

STRATHY SOUTH WIND FARM **SECTION 36C**

Pre-Application Consultation
Report

August 2020



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PROJECT INTRODUCTION

PROPOSED VARIED DEVELOPMENT

SSE Generation Limited (hereafter referred to as ‘the Applicant’) has submitted an application to Scottish Ministers under Section 36C (the ‘S36C application’) of the Electricity Act 1989 (‘the 1989 Act’). The S36C application proposes the variation of the Section 36 consent (2018 Consent) granted by Scottish Ministers on 27 April 2018 under the 1989 Act for the construction and operation of the Strathy South Wind Farm T39 Layout (‘Consented Scheme’). The site location is presented on Figure 1.1 and layout of the Consented Scheme is presented on Figure 1.2a (EIAR Volume 3a: Figures).

In addition to the Applicant is seeking direction under section 57(2) of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 (‘the 1997 Act’) that planning permission would be deemed to be granted in respect of the varied description of the proposed development (‘the Proposed Varied Development’).

The purpose of the application for variation of the relevant 2018 Consent, granted under the 1989 Act, arises from the proposed variation to the Description of the Development that primarily reflects the proposed change to the specification of the 39 turbines which would increase the maximum tip height from up to 135 m to up to 200 m. The increase in turbine height would lead to a consequent increase in land take to accommodate larger turbine foundations and also the regulatory¹ requirement for turbine lighting, as the turbines would exceed 150 m. The Applicant has also reviewed the on-site access tracks and reduced the track length requirements by 0.5 km by removing track loops. Further information regarding the Proposed Varied Development is presented in Section 1.6 and Section 1.7 of this chapter and detailed in Chapter 2: Description of Development (EIAR Volume 2).

A copy of the variation application will be served on The Highland Council (THC) in accordance with Regulation 4(2)(b) of the Electricity Generating Stations (Applications for Variation of Consent) (Scotland) Regulations 2013, as amended (‘the 2013 Regulations’).

Strathy South Wind Farm has been subject to three principal design iterations over time and the layout has evolved to respond to feedback from consultees and collection of additional environmental data. The three principal iterations are presented below together with the environmental reports relating to each layout:

¹ The Air Navigation Order 2016, URL: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2016/765/contents/made>

- Original 2007 Scheme (77 turbines) – 2007 Environmental Statement (ES);
- Modified 2013 Scheme (47 turbines) – 2013 ES Addendum; and
- Consented Scheme (39 Turbines) – 2014 Further Information Report (FIR).

The Applicant provides this Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) under the Electricity Works (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017 (as amended) ('the 2017 EIA Regulations') to accompany the application for variation to the Consented Scheme comprising 39 turbines to a tip height of up to 200 m. Professional judgement, based on a review of the previous environmental reports, including information prepared for the Public Local Inquiry (PLI), and updated baseline information (where required), has been used to establish the likely significant effects on the environment of the Consented Scheme for the purposes of comparison with the likely significant effects of the Proposed Varied Development.

CONSULTATION ACTIVITIES

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of pre-application consultation is to:

- Ensure that statutory consultees and other bodies with a particular interest in the environment
- are informed of the proposal and provided with an opportunity to comment at an early stage in
- the EIA process;
- Obtain baseline information regarding existing environmental site conditions;
- Establish key environmental issues and identify potential effects to be considered during the
- EIA;
- Identify those issues which are likely to require more detailed study and those which can be
- justifiably excluded from further assessment; and
- Provide a means of confirming the most appropriate methods of assessment.

This PAC Report is supported by the following Appendices:

- Appendix 1: Consultation Register
- Appendix 2: Copy of Northern Times Newspaper Advert and Facebook Post Advertising Public Exhibition
- Appendix 3: Map showing Community Council Areas
- Appendix 4: Copy of Strathy South Wind Farm Postcard
- Appendix 5: Summary of Online Responses
- Appendix 6: Peatland Partnership Consultation Response

PRE-APPLICATION CONSULTATION

Pre-application meetings and telephone calls were held with representatives of Scottish Government (Energy Consents Unit), The Highland Council (THC), Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA), Historic Environment Scotland, Scottish Natural Heritage, Strathy and Armadale Community Council, Bettyhill, Altnaharra and Strathnaver Community Council and Melvich Community Council.

Meetings and calls were used to inform consultees of the Proposed Varied development and the key changes from the Consented Scheme, discuss key issues in respect of the potential for environmental effects and to discuss timescales for the submission of the application. A list of community consultation which has taken place is listed in appendix 1.

A scoping report was submitted to Energy Consents Unit on 1 May 2019 and the formal Scoping Opinion was received on 18 July 2019. Scoping responses were received from the following consultees:

- THC
- HES
- SEPA
- SNH
- British Horse Society
- British Telecommunications Plc.
- Defence Infrastructure Organisation
- Highlands and Islands Airport Limited
- Joint Radio Company Limited
- NATS Safeguarding
- Northern District Salmon Fishery Board
- RSPB Scotland
- Scottish Rights of Way of Access Society
- Scottish Water

No responses were received from the three community councils in the vicinity of the Proposed Varied development, but copies of the Scoping Report were made available for their review.

PUBLIC EXHIBITIONS

Public engagement is a key element of the consenting process. Two public exhibitions carried out between receipt of the Scoping Opinion and submission of the Section 36C variation documentation, provided information regarding the proposed development to local residents.

Public exhibitions were held in two phases. The first public exhibition was held to discuss with the local community that the Applicant intended to vary the 2018 Consent and to highlight the key changes which would comprise the Proposed Varied Development. This initial exhibition was held on 27th August 2019

from 3pm until 8pm at Strathy Hall. The event was advertised by email, word of mouth and local residents' social media.

A second exhibition, which was designed to present the final layout of the Proposed Varied Development, was planned for the 24th March 2020, again at Strathy Hall. Unfortunately, due to Covid 19, this exhibition had to be cancelled in line with Scottish Government guidance at the time. As an alternative to maintain engagement with the local community, the Applicant undertook an online exhibition on the SSER Strathy South Website - <https://www.sserenewables.com/onshore-wind/in-development/strathy-south>. An advert advising that the planned exhibition had been cancelled was placed in the Northern Times newspaper, and an advert for the event was posted on 'Strathy Community' Facebook pages, copies of both adverts are detailed in Appendix 2.

Exhibition information available included plans of the Proposed varied Development, information boards detailing the key environmental effects, along with an explanation of the consenting process for a Section 36C Variation Application and the current stage that the project is at within that process. Information was also provided on the extensive habitat management work which is planned both on-site and off-site. Local councillors, the MSP and MP were advised in advance of these exhibitions in writing.

Postcards were posted to 667 addresses on 28 May 2020, covering the Melvich, Strathy and Armadale, and Bettyhill, Strathnaver and Altnaharra Community Council areas. The postcard requested that the local community provide their views on the Proposed varied Development via the online feedback form the Strathy South website address noted above. Maps detailing community council areas are detailed in Appendix 3 and a copy of the postcard is provided in Appendix 4.

ATTENDANCE

13 members of the local community attended the first public exhibition held on 27 August 2019. With the exception of one attendee, the community who attended the exhibition was in support of the Proposed Varied Development and welcomed the update on the Applicants intention to progress with the Strathy South Wind Farm following the 2018 Consent.

563 individual website views have been recorded from the online exhibition on the Strathy South Wind Farm website, in the run up to submission of the Section 36C Variation Application². A significant increase in website views was recorded in the week following the postcard delivery.

² At the time of writing (August 2020)

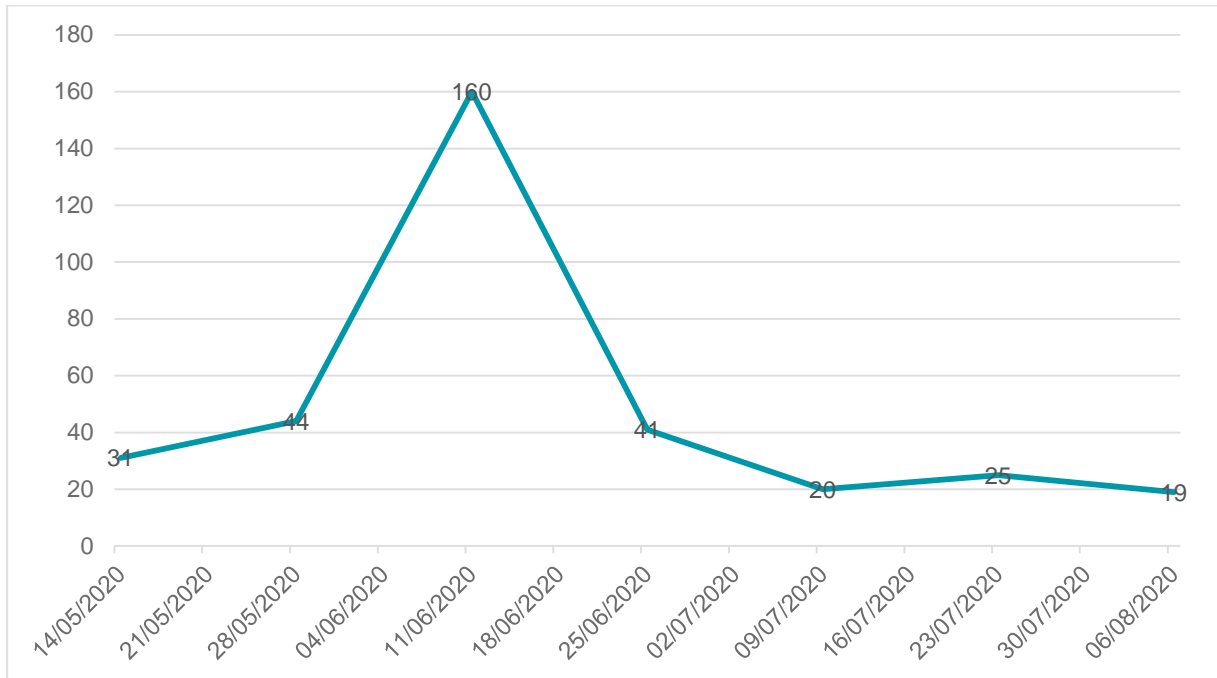


Figure 1: Website Hits Following Online Exhibition and Postcard Mail Drop.

SUMMARY OF RESPONSES

No feedback forms were provided at the first public exhibition. The Applicant opted to avoid feedback forms for this event, as the intention was to hold an informal meet and greet for the local community to introduce the Proposed Varied Development and key members of the project team where there had been changes to personnel since the 2018 Consent was granted.

In total 43 responses were received via an online form on the Strathy South wind farm website in response to the online exhibition and postcard sent out to the local community. In summary, of those who responded 86% were residents of the Melvich, Strathy and Armadale and Betthill, Altnaharra and Strathnaver community council areas. Of all responses 67.4% noted that they were 'very supportive' with a further 7% noting that they were 'supportive' of the Proposed Varied Development. Details of responses can be viewed in Appendix 5.

FUTURE COMMUNITY CONSULTATION

Whilst every effort has been made by the Applicant to provide appropriate pre-application consultation during the COVID-19 restrictions, it is acknowledged that there has been a lack of face-to-face consultation activity ahead of submission. As such, it is the Applicant's intention to hold a further public event to allow the local community to have their say, as and when it is deemed safe to do so. The Applicant will be led by the community councils on such an event and is happy to meet when the community feels comfortable to do so.

THE FLOW COUNTRY WORLD HERITAGE SITE

The Proposed Varied Development is situated within an area the Peatlands Partnership³ has highlighted as a proposed 'buffer' for the areas of core peatland in The Flow Country World Heritage Site Project. The Applicant supports the proposal to designate part of the Flow Country as a UNESCO World Heritage Site (WHS) and welcomes the news that an application has been approved for submission in 2023. Contact was first made with the Peatland Partnership in 2014 to provide information on the removal of the commercial forestry and the extensive peatland restoration programme that would be carried out both on and off-site. At this time, it was proposed that this work could lend support to the WHS bid and the Applicant offered to work collaboratively and felt that UHI-ERI Partnership-Peatland Restoration Project may have been of particular interest to the Peatlands Partnership.

In September 2019, the Applicant submitted a response to the '*Go with the Flows? The Flow Country World Heritage Site Project*' consultation via the Highland Council portal (Appendix 6). This consultation response again highlighted the extensive peatland restoration work that has been committed to as part of the Proposed Varied Development, and how this will help the aims of the Peatland Partnership. This consultation acknowledged that whilst the Caithness and Sutherlands Peatlands Special Area of Conservation does not include all the areas of blanket bog in the Flow Country, the boundary as proposed in 2019 was not comprised solely of blanket bog of Outstanding Universal Value, as required for WHS status. As part of this response, the Applicant welcomed discussions with the Peatland Partnership on how the Strathy South wind farm restoration plans could assist with improving the quality of the surrounding habitat.

To date, no response has been received from the Peatland Partnership, but the Applicant remains committed to peatland restoration within the Flow Country and would welcome ongoing consultation on the final boundary of the proposed WHS to help ensure a successful site is taken forward and provide information on how wind farm developments can form part of the Flow Country and help to enhance the areas peatlands.

³ Comprised of SNH, Forestry and Land Scotland, Scottish Forestry, Highland Council, RSPB Scotland and Plantlife international

Appendix 1

Strathy South Consultation Register

Date of consultation	Applicant Representative	Consultee	Email/telephone call/meeting	Summary of consultation
05/04/2019	Murray West	Joyce Campbell - Strathy and Armadale Community Council	Email	Discussion with Joyce Campbell, confirming she has taken on Chair of Strathy and Armadale Community Council . The Applicant proposed an introductory meeting once plans have been firmed up.
19/03/2019	Jon Soal	Murray West, Morven Smith, Jenny McGregor	Site Visit/Community Engagement	Community engagement with Strathy Visit held on 18/19th March 2019
03/06/2019	Jon Soal	Highland Council	Presentation	Highland Council - Pre-application meeting Strathy South presentation / meeting
26/08/2019	Jon Soal	Strathy Community Council	Presentation	Community Partnership Meeting / Presentation
11/03/2020	Jon Soal	Sandra Munro, Bettyhill Community Council	Telephone Call	Discussion about community benefit and ownership
24/03/2020	Jon Soal	Margaret Davidson - Highland Council	Telephone Call	Discussion around planning committees, Covid 19, peatland, ornithology
19/05/2020	Murray West	Andrew Mackay - Melvich Community Council	Email	Confirmation of March public exhibitions being cancelled due to Covid 19. Advising the public exhibition materials are now on the Strathy South website, and request for feedback. Information on microgrants and community funds provided. Email reply to Murray advising Melvich CC are using zoom for meeting.
19/05/2020	Murray West	Sandra Munro, Bettyhill Community Council	Email	Confirmation of March public exhibitions being cancelled due to Covid 19. Advising the public exhibition materials are now on the Strathy South website, and request for feedback. Information on microgrants and community funds provided.
19/05/2020	Murray West	Strathy and Armadale Community Council	Email	Confirmation of March public exhibitions being cancelled due to Covid 19. Advising the public exhibition materials are now on the Strathy South website, and request for feedback. Information on microgrants and community funds provided.
21/05/2020	Murray West	Councillor Linda Munro - Highland Council	Email	Confirmation of March public exhibitions being cancelled due to Covid 19. Advising the public exhibition materials are now on the Strathy South website, and request for feedback. Information on microgrants and community funds provided.
25/05/2020	Jon Soal	Joyce Campbell	Telephone Call	Discussion around limited seasonal survey was underway on Strathy South, submission and the Applicant is keen to get on site again and speak with community, once it is safe to do so (Covid 19)
26/05/2020	Murray West		Post Card	Draft of A5 feedback post card to be sent out to gather feedback following online public exhibition

02/06/2020	Jon Soal	Councillor Linda Munro - Highland Council	Telephone Call	Project update and discussion around end of July submission date, and discussion around if there is anything else the Applicant could be doing with the community.
03/06/2020	Murray West	David Hodge - Melvich Community Council		Following email to Melvich CC on 19th May - David Hodge requested exhibition board material be emailed to him and a few of his contacts, which Murray sent on and gave details of the Strathy South website for more information.
10/06/2020	Jon Soal, Murray West, Laurie Winter	Bettyhill, Strathnaver and Altnaharra Community Council	Skype Call	The meeting was called by the Applicant to help fulfil their obligation to keep the local community informed of developments as they moved towards a new planning application regarding their proposed wind farm. Meeting provided a project overview, discussions on aviation lighting requirements, public access and maximising benefit to the community. Meeting provided a project overview, discussions on aviation lighting requirements, public access and maximising benefit to the
10/06/2020	Jon Soal, Murray West, Laurie Winter	Strathy Community Council	Telephone Call	The meeting was called by the Applicant to help fulfil their obligation to keep the local community informed of developments as they moved towards a new planning application regarding their proposed wind farm. Project overview, mainly on project development board. July submission date. Turbine size, PMM's being replaced with Lidar. Discussion re subsidy free windfarm.
11/06/2020	Jon Soal, Murray West, Laurie Winter	Melvich Community Council	Zoom Call	The meeting was called by the Applicant to help fulfil their obligation to keep the local community informed of developments as they moved towards a new planning application regarding their proposed wind farm. Meeting provided a project overview, discussions on aviation lighting requirements, public access and maximising benefit to the community. Melvich community council highlighted that they would be keen to see a traffic management plan through the community from the Applicant. The Applicant is in the process of providing this.
11/06/2020	Murray West	Councillor Hugh Morrison - Highland Council	Email	Update email - explained March public exhibition postponed due to covid 19. Copy of online exhibition materials provided
11/06/2020	Murray West	Councillor Kirsteen Currie - Highland Council	Email	Update email - explained March public exhibition postponed due to covid 19. Copy of online exhibition materials provided



Strathy South Wind Farm

Public exhibition event ***CANCELLED***

Regrettably, SSE Renewables has cancelled this event due to restrictions relating to the coronavirus COVID-19 outbreak.

However, we still seek your comments and questions regarding the proposals and would urge you to contact the project team below:

Jon Soal (Project Manager)

Tel – 07767 852 441

Email – jon.soal@sse.com

Murray West (Stakeholder Engagement Manager)

Tel – 07741 355 461

Email – murray.west@sse.com

In place of the exhibition, the information will be available online at sse.com/strathysouth as of 24 March as part of an online open consultation process. The project team will be back out in the community again as soon as it is safe to do so.

Strathy Community

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Discussion

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North Coast Entertainments

11

Like

Comment

Share

Good afternoon,

I'm pleased to announce that SSE will be holding a public exhibition for the Strathy South wind farm proposals and would like to invite you along for a chance to peruse the information boards and discuss the scheme with members of the project team.

The event is being held in Strathy village hall on Tuesday 27th August between 3pm and 8:30pm.

This invite is of course extended to the wider community so please feel free to share amongst family, friends or colleagues who may be interested in the proposals or even just for the tea and biscuits!

Kind regards,

Murray

Murray West

Major Projects Liaison Manager

Corporate Affairs (Wholesale)

SSE

9

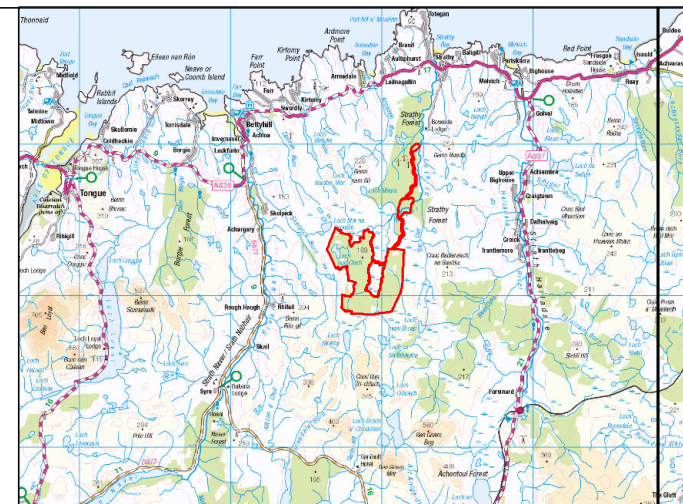
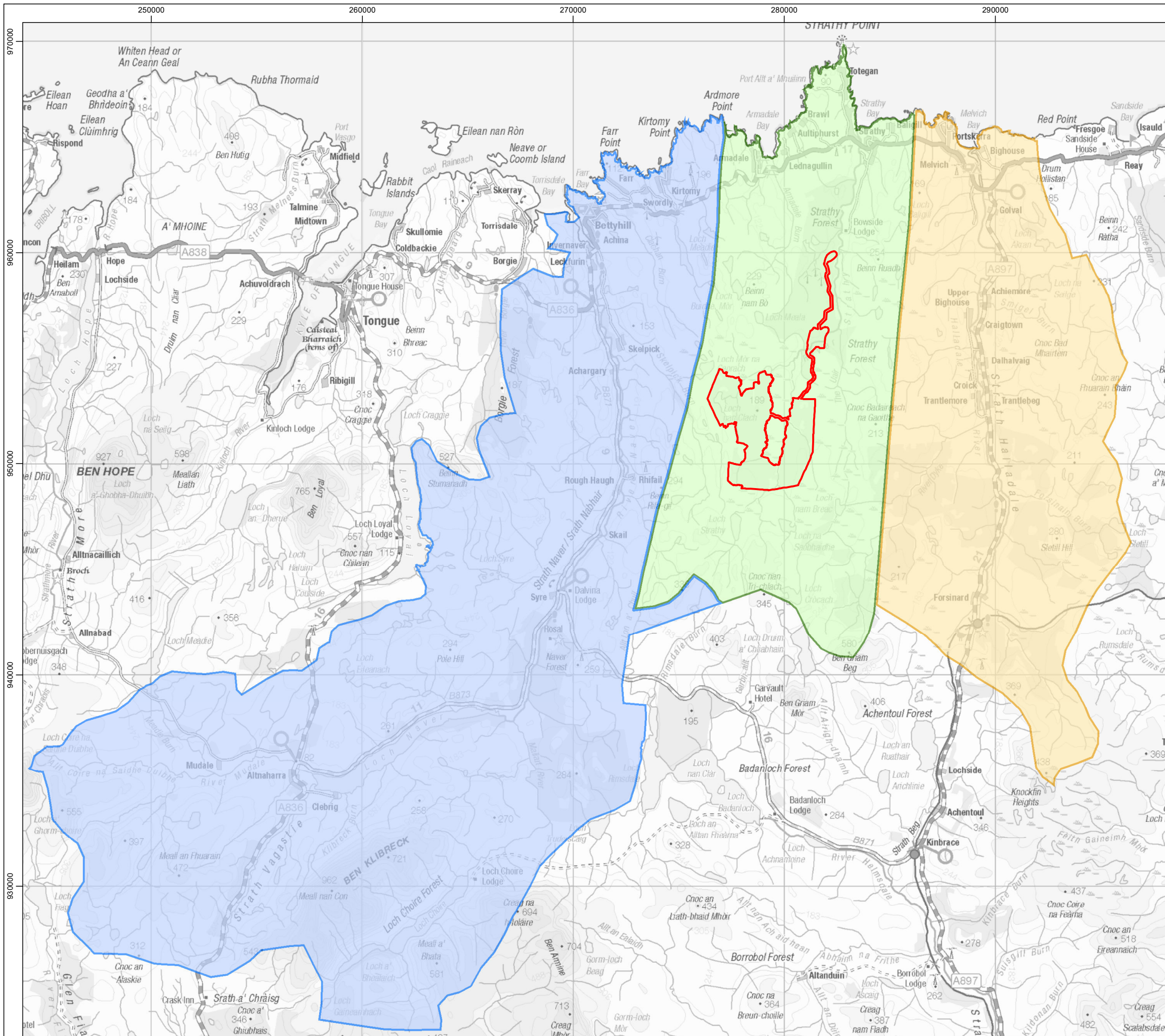
5 shares

Like

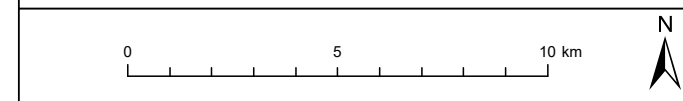
Comment

Share

Appendix 3 - Community Council Map



- Legend**
- Strathly South Site Boundary
 - Bettyhill, Strathnaver and Altnaharra
 - Melvich
 - Strathly and Armadale



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Project Name
STRATHLY SOUTH


Drawing Title
COMMUNITY COUNCIL BOUNDARIES

Rev	Date	Remarks	Drwn	Chkd
R0	10/07/2020	First issue	AM	AM

Drawing Number
STS-MISC-SK-0002-01

Scale	Plot Size	Datum	Projection
1:180,000	A3	OSGB36	BNG

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Strathy South Wind Farm



Have your say

SSE Renewables invite you to view our proposals for Strathy South wind farm and take the opportunity to provide feedback at the website below.



Please visit sse.com/strathysouth



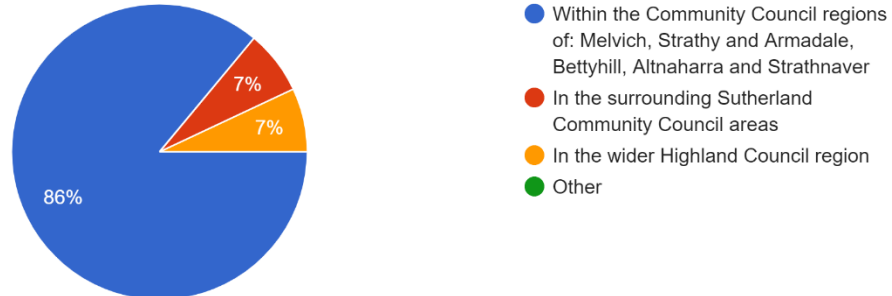
*** ADDRESS ***

For more information or to provide feedback by telephone, please call Project Consent Manager Laurie Winter on 07385 020216

Appendix 5: Strathy South - Virtual Exhibition Feedback Responses

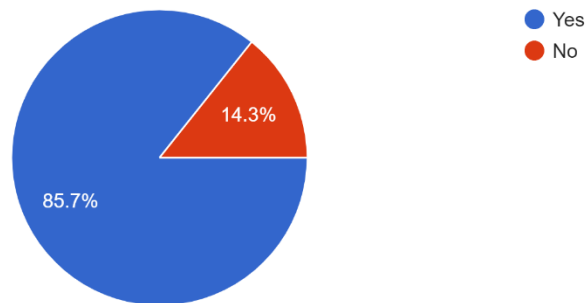
Where is your primary residence?

43 responses



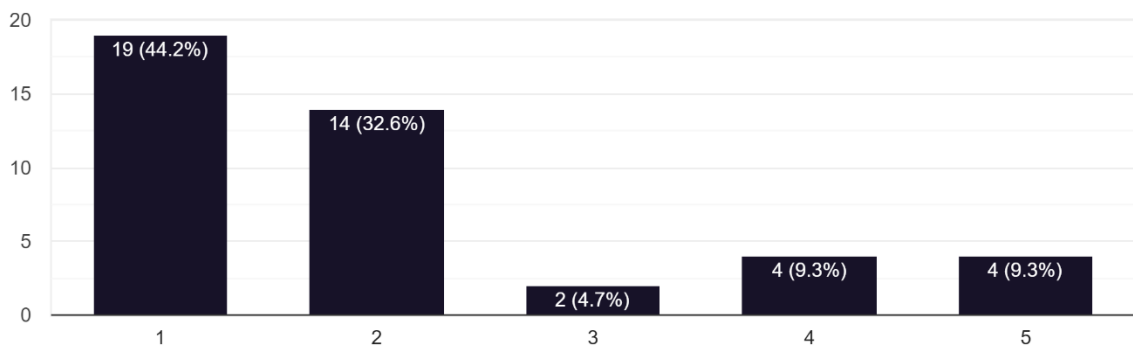
Were you able to access all the information you wanted about the Strathy South Proposals? If no, please include what you would wish to see in the further detail section.

42 responses



How helpful has this digital exhibition been in terms of giving you the information you wanted about the Strathy South project?

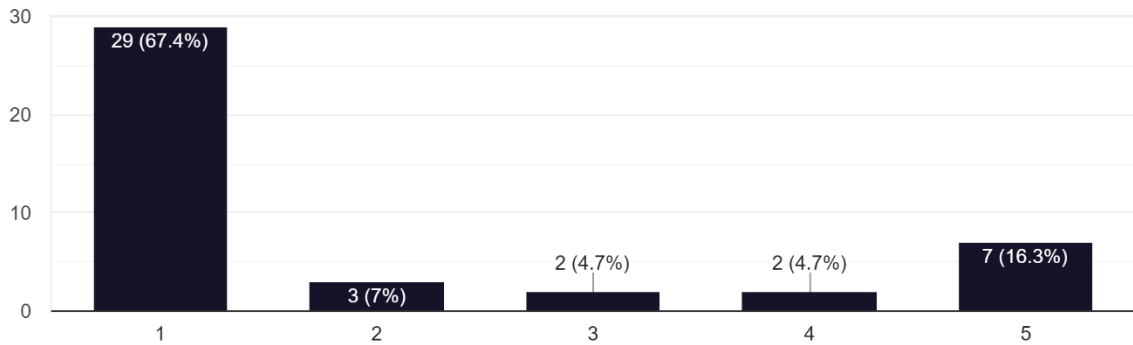
43 responses



(1 = Very Helpful to 5 = Very Unhelpful)

How supportive are you of the Strathy South proposals?

43 responses



(1 = Very Supportive to 5 = Unsupportive)

What are your views on the proposed Strathy South wind farm?

RESPONSE 1

Onshore wind development is vital for Scotland's net-zero aims, especially as heat and transport are likely to be electrified. The local benefit of developments like this are also vital for the sustainability of local communities. Both Sutherland and Caithness (which will also see Strathy South activity) are facing unsustainable levels of depopulation. Development like this, as seen in the construction and operation of Strathy North, is vital to combat this depopulation. Strathy South is well sited, obviously well supported by the local community, and supports our move to a more sustainable world.

RESPONSE 2

I do not agree with the amended application, the increase in height will not only increase the risk of fire, it will make the turbines more visible from the surrounding tourist areas, the income from which a lot of the locals, including my family depend on. the attraction of this area is its unspoilt beauty and windmills would give the place an industrial look.

RESPONSE 3

In short "Get on with it". I note the fact that aviation lighting is still to be agreed but do not think that this should be an impediment to planning permission and project go ahead. However, in the documentation I was very disappointed not to see any reference to Community Shared Ownership as an additional benefit to the local community over and above 'traditional' community benefit. The figures quoted in the community benefit section are confusing and obtuse. Please provide more detail on the community benefit to arise from Strathy South and make SSE commitment to shared ownership explicit.

RESPONSE 4

Disgraceful project, dishonest portrayal of impacts, damaging to local community and local tourism businesses

RESPONSE 5

I would like to know if the clean up costs are safeguarded and not left for the community as the company finds a way out of its responsibility.

RESPONSE 6

I am in support of the scheme because I believe it is necessary to move to a low carbon future and that wind farming generally contributes towards that. I am also very keen on the contribution SSE is making to the sustainability of local communities through Community Benefit and through its commitment to Shared Ownership of a portion of the windfarm with the joint communities of the parishes of Farr and Tongue. I have a vested interest in this as I represented the communities of Bettyhill and Strathy at the Public Enquiry at Strathy Hall many years ago. I am very pleased to see some hope of progress at last.

RESPONSE 7

The proposal is too close to the major tourist route(NC500) and will destroy the local economy in an area which already has Strathy North Wind Farm which has 32 turbines

RESPONSE 8

Defiantly for the wind farm and very interested in the possible community buy in.

RESPONSE 9

I have no objections at present

RESPONSE 10

Positive as long as local people and the environment benefit

RESPONSE 11

I've found Strathy north less visually obtrusive than I thought it would be and Strathy south's impact from the north will be minimal but it will in my view blight what is a beautifully remote but still reasonably accessible area for walkers via the old track out to Loch strathy bothy and the surrounding area. I would like to see walking access to this area maintained and the southerly extent of the wind farm curtailed as far as possible.

RESPONSE 12

My view is that Strathy South wind farm will be a great benefit to our local community

RESPONSE 13

Since inception of the project I have supported the plan as we can see the benefits brought to the area surrounding the wind farm and some of those benefits have spilled out in to the neighbouring area. I appreciate these benefits from an economic standpoint as I serve on groups who have been lucky enough to get funding.

RESPONSE 14

We need this

RESPONSE 15

I believe that the climate and environment are better served by micro projects and not by massive ones like this. I believe that where trees can grow they should grow in the Highlands and that your expressed view that your 'restoration' of the ground is to a lost environment of peat bog isn't justified. It could be argued on better grounds that the now lost Caledonian forest should be restored rather than 'restoring' the land to bog. There's nothing wrong with the forest as it is. Tearing it down is environmental vandalism as is the manufacture, transport and installation of monster windmills.

RESPONSE 16

Fed up of additional wind farms along the main north coast road, the output of these is significantly less than offshore wind farms and these are far less obtrusive for people.

RESPONSE 17

It is a suitable area for windfarm development and SSE have demonstrated their ability to deliver this sort of project in the area whilst taking into account the views of locals. Time to get it done.

RESPONSE 18

I'm very much in favour of the proposed development of the Strathy South Wind Farm site.

RESPONSE 19

Think it's good for stimulating growth with regards to shops, local businesses such as construction and accommodation providers and employment. As a SSE customer I am very alarmed to read in the press, payouts in excess of £60 million to switch wind turbines off and the SSE customers pick up the tab. I am in favour of developing the wind farm at Strathy South as I have seen substantial benefits within the communities, although other communities benefit more, because of criteria set.

RESPONSE 20

Will be very good for the community benefiting local suppliers Would be good to see each household benefiting in the community towards utility bills.

RESPONSE 21

Would like to see it go ahead as it will provide work and green energy

RESPONSE 22

Hopefully more local work and money for the community with local contractors

RESPONSE 23

It's the best place to put a wind farm as the infrastructure is already in place

RESPONSE 24

Wind farms are going to happen so as long as consideration for the impact on local residents is taken into consideration then they are less liable to have opposition.

RESPONSE 25

I am in support of the application for Strathy South Windfarm. SSE have worked closely with our community throughout both the Strathy North and Strathy South projects and the relationship we have developed is very respectful.

RESPONSE 26

As a business we were very involved with Strathy North and it allowed us to generate local employment and company sustainability. The creation of strathy south would hopefully allow us to expand and recruit again providing more local jobs and sustainability.

RESPONSE 27

In favour of this project as it will bring much needed employment to the area for the younger generation who would like to stay living in the area.

RESPONSE 28

I am very supportive of the proposed project and excited about the potential benefits it could bring to our local community. I was born and brought up here and am now bringing up a large family of my own in the community and am passionate about the area. Due to our rural location we are often at a disadvantage when it comes to certain services, provisions, recreational activities and arts and culture experiences, additionally with increasing cuts in local authority funding the area had become unattractive to some people as a base for bringing up families and creating roots. However the Strathy North Community Benefit Fund has been a catalyst for change in the way our community residents can experience life on the North Coast. The fund has already provided much support to the area in giving the children and young people more balanced opportunities in comparison with those living in more populated and privileged areas, examples of such projects are The Farr Edge, Bettyhill and the Feis air an Oir Project but there are many others. These type of projects and opportunities would not be possible without the financial support from SSE and our area would welcome further support. Another major issue in keeping families in our area is employment, job opportunities and apprenticeships. It would be great if The Strathy South benefit fund could incorporate some kind of support for tradesmen taking on apprentices. Additionally, young people from the area often struggle to take up further education opportunities in University further south due to the residential and living cost. This leaves our young people at a disadvantage and when jobs that require degree level education come up in our area, a lot of local young people are unable to access them due to the academic criteria. It would be fantastic to have some kind of bursary scheme that could be accessed by local people who want to undertake further education opportunities.

RESPONSE 29

I am in full support of Strathy South wind farms, and especially how the community can benefit from annual funding. This is essential for the area.

RESPONSE 30

Great for the surrounding areas

RESPONSE 31

Makes complete sense to have a wind farm in this location good land use and very good for the local areas in construction and then valuable income for the fragile north coast communities Creates work income and clean green energy for our children and grandchildren's future

RESPONSE 32

I do hope the strathy south wind farm will go ahead. We have waited a long time now for it

RESPONSE 33

I do hope the Strathy wind farm will go ahead

RESPONSE 34

it is an ideal situation away from the local commnities and can only do good financially

RESPONSE 35

The wind farm will not be intrusive to where I live and will only benefit the community financially and will be a cleaner form of power

RESPONSE 36

Quite happy where the are situated away from populated areas.

RESPONSE 37

Happy that the project is situated further into the hill.

RESPONSE 38

Eco friendly and supports local businesses

RESPONSE 39

I think it would be very good for the community and local businesses

RESPONSE 40

I believe they will be very beneficial to the community providing they use local contractors and provide local employment.

RESPONSE 41

I think it would be very good for the community and local businesses

RESPONSE 42

Happy for the wind farm to go ahead, will bring some work in to the local area

RESPONSE 43

Supportive

We're interested to hear any further feedback or thoughts you may have on the proposals, please provide them below. (23 responses)

RESPONSE 1

Your contempt for concerns of local people was shown time and again during Strathy North development, and through your misinformation campaign during earlier application and public inquiry for Strathy South

RESPONSE 2

Why can't all households benefit from the fund - operate a non means tested scheme offering white goods etc or non means tested voucher to put towards heating costs in the home?

RESPONSE 3

I am sure there must be other areas where an alternative farm could be sited perhaps not directly on a tourist route and in an area which is not already saturated with turbines

RESPONSE 4

Can we get more information on the community buy in proposal for the SSWF?

RESPONSE 5

I would like to see explicit reference in the project summary to SSE's commitment to community shared ownership in the development.

RESPONSE 6

The layout plan is presumably the old 70 turbine one? What will the 39 turbine one look like? T33 looks to be adjacent to the Loch strathy bothy at the end of the existing track - this will ruin the feel and look of the place which is a marvellously remote spot and haven for walkers - can you give it more distance from the nearest turbine? Will the existing track out to the Loch strathy lodge still be open and available for walkers wishing to access the bothy from the north?

RESPONSE 7

I would be keen to see our communities take a shared community interest in the development of the project

RESPONSE 8

I would be pleased to see explicit reference to SSEs commitment to community shared ownership of the development in the project summary. We have supported this initiative for some years now and look forward to having a firm commitment soon.

RESPONSE 9

Will an additional transformer be needed at connagill, if so can any additional bridges/road straightening on the Hallandale road please be made permanent this time. I believe forgetting to ask for planning permission for permanent changes was an issue with the first transformer.

RESPONSE 10

The development of Strathy South site offers many positive outcomes for the environment, habitat enhancement, as well as the local and wider communities on the fragile north On top of producing green, sustainable energy, there are a raft of other positive outcomes from Strathy South being built. The site was very badly damaged in the past where non native conifers were wrongly planted just under 40 years ago. The developer's proposal to reinstate damaged peatland by drain blocking and peat restoration, will help to heal the damaged fragile ecosystems and the birds and mammals they support. The local and wider communities have already seen the great work that can be done where wind farm community

funds have been targeted for local projects. Match funding from outside agencies have been made easier to access, when applicants can demonstrate that they already have money made available from wind farm community benefit funds. Our own local village at Armadale is currently rebuilding a new hall funded through various sources, but in the main, from SSE Strathy North Community Fund. The build is costing just over £400k, with all the contractors and suppliers being locally based. This will give a much needed focal point and meeting place to strengthen our community. As our community, like the rest of the country, try to rebuild from Coronavirus lockdown, the importance of sustainable productivity has never been more important. Our communities reliance on tourism and the service sector, has only highlighted our need to have more self determination on securing strong, resilient rural communities. Economic and environmentally sustainable developments, such as Strathy South wind farm, have a major role to play in our country's and community's recovery.

RESPONSE 11

If Strathy South Wind Farm goes ahead, would like to see local businesses being considered in the supply chain.

Like to see a more proactive liaison officer, interacting with local people and picking up the mood of the community, as worked very well for Strathy North.

See benefits for Strathy and Armadale community such as improved internet speeds, crash barriers, money towards householder fuel bills, funding towards a community officer, mini buss for the community.

RESPONSE 12

Would like to see some local businesses and local workforce benefits from Strathy South

Improved internet

Community minibus

RESPONSE 13

Would like to see any community benefit fund being administered by an outside agent or SSE as opposed to a local panel

RESPONSE 14

It's very important to involve the local communities and keep good communication with them

RESPONSE 15

I think the immediate surrounding residents should be offered some assistance with either heating or home improvements.

RESPONSE 16

Our community has seen great benefits since the establishment of Strathy North Windfarm and funding from the community funds has allowed our community groups to continue and develop in ways in which would never have been possible with our SSE support.

Opportunities have been created for young members of our community that have helped them to develop skills which they have taken with them in to further education.

RESPONSE 17

The income for local areas and businesses is already evident and further expansion of this can only be a good thing.

RESPONSE 18

If the proposed project gets to the construction phase please use local tradesmen and business where at all possible this is very important to the local residents and economy.

RESPONSE 19

our area greatly benefits from funding and local contractors can gain work.

RESPONSE 20

The benefits received from windmills is a huge help in our fragile community

RESPONSE 21

Wind mills are not any threat to wild life. It is amazing all the benefits the strathly north wind mills has brought to the community

RESPONSE 22

None at the moment

RESPONSE 23

My preference would be the smaller turbines and would be interested to see more information on the larger turbines

Appendix 6 - Peatland Partnership Consultation Response

2 September 2019

Dear Joe Perry

Please accept this document as a representation from SSE Renewables to the consultation on The Flow Country World Heritage Site Project as currently live on the Highland Council's consultation portal. As a responsible developer SSE Renewables is committed to delivering projects where the local and national benefits are maximised, and any potential impacts are minimised and considered low by independent consultants.

SSE Renewables is the developer for the consented Strathy South Wind Farm and is currently progressing with a Section 36C application to vary the existing consent to allow for larger turbines (up to 200 metres to tip). It has been noted that Figure 2 of the '*Go with the Flows? The Flow Country World Heritage Site Project*' identifies the consultation area and that Strathy South Wind Farm site has been highlighted as a proposed buffer for the areas of core peatland.

SSE would like to offer support to the Peatlands Partnership on the application to designate part of The Flow Country as a World Heritage Site (WHS), and would welcome ongoing consultation on the final boundary to help ensure the best possible site is taken forward and to minimise the risk of policy surrounding a WHS designation sterilising the area to any future developments. SSE has previously offered a collaborative approach to the Peatland Partnership, on peatland restoration and habitat management and continues to offer this service and provide information on how wind farm developments can form part of The Flow Country and serve to enhance the features which are considered so valuable to the area.

Onshore wind farm developments, such as Strathy South and SSE's wider portfolio play a key role in helping to combat climate change, which has the potential to have a devastating effect on the Flow Country. SSE believes that onshore wind farms are appropriate developments in this area, delivering renewable energy in an intelligent way, supporting the survival of The Flow Country by helping to tackle climate change and would urge the Peatland Partnership to engage with the renewables community when defining a boundary for the WHS in an effort not to sterilise the area to such beneficial developments. Strathy South Wind Farm and its associated peatland restoration would serve to support The Flow Country by returning the site to a carbon sink, as it was prior to afforestation.

Strathy South Wind Farm

Strathy South wind farm is located approximately 12 km from the village of Strathy in an area of commercial conifer plantation. SSE is very aware of the extent of inappropriate commercial conifer plantation and the damage this has caused including drainage of peatland in the Caithness and Sutherland region. As part of the Strathy South Wind Farm

development SSE has extensive peatland restoration plans which provides opportunities for enhancing the peatland in the area.

During the Public Local Enquiry for the consented Strathy South Wind Farm, the developments' impacts on the tentative Flow Country WHS was included as agenda item 9. Following review of this documentation SSE Renewables believes that the conclusions of this enquiry remain valid today. Specifically, in that the Strathy South Wind Farm does not meet the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) criteria as required by UNESCO for a natural WHS and as such its presence will not jeopardise the current nomination of the Flow Country. The identification of the Strathy South site within the proposed buffer zone for the core areas of peatland is welcomed and it is believed that through the habitat management plan and peatland restoration programme Strathy South Wind Farm will serve to enhance the surrounding peatland, affirming that there is potential for wind farms to exist within the proposed WHS boundary and the immediate vicinity.

Peatland Restoration Programme

The conifer plantation on the Strathy South site was planted back to the 1980s. Without the development, removal of the forestry is unlikely due to the remote location and access limitation. The Strathy South consent includes a commitment to restore and manage more than 2,500ha of peatland on and offsite. The removal of the entire conifer plantation (1,133 ha) within the site boundary, will remove indirect impacts of the forestry on the Caithness and Sutherland Peatland SPA/SAC and allow the restoration of peatland on site. SSE Renewables has also committed to peatland management and restoration out with the Strathy South Wind Farm site in the wider Caithness and Sutherland SPA/SAC.

SSE Renewables recognises that this is a long-term peatland restoration and management programme and commit to this for the life of the wind farm. SSE renewables is not required to do this work solely for mitigation of the wind farm; rather it is part of our commitment as a responsible developer of renewable energy.

World Heritage Site Proposal

SSE Renewables welcomes the proposal from the Peatlands Partnership and thinks that this designation could go a long way towards helping mitigate climate change. We would welcome further information on the proposed boundary of the site to be taken forwards. It is noted from Figure 1 of *'Go with the Flows? The Flow Country World Heritage Site Project'* that at this stage that the Peatland Partnership believes that the core area of the WHS is likely to be larger than the boundary of the Caithness and Sutherland Peatlands Special Area of Conservation (SAC). Whilst we acknowledge that the SAC does not include all the important areas of blanket bog in the Flow Country, SSE Renewables would like to suggest that the Partnership consider the following points:

- An area of the scale proposed may be an unobtainable aspiration as whilst the area is dominated by peat, it is not comprised solely of blanker bog of OUV;

- There is a need to reverse decline and improve the quality of the habitat within the SAC; and
- There is a risk of sterilising the WHS to any development, which may have detrimental effects on the areas economic and social climate.

SSE Renewables welcomes Strathy South Wind Farm Site being included within the buffer area for the core areas of peatland under consideration for the WHS designation and would welcome discussions with the Peatland Partnership on how the restoration plans as part of the development could assist with improving the quality of the surrounding habitat.

Please do not hesitate to contact me should you have any questions regarding this response.

Kind regards.



Laurie Winter

Consents Manager

Strathy South Wind Farm