

Tom referenced the fund agreements between SSE and S&FCT as the place to go to and test any proposed project against. In addition, SSE broadly use charity law in Scotland as a proxy for what may or may not be considered of benefit to the public or specific groups considered to be 'in need'.

Question / Topic	Key Points in Response
<p>Cutting and removing fallen trees from a private property that are a result of storm damage - can this be funded? If the wood was being donated to the community wood fuel scheme?</p>	<p>Yes, potentially. If that is the genuine purpose behind the activity. Indeed, costs involved in collecting donations from anywhere for a community project could be covered if those are reasonable/ proportionate (in comparison to e.g. the costs of sourcing wood from elsewhere). So, in this case, only the costs involved in removing the wood in a manageable fashion could be funded.</p> <p>Improvements to a private property in the wake of a storm cannot be funded as private gain would outweigh public benefit. Also, it would not be an appropriate use of community benefit monies to fund anything that is / would be covered via householders' insurance policy.</p>
<p>Supporting those who are most vulnerable (elderly, infirm/disabled, low income) in society through handyman services?</p>	<p>Potentially. The Board need to consider the detail of how the scheme will operate including how it will target those genuinely in need. But if you can do this it could be considered charitable. Funding would need to be proportionate so that public benefit outweighs private gain.</p>
<p>Membership benefits – can a membership benefit scheme including discounts on local gym memberships, in supermarkets, also pensions and loans and preferential loans and savings be supported?</p>	<p>No. This would provide only individual benefit, and the fund agreements with SSE clearly state that any income/growth arising from any investments made with the fund must go back into the fund and be used for the purposes set out in those agreements.</p> <p>S&amp;FCT may be able to negotiate discounts for its membership with local providers anyway.</p>
<p>How about a credit union?</p>	<p>Yes, some costs involved in setting up a local credit union could be funded. The purpose of a credit union is to support those in the community who cannot otherwise access savings accounts or loans (on affordable terms). Such services may therefore address the charitable purpose Relief of Poverty. But the capitalisation of any loans or inducements to set up a savings account or pension/investment cannot be funded. We would also expect the credit union to be a viable business in its own right, beyond any start-up funding.</p>
<p>Resilience response in the area e.g. to floods and forest fires? Including e.g. installing outdoor taps and hoses in peoples' gardens where there is no other viable source of water for the fire brigade.</p>	<p>Our preference would be to fund a publicly accessible hydrant, if the need was justified. Promotion of safety fits under the Saving of Lives charitable purpose. But public benefit must clearly outweigh private gain in order to justify fund spend in this way - it cannot be ancillary. It would seem a stretch to fund this if forest fires were very rare. See also other points below.</p>

	<p>However there have been instances where CB funds have been used to instal equipment of benefit to the public in rural areas at a private property (install of defibrillators on the gable end of someone’s house) where that is the best (perhaps only) location for them. In such cases we would wish to see a written agreement that states access to the equipment will be given to the public on an ongoing basis.</p>
<p>Or costs of someone nearby to open sluice gates, where local authority will take too long to respond. Also costs of fire readiness packs, etc.</p>	<p>Promotion of safety including provision of safety equipment/ first aid kits etc. is charitable under the Saving of Lives purpose. SSE networks already provide a lot of this in rural areas (through our Resilient Communities Fund and otherwise). The costs of a Resilience post could be funded perhaps, on a sessional basis.</p> <p>See also the point below on working with statutory authorities.</p>
<p>Under what circumstances can we use SSE funds to support businesses? Point made that SCFT was allowed to give some emergency relief to local businesses during cost-of-living crisis or pandemic.</p>	<p>Development of new (community owned) business premises/infrastructure, also skills/training incl. apprenticeships can be funded. SSE’s focus in the latter case is on supporting the individual and helping them develop skills and experience to improve their opportunities, rather than growing the business.</p> <p>Emergency relief was just that. We cannot otherwise fund running costs for private businesses – aside from any other considerations that would be propping up a non-viable business venture.</p>
<p>Statutory duties</p>	<p>If S&amp;FCT is seeking to fund activities/works that but up against statutory duties, we would advise it needs to be very careful that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Its discretionary activity not statutory duties that the Trust is funding.</li> <li>• The Trust isn’t knowingly creating a situation that enables the statutory body to roll back funding they would otherwise have been willing and able to provide for that work/activity. Consider whether it is currently funded or budgeted for by the statutory body, and is it likely to be in future (what have they communicated, publicly or directly to the Trust/others)?</li> <li>• Ensure there is strong partnership working with the statutory body with clear lines of authority/responsibility and communication so you don’t do something that leaves the Trust open to criticism or worse (liable). E.g. opening sluice gates. There must be an agreed written procedure e.g. alerting or getting permission from the authority, and which they have signed off on.</li> </ul>
	<p>The following general points on funding provided by SSE were also made:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We can’t fund individuals directly other than for educational purposes or, where micro-grants are concerned, for activity of benefit to the wider community.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Funding must be subject to the public benefit test – see Scots charity law. Consider is the stated purpose of grant support genuinely and for the main part something that will benefit the wider community somehow.</li> <li>• Also consider how would it look/feel to those in the wider community, including your detractors. Start there and work back. The decision to award must be made fairly, in public interest and based on published criteria. Also the funding opportunity must be widely advertised.</li> <li>• Ask yourselves whether the activity being considered for funding fits with feedback from your community consultations and is (ideally) reflected in some way in your Community Action Plan. That’s not to say new/emerging priorities can’t be funded, but you need to satisfy yourselves that the community is - in the round - supportive.</li> <li>• Do feel free to pass ideas by us before you spend too much time working them up, so we can give you any steer on whether they are fundable and any key points on how we would wish to see them delivered.</li> </ul>
<p>What is SSE’s policy on community benefit for new projects including new wind farms, extension and re-powered/extended life.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SSE complies with the Scottish Government’s Good Practice Principles for Community benefit, offering £5,000 per MW installed capacity, index linked, for all onshore wind farms, including new ones and extensions. Payable from point of construction rather than commercial operation date. We conduct an analysis of lifetime and time limited (transport and construction) impacts and look to split the fund across relevant communities based on those considerations.</li> <li>• We are considering our policy on re-powering/extended life wind farms and will confirm this once agreed. We are also considering our policy on offshore, hydro, solar and battery.</li> </ul>