



The Pebble Trust Grant Programme Evaluation Report

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The Pebble Trust**

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Table of Contents

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	3
1. INTRODUCTION	4
2. OVERVIEW OF THE PEBBLE TRUST'S ACTIVITY	4
3. EVALUATION METHODOLOGY	5
4. CONSULTATION FINDINGS	5
4.1 OVERVIEW OF THE RESPONDENT AWARDEES	6
4.2 RESPONDENTS' VIEWS OF THE APPLICATION AND REPORTING PROCESS	7
4.3 RESPONDENTS' PROJECT FIT WITH THE PEBBLE TRUST'S OBJECTIVES	8
4.4 IMPACT OF THE PEBBLE TRUST'S SUPPORT	10
5. INTERVIEW FINDINGS	13
5.1 GENERAL FEEDBACK ON THE TRUST	13
5.2 THE APPLICATION PROCESS	13
5.3 IMPACT OF INVESTMENT	14
6. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	15
6.1 RECOMMENDATIONS	16
APPENDIX 1 – CASE STUDIES	18
HIGHLAND ONE WORLD SCIO	18
COMMUNITY ENERGY MALAWI	21
INSTITUTE FOR PUBLIC POLICY RESEARCH (SCOTLAND)	23
WWF SCOTLAND	25
APPENDIX 2 – SURVEY AND INTERVIEW RESPONDENTS	26
APPENDIX 3 – SAMPLE IMPACT MEASUREMENT FRAMEWORK	28

Executive Summary

- The Pebble Trust was set up in 2014 to support projects working towards a more sustainable, fair and low-carbon society and in that time has made 130 awards totalling more than £700,000. At this point in its history, the Trust commissioned a review to assess the impact and the difference its funding has made by enabling positive outcomes across its charitable objects of community development, environmental protection, education and science.
- The review of its grant-making impact involved an online survey completed by 51% of grant awardees and in-depth interviews with 22 grant recipients.
- The main geographic area covered by the work of respondents was the Scottish Highlands and Islands with just over 30% of respondents covering this area. A further 24% covered the whole of Scotland, and 21% the Inner Moray Firth area. 5% covered the Global south.
- Headline findings from the survey indicate an overwhelmingly positive experience of the application process itself with a genuine appreciation for the Trust's flexibility and the approach and interest it takes in applications.
- 95% of respondents stated the application form was very easy or easy to complete. 38% surpassed the objectives they were hoping for with Pebble Trust funding while 41% reported the objectives were exactly as expected.
- 92% of respondents stated that completing the end-of-project report was also either very easy or easy.
- Trust feedback on applications was widely appreciated. The level of genuine interest and intelligent questioning were viewed as important in strengthening applications and project refinement.
- Although a number of projects have not continued, and several organisations that were funded have ceased to exist, a high proportion continue to operate and deliver impact.
- Most projects met all three of the Trust's charitable objectives: 71% community development, 65% environmental protection, 62% education and science.
- Funding from The Pebble Trust is viewed as essential in enabling projects to go ahead. More than 50% of respondents stated their project could not have happened without the financial support of the Trust. Furthermore, investment from The Pebble Trust was seen as key in helping leverage significant additional funding.
- Most projects, 70%, continue after funding from The Pebble Trust stopped, indicating a lasting impact of the investment made.
- Any challenges faced by applicants were due to unplanned, external factors of which the Covid19 pandemic was the main one. In all cases applicants found the Trust to be understanding, flexible and responsive.

- The Trust is seen as a significant funder. This is not only because of the money invested but because of wider impacts which many recipients had not expected. These included allowing work that was in-depth and involved specialists which boosted project credibility and opened wider opportunities; funding projects other funders would be reluctant to support; and early-stage funding which allowed a project to then mature.

1. Introduction

The Pebble Trust has a vision for a 'more sustainable, fair, and low-carbon society, where constraints on fossil fuels lead to a more localised economy with stronger, more resilient communities.'

The Trust was set up in 2014 with the following purposes:

- The advancement of environmental protection or' improvement, in particular supporting organisations and individuals developing sustainable lifestyles and projects which take into account future resource availability and the desirability of a more equal society;
- The advancement of community development, in particular encouraging local communities to become stronger and more self-reliant through the adoption of sustainable lifestyles;
- The advancement of education and science, in particular carrying out research and education relating to the technical and social aspects of sustainable lifestyles;
- Such other purposes as are charitable which enable the charitable objectives to be fulfilled. <https://www.thepebbletrust.org/charitable-objectives/>

The Trust now wishes to use its 10th year to gain a greater understanding of the impact its funding has had and what scope there might be for improvements going forward. The purpose of this evaluation is to provide The Pebble Trust (TPT) with an independent assessment of the impact of its grants programme. Specifically, the Trust is seeking a clearer view of the difference its grants make to recipient organisations and how these enable positive outcomes across its charitable objectives of community development, environmental protection, education and science and in what ways they contribute to reducing dependency on fossil fuels and finite resources.

2. Overview of The Pebble Trust's activity

Between 2014 and 2024, The Pebble Trust made 130 awards, comprised of:

- 3 strategic projects (where The Pebble Trust approached an organisation to offer financial support for a particular output)

- 4 internships (to enable young people to get a step on the ladder of a career in the environmental arena)
- 3 loans (interest-free, where there was a specific short-term cash flow issue for an organisation)
- 120 general awards.

Excluding the strategic awards as requested by the trustees, a total of 127 awards were granted, amounting to £775,621.74. The average award was £6,107.26, with the smallest award being £301 and the largest grant reaching £10,000.

Loans were of a higher value, up to £30,000. The table below shows the breakdown of awards by each year of the Trust's operation.

Figure 1 Awards per year

Year	No. of awards	Lowest award	Highest award	Average award	Total awarded
2014/15	2	£943	£5,000	£2,972	£5,943
2015/16	7	£1,296	£5,000	£3,623	£25,362
2016/17	5	£3,800	£5,000	£4,539	£22,696
2017/18	8	£3,191	£5,000	£4,430	£35,441
2018/19	14	£1,000	£10,000	£5,234	£73,278
2019/20	12	£3,225	£25,000 (loan) £6,193	£6,553	£78,633
2020/21	11	£2,073	£5,000	£3,903	£42,932
2021/22	19	£607	£10,000	£5,386	£102,342
2022/23	18	£310	£30,000 (loan) £10,000	£7,496	£134,934
2023/24	18	£5,000	£10,000	£8,481	£152,653
2024/25*	13	£2,500	£10,000	£7,801	£101,409
Total	127	£310	£30,000 (loan) £10,000	£6,107	£775,622

* Incomplete year

3. Evaluation methodology

The evaluation had several strands to it. Firstly, a survey was sent to all eligible organisations (see Table Organisations receiving awards and survey responses Figure 2 below for more details). The survey, which aimed to gather information on how awardees had found the process and the difference that the award had made, can be found in Appendix 1 below. From the responses received, 25 had indicated a willingness to be interviewed to explore the impact of the award in more detail. Four of these were expanded into full case studies included in the Appendix. Additionally, several were developed into mini-case studies, which, along with quotes from the survey and follow-up interviews with awardees, are featured throughout the report to illustrate key insights, lessons learned, and the impact of the awards.

It is worth highlighting that several respondents noted that COVID-19 had a significant impact on their projects, presenting particular challenges. Some

activities were stalled or limited, resulting in reduced impact compared to what might have been achieved under normal circumstances.

4. Consultation findings

The evaluation aimed to get the views of as many awardees as possible from qualifying projects which had been completed. Of the 130 awards made by The Pebble Trust, there were 76 potential organisations that could respond to the survey or take part in an interview. Figure 2 below shows the basis for the exclusion of some organisations from the survey, and the total number that were included in the survey. The adjustments made left 76 discrete organisations that had received an award, and of these, 39 responded to the survey, representing just over 51% of all eligible awardees.

Figure 2 Organisations receiving awards and survey responses

Category	Number	%	Number remaining
All awards	130	100	130
Strategic awards (excluded at request of trustees)	3	2	127
Ongoing awards (excluded)	25	19	102
Other excluded organisations*	15	11	87
Organisations excluded because of multiple awards**	10	8	76
Surveys completed	39	(of total) 30 (of eligible) 51	

* These were excluded for a number of reasons such as the email with the survey notification bounced, the organisation was known to have folded, the project contact had moved on, etc.

** Organisations were asked to complete a separate survey for each award received, most did not do so.

4.1 Overview of the respondent awardees

Half of those who responded to the survey were charitable organisations, and 10% were companies limited by guarantee with no charitable status. A small proportion were CICs (5%) and a further 13% were individuals. A fifth of responding awardees did not identify as any of the categories listed, and were a mix of unincorporated organisations, the public sector, and partnerships.

Figure 3 Respondents' legal structure

The geographical spread of respondents is shown in the figure below. Respondents were asked to select all the options that applied, so there is some double counting. The main area covered by the work of respondents was the Scottish Highlands and Islands with just over 30% of respondents covering this area. A further 24% covered the whole of Scotland, and 21% the Inner Moray Firth area. 5% covered the Global south.

Figure 4 Geographical area covered by respondents

4.2 Respondents' views of the application and reporting process

Just over half of the respondents (53%, 20 responses) stated that it was very easy to find out about The Pebble Trust funding with the remaining 47% saying it was easy. Comments made about The Pebble Trust included that the website was very easy to navigate, and that the process and information was much

clearer than most other funds. Word of mouth (from colleagues, friends, and The Pebble Trust itself) was a common way that people said they had heard about the fund. When prompted for how it could be easier to find out about the Trust, very few comments were made, but a small number of people suggested The Pebble Trust could have a greater presence on social media.

[Grant applications] Always take a lot of time, but one of the most straightforward I have come across.

As it goes, what was required from the form was quite reasonable and the wording was clear, better than most and not too long.

New groups have trouble with the word "project." If you have just started then the whole organisation is a project... if you're established then the thing you're applying for is the "project."

Perhaps have an online platform which could help in checking word

The majority (95%) of respondents stated that the application form was very easy or easy to complete, with only a small minority of 5% saying it was not very easy, although this related more to completing application forms in general and The Pebble Trust's form was praised for its simplicity on the whole, and there were very few suggestions as to how it could be made easier. One person commented that it would have been good to have someone at The Pebble Trust that they could have spoken to in advance, while another stated that they had found it useful to have a conversation with someone from The Pebble Trust in advance helpful. It could therefore be made clearer that people can contact The Pebble Trust in advance if they wish to do so.

Similarly, 92% of respondents stated that completing the end-of-project report was also either very easy or easy. Comments made included that it was clear what was expected of them, with a helpful template and guidance being available, and there were no real areas identified that could have made the process any easier.

We received some very relevant questions about our application. Giving our answers to these questions also helped us to better understand the justification for our aims.

It was very helpful and demonstrated a commitment to supporting the aims of the project.

I felt good - seemed like we would be working as a 'team' - very supportive.

I thought it was all brilliant. The team were communicative and supportive.

The Pebble Trust were very easy to deal with, and for a small organisation like ours it was very helpful that we didn't have to spend hours on writing reports about our project for them.

It was thought-provoking and helped to structure our thinking.

Almost 45% of respondents had received feedback from the panel on their application, although a further 32% couldn't remember if they had or not. For those who had received feedback, this was universally viewed in a positive light, and respondents felt that it showed insight and consideration of their application. Some people were very pleased to get the feedback as it made it clear that their application had been properly read and considered. Feedback was seen as relevant, appropriate and helpful. Overall, respondents were very positive about the whole process of working with The Pebble Trust.

4.3 Respondents' project fit with The Pebble Trust's objectives

There was a fairly even split across the three key objectives of The Pebble Trust for the projects funded, and most of the respondents stated that their project fitted with all three of the Trust's objectives. Community development was a particular focus for over 70%, as shown in the table below.

Figure 5 The Pebble Trust objectives covered by respondents' projects

The Pebble Trust Objective	%
Community development	71%
Environmental protection	65%
Education and science	62%
Skipped	5

The Pebble Trust believes that today's challenges require a holistic and multidisciplinary approach, and so seek to fund projects in the areas shown in Figure 6 below, although these are not exclusive and other relevant fields are considered by trustees. Looking in more detail at the areas covered by responding awardees' projects, there was a wide spread of projects across a number of different sectors, although education was a focus for 50%, with food, forest and land, and energy all featuring highly. Things that respondents felt didn't fit into one of the existing categories were: all land uses; community; and permaculture.

Figure 6 Category of funded project

Figure 7 below shows the types of outcomes that projects set out to achieve, and which they actually achieved. The most commonly intended (and achieved) outcomes of respondents' projects related to the core vision of The Pebble Trust of a more sustainable and low-carbon society, showing that applications and/or award decisions were in line with the Trust's purposes. The graph also shows that projects generally had multiple intended outcomes, delivering impact in several different spheres. Generally, projects delivered the outcomes that they had set out to deliver, although the graph shows some degree of variation from intent, with some projects not quite delivering as expected. This is particularly noticeable in relation to the outcome of delivering community resilience, and to a lesser extent environmental protection, contribution to a low carbon society, and the development of practical solutions for sustainable living. In the majority of cases the lower impact than anticipated was due to timing, in that the work was still ongoing, or had been intended to feed into a wider process that was still ongoing (such as feeding into government policy which has yet to be enshrined in law). In other cases, it was due to challenges outwith the control of the group that were not anticipated at the outset of the project, and this had led to delays in delivery.

We had such a warm response to the videos that went out, they still get viewed. And the whole thing became a moment of inspiration in a Covid clamp down.

Feedback from the event was positive and a good proportion of attendees reported that they had changed their views on renewable energy and intended to change their actions.

On the other hand, a number of projects reported an outcome of community wellbeing which had not been intended at the outset of the project. Figure 8 shows that, on the whole, respondents felt their project had met their objectives, with 38% stating that they had exceeded expectations, and a further 41% saying they were exactly as expected. In 95% of cases, the focus of the

project remained as intended at the time of application. Although some projects had some challenges, they reported that the Trust was very supportive of finding ways around these to ensure the outcomes could still be met. The Trust was repeatedly praised for its flexibility and adaptability and the support it showed when challenges in delivery arose.

Figure 7 Intended and actual project outcomes of respondents' projects

Figure 8 Extent to which objectives were achieved

Overall, did you achieve the objectives you were hoping for with the funding from The Pebble Trust?	
Yes, we exceeded our expectations	38%
Yes, exactly as expected	41%
Mostly	15%
No	0%
Still ongoing so hard to say at the moment	6%

4.4 Impact of The Pebble Trust's support

The survey asked some questions about the impact the award from The Pebble Trust had had, but the interviews gave a real opportunity to dig much deeper into this area.

Respondents were very forthcoming in the survey in stating what difference the award from The Pebble Trust had made to their project and sometimes their organisation. This was supported by the interviews (see below). The following statements illustrate the sentiments that came across in the survey from these and other respondents:

This September ScotGov included a Heat in Buildings Bill in the legislative programme, which we welcome and is a result of the work that Pebble Trust supported us in.

Key to helping start the community garden when other organisations wanted us to be more established.

It gave us the confidence that we could try and do different things with our nursery that wouldn't have been possible previously. We will forever be grateful to the Pebble Trust.

The pride in the people we support achieving making wooden items/ growing plant cannot be measured.

Willingness of the PT to fund at this early stage (when others often won't) made a massive difference.

Contacts we have made through the process have continued to support our work and we have been able to put new projects into place because of it.

Quite a few people made reference to hard outcomes such as people attending events, school children taking part in activities, etc., but many also referred to much broader and softer impacts which they felt were very important, but not always easy to measure or quantify.

Mini-case study 1

The Peffery Way Association received a small amount of funding to enable them to apply for planning permission to create the first section of an all-ability route between Strathpeffer and Dingwall. The route had been a long-held ambition of the community, but it had failed to get started. Having got planning permission they were then able to unlock almost £500,000 towards the route's development and have since returned to the Trust for an additional grant and two loans. In each instance, the support from the Trust was essential and valued for its enabling role. 5.5km of route has been developed.

For the majority of respondents, funding from The Pebble Trust was essential in allowing the project to go ahead: over 50% stated that this could not have happened without the financial support of the Trust (see Figure 9). A further 26% said it would have gone ahead without the support, but more slowly. For just over 20% of respondents, the award from The Pebble Trust covered all the costs of their project, with the same proportion again using some of their own resources to supplement the award from The Pebble Trust. 58% of respondents had match funding from elsewhere. Of those that did have match funding, 23% had more than half of the project costs covered by The Pebble Trust, indicating that for these projects, the award from The Pebble Trust was an important part of the funding package. Of those respondents who did require match funding, 54% stated that the funding from The Pebble Trust was essential in order to enable the project to go ahead, and a further 43% said it was very helpful.

Figure 9 Importance of The Pebble Trust funding

For the majority of the respondents (70%), the work started with an award from The Pebble Trust was still ongoing at the time of the survey even though their funding had come to an end. A further 5% stated that it had continued for a while but had now come to an end. This indicates that there has been a lasting impact from the investment made by The Pebble Trust.

Mini case-study 2

Wester Lawrenceton Farm Education Trust was awarded funding for research (still ongoing), into peat and plastic-free growing media for plant and seedling propagation. This was a follow-on from an earlier project, also funded by The Pebble Trust. The research is project managed by a respected soil scientist. It allows for more sophisticated testing and has been a catalyst in giving WLFET credibility and recognition for its work more broadly envisaged. The Scottish Government, National Trust and Moray College are all interested in the work and the project manager has been invited to speak at the Oxford Real Farming Conference in January 2025.

Figure 10 Continuation of activity post-award

The interviews added a lot of depth to the understanding of the impact of the investments made, as detailed below.

5. Interview findings

The surveys were useful for giving some basic information and feedback on the process and impact of the awards made. The interviews provided scope to draw out additional information, build on the answers provided in the survey, and delve deeper into the difference that the award made to the recipient. The survey asked respondents if they were willing to take part in the interviews. Once duplicate organisations were taken into consideration, there were 25 survey respondents that were available to be interviewed, and three attempts were made to contact them to set up a suitable time and date for the interview. Over a period of 3 weeks, we were able to carry out 22 interviews, with the remaining 3 failing to respond to a request after three attempts. The findings are presented below by theme.

5.1 General feedback on the Trust

Overall, the interviewees expressed gratitude to the Trust for the investment and the general approach that it takes. A word commonly used to describe the Trust was 'kind'. The Trust was applauded for being flexible and approachable, which enabled applicants to be innovative and try new ways of thinking and delivery. The flexible approach also allowed a wide range of types of project and impact, covering areas such as river restoration, electricity generation, exhibitions and events, publications, and the development of paths.

The Trust was found to be collaborative and supportive, and provided a 'human' face to funding, taking time to understand the projects it supports. This approach helped create a relationship between the Trust and the awardees, and built confidence in the Trust and in the process.

Both the grants and loans were seen as very valuable to enable unlocking of bigger funds, on the one hand to help leverage in further larger grants, and on the other, to help alleviate cashflow issues which would have prevented access to other funds.

5.2 The application process

The process of application, delivery and reporting were all seen as simple, straightforward and appropriate to the levels of awards being made. The documents were straightforward and completing them was not too time-consuming. The relationship that an applicant builds up with the Trust through the process was appreciated, and it led to better projects being developed through the process of feedback and conversation. It also meant that there was flexibility in delivery and outcome when circumstances changed for instance, due to COVID. The feedback received meant that applicants felt that the Trust cared about the project, and was invested in and supported their project. It was not just a 'chuck it in and see what happens' process. The willingness to be flexible and engage in supportive discussions with organisations and individuals to achieve their aims where these aligned with the aims of the Trust, meant that both the Trust and the applicant could be more innovative. Applicants appreciated the support to see how they could make things happen, rather than feeling constrained by rigid processes.

There were some comments made about the use of social media to get the message of the Trust's work out into the community, with several people saying that they no longer felt that X was an appropriate platform for this since it was now a slightly tainted brand and less used by people. LinkedIn and Facebook were seen as more appropriate. A few others also commented how much they had appreciated the Trust posting about their particular project as this gave more visibility to the project and the organisation and showed the level of commitment by the Trust to the work that awardees were doing.

5.3 Impact of investment

The survey results showed that awardees had a very positive view of the Trust and the impact that the award had had. When digging further into this in the interviews, it became clear that survey responses somewhat *underplayed* the impact that the awards had had, and during conversations, many more examples of spin-offs and further impact came to light.

The Trust was seen as a very significant and important funder, not necessarily because of the amounts of money that it disbursed, but because of:

- The additional monies it enabled awardees to unlock

- Its willingness to invest in very early-stage projects and organisations that other funders would not be interested in.
- The types of projects that it funds, and how many of these have had significant impact beyond the funded project itself and beyond the value of the award.
- The increased confidence that the award gave both the organisation and others that they might work with. The value of a small amount of funding (£10k) was enhanced by giving other organisations and other funders confidence in the organisation by showing faith/pledging support.
- The additional opportunities that the award opened up for organisations because of their increased credibility which led to greater levels of volunteer involvement, especially from experts in the relevant fields.
- Allowing work that was in-depth and involved specialists. This gave credence to the project and opened opportunities (e.g. speaking at a UK conference) they couldn't have anticipated and wouldn't have happened without the funding.
- The Trust's willingness to fund individuals as well as organisations.
- The ability to use the funding for developing proof of concept or development of an idea to a stage where it could get funding from other sources.
- The 'long and broad tail' of impact after the end of the award in many cases.
- The inspiration that funded projects have given to others to do something similar in their area. Often a project acts as a demonstration project that others have learned from, especially where they have been taking an innovative approach. Funded organisations have been happy to share what they have learned with other groups.
- The range of spin-offs from some of the awards, for instance, conference papers to share with others the model developed under the funded project, and new audiences and opportunities for projects.
- The level of risk that the Trust was able to engage in with funded projects: providing smaller amounts of funding allows greater risks in the types of projects supported and encourages innovation.

Mini-case study 3

LOST: Climate action exhibition & events: *As a self-employed artist with limited grant options, I found The Pebble Trust's willingness to fund individuals invaluable. My project, a five-year endeavour capturing the energy loss in marine plastic, came to life through an immersive exhibition at Eden Court. The Pebble Trust's funding was crucial—without it, the exhibition wouldn't have happened. This exhibition not only highlighted*

environmental issues but also led to further opportunities, including showcases at the Edinburgh International Festival and Edinburgh Science Festival, reaching a far larger audience than I'd initially imagined.

6. Conclusions and recommendations

The support from The Pebble Trust has clearly delivered on its vision for a 'more sustainable, fair, and low-carbon society, where constraints on fossil fuels lead to a more localised economy with stronger, more resilient communities.'

Furthermore, the funding from the Trust has been fundamental in allowing many projects to go ahead. This is particularly true for organisations in the early stages of development and for projects run by individuals who would have otherwise struggled to get funding for one reason or another. The Trust was also seen as playing a key enabling role, not only helping things get off the ground but also helping organisations unlock further funding.

The process of application and reporting were seen as clear and appropriate to the level of funding, and awardees appreciated the feedback they were given on their application and felt that the resultant project was stronger for having had feedback. The levels of flexibility that the Trust offers its awardees were also appreciated.

Importantly, funding from The Trust has had, in many instances, an impact that reached beyond the specific project the money was awarded for. The funding has had a 'seeding' or catalysing purpose which gave some groups much-needed credibility to their organisation/project and enabled it to mature and progress to the next stage in its development. Several talked about the confidence that the award had given them as an organisation, and also the confidence that it gave others (funders, volunteers, supporters etc.) external to the organisation, thereby enabling them to leverage a variety of additional support because of this increased confidence. It is important to acknowledge that some of the funded projects have not continued (as seen in Figure 1 above) but this is to be expected, and it does not diminish the very important work that has been able to progress because of the awards made.

Mini-case study 4

Stramash was awarded £3,250 in 2017 for a renewable energy project to bring heat and light to an outdoor structure used in their nursery in Fort William. Sadly, the project was subject to an arson attack just days after the installation of the hot water system. Stramash emphasised that the kindness shown by The Pebble Trust rebuilt their confidence in keeping going with a renewable energy approach when they rebuilt the

nursery and renewed their commitment to continue to environmental change and education within their business.

6.1 Recommendations

The ethos, practice and approach of The Pebble Trust are widely appreciated and valued by grant recipients. The overarching recommendation is therefore not to change too much which would risk shifting the Trust away from what already works well. With this caveat, a number of recommendations are given below.

- Build into the terms and conditions that the data can be shared for any future evaluation which may be carried out by an external body.
- In the progress reporting template, require awardees to make it clearer which of the outcomes they have met relate to which of the purposes and priority areas of The Pebble Trust.
- Consider greater flexibility when asking for 'outcomes'. From the interviews, some respondents list quantitative outcomes they know they probably won't achieve simply because that's what's required when completing the application form.
- Consider including reference to qualitative outcomes in order to be less prescriptive.
- A real advantage of The Pebble Trust is its flexibility and openness to new ideas and approaches. The downside to this is that this can make it challenging to quantify its impact, as each project is so different. However, something valuable would be lost if the Trust became too focused on setting rigid, easily measurable outcomes that were consistent across all projects. A suggested approach for impact measurement that can help balance the need for flexibility with the need to measure the impact the funding has includes:
 - Develop Broad Impact Categories - Define a few overarching categories of impact that relate to TPT charitable objectives. Each project can then report under each of these categories without specifying outcomes, allowing for comparison without restricting the type of work funded.
 - Use Qualitative Reporting - Encourage projects to share stories, testimonials, and case studies that illustrate their impact and project success.

Implement Flexible Metrics - Create a set of core, optional metrics that projects can use as relevant, such as the number of participants reached, new initiatives launched, or skills developed. Appendix 3 provides a sample framework detailing broad categories for each of TPT's charitable purposes, accompanied by examples of quantitative and qualitative metrics to measure impact effectively.

- An online application form with the ability to control/check word limits would be useful.
- While the Trust does not necessarily have the resources to discuss potential applicants in advance, this evaluation has shown that trustees are very open to working collaboratively with applicants to refine and improve on possible projects. This approach was highly valued by awardees, and it could be made clearer in the guidance etc. that this is the approach of the Trust.

Appendix 1 – Case studies

Highland One World SCIO

Learning for Climate Change and Sustainability in Highland Primaries

Location: Highland

Grant: £4,115



Purpose of the Grant: intended to support professional development (CPD) sessions for teachers in Highland primary schools, focusing on social and environmental issues. The initial plan was to deliver in-person training across four Highland locations, but due to COVID-19 restrictions, the project pivoted to online delivery. The Pebble Trust (TPT) grant covered costs for developing online resources instead of travel, allowing the project to adapt effectively to the challenges of the pandemic.

Alignment with The Pebble Trust Priorities: The project aligned closely with the following TPT charitable priorities:

1. **Environmental Protection:**
2. **Education and Science**

As an education charity, the primary aim of the CPD sessions and learning resources, were to equip teachers with knowledge to engage students on sustainability and environmental issues.

Outcomes: The project reached a wider audience than initially expected, thanks to the pivot to online resources.

The resources developed because of the funding from TPT continue to be accessed and have now been viewed 6,800 times demonstrating continued interest and engagement from teachers.



Difference the Grant Made: The funding from TPT was crucial in enabling the project to adapt to changing circumstances and expand its reach:

Flexibility and Responsiveness: TPT's flexible approach allowed the organisation to redirect funds that were originally for transport costs toward the development of online materials when in-person sessions were no longer possible due to Covid restrictions. This adaptability was essential for the project's success and impact.

Sustained Resource Availability: The online resources developed continue to be accessed and used, creating a long-term educational impact that extends well beyond the initial project funding.

Broadened Reach: The switch to online resources allowed engagement with more schools and pupils than initially planned. Although delivering the training online was not our original intention, it did bring benefits. Teachers from very rural areas were able to engage in the training, who might otherwise not have been able to attend

New approach to delivering CPD training: The grant from TPT and TPTs willingness to adapt how the funding was to be used enabled the organisation to transition to an online delivery format. This shift set a new standard for their future training efforts and aligns with Highland Council's move to online professional learning.

TPT's funding proved highly beneficial as it allowed for 100% project funding which is unusual among funders who often require match funding. TPT's focus on Highland-based projects was welcomed as funding specific to this area is often limited.

Feedback from the courses was extremely positive with **81% of teachers rating the course as excellent** (14% as good, 5% as average).

Feedback from teachers included :

"I have never attended training that has made me feel so emotional, empowered or inspired. Excellent!"

"This has been some of the best CPD I've attended. I was really nervous as I thought it would be overwhelming but it wasn't at all, it's been so enlightening and interesting as well as providing resources for us busy teachers to access and run with. Thank you so much to all involved for the inputs and really focusing my mind on such an important issue."

"Great to meet with other teachers from many places. Fantastic to have 'permission' and further resources to teach Climate Change/Climate Justice good to know there are so many like-minded people around."

Community Energy Malawi

Location: Malawi

Grant: £10,000 in 2023, matched with some of their own resources (around 50%). Working in the energy sector.

Purpose of the grant: Community Energy Malawi (CEM) wanted to prepare a business case for community-based mini-grid systems and received funding to help with the costs of preparing feasibility studies. These required evidence of community engagement and the award from The Pebble Trust covered the costs incurred for travel and subsistence. CEM was able to then present their case to the Ministry of Energy who subsequently gave the relevant permissions for the mini-grids to go ahead.

An engagement meeting made possible with The Pebble Trust grant



Alignment with The Pebble Trust priorities: Community development; environmental protection.

Outcomes: Community development and cohesion; Stronger and more self-reliant community; Environmental protection; Contribution to a low-carbon society; Development of Practical Solutions for sustainable living.

Difference the grant made: CEM would have struggled to find funding for the work without The Pebble Trust support. Having secured approval from the Ministry CEM is able to apply for funding to install the mini-grids in the approved communities, which they have now secured. Having secured \$250,000, they will soon install a 60kWh solar mini-grid which will supply over 550 households, or over 3,000 individuals with clean energy. Funding for additional installations in other villages that have Ministry approval is being sought.

The grant was instrumental in enabling them to unlock the necessary financing. But it did more than this, as it helped build the confidence of the organisation both internally and with their stakeholders (Government, energy practitioners, etc.). They didn't have enough resources to pay some of the experts they needed for the work, but the credibility that the award gave them led to experts volunteering their time to input into the feasibility work, thus opening up opportunities to gain technical assistance.

As well as generating electricity for lighting, clean electric cooking methods could also be introduced. As a further opportunity, they have also been exploring the potential for productive use of the energy generated, such as working with local women's groups and local farmers to develop business ideas based on the availability of energy.

Based on the work which was able to start with the catalyst funding from The Pebble Trust, CEM has prepared and delivered a paper at two conferences, one in Malawi and one in Morocco. The paper is among the pioneering papers on estimating demand for mini-grids by comparing data from existing mini-grids and that of the prospective mini-grid sites.

CEM has subsequently applied for a second award from The Pebble Trust and is currently working on expanding the installation of mini-grids into more communities.

Institute for Public Policy Research (Scotland)

Location : Edinburgh

“Funding a just transition to zero emissions heat in Scotland”

The Pebble Trust awarded £10k towards staff costs which totalled £26,800.



Purpose of the grant

IPPR Scotland investigated the question of making the transition to clean heat in Scotland affordable and fair by constructing a policy simulation model of the Scottish housing stock, its occupants, their options for energy efficiency and clean heat, and the costs of retrofit. They did this by bringing together several official data sources and published modelling studies. IPPR Scotland launched the report in February 2024 which can be found here:

<https://www.ippr.org/articles/no-home-left-behind>.

Alignment with The Pebble Trust priorities

This project aligns with two of the charitable objectives: Environmental Protection and Education and Science.

Difference the grant made: The modelling undertaken by this grant has put IPPR in a position to move the discussion forward and change the policy debate around clean heat – grant really enabled them to do that and to open up the public debate. This grant is still affecting change – they are still waiting for the Scottish Government to produce a draft Heat and Buildings Bill but when it becomes a current parliament debate they will use the report to push the discussion forward.

Successful outcomes and wider impact

Outcomes	SMART targets (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound)
Evidence-based policy recommendations for funding the heat transition	One central package, with analysis of its multi-dimensional impacts including distributional impacts.

	At least two adjacent packages, describing the implications of adopting alternative approaches, in order to highlight the advantages of the central recommendations
Influence Scottish government policy	Presentation of project results to Scottish government decision makers at at least one meeting in 2023
	Favourable reference to the research findings in at least one Scottish government publication and/or parliamentary debate (including debates early 2024 on the Climate Change Plan)
Advance collaboration and public understanding on how to share the costs of a just transition	Public endorsement of the project's recommendations by at least two organisations beyond the project partners (such as the Existing Homes Alliance or the Association for Decentralised Energy)
	Appearance of the project's findings in at least three news articles or opinion pieces in Scottish or UK-wide media within two months of the project report being published.

Innovative approaches

This grant enabled IPPR Scotland to approach the modelling innovatively by creating a model of the whole of the Scottish building stock using the Scottish House Condition Survey and linking them to give a comprehensive picture. The time taken to do this was enabled by the grant from TPT towards staff costs.





WWF Scotland

Location: Edinburgh

Grant: £5,000 which covered 50% of the cost with other funding from elsewhere and some of WWF's own resources.

Purpose of the grant: was to build the evidence base around switching buildings away from using gas boilers and to develop implementable policy recommendations for the Scottish Government to accelerate a just transition to zero-emission heating in Scotland.

Alignment with The Pebble Trust priorities: Environmental protection

The difference the grant made: Without The Pebble Trust grant, which helped lever additional funding, the work would have been done in-house by WWF staff taking much longer. It meant WWF could commission a high-quality and in-depth piece of objective research with two main elements – research and advocacy.

Research phase: This enabled an in-depth hydrogen literature review and, for the first time in Scotland, a dynamic energy modelling of the upfront and running costs of low-carbon heating options such as heat pumps for typical Scottish homes. This research was important for WWF to provide a proper evidence base for future policy decisions without which there was a risk of taking a 'one-size fits all' approach.

The findings of this research showed hydrogen, in particular the timescales over which a mass-roll out to homes would likely take place, would be too late (the mid 2030s) to contribute to meeting Scotland's crucial 2030 climate target. The research helped develop WWF Scotland's own position on hydrogen heating and was shared with key MSPs and NGOs including members of the Existing Homes Alliance Scotland.

The energy and carbon modelling provided, for the first time, in-depth analysis of the practicalities, costs and benefits of fitting low-carbon heating in the existing Scottish housing stock including those in rural areas which was something The Pebble Trust flagged up during its assessment of WWF's application.

Advocacy: This was an important element of the work following publication of the report to help build support and raise awareness, involving meetings and

workshops with Scottish Government ministers, officials and a range of stakeholders.

WWF's report has confirmed that electric heat pumps are the most affordable and climate-friendly approach to heating the majority of homes in Scotland. And although it is still early days, making a direct correlation between WWF's report and advocacy and the Heat in Buildings Bill which is currently working its way through the Scottish Parliament, is not an unreasonable assumption to make. If the bill passes it will set laws for how buildings in Scotland are heated and how energy efficient they need to be.

Appendix 2 – Survey and Interview Respondents

Survey respondents

Woodland Trust
Knockfarrel Produce
Isobel Rhind Centre
Community Energy Scotland
Wester Lawrenceton Farm Education Trust
The Scottish Ecological Design Association
Wester Lawrenceton Farm Education Trust
WWF
Nature Nudge
Julia Barton
Sustainable Strathspey
Permaculture Association (Britain)
Mull and Iona Community Trust
Community Energy Scotland
Highland One World SCIO
Highland One World SCIO
Inkcap Journal
Pefferly Way Association
Pefferly Way Association
Transition North Ronaldsay CIC
Common Ground Forum
Stramash
Thurso Community Development Trust
Transition Black Isle
SCOTLAND: The Big Picture
Community Energy Malawi

Darachbeg Croft
Outfit Moray
Institute for Public Policy Research Scotland
Lockett Agri-Environmental
Knoydart Farm CIC
Carrbridge Community Orchard
The Loch of Ayre Walkway Association SCIO
Naturallyuseful
Iochdar Community Council
Talking Medicines Limited
Highland Seedlings
Community Woodlands Association

Interview respondents

Knockfarrel Produce
Community Energy Scotland
Wester Lawrenceton Farm Education Trust
The Scottish Ecological Design Association
WWF
Julia Barton
Permaculture Association (Britain)
Mull and Iona Community Trust
Community Energy Scotland
Highland One World SCIO
Inkcap Journal
Peffrey Way Association
Stramash
Thurso Community Development Trust
Transition Black Isle
Scotland the big picture
Community Energy Malawi
Institute for Public Policy Research Scotland
Lockett Agri-Environmental
Knoydart Farm CIC
Naturallyuseful
Community Woodlands Association

Appendix 3 – Sample Impact Measurement Framework

TPT Charitable Objectives	Broad Categories	Example Quantitative Metrics	Example Qualitative Metrics
Advancement of Environmental Protection or Improvement	Sustainability Practices Resource Conservation Biodiversity Protection Pollution Reduction	Metric tonnes of CO2 saved Percentage reduction in energy use or increase in renewable energy sources. Amount of waste diverted from landfills (e.g., in tonnes). Number of attendees at educational sessions Number of participants in local sustainability initiatives.	Evidence of individuals adopting sustainable habits (e.g., recycling or using public transport). Testimonials or reports from participants about the perceived impact of projects.
Advancement of Community Development	Community Empowerment Infrastructure Improvement	Number of cooperative programs (e.g., community gardens or tool-sharing libraries). Number of participants involved Community-led initiatives launched Partnerships formed	Community perceptions of environmental improvement Participant testimonials on adopting sustainable practices Stories of successful or conservation projects. Stories of community advocacy efforts gaining visibility and traction.
Advancement of Education and Science	Sustainable Education Scientific Research Public Awareness Capacity Building	Number of research papers, related to sustainability. Number of workshops, seminars, or training sessions conducted. Number of individuals participating in educational programs. Number of educational materials created	Examples of how research findings are implemented in practice. Testimonials or case studies on how education influenced behaviours. Case studies of innovative educational methods or tools developed. Testimonials from innovators about the

		Changes in knowledge or attitudes as measured by surveys. Innovations prototyped	support received and its impact on their projects.
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