Half a million goes to local groups, but Viking Genes is left off the list

BY **DANIEL SHAILER**

The community fund set up with money from Viking Energy has celebrated awarding almost half a million pounds to local organisations since the windfarm opened six months ago.

Others however - from antiwindfarm campaigners to the head of the renowned Viking Genes Project - have criticised the mechanism whereby projects are selected for funding, and said that more worthy groups have been forgotten.

The fund's managers have allocated a little more than £450,000 in total to numerous projects since the windfarm went operational, including insulation support for fuel-poor households and an accessible transport initiative for wheelchair users.

SSE has promised roughly £72 million of community funding over the lifespan of the windfarm, the equivalent of £2.2 million each year.

Including money drawn down for an MRI scanner last year, the fund has spent roughly a quarter of its annual deposit in the first half a year.

Eleanor Gear, the fund's manager, said that represents a "positive start" to the project, and that some of the funding has been held back in anticipation of supporting projects later in

do not happen overnight and early engagement with the Shetland community, through its community groups, organisations and businesses is crucial to the success of the fund," she said.

Ms Gear added that the fund was not designed to initiate new groups or projects, but to support existing local organisations in the work they do, and that the fund expects to award £150,000 more

Frank Hay, a campaigner with Sustainable Shetland and long-time critic of the Viking project, described the pay-outs as "haphazard" and said the most meaningful contribution SSE could make would be directly to people affected by the turbines

"The money could perhaps go towards reducing electricity bills, then more people would see tangible benefits," Mr Hay said, suggesting areas nearer turbines could be targeted for larger rebates.

"Perhaps people need to be reminded that community benefit money ultimately comes from consumers anyway," he said. "It doesn't just magically

The priorities for pay-outs were determined by a community consultation laid out in the fund's plan last year.

"Like all other funders, we can't



meet everybody's needs," said Ms Gear, "and in order to deliver good funding we have to have criteria; we have to have priorities.

"The consultation was delivered Shetland-wide so the priorities that have been adopted by the fund are the priorities that were given to us by the community."

Jim Wilson is the head of the Viking Genes project in Edinburgh University – a genetic sequencing project which last year identified variants which put some Shetlanders at greater risk of certain types of cancer.

But because that research was largely published after the consultation concluded, Professor Wilson says the Viking Genes

project was left off the priorities for funding.

"Obviously the community consultation would not have had people on the doorstep saying that they want population-wide genetic screening, because nobody knew that was required until really recently," Prof Wilson said.

The Viking Genes researchers hope to roll-out a "go-to" screening programme to test Shetlanders for 50 concerning genetic variants.

That would take around three years to create, and cost roughly £1 million – half the Viking fund's annual pay-outs - according to Prof Wilson.

A PhD student is currently working to identify which variants

to screen for in Shetland - those that pose a danger to locals and which, with warning, they could

That includes cancer-causing people find tumours earlier, or variants which might make birth conditions more likely so that would-be parents can make informed decisions about conceiving children.

That can only happen, Prof Wilson said, with support from the Viking fund.

Ms Gear confirmed the fund had met with the Viking Genes researchers, but that until the priorities for large-scale funding are re-evaluated in 2029, the geneticists can only apply for community grants up to £15,000.

Meanwhile, the council's energy efficiency team received £200,000 of "top-up funding" to replace doors and windows for locals struggling to heat their homes

"With Shetland's cold and windy weather we regularly receive requests for help with new windows and doors," said the council's manager of environment and estate operations, Carl Symons.

"This additional energy efficiency funding is welcome and will provide further help to households living in fuel

staff retrofitting houses to make them more efficient.

The Royal Voluntary Service was given more than £30,000 for variants which might help its work connecting wheelchair users with volunteers drivers and accessible cars.

> The fund has also awarded just more than £1 million since early 2021, before Viking energy began generating.

> Both Mr Hay and Prof Wilson, as well as feeling the funds were missing important local causes, said the amount paled in comparison to the windfarm's profits.

> SSE made almost the full amount of their contribution to the fund from constraint payments in August alone.

> Mr Hay said the cost to Shetland from Viking has been "relatively massive ... in exchange for the £450k."

> Prof Wilson said: "There's a moral obligation for windfarms to pay into community benefit funds because it's universally recognised that they have a negative impact on various stakeholders.

I think there's also a moral obligation on the people negotiating on behalf of the people of Shetland, whether that be the council or others that I don't know, to get as good a deal as humanly possible out of these enormous industrial complexes Hjaltland Housing Association that are the wind companies."

Man is fined £400 for drug possession

A 32-year-old man was switching opioid dependency treatments when he was caught carrying Class A drugs, a court heard. Sydney Johnson, of Clothister in the North Mainland, admitted possessing heroin and cocaine when he appeared at Lerwick Sheriff Court on Wednesday.

Procurator fiscal Duncan MacKenzie said police officers pulled Johnson's car over on 15th October last year and took him back to the station where a strip search was carried out. He said the search revealed two grams of heroin, valued at £70, and 0.28g of cocaine worth an estimated £20.

Defence agent Tommy Allan said his client had been coming off methadone and going onto buprenorphine - which is also used to treat

The solicitor said Johnson had been between treatments, and "decided to use his own medication" when he was pulled over.

Sheriff Ian Cruickshank imposed a £400 "cumulo-fine" for both

Cocaine supplier is caught outside town music festival

A social drug supplier caught with cocaine wraps outside the Rising North Music Festival has been fined £800.

Ryan Peart pleaded guilty to supplying the Lerwick Sheriff Court on Wednesday

aroused the suspicion of officers policing the festival when they saw him and another man 'slumped over" in his car, the court heard.

It was parked outside the Clickimin Leisure Complex, where the festival was held, on 17th August. Procurator fiscal Duncan MacKenzie

was found to have a single wrap in his wallet.

Their total value was as much as £800.

man in the car was Peart's friend with whom he was sharing some of his personal supply for

was an apprentice mechanic with no previous drugs" - but accepted it was on a "social basis convictions. He said Peart had suffered not a commercial basis". He fined him £800, said a search was carried out and the accused a painful injury in a car accident three years taking account of the early plea.

ago, which had affected his mental health.

The solicitor said his client had started using cocaine to help his mental health - but it

"This has very much been a wake-up call." he said. "He has been doing everything right

Mr Allan said Peart had been attending the

BIRTHS

THOMSON - William and Amruta are delighted to announce the birth of their daughter, Arya Janaki Barbara, born on 10th December 2024, in Houston. A peerie sister for Zoe, and another beautiful granddaughter for Linda Thomson, Toab, and Leslie Thomson, Aberdeen.

DEATHS

FRASER – Marie Louise, aged 43 years, passed away peacefully on 2nd February 2025 at South Shields. A much loved daughter of the late John Fraser (formerly of Houll, Walls) and his wife Noreen Fraser, also sister of Lynsey.

Sadly missed.

INKSTER - On 26th January 2025, at North Haven Care Centre Fleming (née Houston), aged 73 years.
Daughter of the late Duncan and
Jessie Houston. Dear sister of Hazel
and Beryl and the late Derek, Douglas

Never more than a thought away, Loved and remembered every day. Love always, Hazel and Robert, Beryl and Ivan and their families.

NICOLSON - Elisabeth (Lis), 14th March 1943 to 7th January 2025. Passed away peacefully, aged 81 years, at the Gilbert Bain Hospital. years, at the Gilbert Bain Hospital. Wife of the late James (Jim) Barron Smith Nicolson. Fondly remembered sister and aunt.

- John, Donald, Steven and Katrina.

SEX - Elsie (Tait), died 20th January 2025, in Sussex. Last of nine, formerly of Westhouse, East Burrafirth.

- Loved and missed by all her nieces, nephews and families home and away.

SUMMERS - William John (John) passed away peacefully on 6th February 2025, in his 89th year. Much loved husband of his late wife Chrissie, proud dad to Karen and Laurence and step-dad to Alison and precious grandad to all the bairns

(Continued on next column)

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_ Laurence and Glynis, Susan and

- Alison and John, Lori, Hayden and

Jayne and Alastair, Jennifer, Sandy and Ann, Matthew, Emily, Alec and

- Nephews Robert, Alan, David, Colin Gary and families

Sadly missed. Donna and families.

THOMASON - Elizabeth (Betty), died 31st January 2025, peacefully at home, aged 96 years, with her family

We miss you in so many ways, Ve miss the things you used to say, And when old times we do recall, It's when we miss you most of all. In our hearts forever, Magnus,

Eileen, Wills and Archie. We hold you close within our hearts, And there you shall remain,

Until we meet again Forever loved by Judy and family. Your life was a blessing,

You were loved beyond words, And are missed beyond measure Always in our hearts, Ruthie, Bobby

Look beyond the empty chair, To know a life well spent, Look beyond the solitude, To days of true content.

Beautiful memories are silently kept, Of an aunt we loved dearly, and will never forget. Thelma, Damien and Sonja.

We hold you close within our hearts, And there you shall remain, To walk with us throughout our lives, Until we meet again.

Karen and Jim, Jason and Michael.

- Rachael and Will, Kennedy, Melissa and Tim, Jonny and Corinne, Ellie and Rhys, Chrissie and Leon and James.

Treasured memories - Magnie and Wendy. Fondly remembered.

Sister-in-law Alice and nieces Ann,

To walk with us throughout our lives.

Your memory a treasure

Always remembered, never forgotten, Marshall, Janice and family.

drugs on a "social basis" when he appeared at

The 20-vear-old from Gulberwick had

A further eight wraps were found in the

driver's door pocket. The fiscal said they averaged 0.7g, which Sheriff Ian Cruickshank described as "under-weight gram deals".

Mr MacKenzie said it was clear the other since then."

Defence agent Tommy Allan said his client

got "out of control".

Shetland Recovery Hub and was finishing his apprenticeship. Sheriff Ian Cruickshank said

the offence involved a "sizeable quantity of

BIRTHS, MARRIAGES & DEATHS

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IN MEMORIAM

ADAMSON – In loving memory of Maggie, who died on 14th February 2014, and Malcolm, who died on 29th January 2007.

- Always remembered with much love by all the family.

BURGESS – In loving memory of Pearl, who died on 25th February 2014. - Always fondly remembered by Linda

COLLIGAN – Lovingly remembering lan, who died on 2nd March 2011. - Much loved by Maisie his wife, Jan his sister, father to Carol and Lynne and grandad to Shannah, Raema and

HUTCHISON - In loving memory of Loretta (née Stewart). Dear wife, mother, grandmother and greatgrandmother, who died 17th February 2024.

Your presence we miss, Your memory we treasure, Loving you always, Forgetting you never.

Richard, Ingrid, Odette, Heather, Kay Lisa and partners.

IRVINE - Robert John (Peerie Robbie) Passed Tuesday, 20th February 2024.

All her grandchildren and great-

Not a day goes by without you in my thoughts and prayers Only consolation is knowing that each passing day brings me closer to being with you again.

JOHNSON - In loving memory of Karl, a dear son, brother and uncle, who passed away on 24th February 2016. Deep in our hearts your memory is kept, To treasure and love

and never forget.

(Continued on next column)

Love and miss you. Anne.

(Continued from previous column)

 Lovingly remembered, Mam and Dad, Elaine, Neil, Jessica and family, xxx. PATON – Treasured memories of our parents, Murdy, who died 30th November 1976, Nana, who died 19th February 1998, also our granny, Maggie Hardy, who died 4th April 1977.

Always in our thoughts.

 Loved and remembered every day by all the family. ROBERTSON - In loving memory of

my dear brother, Tommy, who passed away on 20th February 2021. Remembered with love.

Ethel and family, x. ROBERTSON - In loving memory of Tommy, who passed away on 20th February 2021. A much loved brother and uncle.

Always in our thoughts. Jean, Dorothy, Philip and families.

SCOTT – Walter (MBE), of New Easterhoull, Castle Street, Scalloway, passed away on 23rd February 2018. A special cousin, loved and remembered always

Joyce and family, x. SINCLAIR – In loving memory of Peter Leslie, who died on 23rd February 2010. A dear husband, father, brother

and always in our thoughts.

Linda and family. Maggie, Bobby and family.

John, Dorothy and family

 Christine, Peter and family. **SMITH** - In loving memory of John Raymond, formerly of Holmlea, Weisdale, who died at his home in Kirkwall

on 2nd February 2019, aged 64 years. (Continued on next column)

(Continued from previous column) - Fondly remembered and sadly missed by his brothers Arnold and Ewan and all his family at home and

WARD - In loving memory of our mam. Laurina Charlotte, who died on 22nd February 2010, and our dad, Thomas Alexander, who died on 11th November 1977.

Laurabell, Joyce, Lyall, June and lalerie and families.

WILLIAMSON – In loving memory of Eunice, who died on 24th February 2024.

Remembered with love and thanksgiving.

- Husband Magnie and bairns John, Robert, Maria and Christie, and by grandbairns and great-grandbairns. Remembered by sisters Sandra,
 Alma and Mary and by brothers Edwin

WILLIAMSON - In loving memory of our parents, grandparents and great-

grandparents, John, who passed away on 31st March 1989, and Helen, on 19th February 2004. Never more than a thought away. Loved and missed by all their family.

WILLIAMSON - Treasured memories WILLIAMSON - Ireasured memories of Stephen, who died on 21st February 2020, and our parents, Jessie Helen, who died on 10th August 2018, and Robbie, who died on 21st December 2010.

Never more than a thought away, Missed and remembered every day.

RETURN THANKS

Inkster would like to thank friends and relatives for phone calls, cards, flowers and visits. Thanks to Arthur for the fitting service, the organist and church attendants, Goudies Funeral Directors Ltd, grave diggers, and Stems for the flowers. Special thanks to North Haven Care Centre and Brae Health Centre staff for their dedicated care, also Linda for her many visits to Valerie. Finally, thanks to all who attended the funeral and donated to the chosen charities.

THE FAMILY OF THE LATE John Summers wish to thank family and friends for their kindness and support at this sad time. Thanks to the doctors, district nurses and occupational therapists for their attendance, especially over the last couple of weeks. Special thanks to the dedicated staff at King Erik House, who were no hand to help when required. on hand to help when required, ensuring that John was able to retain his independence. Thanks to Universal Stores for the beautiful floral tributes and Goudies Funeral Directors Ltd for their bole and preference involve. their help and professionalism. Grate ful thanks to David McQueen at Quovs Baptist Church for all his help and assistance, to the ushers for their attendance, Clive for the sound and like personal to the sound and the personal to the sound and the personal to the sound and the personal to the sound t live streaming and to the organist, Billy Stout. Thanks to Arthur Watt for the lovely service, and Magnie for the truly fitting eulogy. Finally, thanks to everyone who attended the funeral and for the cards, flowers, phone calls and donations received on behalf of the King Erik House comfort fund.

THE FAMILY OF THE LATE Betty Thomason would like to thank all the staff at Lerwick Health Centre, Gilbert Bain Hospital, Goudies Funeral Gilbert Bain Hospital, Goldies Funeral Directors Ltd and special thanks to the Care at Home teams who supported her so well. Thanks also to all at the Gospel Hall and those who attended and helped with the funeral. All were greatly appreciated.

THE FAMILY OF THE LATE Lis Nicolson would like to thank the emergency services and Ward 3 of the Gilbert Bain Hospital for their care of Lis. A special thanks to Goudies Funeral Directors Ltd for

Goudes Funeral Directors Ltd for arranging the funeral and interment at the Easting Cemetery, and to all those who helped create a special day at St John's Church and Baltasound Hall. The Rev. David Cooper and Jill Blackadder are to be congratulated on a unique Quaker cum Church of Scotland service to commemorate Lis. A big thank you to all those who attended the funeral and for donations which helped to raise £680 for St John's Guild projects. Finally, the family are hugely grateful to all the people of Unst and the rest of Shetland who helped to bring ber funeral troether. bring her funeral together.