

# What is the Douglas Valley Advisory Group?



The Douglas Valley Advisory Group (DVAG) is a constituted community group set up by local communities and South Lanarkshire Council (SLC) to direct and make decisions on new community benefit funding within the Douglas Valley, with a priority to deliver large-scale transformational change and to develop strategic investment proposals. It brings together the six settlements and four Community Council areas of Coalburn, Douglas and Glespin, Lesmahagow and Rigside and Douglas Water, to deliver on community ambition for lasting change.



Ten members form DVAG, comprising of representatives from Community Councils in Coalburn, Douglas and Glespin and Lesmahagow, plus Rigside and Douglas Water Tenants and Residents Association (TRA), as well as individual representatives from each settlement, chosen through a recruitment process scored by each Community Council and the TRA.

DVAG was formed in early 2023 as an outcome of the Development Framework for the Hagshaw Energy Cluster: Planning for Net Zero, an innovative approach to renewable energy development which sets out an ambitious vision for the Douglas Valley. It sits alongside and reports to the Windfarm Developer Group, Landowner Forum and Circular Economy Working Group who each support the delivery of the vision for a collaborative and sustainable future as laid out in the Framework.

DVAG vote and make decisions on where and how funds are used, and SLC supports this by providing direct support through locally focused staff and management of potential new funds. Informed by local Community Action Plans and guided by the Development Framework, DVAG feed into the shared vision for the Douglas Valley as presented by the Development Framework. Under this model, the £1.3 million per annum funds from Hagshaw Hill Repowering, Cumberhead West and Douglas West Extension would be paid to SLC and ringfenced for DVAG to administer and direct, with complete transparency.

A dedicated Economic Development Officer: Douglas Valley Initiative, is embedded in the SLC Enterprise and Sustainability team, supporting the administration of DVAG and development of projects under DVAG guidance, as well as the support of other strategic Douglas Valley community projects carried out by other community bodies and organisations. These include Coalburn – Lesmahagow and Coalburn – Douglas active travel paths, Douglas Primary School MUGA floodlights and Glespin affordable community-led housing project.

At the request of the DVAG, the Economic Development Officer can prepare specifications, business plans and options for projects as well as administer procurement, legal advice, additional funding, contract management and delivery of projects and programmes on behalf of the DVAG and the local communities. DVAG have the ability to appoint additional staff members in time if desired.

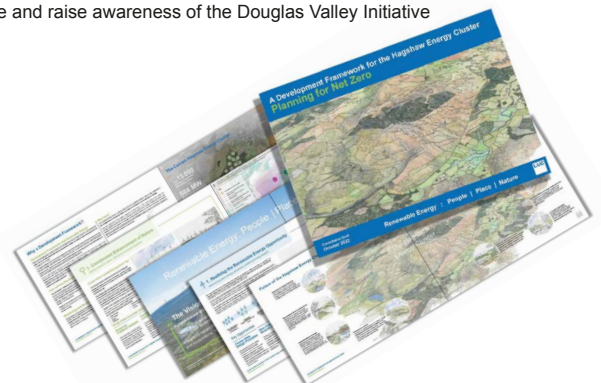
Assisted by the Economic Development Officer, DVAG are currently progressing an Outdoor Recreation and Adventure Tourism Feasibility Study for the area, with the intent of identifying opportunities for community development, social enterprise plus inward investment for the benefit of local communities whilst stimulating the local economy.

The DVAG builds on the experience of European and national Local Authority administered funds, LEADER and Community Led Local Development (CLLD), where a strong partnership between communities and Public Bodies such as the Council, Healthy Valleys, Voluntary Action South Lanarkshire and Central Scotland Green Network Trust, deliver the change communities choose as priorities, joining up partners and funding to deliver larger impactful projects. This has included Clydesdale Community Initiatives, Wiston Lodge and Abington Campus Enterprise.

## What are the aims of the Douglas Valley Action Group?

The aims and purpose of the DVAG within the constitution are:

- To provide strategic overview and direction to investment proposals
- To advise the Council on the investment of the Douglas Valley Initiative
- Approve the commissioning of strategic projects that further the delivery of key priorities of the Douglas Valley Initiative
- Assess enquiries, proposals and applications to the Douglas Valley Initiative
- Advise on applications
- To monitor and review the delivery and outcomes of the Douglas Valley Initiative
- Provide oversight on the financial and operational delivery of the Douglas Valley Initiative
- Support the promotion and development of local capacity on project delivery including training and awareness
- Promote and raise awareness of the Douglas Valley Initiative



# Why the DVAG?

Opportunities to enhance and enrich the cultural and industrial heritage of the area will be explored as the area transitions to renewables, and land use evolves



The Hagshaw Energy Cluster in the Douglas Valley is uniquely placed in central-southern Scotland, close to large conurbations, key transport and communication routes, and areas of rich industrial, cultural and natural heritage of local and national value. Together, this poses some unique developmental opportunities, providing options for bold and ambitious new mechanisms for delivering transformative change.

Since the construction of the original Hagshaw Hill Wind Farm in 1995, the Hagshaw Energy Cluster has evolved, with ten windfarms either operational or under construction, plus one further currently consented.

Community benefit available from these windfarms is currently distributed through Dalquhandy Coalburn Fund, Foundation Scotland: Coalburn, Douglas and Glespin Community Fund, Hagshaw Hill Trust, Spirit of Lanarkshire Wind Energy Coop, South Lanarkshire Council Renewable Energy Fund (REF) and associated microgrants at a value of over £1.4 million per annum.

Despite this figure, it is recognised that significant improvements have not taken place in the area. It is thought that some of the reasons for this are as follows:

- Complex assortment of local funding pots administered by different groups and organisations with different levels of funding available, application deadlines and criteria
- Lack of partnership and joint working between agencies and funders to deliver strategic initiatives
- Low number of local organisations, social enterprises, and groups to apply for funding and deliver projects
- Lack of resource within communities to manage and deliver projects

With Hagshaw Energy Cluster community benefit set to double, reaching around £2.8 million per annum with Hagshaw Hill Repowering, Cumberhead West and Douglas West Extension becoming operational, DVAG offers a mechanism for delivery of large-scale strategic projects which currently have no means of implementation.

#### Advantages to the DVAG model include:

- Community-led decision making through Community Council representation as well as individuals, through a community-led recruitment and scoring process
- Low cost delivery mechanism with SLC administering projects on behalf of the community panel and acting as the accountable body
- Access to broad range of SLC Officers for advice and support, for example, Economic Development, Employability, External Funding, Planning, Roads and Transportation, Planning, Estates and Land Services
- Connects local funding to other funding programmes through the SLC External Funding team, such as UK Shared Prosperity Fund, Regeneration Capital Grants, Rural Community Led Local Development (CLLD), Clyde Windfarm, and Smarter Choices Smarter Places
- Promotes the Douglas Valley within strategic organisations and facilitates the recognition of the area as an investment priority
- Based on the existing partnerships formed around the Development Framework for the Hagshaw Energy Cluster
- Existing relationships with national agencies such as Business Gateway, Historic Environment Scotland, National Lottery Community Fund, NatureScot, Scottish Enterprise, Sport Scotland and Zero Waste Scotland
- Recognition of the Douglas Valley as a strategic investment area within SLC and other agencies
- Simplification of the complex funding landscape associated with the Hagshaw Energy Cluster, with the ability to be matched with any existing funds, including REF
- Opportunity to bring match funding and leverage through External Funding - since 2020, SLC have led on rural partnerships in Abington, Carluke and Camwath, securing £3million additional funding from Scottish Government
- Ability to fund large-scale strategic projects as well as smaller projects or initiatives, as decided by DVAG
- Ability to fund capital and revenue projects, as decided by DVAG
- The only dedicated SLC Economic Development Officer for a particular geographic area, through SLC Economic Development Officer: Douglas Valley Initiative
- The group has been constituted since April 2023 and has commenced project work



Abington Campus Enterprise has received support from Clyde Windfarm, LEADER, National Lottery Community Fund and REF



Wiston Lodge Outdoor Classroom has received support from Clyde Windfarm, LEADER, National Lottery Community Fund and REF



Douglas Arms Hotel proposals have potential to be supported by DVAG, REF, Place Based Investment Fund and Scottish Land Fund



Clydesdale Community Initiatives has received support from European Social Fund, National Lottery Community Fund and REF



Conversion of Billy's, Lesmahagow into a Community Hub and community flats, currently supported through Place Based Investment Funds and REF, with potential to be supported by DVAG

# What DVAG can achieve



Key themes have been identified through community consultation and implementation of the Development Framework for the Hagshaw Energy Cluster. They are as follows, and can be most successfully addressed through joint working and strategic planning, as proposed through DVAG:



Promoting sustainable and reliable methods of public and private transport to connect rural and semi-rural local communities with the wider region



Waymarked trails for mountain or gravel biking, walking or horse riding to be developed around the Douglas Valley

- **Realising the Renewable Energy Opportunity** through extensions, repowering, other renewable technologies via a co-ordinated approach
- **Resilient and Connected Communities** including placemaking, sustainable transport options, local place planning and community ownership
- **Nature Enhancement** including habitat management, priority species conservation, peatland restoration, education and an agri-environment network
- **Identity of Heritage, People and Place** through enhanced maintenance and interpretation of features, trails and enhanced local character
- **Inclusive, Sustainable Growth** including enhanced business, employment, training and skills opportunities, within a Circular Economy Strategy
- **Outdoor Recreation to Support Health and Wellbeing** through connected greenspaces, active play opportunities, active travel opportunities and an Outdoor Recreation and Adventure Hub



New industrial and logistics development at the Conexus hub adjacent to the M74 brings opportunities to establish a green energy hub and local employment, copyright 3R Energy



Creating opportunities for recreation and interpretation, with an ethos of access for all abilities, whilst engaging people in nature, biodiversity and the threat of climate change



Opportunities for promotion and educational interpretation of green energy technologies to communities and visitors, copyright Richard Carmen



Improved connectivity between communities, through the enhancement of existing and creation of new active travel and public transport links, copyright Richard Carmen



Enhancement of existing and creation of new public spaces within settlements, respecting historic character and sense of place, copyright Richard Carmen



Recreation and Tourism Hub Facilities to promote and support local and regional visitors to the area, and diversified employment opportunities, copyright Richard Carmen



A Renewable Energy Hub, creating sustainable jobs supporting the deployment, servicing and maintenance of renewable technologies in the area, copyright Richard Carmen

