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## PRESS RELEASE

### Lothians see the light with £20,000 solar energy award

Communities across the Lothians could harness the benefits of solar energy with new government funding awarded to explore the potential of six local sites.

A partnership of three regional climate action hubs will now look at the development of sites across West, Mid and East Lothian. They will now share £20,000 funding to explore the feasibility of sites for renewable energy, especially solar photovoltaic (PV) projects, that would generate energy for their communities as well as income.

The award from CARES - the Community and Renewable Energy Scheme - was secured in a joint application - CommonWatt - led by West Lothian Climate Action Hub. The three areas have each put forward two sites for feasibility study. The hubs have been growing a list, or pipeline, of more than 30 potential photo-voltaic sites.

The first stage will enable technical analysis of the six selected sites. For West Lothian, these are Xcite leisure facilities in Linlithgow and Bathgate. In East Lothian, they are provisionally Tynninghame Village Hall and Cockenzie House. Midlothian also has a short list of suitable sites, pending initial feasibility assessment.

Those involved with the buildings see their potential to generate energy not only for use locally, but sell on, creating earnings that are ploughed back into the area.

The application was led by Neil Barnes, Senior Development Worker with WLCAN. He said: "We're delighted to have received this funding boost from Local Energy Scotland to help us better understand the costs, benefits, technical aspects and overall potential of community-owned solar systems at several pre-selected sites across our territories.

"The South East Scotland Hubs, including our three Lothians, are working closely together as part of our new, innovative 'CommonWatt' project to share knowledge, experience and passion for positive, sustainable change. We have been envisaging for quite some time community-owned, cooperative energy as a key priority to help our local communities become more resilient, self-sufficient and reduce our carbon emissions too.

“We look forward to working with the appointed experts, local organisations and friends in other regions to help us with our big plans and a growing pipeline of more than 40 sites.”

Bobby Pembleton, Manager for the East Lothian Climate Hub, said: “We are extremely grateful to Local Energy Scotland for awarding this funding, and to Neil Barnes from West Lothian for tirelessly leading the charge. I believe that we must collaborate rather than compete to tackle the climate crisis, and this collaboration between West, Mid- and East Lothian Climate Action Networks to enable more community-owned energy helps prove the case that we can work better together. It will be so exciting to support these local initiatives, while also developing the regional Climate Action Hub proposition on supporting feasibility studies (and more) for community-owned energy sites.”

The CARES/Community Energy Generation Growth Fund is part of a £13.8 million package for Scotland provided by both Scottish and UK governments. West Lothian led the application to Local Energy Scotland, which administers scheme and associated funds.

— ENDS —

Editor’s notes:

**The Community Climate Action Hubs** are a network of 24 regional community hubs and part of the Scottish Government’s strategic regional approach to climate change action. These hubs are run by local experts connected to community organisations and cross-sector partners, varying in size, scale, and employ different models of working. Each hub empowers local groups by offering training, seed funding, collaboration opportunities, and a platform for sharing knowledge and best practices.

[www.gov.scot/policies/climate-change/community-led-climate-action](http://www.gov.scot/policies/climate-change/community-led-climate-action)

**The Scottish Government’s Community and Renewable Energy Scheme (CARES)** supports communities to engage with, participate in and benefit from the energy transition to net zero emissions. CARES is managed by **Local Energy Scotland** and offers a range of financial support to local energy projects.

[www.localenergy.scot](http://www.localenergy.scot)

The six sites are provisionally: Xcite Linlithgow and Bathgate (West Lothian); Tynninghame Village Hall, and Cockenzie House (East Lothian); Midlothian has a shortlist of sites pending final assessment.

Pictures of sites in each area are available, contact individual hubs for more information.

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