

Windfarm will support the local community for another 25 years

One of Scotland largest windfarms has been granted an extra 25 years of life in a move that is expected to help ring in funds for rural communities on the fringes of the Pentland Hills.

The Harburnhead windfarm has already contributed almost £200,000 to local communities since it opened in 2016.

And West Lothian Council Development Management Committee raised no objections after being consulted by the Scottish Government under the Electricity Act to extend the operational life of Harburnhead Windfarm to 50 years – 2066.

The windfarm which sits on moorland south-west of West Calder, near Cobbinshaw Loch, has been in operation since 2016 and was due to be decommissioned by 2041. Since February 2017 it has contributed £196,440.64 to surrounding communities.

The windfarm has 22 turbines and has an electricity generating capacity of 51.7MW. It can generate clean energy for around 31,000 homes and reduces annual carbon emissions by around 60,000 tonnes.

In a report to the DMC planners said: “The wind farm has been operational for over six years and is already providing a

valuable contribution to the Scottish Government's net zero and renewable energy targets.

"The additional 25 years' life extension would maximise the benefits of the renewable energy infrastructure at the site, making a significant contribution to addressing the global climate emergency declared by the Scottish Government in 2019.

"The life extension would ensure the renewable energy capacity provided by the wind farm remains on-line beyond the 2045 target date for 'net zero' greenhouse gas emissions set out in the Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Act 2019.

The wind turbines have low levels of degradation and will be able to operate beyond the present 25 year limit in the existing consent. Thus there is no technical reason for decommissioning the wind farm after 25 years. The proposed life extension would have no significant environmental disadvantages and for the 2045 'net zero' target set to be met it is important the wind farm is not decommissioned prematurely."

West Calder, and its surrounding villages have benefitted from windfarm cash including Harburn, Addiewell, and Loganlea.

Wind farms have contributed more than £1 million to West Lothian since they were first established in the county in 2007.

In 2019 the council's Partnership and Resources Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel heard that West Lothian Development Trust (WLDT) set up to handle wind farm contributions has made more than £765,000 in grants to 41 local organisations since then.

Five wind farms in West Lothian have provided community benefit payments to WLDT – Black Law, Pateshill, Harburnhead, Tormywheel and Pearie Law. More money will come into the

trust as newer windfarms, including a huge new development at Camility on the boundary of the Pentland National Park at Harburn, are built and become operational.

by Stuart Somerville Local Democracy Reporter

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