye Pudney, Visitor Economy Officer	Refresh of the Visitor Economy Strategy and Action Plan
20 Apr 2027	STEP Investment Plan	James Makinson-Sanders, Head of Economic Growth and Regeneration	To review the STEP Investment Plan