Supporting quarrying communities in Wales

Aggregate Levy Fund

The Aggregate Levy Fund (ALFW) is very much alive in Wales – delivering real benefits to local communities.

While it has been withdrawn in England, the Welsh Government, which administers the fund, continues to set aside an annual budget of £1.5m to support projects in Welsh communities affected by aggregate extraction.

Both the industry and Welsh Government are keen to increase public awareness of the fund, particularly within quarrying communities, and to identify local capital projects which could benefit from funding.

Since it was launched in 2002 the ALFW has provided more than £16 million in funding to projects across Wales – 80 per cent of which benefit local communities. In many cases ALFW support has been the catalyst to bring other major funders on board.

Funding is available to support community-led projects that have a strong emphasis on community regeneration, and environmental and educational initiatives which have a clear connection to aggregate extraction.

Fund Manager Russell Dobbins said: “Although we’ve funded many great projects across Wales over the last ten years, it’s surprising how many communities are either unaware of the scheme or unwilling to apply. There may a perception that the application process is time consuming, which puts some applicants off. We want to help where we can and get the message down to grass roots level through quarry managers providing more information. I am more than happy to work with quarry managers to encourage more people in their communities to apply.”

Where does the funding come from?

The ALFW is funded by money collected by HM Treasury as part of the Aggregate Levy, which is a £2 a tonne levy on primary aggregate. The levy was introduced in 2002 as a green tax to soften the impact of quarrying and marine aggregate dredging.

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What sort of projects are supported?

Glyncoch Community Centre - There can be no better example of the fund achieving its goals than at Glyngoch, near Pontypridd, a large post-war housing estate which sits above Craig-yr Hesg quarry. The old community centre was in a dreadful state of repair and a target of vandalism. Without a grant of £403,000 from the fund the bold plans to revamp the building would have failed as a number of other funders dropped out and hopes of securing the necessary £800,000 looked bleak.

Llanelwedd Community Hall
Llanelwedd is a rural community which sits in the shadow of Builth Wells quarry. The ALFW provided £97,000 to enable much-needed improvements to the ageing community hall and for a new community space for local children and young people. From start-to-finish the project demonstrated a fantastic willingness from many people to work together. The work on the play area, which was horribly run down, has received a huge thumbs-up from local kids.

Pontardawe Street Festivals - like so many small towns in south Wales, Pontardawe, near Swansea has suffered greatly from the closure of the coal mines. A grant of £18,000 funded the purchase of gala tents, a mobile dance floor and other equipment to promote Pontardawe’s four seasonal street festivals. These festivals have become really popular, have helped to lift spirits in the town, and have brought people – and much needed business -back to the local high street. The town is close to Cwm Nant Lleici quarry.

Bradley Park Bowling Club - this project near Wrexham was awarded a grant of £125,000 to transform a dilapidated bowling green which had deteriorated following its closure some years ago. People from the local community decided to take responsibility for the green but also raised the funds to create the first all-weather official crown bowling green in north Wales. Links have now been set up with the brand new primary school next door, as well as offering opportunities for players with disabilities.