

# Yellow River Wind Farm Funding Strategy



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# Committee Foreword

**Yellow River Wind Farm, located in northeast Offaly where the county meets Westmeath, Kildare, and Meath, marks an exciting step forward in Ireland's move from peat-based energy to a greener, more sustainable future. Once an area dominated by raised bogs, the landscape is now transforming — combining renewable energy, active farmland, and reclaimed peatlands to create a more balanced and resilient environment. Yellow River Wind Farm plays a key role in supporting national climate goals while helping local communities grow and thrive.**

At the heart of this transformation is the Community Benefit Strategy (CBS), created to make sure local people share directly in the long-term benefits of the wind farm. The strategy began with a wide community consultation, where residents highlighted the need for inclusive representation, transparent decision-making, and fair access to opportunities. Following an impressive 60 applications from local residents, ten people were selected to form the Community Benefit Fund (CBF) Committee, ensuring a strong mix of experience, age, gender, and location across the area. The committee was officially appointed in March 2024 and has since taken part in training and induction to prepare for their role.

The committee's mission is clear — to use the CBF to support projects that make a lasting difference. Over the first three years, the focus will be on delivering a strategic funding plan shaped by community priorities and in line with the Renewable Electricity Support Scheme (RESS) guiding principals set out by the Department of Climate, Energy and Environment. Through consultation, local residents identified several key priorities:

- Protecting and enhancing the environment — improving walking trails, conserving woodlands, rivers, and canals, and supporting biodiversity.
- Building community connections — investing in clubs, cultural events, and facilities that bring people together. Promoting health and wellness for all ages.
- Supporting education and lifelong learning — helping people of all ages access new skills, training, and opportunities.
- Preserving heritage and improving facilities — maintaining the unique character of the area while ensuring community spaces are welcoming and functional.

The Committee is focused on addressing these priority themes through the CBF, ensuring that our community continues to thrive and grow. By addressing these priorities, as identified by the local community, community life will be enhanced through sustainable projects that create lasting legacy. These projects will support and strengthen local organisations, helping to build a vibrant, resilient and cohesive community for generations to come. Thank you to everyone who participated in the consultation and shared their valuable insights.

## Community Consultation Report Launch



# Introduction

## About Yellow River Wind Farm

Yellow River is a 29-turbine wind farm, with an installed renewable electricity capacity of 101MW located outside Rhode, County Offaly. First energisation at the site powered Ireland forward to reach an installed capacity of 5GW of onshore wind in January 2025, with Yellow River Wind Farm now producing clean and secure renewable power from the Midlands for Irish homes and businesses. The wind farm's operation marks another vital contribution by SSE towards Ireland's Climate Action Plan commitments, helping meet the State's 2030 renewables and decarbonisation targets and assisting the country's security of supply goals. All Yellow River's power has been contracted under a RESS 3 agreement for low carbon generation from the Irish Government. Over the lifetime of this contract, SSE will distribute a multi-million-euro Community Fund to local initiatives, projects, clubs and amenities.

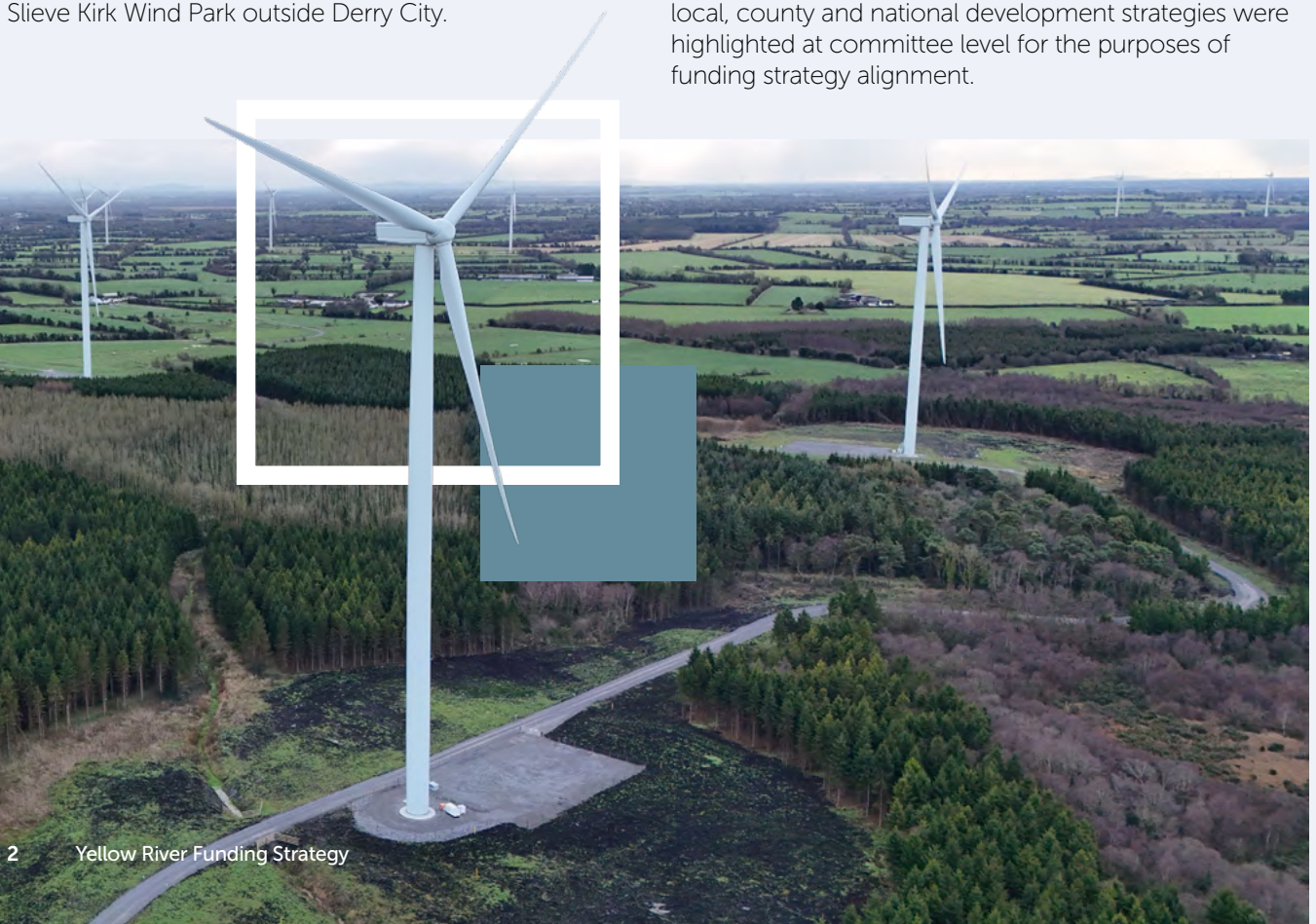
## About SSE Renewables

SSE Renewables is a leading developer and operator of renewable energy generation, focusing on onshore and offshore wind farms, hydro-electric power and flexible battery storage technologies. It is part of electricity infrastructure company SSE plc, a FTSE-100 company with operations across the UK and Ireland, and a presence in carefully selected international markets. SSE Renewables delivers clean power assets to increase SSE's operational renewable generation capacity as part of the company's five-year investment plan for 2030. This includes delivery of the world's largest offshore wind farm in construction, the 3.6GW Dogger Bank Wind Farm. SSE Renewables operates some of the leading onshore wind farms in Ireland including the 174MW Galway Wind Park in Connemara and the 73MW Slieve Kirk Wind Park outside Derry City.

## About Offaly Local Development Company (OLDC)

OLDC has over 30 years' experience working directly to support communities across Offaly to develop projects and implement initiatives locally that meet the needs of the people living there, making their locality a better place to live work and play. OLDC works in collaboration with all other organisations and agencies to maximise and co-ordinate the range of programmes and services that can be used to support communities develop.

Support from OLDC which delivers both LEADER and SICAP projects across Co. Offaly, was instrumental in enabling SSE Renewables to carry out a comprehensive community consultation process within the local areas. OLDC also played a key role in ensuring that current local, county and national development strategies were highlighted at committee level for the purposes of funding strategy alignment.



## Purpose of the Funding Strategy

Over the lifetime of the wind farm, it is expected that approximately €8 million will be distributed to the local community to promote fairness, environmental sustainability and long-term resilience. The Yellow River CBF has been created to ensure that the benefits of the wind farm are shared widely and equitably across the host community. Our goal is to ensure funding is accessible, meaningful and impactful and is a catalyst for long-term transformation that enriches the community through sustained investment in energy efficiency, climate action, education, infrastructure and wellbeing.

This CBF Strategy serves as a guiding framework to individuals and groups applying to the Yellow River CBF. It outlines fund priorities, how the fund will operate, who can apply, the eligibility criteria and the impact it seeks to make. It reflects extensive community consultation and aligns with key themes from the consultation process conducted in 2023 and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

To ensure community ownership of the fund and that the funding priorities are fit for purpose, the committee participated in the design and supported the development of the strategy. The strategy will remain in place for a three-year period, when it will be revised to ensure that the fund remains aligned appropriately with community interests. Committee members will rotate every three years, both committees within this time frame will assess the strategy's impact and area of benefit prior to the end of their appointments. At the end of the six years, if the committee decides the strategy needs to be updated to align with the communities' needs and priorities, the wider community will be invited to review the strategy and propose amendments.

The RESS terms and conditions that have been developed, are the official guidelines and requirements for how renewable energy projects in Ireland must manage and distribute their CBFs. These funds are a key part of RESS projects, designed to ensure that communities hosting renewable energy developments benefit directly from the energy transition.

## Community Consultation Summary

Community perspectives were central to shaping the funding strategy ensuring a strong emphasis on understanding and responding to the unique priorities of local communities. SSE Renewables, supported by OLDC, delivered a public consultation process from April to September 2023 in Offaly, Meath, Westmeath and Kildare to get a better understanding of the local needs, priorities, and aspirations of communities near the wind farm. The development of this funding strategy has been underpinned by wide-ranging consultation activities designed to capture feedback from diverse voices and perspectives. Community interests and considerations were captured in surveys, collaborative forums, feedback from public sessions and a comprehensive Consultation Report was developed to support CBF Committee when developing the strategy.

Click this link to read the [Yellow River Community Benefit Fund Consultation Report](#)



# Area of Benefit

The area of benefit refers to the geographic region and boundaries that the fund intends to support. This distance is measured from the base of the nearest turbine to the nearest part of the main structure of the occupied residence / community organisation. The location of the building will be identified in the An Post national address register.

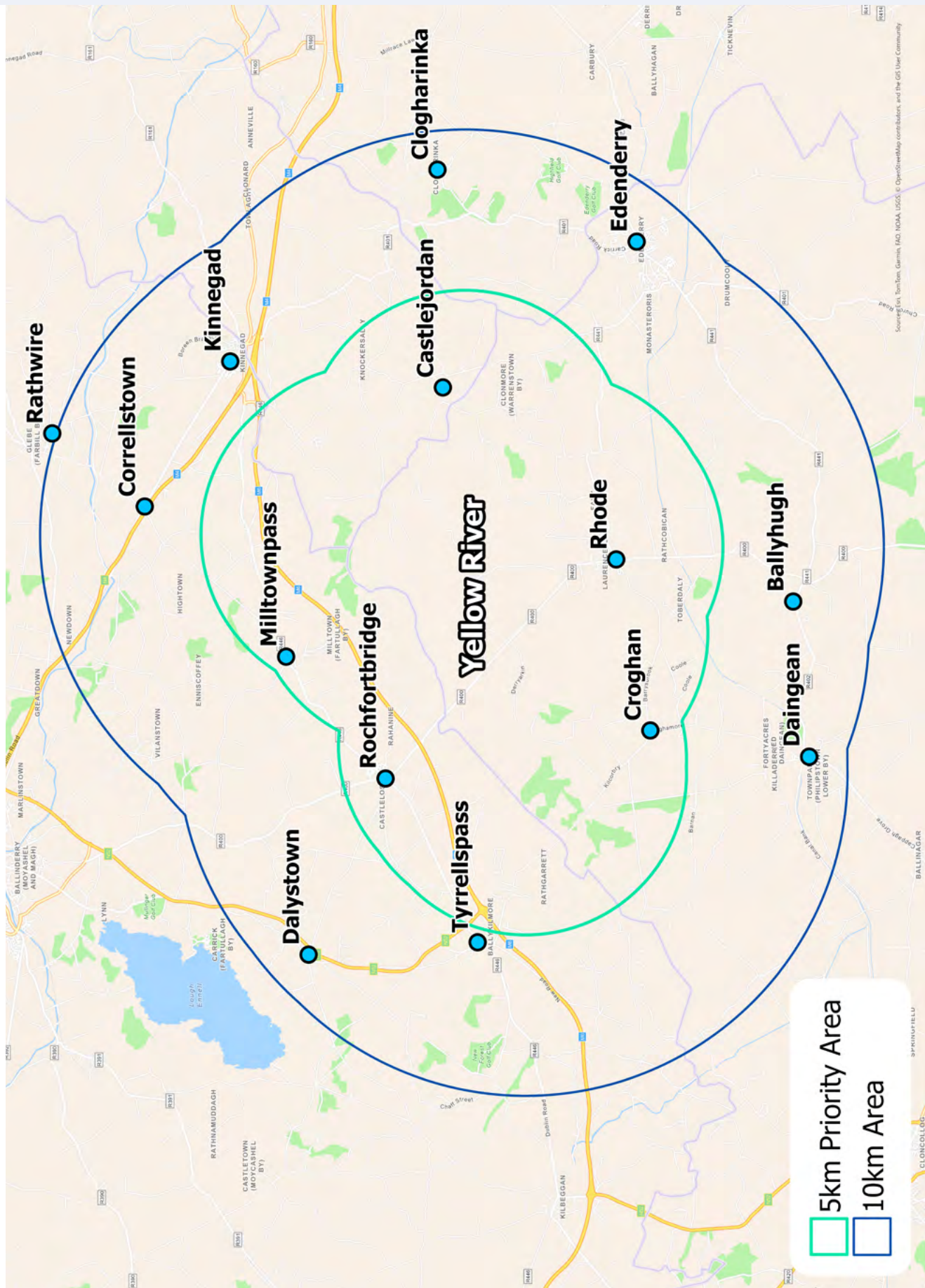
The committee voted in favour of defining the area of benefit for eligible community organisations and social enterprises as within a 10km radius of the base of a turbine, with priority given to projects within a 5km radius. This decision was made after examining the population size, the turbine visibility and the geographical area, as well as an extensive analysis of the community consultation, existing data from Census 2022, and local, county and national development plans. The committee has designated this area of benefit as it encompasses a population of over 44,000 residents (5km - 11,476, 10km - 32,869). The decision was grounded in evidence-based community need and reflects existing service provision, infrastructure

and the potential reach of the fund. It reflects the committee's commitment to a diverse cross-section of the community members across county boundaries. The area of benefit designation will be formally reviewed before the end of the committee's appointment to ensure it remains aligned with evolving community needs and project outcomes.

The area of benefit for eligible near neighbours is a 1km radius from the base of the nearest wind turbine. Near neighbours can also benefit from funded community projects within the defined area of benefit.



## Map of the Area of Benefit Rotate Page



# Community Benefit Fund Structure

Power generated at Yellow River Wind Farm is contracted under a RESS 3 agreement for low carbon generation from the Irish government. The CBF for Yellow River Wind Farm is being delivered under the Terms and Conditions of the RESS 3 scheme. Funds will be paid annually and the total value of the fund will be calculated at a rate of €2 per megawatt hour of electricity generated for each applicable year. As a result, annual funding awards will be variable but would be estimated to total around €500,000 per annum for the lifetime of the RESS contract term.

The CBF will align with local and government policy to ensure compliance, cooperation, and maximum impact is realised for the community living in the Area of Benefit. The fund will be administered as per industry best practice and guidelines. The funding will support projects that will create positive social and environmental impacts ensuring the communities adjacent to the wind farm receive real and tangible benefits from the development that will create a sustainable legacy.

The community fund will provide grants to local groups within 10km of Yellow River Wind Farm, with priority given to community groups within 5km to achieve their aims and develop initiatives on behalf of the community. Funding will be delivered in line with recognised standards as set out below.

## Near Neighbour

Residents living within a 1km radius of the base of the nearest turbine to the nearest part of the structure of the occupied residence will receive an annual Near Neighbour payment.

## Local Fund

The Local Fund has been designed to directly empower grassroots initiatives and community development organisations to build sustainable change and long-term resilience within the area of benefit. Through the provision of financial resources, local organisations can lead transformational projects that address local priorities with autonomy by promoting energy efficiency, climate action and social and economic sustainability.

Types of Funds	Frequency	Area of Benefit	Purpose
Near Neighbour	Annual	0-1km	To support neighbouring residents
Local Fund	Annual	10km radius of a turbine	To support sustainable change
Major Projects Fund	Annual	10km radius of a turbine	To support large scale transformational projects



## Major Projects Fund

The Major Project Fund supports large-scale, high-impact initiatives that advance the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and align with key funding themes. It focuses on projects that demonstrate strong potential for community impact, scalability, and inclusivity, ensuring lasting benefits beyond the initial investment phase.

With an emphasis on innovation, collaboration, and circular economy principles, the fund backs community-led solutions such as educational and skills development programmes, green and sustainable infrastructure, climate action initiatives and projects that build sustainable and resilient communities.

As part of the Major Project Fund, multi-annual funding may be made available for large-scale, transformational

projects that create a long-term community legacy. This funding model helps community groups secure other financing models if necessary and can attract additional capital investment to bring their projects to life.

If a project requires a multi-annual agreement, funding agreements will be issued for a defined total amount and are paid in fixed annual instalments over an agreed period. To receive each instalment, funded projects must demonstrate robust governance structures and provide annual progress reports alongside supporting documentation showing clear evidence of the projects development.

All projects supported by the Major Project Fund must clearly contribute to advancing the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

## Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

The SDGs, also known as the Global Goals, were adopted by the United Nations in 2015 as a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity.

Ireland's Sustainable Development Goals National Implementation Plan 2022-2024 provides a whole-of-government approach to implementing these goals. Delivering on the SDGs will help build a cleaner economy, fairer opportunities for everyone, and stronger, more resilient communities.



The call to 'think global, act local' highlights the fact that universal challenges can only be met through local action. To this end, the Yellow River Wind Farm CBF will be underpinned by the 17 objectives of the UN SGs, with a focus on the following 4 UN SDGs.



### UN SDG 4. Quality Education

Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.



### UN SDG 7. Affordable & Clean Energy

Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all.



### UN SDG 11. Sustainable Cities & Communities

Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.



### UN SDG 13. Climate Action

Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.

# Funding Themes and Objectives

The CBF is built around six key themes that reflect the values, guiding principles, and aspirations of the local communities. The feedback gathered from the community consultation phase shaped the strategic themes and objectives outlined below. Inclusive dialogue with residents, community groups, and key stakeholders, gained critical insights into the needs and priorities of those who will be impacted.

These themes act as focus areas for the kind of projects that will be supported with each one addressing strategic objectives of need and opportunity. We are seeking initiatives that not only deliver tangible environmental and social benefits, but also build stronger connections, improve quality of life, and leave a lasting legacy. Projects must demonstrate meaningful impact across at least one of the following themes.



## Theme 1: Enhancing the Natural Environment

**This theme aims to foster a deep appreciation for the natural environment while promoting sustainable practices and community involvement.**

### Objectives:

- 1. Develop and Maintain Walking and Nature Trails:**  
Create and maintain accessible walking and nature trails to encourage outdoor activities and foster a connection with nature.
- 2. Protect and Restore Woodlands and Forests:**  
Implement conservation projects aimed at protecting and restoring local woodlands and forests.
- 3. Promote Biodiversity and Wildlife Conservation:**  
Establish programs to protect and enhance habitats for native wildlife species.
- 4. Engage the Community in Nature Conservation Efforts:**  
Organise community-led initiatives, such as tree planting events, clean up drives, and educational workshops, to involve residents in conservation efforts.



## Theme 2: Promoting Community Engagement

**This theme aims to create a vibrant, connected, and supportive community where everyone has the opportunity to engage, contribute and thrive.**

### Objectives:

- 1. Preserve and Celebrate Architectural Heritage:**  
Protect, and restore historic buildings and structures to maintain awareness of the cultural and historical identity of the community and architectural heritage.
- 2. Enhance Local Clubs and Organisations:**  
Support the sustainability of local clubs / organisations and encourage the formation of new clubs that cater to diverse interests by providing resources, training and funding.
- 3. Improve Community Facilities and Services:**  
Strengthen existing community services by improving accessibility, quality, and responsiveness to community need for all ages and backgrounds.
- 4. Facilitate Social Cohesion through Activities:**  
Create opportunities for social interaction and networking through regular community activities, workshops, and social gatherings for all.





### Theme 3: Promoting Lifelong Learning

This theme aims to create a robust and inclusive educational environment that supports lifelong learning in the areas of apprenticeships, extracurricular activities and skills development for everyone in the community.

#### Objectives:

- 1. Enhance Access to Lifelong Learning Opportunities:**  
Develop and support programmes that provide continuous education opportunities for individuals of all ages.
- 2. Strengthen Extracurricular Programs:**  
Increase the availability and variety of extra-curricular activities to cater to different interests.
- 3. Expand Skills Training and Certification Courses:**  
Offer a range of skills training programme and certification courses that align with current and emerging job market needs.



### Theme 4: Preserving and Enhancing Waterways

These objectives aim to preserve and enhance the natural beauty and ecosystem of the waterways, canals and rivers, while promoting eco-friendly tourism, sustainable use and community engagement.

#### Objectives:

- 1. Conservation and Restoration of Waterways:**  
Implement projects to clean and restore rivers and canals.
- 2. Develop and Maintain Walking and Cycling Paths:**  
Create and sustain well-designed walking and cycling paths along waterways to promote healthy, active lifestyles.
- 3. Establish Outdoor Recreational Facilities:**  
Develop outdoor facilities such as picnic area, fitness areas, and playgrounds to enhance the recreational use of waterway corridors.
- 4. Promote Sustainable Social Enterprise Tourism Projects:**  
Support the development of social enterprise tourism initiatives that highlight the natural beauty and cultural significance of waterways.
- 5. Enhance Environmental Education and Awareness:**  
Organise community events, workshops, and volunteer programs focused on environmental awareness, leadership and sustainable practices.



### Theme 5: Regenerating the Built Environment

These objectives aim to create a vibrant, sustainable, and inclusive built environment that supports the well-being and growth of the community.

#### Objectives:

- 1. Promote Energy Efficiency and Sustainability:**  
Implement energy efficiency retrofits in community buildings and facilities to reduce energy consumption and environmental impact.
- 2. Enhance Community Buildings and Facilities:**  
Develop, upgrade and maintain new and existing community buildings to ensure they are safe, accessible, and meet the diverse needs of the community.
- 3. Expand and Improve Outdoor Recreational Spaces:**  
Create and enhance outdoor recreational facilities such as parks, playgrounds, sports fields, and green spaces to provide opportunities for everyone to enjoy the outdoor environment.
- 4. Develop Multipurpose Indoor Community Facilities:**  
Promote the development of adaptable community centers that can accommodate various activities and events, from sports and fitness to cultural and social gatherings.



### Theme 6: Promoting Health and Wellness for All Ages

These objectives aim to create a supportive and health-conscious community where individuals of all ages can thrive mentally, physically, and socially.

#### Objectives:

- 1. Improve Indoor and Outdoor Recreational Facilities:**  
Create and maintain high quality outdoor recreational spaces such as parks, trails, that are accessible to people of all ages and abilities.
- 2. Promote Active Community Programmes:**  
Develop and support a variety of community programmes that promote physical activity focusing on inclusivity and accessibility for all community members
- 3. Foster Community Engagement and Education:**  
Organise health and wellness workshops, seminars, and events to educate community members to promote a culture of wellness and continuous learning within the community.
- 4. Support Active Aging, Health and Wellness Programmes:**  
Support programmes that develop and enhance health and wellness programmes including activities that promote physical, mental and social well-being for all ages.

# The Application Process

## Who Can Apply

The Local Fund and Major Project Fund is open to not-for-profit groups such as community and voluntary groups, charities, community / social enterprises, clubs and societies located within the 10km area of benefit. Each fund will each have separate application forms to reflect their distinct purposes and scales of investment. All applicants, whether applying to the Local Fund of Major Project Fund, must have a constitution and bank account in their name.

The Local Fund is designed to support small-scale, community-led initiatives that can be delivered within one year or less. In contrast, the Major Project Fund supports larger-scale projects with significant financial requirements and long-term strategic impact.

The Near Neighbour Fund is open to residents living within a 1km radius of Yellow River Wind Farm. The distance is identified from the base of the nearest turbine to the nearest part of the structure of the occupied residence (not outbuildings etc.), the location of which is identified in the An Post national address directory.



## How to Apply

Eligible households, community groups, and voluntary organisations can create a Group Account on the online Community Investment Portal. This platform streamlines the grant application process and enables applicants to view key information about their applications and any grant awards in one central location.

Comprehensive Guidance Notes and Instructional Videos on how to use the system are available on the Yellow River CBF webpage. These resources are designed to support applicants at every stage of the process, ensuring equitable access and encouraging high-quality submissions.

Community groups may receive additional assessment points if they have undertaken fundraising activities, contributed organisational reserves, or secured other grants to co-fund their project.

To support applicants to the Local and Major Project Funds, structured information workshops will be delivered both in person and online. These sessions will provide clear guidance on the application portal, project requirements, eligibility criteria, and submission procedures.

Applications to the Major Project Fund require a more detailed submission and may include the following supporting documentation.

Applicants will be required to submit:

- Evidence of governance structures and credentials
- Planning approval and relevant permits if required
- A comprehensive project budget and supplier quotations
- Up-to-date financial statements
- Details of confirmed or pending match funding
- Land ownership or lease agreements
- Letters of support from relevant stakeholders

The project team will contact households eligible for Near Neighbour payments to provide details of the application process.

The Yellow River Community Benefit Fund will open for applications once each year, with the launch widely promoted through multiple communication channels.



## What can be funded?

The fund will consider applications for both capital and revenue.

### ✓ Capital Funding

For acquiring or improving assets with a lifespan of at least five years and delivering broad community benefits.

### ✓ Revenue Funding

For operational costs tied to project delivery, including training, events, and programme development. Outputs must be tangible, such as course materials or action plans. Costs associated with implementing short-term social initiatives.

As part of the project application review process, each group's ability to successfully deliver their proposed project will be carefully evaluated. We strongly encourage local community groups to focus on strengthening their organisational capacity and enhancing governance practices through relevant training and upskilling ahead of the fund's opening.

Sound financial planning is also essential. It helps ensure that the resources needed for the project are identified, secured, and used effectively to achieve project outcomes.

## What cannot be funded?

The Funds will not support:

- ✗ Applications that promote religious or political activities.
- ✗ Direct replacement of statutory funding.
- ✗ Activities not directly benefiting the local community or aligning with the funding criteria.
- ✗ Projects benefiting primarily those residents outside the Area of Benefit.
- ✗ Existing loans, debts, or retrospective funding – you must apply for future needs.
- ✗ Applications that only benefit an individual.
- ✗ The Fund shall not be used as security against credit, loans or borrowings.
- ✗ Applications from for profit enterprises.
- ✗ Activities which do not directly benefit the local community or align with any of the priority themes outlined.

**SSE Renewables supports large-scale, high impact initiatives via its Major Projects Fund at a number of its wind farms such as at Galway Wind Park**





# Funding Eligibility Criteria

To qualify for funding under the Local and Major Project schemes, applicants must meet the following conditions:



## Geographic Eligibility

Organisations must be situated within 10 kilometres radius of Yellow River Wind Farm, with priority given to groups within 5 kilometres.



## Non-Profit Status

Only organisations operating on a not-for-profit basis will be considered eligible. This includes registered charities, social enterprises and community-based organisations.



## Governance and Management

Applicants must provide evidence of sound governance practices. This includes having a formal constitution or governance document such as a memorandum and articles of association. The governing document outlines the group's mission, objectives and rules for your organisation.



## Financial Stability

Groups must demonstrate sound financial management by providing up-to-date financial statements in the applicant's name, a budget for the proposed project and information on other funding sources.



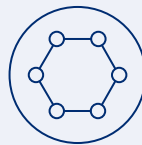
## Sustainability and Community Impact

Proposals must show potential for long-term positive outcomes. Particular attention will be given to environmental, social and economic benefits that support community and sustainable development.



## Addressing Community Needs

Applications should be supported by evidence that the project addresses a clearly identified need. Acceptable forms of evidence include, community surveys, stakeholder feedback, letters of support and relevant local data.



## Alignment with Fund Priorities

All project proposals must clearly demonstrate how they align with at least one of the fund's core themes and contribute to the SDGs.



# Evaluation and Impact

## Annual Reporting and Project Review

SSE is required to submit an annual report to Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland detailing the activities and management of the fund over the preceding year. This report must accurately reflect all fund-related operations and provide a comprehensive account of its social and economic impact, including case studies. As part of this process, the fund administrator will undertake impact assessments on behalf of the committee to evaluate the effects of fund distribution on local communities and socioeconomic wellbeing.

## Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation of funded activities is a core component of the fund's governance. This ensures both SSE and funded organisations can effectively measure progress, assess impact, and gain learnings that contribute to the continued development and success of community-focused programmes.

All organisations awarded funding must submit an end-of-project report. This report should include:

- A detailed summary of the project or initiative
- An assessment of outcomes achieved
- Evidence of community impact
- Reflections on key learnings throughout the project's duration

In addition, recipients are required to upload relevant documentation—including invoices, promotional materials, and supporting reports via the designated Portal.

The scope and frequency of reporting will be determined by the amount of funding granted. For large-scale projects, interim reports are mandatory before staged payments can be released. Upon completion, these projects must also submit a comprehensive outcome report that identifies the overall impact, successful elements, and areas of learning to inform future initiatives both for the grant holder and the broader community.



# Further Support and Information

To ensure applicants are well-informed and confident throughout the application process, a range of ongoing supports will be provided. These will include dedicated information workshops that explain how to apply, offer guidance on completing submissions, and clarify the fund's priorities. These sessions will be tailored to meet the needs of community groups and organisations, highlighting eligibility criteria, timelines, and best practices for developing strong proposals. In addition to workshops, support materials such as FAQs, application guides, and one-to-one advisory sessions may also be made available to help applicants align their projects with the fund's strategic goals and maximise their chances of success.

If you haven't already signed up for our CBF updates, click the link below or scan the QR code opposite to provide your details [ssecommunity.my.site.com/s/register-of-interest](https://ssecommunity.my.site.com/s/register-of-interest)

To access a copy of our Community Consultation, Newsletters and Contact Details click the link below to visit [sserenewables.com/yellowriver](https://sserenewables.com/yellowriver)





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