

Ray Windfarm Fund CIC Meeting

Date 26th March 2026
Elsdon Village Hall
Time 7.00pm

1. Broadband 4 the Rural North (B4RN) Presentation from Tom Rigg, CEO and Elaine Elrick, Chief of Delivery

Thanks to RWF for helping to kickstart the deployment of B4RN in the North East, it is a long-term investment which is here to stay, and the grants awarded by the Ray Wind Funds for the Barrasford, Kirkwhelpington and Woodburn projects is greatly appreciated.

B4RN is a Community Benefit Society started in 2011 by a volunteer group. Its surplus can only be distributed to the community or used to expand the network, and it can never be purchased by a commercial operator. It now has 15,000 customers. The governments Project Gigabit usually gives 70% of funding towards projects through customer signups however, this funding can only be claimed after the network has been built and customers connected.

Volunteers have been crucial to the progression of the network, they are boots on the ground, providing contacts, collaborating with communities, delivering messages and helping to raise community investment. In our area Broadband 4 North Tyne and Redesdale (B4NTR) have been instrumental in the broadband journey.

Kirkwhelpington and Barrasford projects are now classed as complete, though there is a small section to finish in Kirkwhelpington.

- Barrasford project build 2023-2024 out of a potential 552 properties 234 have now been connected which is a 42% takeup.
- Kirkwhelpington project build 2024-2025 with a potential 485 properties to connect. 177 have been connected which is 36% takeup.

The general pattern is that once a network project has completed properties will continue to connect in the years following as their broadband contracts expire or through word of mouth from neighbours. The network has been built to connect all the original numbers, and they can be easily connected if they choose to switch to B4RN.

The Woodburn project has struggled with one volunteer, a lack of demand, some fibre broadband is already connected and wayleave issues. However, the B4RN team believe they can connect Woodburn to the Barrasford network via the A68 and the third-year instalment of £100,000 of the RWF multi-year grant will fund this project. This will enable the cabinet outside Corsenside Parish Hall and a small build immediately around it with approximately 43 properties, which could then be built out from there. The Parish Hall will be connected for free as with all community assets. The B4RN team will be checking the potential for this project and will hopefully proceed with the build this summer. Once installed it could then be interlinked with the Tarsset project which gives resilience to the network with two routes into Woodburn from Barrasford and Tarsset. Therefore the RWF grant money is enabling resilience in the network.

2. Introduction to Teagan Rideau – work experience student studying at Newcastle College

Teagan will be helping to raise awareness of the RWF on our social media and will produce some video case studies promoting grant projects.

Tom Rigg, Elaine Elrick and Teagan Rideau left the meeting at 7.40pm.

3. In attendance

Action

Sarah Crone (SC) Chair; Shirley Stuchfield (SS); Louise Crennell (LC); David Burn (DB); Sarah Lunn (SL); Peter Ramsden (PR); Chris Robson (CR); Charlotte Hird (CH); Paul Andrew (PA); Martin Dickson-Green (MDG); Katie Wood (KW); Joanne Willis (JW)
CDO (Minutes)

Apologies Alison Thomson (AT); Phil Lawless (PL); Deb Walton (DW); Martin Chilvers (MC)

4. Declarations of interest

No changes. DB and SL declared in interest for application 394 Chollerton PCC.

5. Minutes of the last meeting 29th January 2026 and matters arising

Accepted as a true record.

6. Minutes of F & GP 10th March 2026

Accepted as a true record.

7. Notes of ARC 19th February and 19th March 2026

Accepted as a true record.

8. Grant Analysis for 2025-2026

JW gave an account of the grant analysis. The money remaining within the fund is £163,207 which includes the allocations for schools, community transport, village shows, EAT Bursary and Small Donations Fund, which are fluid. The third term of schools' payments will follow on this agenda. £60,190 remains within the Community Benefit Fund which is for grants from businesses and community organisations and there is currently an underspend in the administration costs.

9. Applications

- **394 Chollerton PCC £10,000**

Request for funding towards the creation of a temporary car parking space on the Glebe land next to the St Giles Church. The need for this car park is clear when attending a large funeral or school events at the church as the current car parking arrangement are very dangerous due to the need to park on the road with blind corners and a huge concern there is potential for a serious accident. All procedural aspects are as watertight as they can be. A local contractor will undertake the work. Seeking match funding from Green Rigg Wind Fund and will use own funds for the remainder.

SL and DB left the room.

Scoring - Impact 35 Organisation 18 Engagement & Inclusion 18 Planning & Delivery 18 Total=89

Unanimous decision to award full grant amount, the grant is conditional on whether match funding is secured.

- **467 Ox Inn £10,000**

Request for funding towards the cost to kit out the kitchen space to enable the business to provide food cooked on the premises and the refurbishment of the final room on the ground floor – the Snug. Ensuring the pub can offer hot meals will potentially draw in more customers and increase the customer spend allowing the pub to potentially increase their employment positions. In the east of the area of benefit this is the only pub, a huge community asset and is well supported by the immediate local community and those willing to travel from Wallington, Kirkwhelpington, Bavington and other parishes. CR gave his financial analysis, the business has been profitable in its first year this is helped due to no Directors remuneration, they are investing their time to ensure the business is a success for the community.

Scoring - Impact 35 Organisation 18 Engagement & Inclusion 16 Planning & Delivery 16 Total=85

Majority decision to award the full grant amount.

- **529 North Tyne and Redesdale Trade & Tourism Association £3,500**

Request for funding for a website for Bellingham and the North Tyne and Redesdale area to promote local businesses and act as a hub of information for locals and tourists to the area. North Tyne & Redesdale Community Partnership will contribute the money for the photography work for the project. A varied discussion ensued about the potential benefits and barriers for this project, there are concerns that many locals who would wish to know information may be elderly and could find it difficult to access if they are not computer literate. The QR codes were a good idea. Directors would like to see some financial commitment from the businesses who will benefit and have suggested a starting point may be a Facebook page in the first instance to prove the demand for the project. Directors wish to reject the application as the community commitment and need is not evident and the interested businesses need to show support by financially committing to the project.

Scoring - Impact 15 Organisation 5 Engagement & Inclusion 10 Planning & Delivery 15 Total=45

The grant request has been declined.

- **534 Redesdale Archaeology Group £9,000**

Request for funding towards the cost of the analysis and categorisation of the artefacts found at the dig at Bremenium at High Rochester. The dig site is outside the area of benefit, but the community engagement work takes place across the area at village shows, with Otterburn Primary School and with children attending from North Tyne Youth. There is the potential to spread Roman tourism across the area, which is currently concentrated near Hexham and Hadrians Wall.

Scoring - Impact 35 Organisation 15 Engagement & Inclusion 18 Planning & Delivery 15 Total=83

Unanimous decision to part fund and award £5,000.

- **538 RTC £20,000**

Request for funding towards the cost of the roof replacement to ensure the centre can remain open to the community. This is the only sports facility of this size in our area of benefit and it is a vital asset for the community. The recent promise auction raised a £30,000 and the centre will put £20,000 of this towards the project. They are seeking match funding for the remainder. They will be using the cheaper quote due to the ability to undertake the project this year, there could be an increase in the quoted price due to current global circumstances.

Scoring - Impact 38 Organisation 18 Engagement & Inclusion 18 Planning & Delivery 18 Total=92

Unanimous decision to award the full grant amount with conditions that the remaining match funding must be secured with a commitment for the project to proceed.

- **544 Phoenix 60+ Social Club £2,800**

Request for funding towards the cost of a summer series of coach trips for the over 60s from Otterburn, Bellingham, Elsdon, Corsenside and Rochester parishes. The group hold two fundraising bingo events every year to raise the remainder of the funds to allow the trips to proceed.

Scoring - Impact 35 Organisation 15 Engagement & Inclusion 18 Planning & Delivery 18 Total=86

Unanimous decision to award the full grant amount.

- **553 Church & Community Partnership £9,971**

Request for a grant to cover the cost of the salary of a part time co-ordinator and associated costs with new employee such as laptop and phone and the purchase of the software package to co-ordinate the clients and drivers. There were concerns raised about the size of the area the volunteer drivers cover, with most of it falling outside the area of benefit.

However, transport has been a priority of the Ray Wind Funds since the beginning, and this is something that will provide real benefit to people in our area for both those in a volunteering role and the recipients of the lifts to coffee mornings, social events, health appointments etc. This will enable to Partnership to establish a firm and official footing and it's brilliant that the Ray Wind Funds could be there to support at the start of this exciting project.

Scoring - Impact 38 Organisation 18 Engagement & Inclusion 18 Planning & Delivery 18 Total=92

Majority decision to award the full grant amount.

- **555 Otterburn Primary School £1,200**

Request for funding towards the cost of the residential trip for years 5 and 6 joint with Greenhaugh Primary School. Despite Green haugh falling outside the area, more of the children attend Otterburn PS and this is a transition trip to allow friendship groups to form prior to the move to High School in September.

Scoring - Impact 35 Organisation 15 Engagement & Inclusion 18 Planning & Delivery 18 Total=86

Unanimous decision to award the full grant amount.

10. School visit update and Headteacher meeting

All schools and Preschool settings have been visited with reports shared and the notes from the meeting of Headteachers and school representatives has also been shared. The greatest need the schools expressed was due to their increased transport costs for trips, meaning some schools have had to turn down opportunities or lessen swimming lessons to a single term and one Key Stage. Unfortunately with the global uncertainty currently this will only become a greater issue. The schools would like the headteacher meeting to be repeated on a termly basis.

11. Schools summer award and transport fund

JW

At the meeting with Headteachers, the potential of a Transport Fund for schools was raised, while this was well received by all schools, after contemplation it was decided the most fair option was to uplift the amounts given to the schools on the same basis used with the existing termly donations. The different options were discussed, and it was unanimously agreed to uplift both elements of the formula used currently – the standard amount for each school should be increased along with the percentage split element for the children within the area of benefit. This would significantly increase the summer term donation. JW to advise in communication with the schools that in every grant year our financial commitments are reassessed and amounts awarded could change. Also to impress upon the Pre-school settings not falling within a school umbrella they can apply to the Small Donations Fund for assistance with one off trips etc.

Directors unanimously agreed to award £36,190 to schools for summer term 2026.

12. Show Committees

JW

JW has now heard from all show committees, however due to the delay in responses it was agreed to award the show committees a donation up front and follow up with a meeting after the lambing season is over. Due to the change in committee with Elsdon Show as Elson Projects in the Community have stepped back, the new committee should ensure they are a constituted body prior to the donation transfer.

Directors unanimously agreed to award £10,000 split between show committees.

13. Succession Planning, positions of responsibility and Membership of ARC and F & GP **JW**

DB is due the leave the Board this summer, therefore a Vice Chair nomination is required, Directors to consider this for May meeting. PR who represents Bavington PC may have a PC representative to replace him. MC represents Otterburn PC, JW to ask whether the PC has someone that can replace him. CH would like to join the ARC.

14. Planning for 10-year reporting – working group **JW**

JW has met with Firstport, recommended by Berry Jordan, Vattenfall who would like to work with us for our 10-year consultation report project. A working group of SC, LC, SS, SL and MDG was agreed and JW to liaise with Firstport to set up a meeting.

15. Vattenfall Windfarm visit **JW**

For new Directors and those that were unable to attend in 2024, BJ has asked for a suitable visit date. 11th June 6pm would work for those that would like to visit, JW to inform BJ.

16. AOB

Forum Cinema Supporters Association who sent in a PEF to the ARC, would like to confirm they are totally separate to the management of the Forum Cinema and would not be classed as a business. Directors confirmed we would accept a community application.

Closed 9.45pm