

# 100% rates relief for community hydro projects

The business rates relief will enable eligible projects to retain the maximum possible benefit for their local area, enabling them to re-invest into their local community.

The grant scheme will also provide support to cap the increase in business rates for other small-scale developments to 10% or £1,000 where there was no previous liability.

The new grant scheme, which will start in April, will provide greater support to hydropower developers in Wales than elsewhere in the UK. Work is under way with community developers and others to ensure it is easy to access.

It will be application based and hydro projects will be able to apply for a grant towards both their 2018-19 rates liability and retrospectively for 2017-18.

The Environment Minister Hannah Blythyn yesterday officially opened the 'Welcome to Our Woods' community hydro project in Treherbert, which is creating a low carbon outdoor space and facilities to generate income for the local community. It is an example of a project which will benefit from the new 100% rate relief.

Lesley Griffiths said:

"I am very pleased to announce a new generous grant scheme of support for hydro power projects.

"Our new scheme will provide 100% rate relief for community schemes and provide support for other small-scale projects towards their non-domestic rates. Crucially, it will provide greater support to hydro-power developers in Wales than is available elsewhere in the UK.

"Electricity generation from renewables in Wales has trebled since 2010 and community developments have played an important part in this success.

"Yesterday the Environment Minister officially opened the 'Welcome to our Woods' community hydro project which will be providing income to the local area. This project is a great example of a community working together on its energy future and will benefit from the new scheme I am announcing today."

Finance Secretary Mark Drakeford added:

“I am pleased that through this grant scheme we have been able to provide 100% rate relief to help ensure hydro-projects are able to retain the maximum possible benefit for their local areas.”

The 100% non-domestic rate relief scheme for community hydro projects is part of the 2018-19 Budget agreement with Plaid Cymru.

Ian Thomas, Company Director Welcome to our Woods Ltd said:

“The ongoing support we have received from the Welsh Government has been absolutely vital to the development of our scheme and has enabled us to re-invest in the local community. We welcome the additional support announced today – it will help us continue to deliver our clean energy project.”