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SSE Renewables 'to provide £8m financial boost' to Griffin wind farm's locale

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Blades arrive at the Griffin wind farm.

The presence of a controversial wind farm in Highland Perthshire is to see the start of substantial financial benefits for local communities.

Organisations seeking larger amounts will be able to apply for a small, medium or large grant.

Small grants of £250 to £5000 can be applied for using a simple form from the foundation.

Applicants for medium (£5000 to £25,000) grants must complete a more detailed form, as applicants must provide more information on how funds will be used.

For grants of £25,000 or more, applications will be more complex so any decision to award a grant will follow detailed discussions between the applicant, the Scottish Community Foundation and the advisory panel.

Scottish Hydro Griffin Community Fund advisory panel chairman John Gray said, "This is a fantastic opportunity for us to improve the local area.

"We want this funding to create and support sustainable projects and initiatives, build sustainable local organisations and groups and connect with wider sections of the community and leverage additional funding for the area, where necessary."

Noel Cummins, SSE community liaison officer for the Griffin Wind Farm, said, "We are delighted to launch the Scottish Hydro Griffin Community Fund, which has the potential to make a real difference to the communities around Griffin and to leave a lasting legacy for future generations.

"Over the lifetime of the wind farm, the fund should provide well over £8 million which has the potential to provide real benefit to the local community."

The wind farm should be completed in 2012.

During the lifetime of the Griffin wind farm near Aberfeldy, more than £8 million is to be pumped into local businesses and organisations by developer SSE Renewables.

For the next 25 years, at least £312,000 will be awarded annually to the Scottish Hydro Griffin Community Fund to benefit the community council areas of Aberfeldy, Dull and Weem, Dunkeld and Birnam, Kenmore and District and Mid Atholl, Strathtay and Grandtully.

The fund aims to support activities that will enhance quality of life and promote people's well being, promote community spirit and foster vibrant, sustainable communities.

It will open for applications from Sunday, with an initial deadline of May 31, and SSE said around £324,000 is available for distribution in the fund's first year.

• For further information and application forms, visit www.scottishcf.org/griffin, contact the Scottish Community Foundation on 0141 341 4960 or email grants@scottishcf.org.

The fund was one of the most significant promises made to communities near the Griffin wind farm in a bid to assuage local people who fear it will scar the landscape.

It was opposed by the communities and rejected by Perth and Kinross Council but was cleared by Scottish ministers after a public inquiry.

Local roads have seen disruption, with months spent strengthening and widening them so components of the £200 million project's 68 125-metre turbines can be moved to the site.

That is under way, with convoys of abnormal load vehicles daily travelling under police escort from Rosyth to the Griffin site.

SSE believes the community will benefit hugely from its fund despite the concerns of locals, ensuring the wind farm leaves behind a positive and lasting legacy.

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An advisory panel of residents and representatives of the community council areas will meet up to four times a year to decide how grants are to be awarded. In addition, applications for grants of up to £250 can be made via a "micro" grants scheme administered by each of the five community councils serving the area.

Applications for these grants can be made at any time and are open to groups (with or without a constitution) and individuals for purposes that will benefit the community.