

## Appendix 6.3: Community Consultation Report

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## **1 INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 OVERVIEW**

- 1.1.1 This report details the community consultation which has been undertaken for the proposed Gordonbush Extension Wind Farm (the Development). The report provides evidence of consultation material together with the responses and outcomes of the consultation process.
- 1.1.2 Consent for construction of the Development is being sought by way of an application to the Scottish Ministers under Section 36 of The Electricity Act 1989.
- 1.1.3 Whilst pre-application consultation reports are a mandatory requirement for 'Major' or 'National' projects, as set out in the Town & Country Planning (Development Management procedure) (Scotland) Regulations 2013, as the application for the Development is made under Section 36 of The Electricity Act 1989 and will be submitted to the Scottish Ministers, there is no such mandatory requirement. Nevertheless, SSE Renewables Developments (UK) Ltd. on behalf of the Applicant is committed to a comprehensive strategy of community engagement, and as such a wide range of public consultation has been undertaken prior to the submission of the application, in line with best practice.
- 1.1.4 This community consultation report sets out the means by which the community consultation was undertaken, and the responses from such consultation. This report is an appendix to Chapter 6: Scoping and Consultation of this ES, and should be read in conjunction with that chapter.

## **2 COMMUNITY CONSULTATION**

### **2.1 COMMUNITY COUNCILS**

- 2.1.1 SSE Renewables Developments (UK) Ltd. has proactively engaged with the four local Community Councils of Brora, Golspie, Helmsdale and Rogart Community Councils, as well as sent updates to local Councillors and politicians regarding the Development, since October 2013.
- 2.1.2 Meetings were held with Brora, Golspie and Helmsdale Community Councils in January and February 2015 and with Rogart Community Council in May 2015. At these meetings SSE Renewables Developments (UK) Ltd. provided an update on the Development proposals and answered any questions or queries that attendees had.

### **2.2 PUBLIC EXHIBITIONS**

#### **Scoping Stage**

- 2.2.1 During the scoping stage of the project, a public exhibition was held in Brora Scout and Guide Hall on 30<sup>th</sup> October 2013 from 12pm – 4pm and 6:30pm – 9pm to encourage public engagement with the Development proposals.
- 2.2.2 Adverts were placed in the Northern Times newspaper (the main local paper in the area) on 11<sup>th</sup> October and 25<sup>th</sup> October 2013. A copy of the advert is included in Appendix 1.



- 2.2.3 Laminated adverts were sent to 36 venues in the Brora, Golspie, Rogart and Helmsdale areas a week before the event, and local Community Councils, Councillors and politicians were provided with information on the exhibition 3 weeks in advance (10<sup>th</sup> October 2013).
- 2.2.4 A series of A1 exhibition boards were on display at the event to explain the proposal and a leaflet was available providing contact details for attendees. A copy of the leaflet is included in Appendix 2 and a copy of the boards (at A4 size) is included in Appendix 3.
- 2.2.5 Comments from the public were encouraged by use of a comments form that was available at the exhibition and on the project website at [www.sse.com/gordonbushextension](http://www.sse.com/gordonbushextension). Attendees were encouraged to complete and return these forms in order to provide feedback to the project team.
- 2.2.6 The public exhibition encouraged consultation on the proposal and provided an opportunity for the local and wider community to gain information about the Development and engage with SSE Renewables Developments (UK) Ltd. and their project team.
- 2.2.7 Over 30 people attended the public exhibition at the scoping stage of the project, with 15 members of the public providing feedback on a comments form. Of the respondents 40% stated that they 'strongly agreed' or 'agreed' with the need for renewable energy, 20% had no opinion and 33% 'strongly disagreed' (7% of respondents did not answer this question).
- 2.2.8 In relation to the proposal, 20% of respondents stated that they 'strongly agreed' or 'agreed' with the proposed development, 13% were 'neutral' and 67% 'disagreed' or 'strongly disagreed'. A summary of the main comments received from the public were as follows:
- Impact on tourism in the area;
  - Concerns on the potential cumulative and visual effects of the proposal in relation to other schemes in the area;
  - Approval of the existing Gordonbush Wind Farm and desire for the proposed extension to progress;
  - Preference for the site to be pulled northwards and away from Strath Brora;
  - Concerns on the proliferation of wind farms in the Highlands, which they feel is reaching saturation point;
  - The Development is advancing the industrialisation of an outstandingly beautiful strath;
  - The existing community benefit scheme and preference for alternative proposals e.g. subsidised electricity for locals;
  - Approval of renewable energy, which they feel will undoubtedly become more efficient in time; however, at present they believe the grid cannot cope; and
  - Respondee commented that they found the exhibition helpful and well-advertised and that staff were friendly and answered questions with good knowledge. However, one resposdee felt there were too many staff present, and another resposdee felt that there was not enough information on the cumulative situation in the area.

#### **Final Design Stage**

- 2.2.9 In order to update the local community on the proposed extension and to take on board any further comments, a further public exhibition was held to present the final design prior



to submission of the application. This was held at Brora Scout and Guide Hall on 20<sup>th</sup> May 2015 from 12pm to 4pm and 6pm to 9pm.

- 2.2.10 Details of the event were advertised in the Northern Times newspaper on 8<sup>th</sup> May and 15<sup>th</sup> May 2015 (two consecutive weeks before the event). A copy of the advert is included in Appendix 4. In addition, 34 laminated posters were also posted to a variety of locations across Brora, Golspie, Rogart and Helmsdale a week and a half before the event (on 8<sup>th</sup> May 2015). The four local Community Councils and local Councillors were also emailed to inform them of the exhibition details.
- 2.2.11 A series of A1 exhibition boards were on display at the event to explain the proposals and to provide contact details and a comments form was provided for attendees to comment on the proposals prior to the application being submitted. Copies of the exhibition boards (at A4 size), are included in Appendix 6.
- 2.2.12 The exhibition boards and SSE Renewables Developments (UK) Ltd. staff and consultants made clear to attendees that comments received by SSE Renewables Developments (UK) Ltd. as part of the pre-application consultation exercise were not representations to the Section 36 application and that any representations could be made direct to Scottish Government once an application had been submitted.
- 2.2.13 A total of 10 people attended the exhibition and 3 of those completed feedback via the comments form. Of the respondents, 66% stated that they 'strongly agreed' or 'agreed' with the need for renewable energy and 33% 'strongly disagreed'. In relation to the proposal, 66% of respondents 'strongly agreed' with the proposed development and 33% 'strongly disagreed'. The main comments received from the public were as follows:
- Wind power is an unreliable source of power;
  - Further destruction of a beautiful strath; and
  - No concerns about the proposal.

#### **Material Changes resulting from Community Consultation**

- 2.2.14 Following consideration of all comments received during the consultation process, a number of material design changes were made to the development, as briefly outlined below:
- Following discussions with local residents in close proximity to the construction access track to the wind farm, concerns were raised early on in the design process with regard to the location of the temporary construction compound. The location of the compound during construction works of the original Gordonbush Wind Farm resulted in noise disturbance to this resident, and they were concerned that this location would be reused during construction works of the Extension. This matter was addressed during the design process through the relocation of the temporary construction compound further away from local residents.
  - Feedback received from a comment form at the scoping stage public exhibition, along with discussions with local residents suggested the preference for the most southerly wind turbines to retreat away from Strath Brora towards the moorland, and to reduce the visibility from within the strath. These comments were taken on board and acted upon during the development of the design.



### **3 Summary and Conclusion**

#### **3.1 OVERVIEW**

- 3.1.1 SSE Renewables Developments (UK) Ltd. on behalf of the Applicant consulted and engaged with the four local Community Councils (Brora, Golspie, Helmsdale and Rogart) in respect of the Development as well as any interested members of the local and wider community. In addition, updates were sent to local Councillors and politicians to keep them informed. Public exhibitions were held at both the scoping stage and also at the final design stage in order to inform the local community of the proposals and take on board any comments prior to submission of a full planning application to the Scottish Government. The public exhibition events were well advertised through the use of local posters, adverts in the local newspaper, and updates to the local Community Councils, Councillors and politicians. Comments received during the consultation process were considered as the design evolved.



## **APPENDIX 1: PUBLIC EXHIBITION ADVERT (OCTOBER 2013)**

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# PUBLIC EXHIBITION

## Gordonbush Wind Farm Proposed Extension

Wednesday 30 October

Brora Scout and Guide Hall,  
Gower Street, Brora, Sutherland

12pm - 4pm and 6pm - 9pm

SSE Renewables, the renewable energy development division of SSE, is holding a public exhibition to consult on the proposal for an extension of up to 20 turbines to its 35 turbine Gordonbush wind farm at Balnacoll, near Brora, in Sutherland.

The search area for the extension sits to the south-west of the current site, approximately 9.5km from Brora, and lies wholly within Brora Community Council's boundary area. The proposal is in the early stages of development and the layout has yet to be designed.

We would like to engage with the community at this early stage in order to hear their views and provide the opportunity to talk to our project team about any questions, concerns, ideas or comments they may have.

Comments forms will be provided at the exhibition and these can either be handed in on the day, or posted to our Liaison Manager, **Ruth Liddicoat**, at **10 Henderson Road, Inverness, IV1 1SN**. We will also make comments forms available on our project website at [www.sse.com/gordonbush](http://www.sse.com/gordonbush) from the date of the exhibition, together with copies of the exhibition information boards, and these can be emailed to [ruth.liddicoat@sse.com](mailto:ruth.liddicoat@sse.com).

The closing date for comments to SSE Renewables is **Friday 29 November 2013**. Comments received after this date will still be accepted, but may not be considered in relation to the development of the proposal.

Comments made to SSE Renewables are not representations to the planning authority. If we later submit a planning application for this proposal there will be an opportunity to make formal representations during the statutory consultation period conducted by the planning authority.

Further information on the proposal can be obtained from our website or by contacting our Liaison Manager, Ruth Liddicoat, on 07767 852826.

This advert has been developed by SSE Renewables on behalf of SSE Generation Limited, both of which are part of the SSE Group.





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## **APPENDIX 2: PUBLIC EXHIBITION LEAFLET (OCTOBER 2013)**

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## **Gordonbush wind farm** Proposed extension

Gordonbush wind farm, Balnacoil, Sutherland



## About SSE Renewables

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SSE is a Scottish registered and British owned energy company, headquartered in Perth, and employs over 2,000 employees and contractors in the north of Scotland. SSE is the largest generator of renewable energy across Great Britain and Ireland.

SSE Renewables is the renewable energy development division of SSE and is responsible for the development of renewables in the UK and the Republic of Ireland. We have been building and operating wind farms since 2002, and have over 30 onshore wind farms in Scotland and Ireland, in addition to those in development or under construction.

## The proposal

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Gordonbush is a 35 turbine wind farm at Balnacoll, north-west of Brora, in Sutherland which became operational in June 2012.

We are looking at a potential extension to the site of up to 20 turbines with a turbine tip height of up to 132m (the existing Gordonbush turbines have a tip height of 110m). The search area sits to the south-west of the current site and we are in the early stages of design.

## Site location

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Wind power is one of the most developed of the renewable technologies and it is estimated that Scotland has 25% of Europe's wind resource. It is important to harness this energy in order to meet Scotland's climate change targets.

We are committed to helping meet Scotland's climate change targets and believe that renewables play an important part in this. As the UK's leading generator of renewable energy we are proud to be at the forefront of helping tackle climate change.

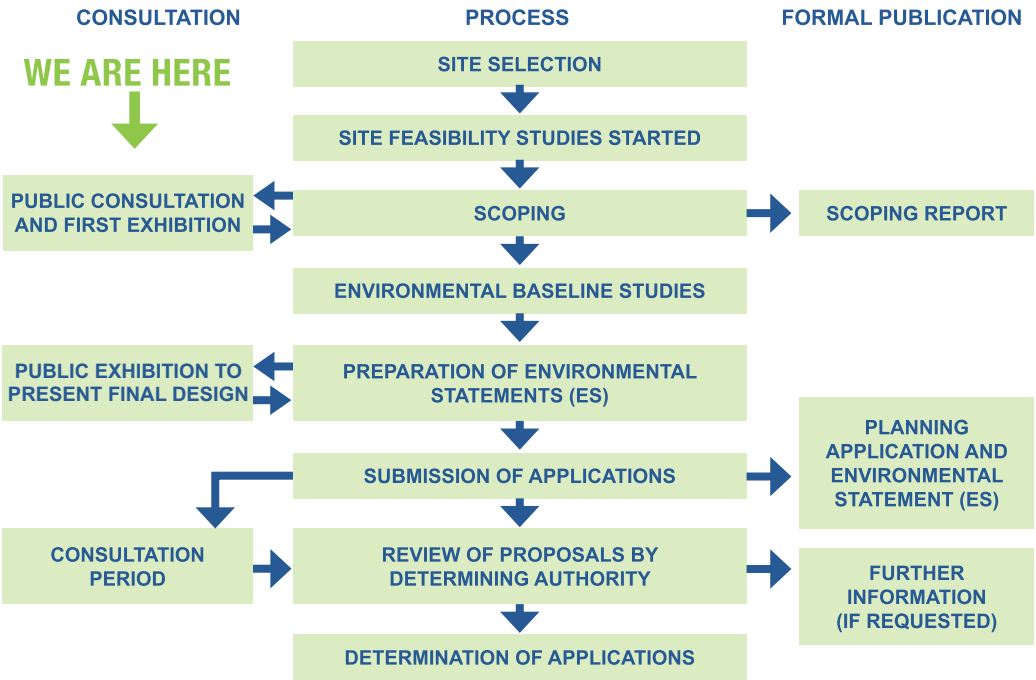
In addition to the turbines themselves, the extension will include crane hard-standings, on-site access tracks and a new welfare building. One of the benefits of constructing and operating a wind farm in this location is the capacity to make use of the existing infrastructure and access tracks.

Power generated by the turbines would be transferred via underground cables to the on-site substation.





# Development process



## Development process

The diagram above identifies the three key opportunities for public consultation. We are keen to receive comments and views from the local community on the proposed extension at this early stage.

Over the coming months we will develop the design for the proposal in response to feedback from statutory and non-statutory consultees, including local communities and interested parties. The findings from this consultation and the technical and environmental surveys will help us to create a final design for the proposal.

We will hold a second public exhibition, prior to submission of the planning application, to update the local community on the proposal and final design and gather further comments.

## Community benefits

For over 10 years now, SSE has established community funds to enable communities to benefit from renewables developments in their area. The existing Gordonbush wind farm fund has already awarded over £300,000 to the local communities of Golspie, Brora, Helmsdale and Rogart since 2011.

SSE also gives each one of its staff a day to volunteer with a charity or project close to their heart, and many of these days are used in the communities within which we work.

Our projects create opportunities for local businesses to get involved too. Over £100m was invested in Gordonbush wind farm, and a number of local businesses benefited from the project through the provision of materials, services, labour and accommodation.



## How do I comment on the proposals?

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We are keen to receive comments and views from the local community on the proposed extension at this early stage.

This allows us to consider people's comments in Relation to the development of the proposal, and identify ways that we can help minimise any impacts on the community.

## Closing date for comments

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Whilst we are aware that there will always be a mix of views about a new development within a community, we are keen to understand what people think about the proposed extension.

The closing date for comments is **29th November 2013**. We will accept comments submitted after the closing date, but cannot guarantee that they will be considered as part of the design development.

Comments can be submitted as follows:

- **By post** - to our Liaison Manager (details below)
- **By email** - to our Liaison Manager (details below)

Comments forms and information can be downloaded from the project website (details below) or posted out to you by our Liaison Manager, upon request.

## Contact details

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Ruth Liddicoat  
Liaison Manager (Gordonbush proposed extension)  
Corporate Affairs  
10 Henderson Road  
Inverness  
Iv1 1SN

ruth.liddicoat@sse.com  
07767 852826

**[www.sse.com/gordonbush](http://www.sse.com/gordonbush)**



Gordonbush wind farm



### **APPENDIX 3: PUBLIC EXHIBITION BOARDS (OCTOBER 2013)**

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# Gordonbush wind farm

## Proposed extension



## Overview

### SSE Renewables

'SSE' is a Scottish registered and British owned energy company, headquartered in Perth, and employs over 2,000 employees and contractors in the north of Scotland.

'SSE Renewables' is the renewable energy development division of SSE and is responsible for the development of renewables in the UK, the Republic of Ireland. We have been building and operating wind farms since 2002, and have over 30 onshore wind farms in operation in Scotland and Ireland, in addition to those in development or under construction.

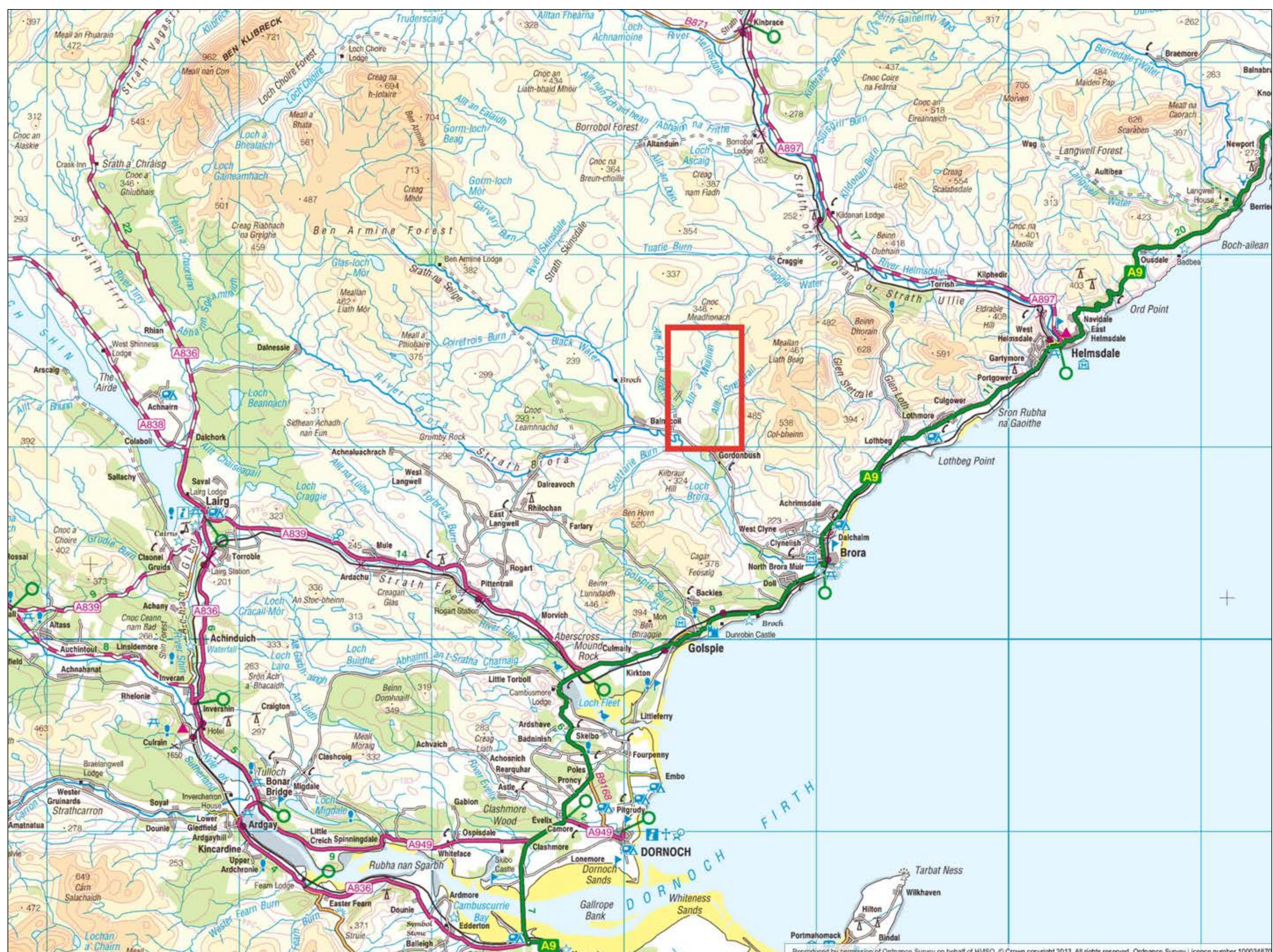
Combined with our hydro-electric schemes, many of which have been in operation for over 50 years, our wind farms make us the largest generator of renewable energy across Great Britain and Ireland.

Wind power is one of the most developed of the renewable technologies and it is estimated that Scotland has 25% of Europe's wind resource. It is important to harness this energy in order to help meet Scotland's climate change targets:

- Scotland's electricity consumption to come from 100% renewables by 2020
- Reduce Scotland's greenhouse gas emissions by 42% by 2020

We are committed to helping meet Scotland's climate change targets and believe that renewables play an important part in this. As the UK's leading generator of renewable energy we are proud to be at the forefront of helping tackle climate change.

## Site location



The area outlined in red above shows the location for the proposal. It does NOT show the specific areas within the site where turbines are proposed.

## This exhibition

The purpose of this exhibition is to engage with the local community on the proposed extension to Gordonbush wind farm, north-west of Brora. We are interested in hearing people's views, and want to provide them with the opportunity to talk to us about any questions, concerns, or comments they may have.

This exhibition also initiates the start of the public consultation period which is being run by SSE Renewables to gather comments on the proposal at this early stage. Comments forms are available at this exhibition for people to fill in.



# Gordonbush wind farm Proposed extension

## The proposed development

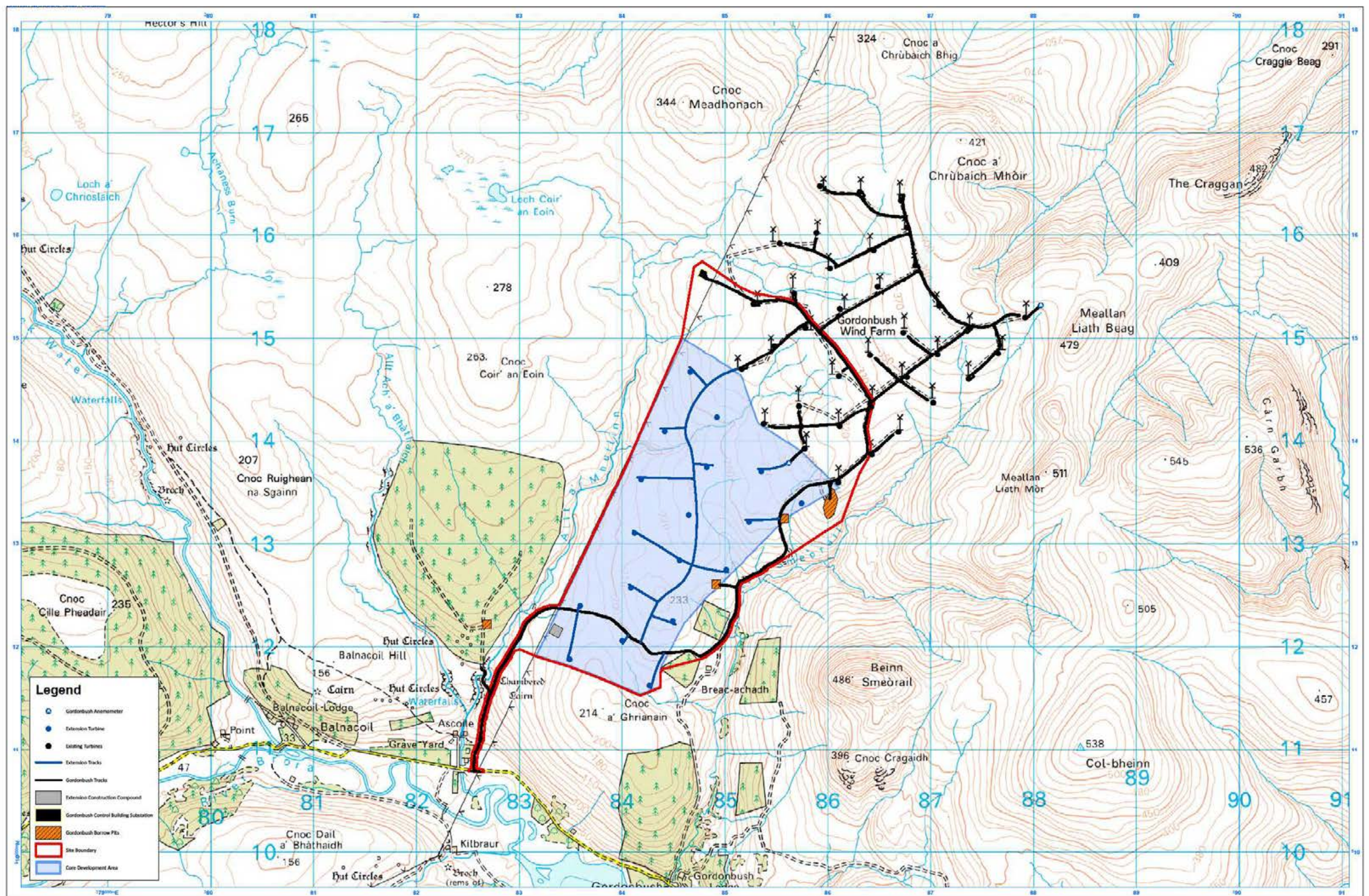
### Background

Gordonbush is an operational 35 turbine wind farm at Balnacoil, north-west of Brora, in Sutherland. The main construction work began in Autumn 2010 and full commissioning was completed in June 2012. The wind farm generates enough electricity each year to power around 70,000 homes (based on an average household consumption of 3.3 megawatt hours a year).

We are currently in the early stages of looking at a potential extension to Gordonbush wind farm of up to 20 turbines. The search area that we are looking at sits to the south-west of the current site, approximately 9.5km from Brora, and lies wholly within Brora Community Council's area. The area is owned by Gordonbush Estate and is predominantly moorland used for deerstalking and other hunting sports.

### Initial layout (early stage of design)

At this early stage, the number of turbines proposed for the extension could be up to 20 turbines, with a turbine tip height of up to 132m (this differs from the existing Gordonbush turbines which have a tip height of 110m). The map below shows an initial 18 turbine layout with a tip height of 132m and reflects the optimum design from a wind resource perspective. The turbine layout is therefore likely to change in terms of number and arrangement as we receive information back from our environmental site surveys and assessments over the coming months.



### Other elements of the design

In addition to the turbines themselves, the extension will also include crane hard-standings, on-site access tracks (utilising existing tracks where possible), and a new welfare building. During the construction phase, there will also be temporary works to create construction compounds, borrow pits (from which construction aggregates would be extracted), and laydown areas.

Power generated by the turbines would be transferred via underground cables to the on-site substation. From here, the extension would be connected into the national grid together with the existing site, and this falls under a separate consent process.



# Gordonbush wind farm

## Proposed extension

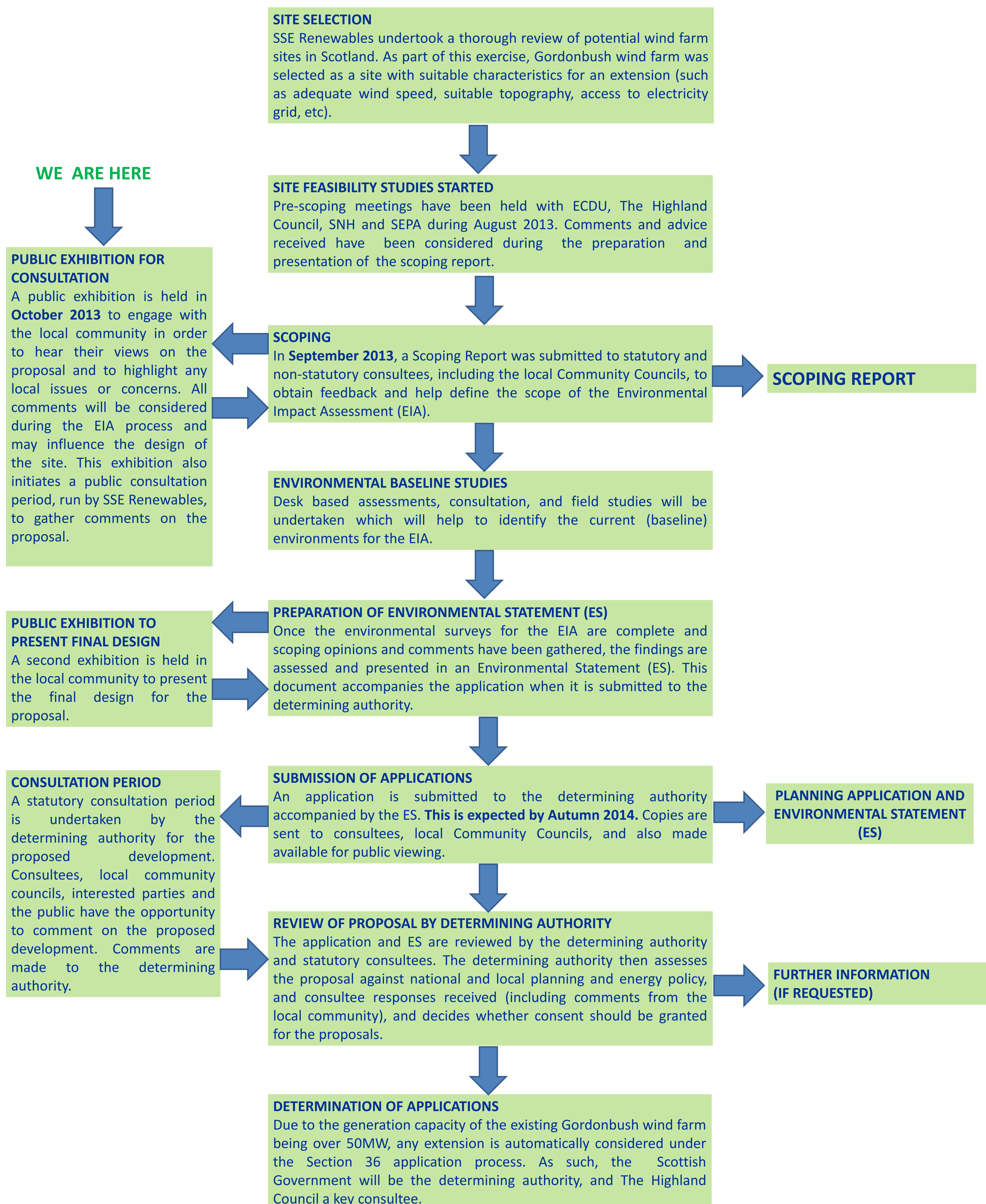


## The development process

### CONSULTATION

### PROCESS

### FORMAL PUBLICATION





# Gordonbush wind farm

## Proposed extension



## Environmental considerations

### The environmental impact assessment (EIA)

We are currently preparing to undertake an EIA for the proposed extension to Gordonbush wind farm. This is a process which identifies and assesses possible significant environmental effects of the development and will help shape the design from an environmental perspective. The process involves desk studies and site visits, baseline surveys, technical assessments, and consultation with statutory and non-statutory consultees. The EIA process will assess a wide range of environmental factors, including those listed below.

We will report the findings in an Environmental Statement (ES) which we will submit, together with the application, to the determining authority. The application and ES will be made available to the public at the time of submission.

### Ornithology

We have a good understanding of the bird activity in the area due to the bird survey work that has been undertaken since 2003 in relation to the existing site. This work has included:

- o Vantage point bird surveys
- o Breeding bird surveys
- o Raptor surveys

In addition, subsequent pre-construction, construction, and post-construction surveys have been undertaken between 2009 and 2012.

All of this historical survey information will be used to understand the current bird species using the site. Further bird survey work has been carried out in 2012 and 2013 in relation to the proposed extension.



### Ecology

Much of the proposed area for the extension has already been extensively surveyed to identify habitats, protected species and mammals in relation to the existing Gordonbush wind farm site.

We will use this historical information, in addition to further surveys and assessments, to build up a good understanding of the site to help inform the design.

### Landscape and visual

This is an important part of the EIA process. More information is provided on the Landscape and Visual board.

### Other considerations

We will also assess the potential effects of the development on other environmental topics including (but not limited to):

- Cultural Heritage
- Soils, hydrology and geology
- Traffic and transport
- Land use, socio-economics and recreation
- Noise

### Current stage

We have just entered the 'Scoping' stage which helps identify the scope of the environmental work which is required to support the application. A 'Scoping Report' was issued in September 2013 to the Scottish Government and other statutory and non-statutory consultees, including local Community Councils, for their feedback on our proposed scope of works. The report will be used to initiate further consultation and identify specific environmental issues and potential impacts that need to be assessed through the EIA process.



# Gordonbush wind farm Proposed extension

## Landscape and visual assessment

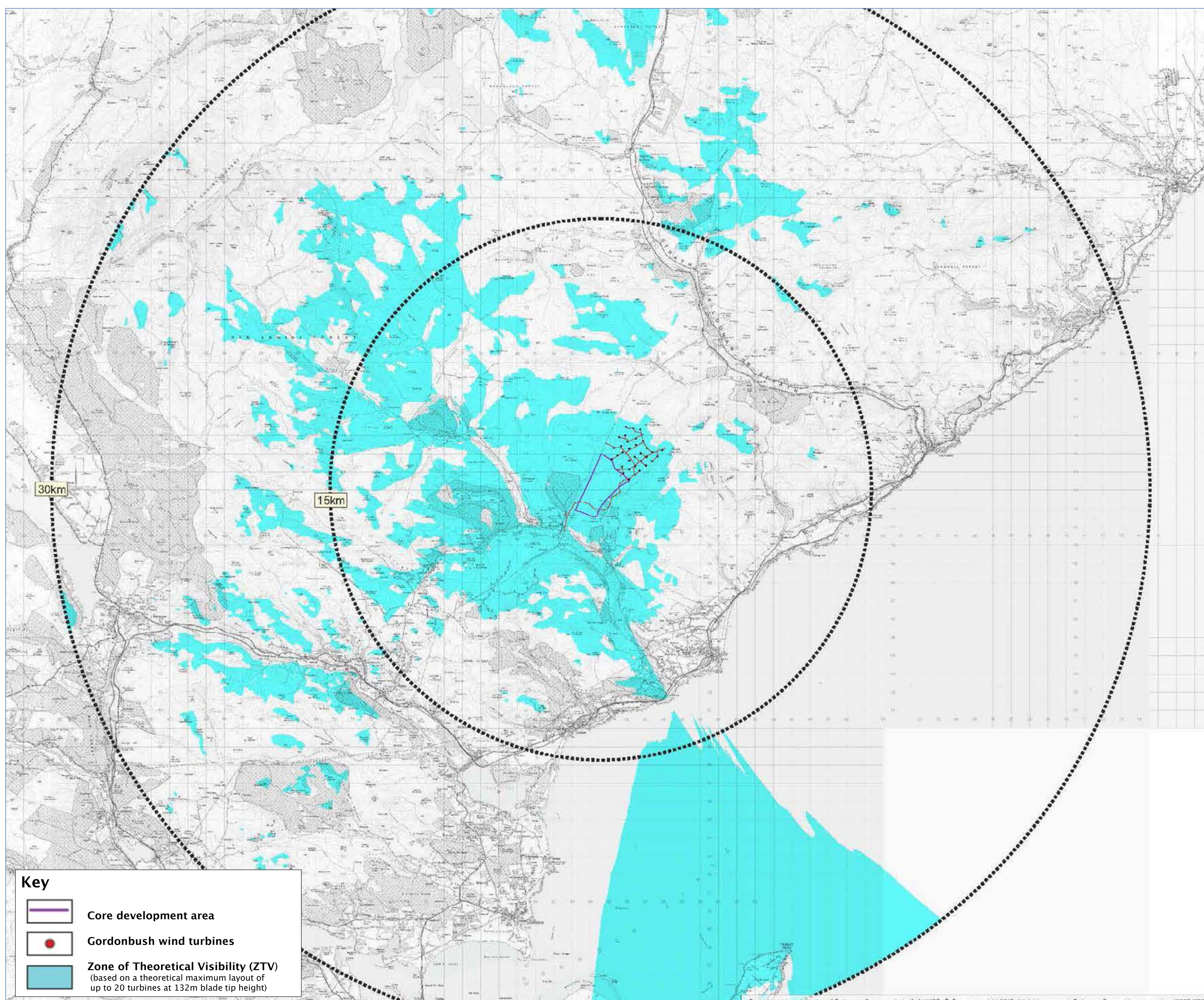
### Background

As part of our Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) we will be undertaking a landscape and visual assessment to understand how the proposed extension will look within the surrounding area and identify any significant effects.

The map below shows the 'Zone of Theoretical Visibility' (ZTV) which illustrates the indicative theoretical visibility of the proposed extension within a 30km radius. It is based on a theoretical maximum layout of up to 20 turbines at 132m blade tip height, and does not take into account any screening effects such as vegetation or buildings.

An updated ZTV will be produced once a final design is reached, in addition to photomontages and other visualisations, and submitted as part of the application.

### Zone of theoretical visibility (ZTV) – 30km





# Gordonbush wind farm Proposed extension



## Habitat management

### Existing habitat management on Gordonbush estate

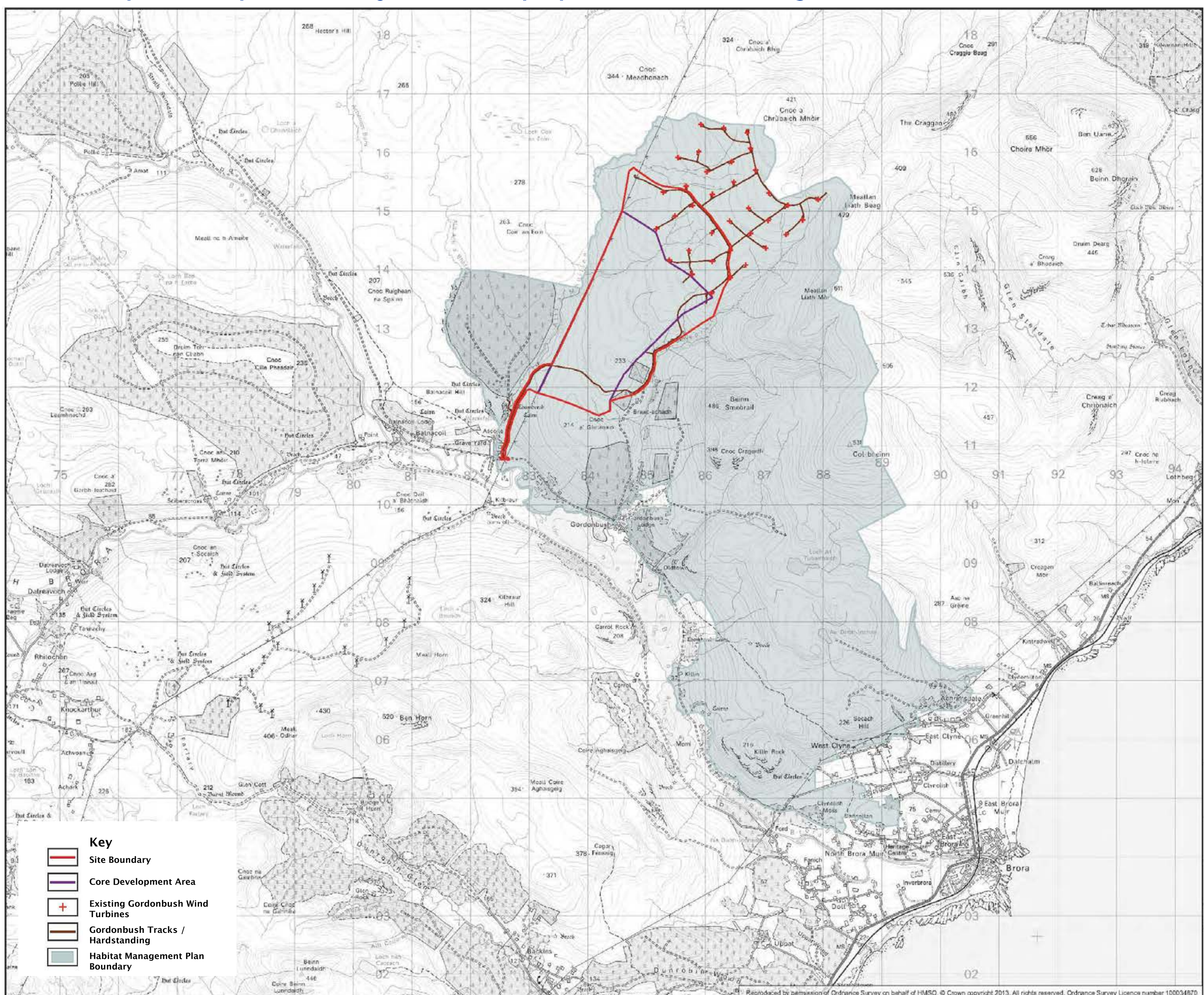
As part of the Gordonbush wind farm development, a Habitat Management Plan (HMP) was designed and implemented to deliver a range of long-term mitigation and enhancement measures on Gordonbush Estate.

### Our approach

The existing Habitat Management Plan (HMP) covers an area of approximately 5,361 hectares, as shown on the figure below. The overall aim of the HMP is to provide mitigation for any potential adverse effects of the Gordonbush wind farm on golden eagle, merlin and golden plover; both by deterring species from the wind farm site ('push' factors) and attracting them elsewhere on the estate ('pull' factors) by enhancement of peatland, woodland and grassland habitats. This aim is being met by implementing the following measures:

- o Reduction in deer on the Estate to promote heather moorland;
- o Removal of coniferous forestry plantations to restore peatland habitats;
- o Improved moorland and heather management;
- o Blocking of drains on peatland;
- o Native woodland management; and
- o Low-intensity cattle grazing.

The proposed Gordonbush Extension core development area overlaps a small part of the existing Gordonbush wind farm HMP area. Therefore, consideration will be given to how the proposed extension would impact the HMP objectives. If there was a predicted impact on any of these objectives, it is proposed that the existing HMP would be amended.





# Gordonbush wind farm

## Proposed extension



## Next steps

### What happens next?

Once the Scoping process is complete, and the scope of the environmental works has been agreed, we will undertake further surveys and assessments as part of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA). These will help us to identify any physical, environmental or technical constraints and refine the design layout.

We will also review the comments received from this exhibition and subsequent consultation period, and consider these in relation to the development of the proposal.

Once all of the survey work is complete and the final design has been developed, we will hold another public exhibition in order to present the final design to the local community.

### How do I comment on the proposal?

We are keen to receive comments and views from the local community on the proposed extension at this early stage. Please also take the time at the exhibition to speak to our project team and raise any questions, concerns or comments that you may have about the proposal. Comments can be submitted as follows:

- o At the exhibition – complete a comments form and place it in the box provided
- o By post – complete a comments form and post it to our Liaison Manager (details below)
- o By email – complete a comments form and email it to our Liaison Manager (details below)

Comments forms and information can be downloaded from the project website (details below) or posted out to you by our Liaison Manager, upon request. Please make your comments as specific as possible in order to help us assess them in relation to the proposal. The closing date for comments is 29<sup>th</sup> November 2013.



### Comments can be sent to:

Ruth Liddicoat  
Liaison Manager (Gordonbush proposed extension)  
Corporate Affairs  
10 Henderson Road  
Inverness  
IV1 1SN      [ruth.liddicoat@sse.com](mailto:ruth.liddicoat@sse.com)

If you have any queries, or would like to discuss the proposal or comments process, our Liaison manager is also the first point of contact and can be reached on 07767 852826.

Further information can also be found on our project website at [www.sse.com/gordonbush](http://www.sse.com/gordonbush).

### Will there be a further opportunity to comment on the proposal?

We will hold a second public exhibition, prior to submission of the planning application, to update the local community on the proposal and final design and gather further comments. Once the planning application is submitted there will be a further opportunity to comment on the proposal by submitting comments to the determining authority as part of the formal statutory consultation period.





# Gordonbush wind farm

## Proposed extension



## Investing in the community

### Community investment funds

For over 10 years now SSE has established community funds to enable communities to benefit from renewables developments in their area. The value of each fund varies from project to project depending on the size (or 'installed capacity' in megawatts) of the wind farm.

In January 2012, we launched what we believe to be the most generous community investment fund package of any of the major developers operating in Scotland, amounting to £5,000 for each megawatt (MW), every year, for up to 25 years, and this

### Local fund

Half of the fund (£2,500 per MW) is 'ring-fenced' for the communities in the immediate vicinity of the wind farm, and a panel made up of members from these communities reviews the applications and decides which projects to support.

We work closely with the panel, and applicants, to ensure opportunities are maximised for the benefit of the community.

### Regional fund

We set aside the other half of the fund (£2,500 per MW) for larger strategic projects that will benefit the wider community in the local authority area where the wind farm is located.

Our regional funds are administered through an independent panel of experts chaired by Lord McConnell, and preference will be given to locations near SSE's existing developments.

The Highland Regional Fund will launch in November this year.

### Sutherland Schools Pipe Band

SSE Renewables is the proud sponsor of the Sutherland Schools Pipe Band.



The Sutherland Schools Pipe Band at Gordonbush wind farm



Image courtesy of TYKES (The Young Carers East Sutherland) who received £4,000 in 2013 from the existing Gordonbush wind farm fund for a drop-in worker during one of their activity days.

### Existing Gordonbush fund

Our existing Gordonbush wind farm community fund was established in 2011 and benefits the local areas of Golspie, Brora, Helmsdale and Rogart.

The fund has already awarded over £300,000 to local projects in the area, such as:

- o TYKES (The Young Carers East Sutherland) – £4,000
- o Rogart in Bloom – £3,000
- o Brora Golf Club – £18,000
- o Golspie Youth Action Project – £3,120
- o Helmsdale Primary PTA – £5,000
- o Sutherland Partnership – £5,000
- o Brora Wanderers AFC – £3,146
- o Golspie Lunch Club – £500
- o Feis Chataibh – £5,000

### Further information

If you have any questions or would like further information on our community funds, please speak to our project team or visit our community website at [www.sse.com/Community/CommunityFunds](http://www.sse.com/Community/CommunityFunds). In addition, our booklet 'Investing in the Community' (copies of which are available at this exhibition) provides a summary of our approach to community funds, and how they work.



# Gordonbush wind farm

## Proposed extension



## Working with the community

### Being a responsible developer

As a company, we are committed to working closely with the local community throughout all stages of a project. This means keeping people informed about what we're doing, and listening to comments and feedback. We also aim to ensure that the lasting legacy of our developments is a positive one for the communities within which we live and work.

When we built the existing Gordonbush wind farm we worked hard to develop a strong working relationship with the community and ensure that the project was delivered as smoothly as possible, with minimal impact, and that any concerns or issues were addressed quickly. We also involved local businesses wherever possible and made sure that the project delivered socio-economic benefits to the area. This is the same approach that we are adopting for the proposed extension.

### Engaging with the community

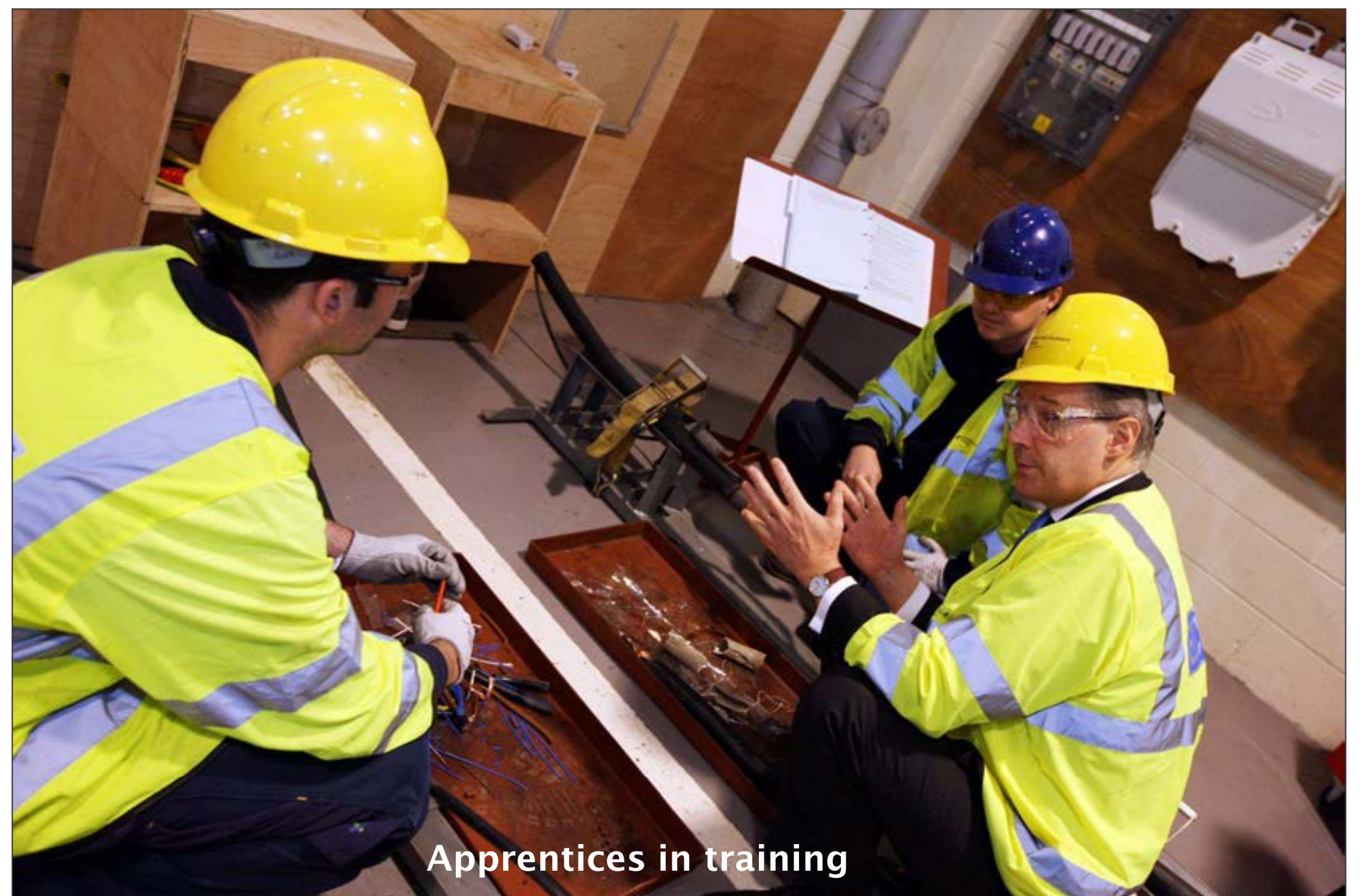
Whilst we are aware that there will always be a mix of views about a new development within a community, we are keen to understand what people think about the proposed extension.

We are also keen to engage early so that we have the chance to consider people's comments in relation to the development of the proposal, and identify ways that we can help minimise any impacts on the community.

In addition to this exhibition we will also be engaging and offering meetings with the local Community Councils, and providing information and updates on our project website at [www.sse.com/gordonbush](http://www.sse.com/gordonbush).



Community visit to an SSE wind farm (not Gordonbush)



### Apprenticeships

SSE currently recruits around 100 apprentices across the UK each year and the Highlands, including Sutherland, will be targeted to recruit apprentices in support of new project proposals and other energy developments.

At some of our sites we have also set up apprenticeship schemes, supported by the community fund, which encourage local businesses to take on apprentices, with the fund offsetting the cost of employing the apprentices while they learn their trade.

### Opportunities and benefits from our projects

In June 2012 SSE launched its new Highlands and Islands 'Open4Business' web-portal which promotes upcoming business opportunities with SSE's projects, and also provides a platform for businesses to advertise their services to other users. More information can be found on the portal itself at [www.sseopen4business-highlands.com](http://www.sseopen4business-highlands.com) or in our 'open4business' booklet which is available at this exhibition.

Over £100m was invested in Gordonbush wind farm, and a number of local businesses benefited from the project through the provision of materials, services, labour, and accommodation. Local roads were also upgraded and a 25 year Habitat Management Plan is underway which is aimed at helping restore some of the area around the wind farm back to its native habitat. More information is provided in our 'Socio-economics' booklet which is available at this exhibition.



# Gordonbush wind farm Proposed extension



## Volunteering in the community

### Community at heart initiative

As part of its 'Community at Heart' initiative, SSE gives each one of its employees the opportunity to take a day off from their usual work programme and swap it for a day working with a local charity or supporting a community project. These days are carried out all over the country, and we are keen to raise awareness of them within the communities that we work.

### Brora ice house

A local example of a Community at Heart day is the restoration of the path around the Historic Ice House in Brora. The Ice House was used heavily back in the day when Brora exported a lot of salmon to London; the crofters used to cut the ice from the river in winter and store it in the Ice House for use during the summer to keep the salmon fresh.

We were asked if we would be willing to help restore the path by 'A Brighter Brora', and four of our employees from the Gordonbush construction team volunteered for the work.

We helped to tidy up the overgrown path from Brora Bridge down past the Ice House, and re-surface it with new gravel. We also replaced a section of fencing between the path and river and cleared the area of litter.



Kathleen Cunningham, Secretary for 'A Brighter Brora', said: *"We're delighted with the excellent job that the Gordonbush team has done."*

*"They've given this popular local walk, which is also a section of the 'Brora Heritage Village Trail' such a facelift."*



### Lairg footpaths



Another example of a Community at Heart day within the wider area is the resurfacing of a local footpath in Lairg which we were asked if we would be willing to get involved with by Lairg Community Council. Some of our staff who work in the area were only too happy to help, and armed with wheelbarrows, spades and rakes, the team of six worked through the heat to complete the work.

The work was completed over two days and in association with Lairg Community Council who provided some of the materials and equipment.

### Do you have a project we could help with?

If you would like more information about our Community at Heart initiative, please speak to one of our members of staff.

Alternatively, you can pick up a form at the exhibition, or visit our website at [www.sse.com/aboutus/employeevolunteering](http://www.sse.com/aboutus/employeevolunteering).



## **APPENDIX 4: PUBLIC EXHIBITION ADVERT (MAY 2015)**

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# Gordonbush wind farm proposed extension

## Public Exhibition

SSE Renewables, the renewable energy development division of SSE, is in the final stages of developing its proposal for an extension to its 35 turbine Gordonbush wind farm at Balnacoll, near Brora, in Sutherland.

The feedback received from the public exhibition and consultation in October 2013 has helped to inform the design process, together with the findings from the technical and environmental surveys, and the final design has been developed. We are now in a position to present the final proposal to the community and are holding a public exhibition in order to engage with the local community. The exhibition will be held as follows:

**Wednesday 20 May 12pm - 4pm and 6pm - 9pm**  
**Brora Scout Hut and Guide Hall**  
**Gower Street, Brora, Sutherland**

The exhibition will provide those interested in the proposed extension with the opportunity to see the final design, and talk to our project team who will be on hand to answer any questions. We are intending to submit our planning application to the Scottish Government around June this year and there will be an opportunity to make formal representations during the statutory consultation period conducted by the Scottish Government once the application has been submitted.

Throughout the planning process we will continue to maintain our dialogue with the local Community Councils and wider community.

## Contact details

Further information on the proposal can be obtained from our website at [www.sse.com/gordonbushextension](http://www.sse.com/gordonbushextension) or by contacting our Liaison Manager, Ruth Liddicoat, on 07767 852826 or at [ruth.liddicoat@sse.com](mailto:ruth.liddicoat@sse.com).



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## **APPENDIX 5: PUBLIC EXHIBITION BOARDS (MAY 2015)**

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# Gordonbush wind farm - proposed extension

## Overview

### This exhibition

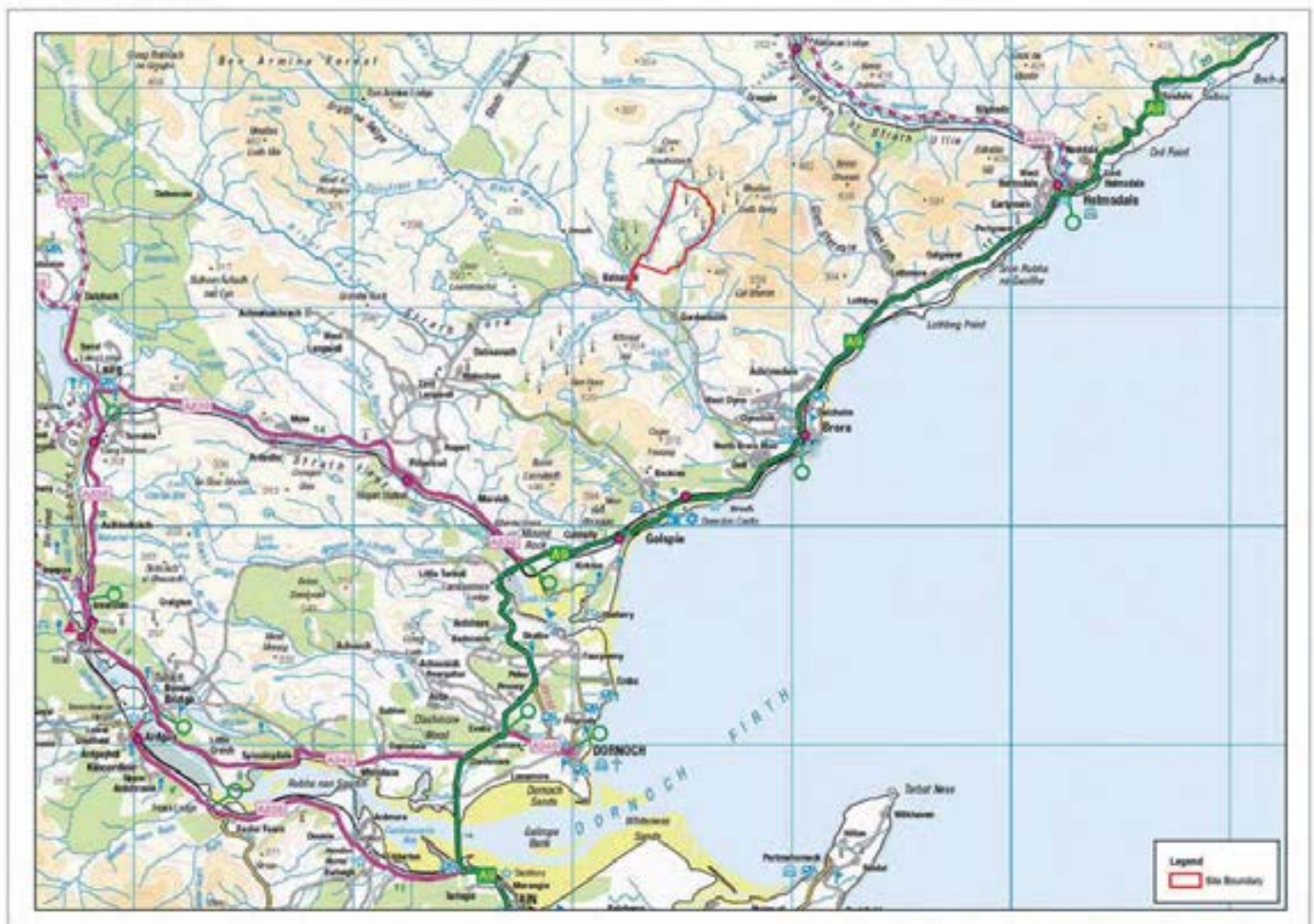
Since 2013 we have been exploring the possibility of an extension to our 35 turbine operational wind farm at Gordonbush, north-west of Brora.

We held a public exhibition in October 2013, early in the development process, to gather views on the proposed extension following initial scoping works. Since then we have undertaken detailed surveys and environmental assessments which have informed the design process.

The purpose of this second exhibition is to present the final design and show how it has developed throughout the different design iterations in relation to technical and environmental constraints and other considerations.

This exhibition also explains the 'next steps' in the process and the anticipated timescales for submitting our planning application, in addition to providing information on how we work with local communities around our projects.

### Site location



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### SSE Renewables

We are the renewable energy development division of SSE and are involved in the development of new renewable energy projects, like the proposed extension at Gordonbush, as well as other wind, wave, tide and hydro electricity projects. SSE is one of the largest energy companies in the UK and is the largest generator of renewable energy in the UK and Ireland. Our core purpose is to provide the energy people need in a reliable and sustainable way. Headquartered in Perth, Scotland, we employ around 19,000 people operating across Scotland, England, Wales, Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. SSE is involved in the generation, transmission, distribution and supply of electricity and the production, storage, distribution and supply of gas with around 11,700MW of generation capacity.



# Gordonbush wind farm - proposed extension

## The development process

### CONSULTATION

### PROCESS

### PUBLICATION

#### Site selection

In selecting a site, such as the proposed extension at Gordonbush, we considered a wide range of criteria including the existing operational site, wind speed, access, grid connection, landscape, environmental and recreational designations, site topography and hydrology. Initial surveys started in early 2013.



#### Scoping

A Scoping Report was submitted to statutory and non-statutory consultees in September 2013. This report described the scope of environmental work which we intended to undertake.

The responses and feedback to this report helped to refine the scope of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA).



#### Environmental Statement (ES)

The results of environmental surveys, desk based assessments and consultation are assessed in line with the scope of the EIA to inform the final site layout.

This information is then presented within an ES which supports the S36 application when it is submitted to the Scottish Government.



#### Submission of application

The S36 application and supporting ES will be submitted to the Scottish Government who will consult with statutory and non-statutory consultees before deciding on consent.

Copies of the application and the ES will be sent to all consultees, including local community councils. This information will also be made available for public viewing during the statutory consultation period.



#### Consideration and determination of application

The application will be assessed against planning and energy policies, together with consultee and community feedback.

The Scottish Government will decide if consent should be granted, taking into account the recommendation of statutory consultees such as The Highland Council.

#### Public exhibition for consultation

We held a public exhibition in October 2013 to engage with the local community.

**We are here** ↓

#### Public exhibition for final design

This second exhibition presents the final design ahead of submission of the Section 36 application.

#### Statutory consultation

The Scottish Government will undertake a statutory consultation period where consultees, community councils, local people and other interested parties have the opportunity to comment on our planning application.

Comments are made directly to the Scottish Government.

Scoping Report

Section 36 application and Environmental Statement is submitted

Further information (if requested)



# Gordonbush wind farm - proposed extension

## The proposal

### Background

The existing operational Gordonbush wind farm comprises 35 turbines each with a 2.05MW capacity, creating a total installed site capacity of 71.75MW. The wind farm received planning consent in 2008 and the main construction work started in Autumn 2010.

The site took roughly a year and a half to build and became fully commissioned and operational in June 2012. Since then it has generated enough renewable energy each year to power over 60,000 homes (based on Ofgem's typical annual domestic household consumption of 3,200 kWh a year).

Since 2013 we have been exploring the potential for an extension to Gordonbush wind farm. We have mainly focused on landscape and visual considerations to ensure that any proposed extension blends in well with the existing site, however, we have also had to consider technical and environmental constraints too. In addition we have tried to make best use of the existing infrastructure on site.

### Wind farm infrastructure

Our Section 36 application for the proposed extension will seek consent for the following:

- 13 wind turbines at 130m tip height;
- 3 wind turbines at 115m tip height;
- Crane hardstanding at each wind turbine location;
- Site access tracks and passing bays (of which 7.6km are new access tracks and 11km are upgrades to existing tracks);
- A permanent meteorological mast;
- Modifications to the existing operations building /substation to accommodate additional cables, etc;
- A new welfare building;
- A network of underground cabling;
- A temporary construction compound and storage area;
- A temporary concrete batching plant;
- Temporary telecoms infrastructure;
- Re-use of 2 existing borrow pits to provide stone for construction; and
- Any other additional associated works.



Gordonbush wind farm - existing site

### The Gordonbush timeline





# Gordonbush wind farm - proposed extension

## Design evolution

### Scoping

In September 2013 we submitted a Scoping Report. This report introduced the proposed extension and outlined the scope of environmental work that we intended to undertake.

At this scoping stage the proposal was presented as an indicative site boundary only, with a suggested capacity of up to 20 turbines and a maximum tip height of 132m. No turbine layout was provided at this stage as it had not been developed.

Additional information gathered during the scoping stage included hydrological, geological, ornithological, cultural heritage and ecological considerations.



### Early design layout

Following the scoping stage we developed an early design layout which reduced the 20 turbine proposal to an 18 turbine scheme (still with a maximum tip height of 132m). The information, comments and feedback gathered from both the scoping stage, and our October 2013 public consultation exhibition, were taken into consideration as part of the development of our early design, in addition to the following:

- Technical constraints, for example access track gradients and ground conditions, in particular the presence and depth of peat;
- Further ecological data from surveys, including the location of sensitive habitats and the presence of protected species;
- Landscape considerations relating to the potential visibility from key viewpoints; and
- Noise modelling which was reviewed to reduce the potential for impacts.

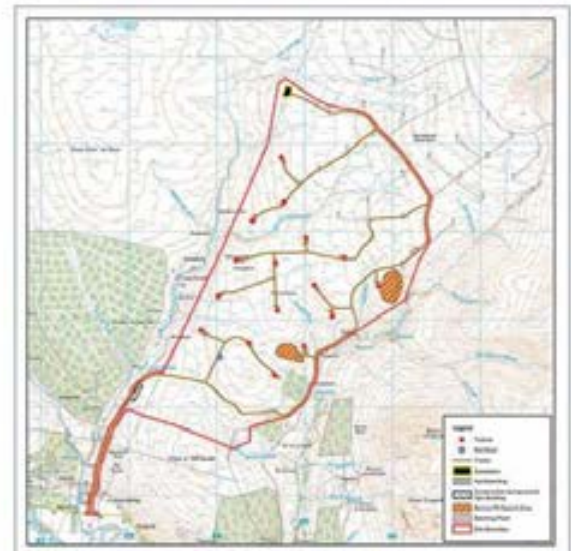


### Final design

As the design continued to be developed and refined, the scheme was reduced from 18 to 16 turbines following the removal of 2 turbines from the most southerly part of the scheme in order to reduce landscape, visual and noise impacts.

To further reduce visibility from Strath Brora the turbine height was reduced from 132m to 130m. In addition, the tip height of the 3 most southerly turbines was then changed from 130m to 115m to reduce their prominence from key viewpoints in the area.

The final design presented here also uses as much of the existing infrastructure as is practicable in order to reduce the length of new track required and minimise potential effects. This principle has also been applied, wherever possible, to the hard-standings, borrow pits, welfare facilities, meteorological mast, and substation alterations.



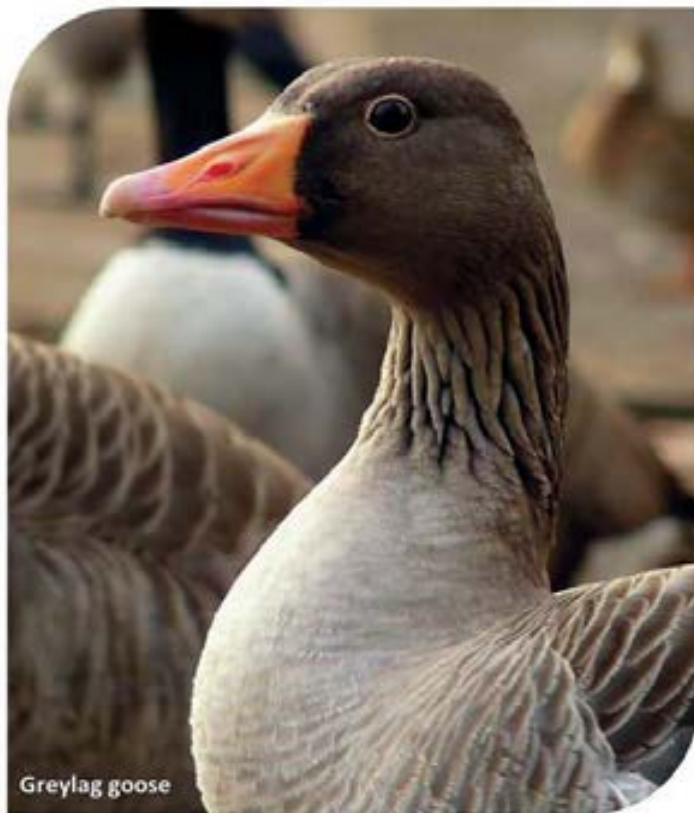


# Gordonbush wind farm - proposed extension

## Environmental considerations

### Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)

An Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) has been undertaken to identify and assess potential environmental impacts of the proposed extension to Gordonbush wind farm. The information gathered through the EIA process has helped to shape the design and layout of the proposed extension and identify any required mitigation measures. The findings of the EIA will be reported in an Environmental Statement (ES) which will accompany our planning application.



Greylag goose

### Ornithology

We have a good understanding of the bird activity in the area due to the bird survey work that has been undertaken since 2003 in relation to the existing site. Further surveys were undertaken between 2009 and 2012 as part of the existing operational site and this is in addition to the survey work carried out in 2012 and 2013 in relation to the proposed extension.

Species identified on site include Golden Plover, Greylag Geese, Pink Footed Geese, Greenshank, and Skylark amongst others. Survey results have indicated that there are no significant impacts on the range of identified species.

### Ecology

A range of habitats are present on site including woodland plantation, rush pasture, grasslands and mire communities.

There are also two nearby designations which lie within 5km:

- *Coir' an Eoin SSSI (Site of Special Scientific Interest)* – to the west. This is part of the Caithness and Sutherland Peatlands Special Area of Conservation (SAC)
- *Carrol Rock SSSI* – on the south-westerly shore of Loch Brora

The presence of Otter, Water Vole, Bats, Atlantic Salmon and Brown Trout, amongst others, were also surveyed within the site and surrounding area.

Surveys for habitat, fish and protected species have been undertaken within the development site from 2012 to 2014. Assessments to date have indicated that there are no significant impacts on protected species and habitats.

### Other environmental aspects

The EIA has also considered potential effects on traffic and transport; noise; peat stability; geology and hydrology; cultural heritage; telecommunications; aviation and other infrastructure. The EIA surveys conclude that there are no detrimental effects in these areas and survey results are within national guidance levels.

Assessments have also been undertaken on land-use; tourism; recreation and socio-economics. No significant effects are anticipated, however the development is anticipated to contribute positively through the wind farm supply chain.



Otter



# Gordonbush wind farm - proposed extension

## Landscape and visual assessment

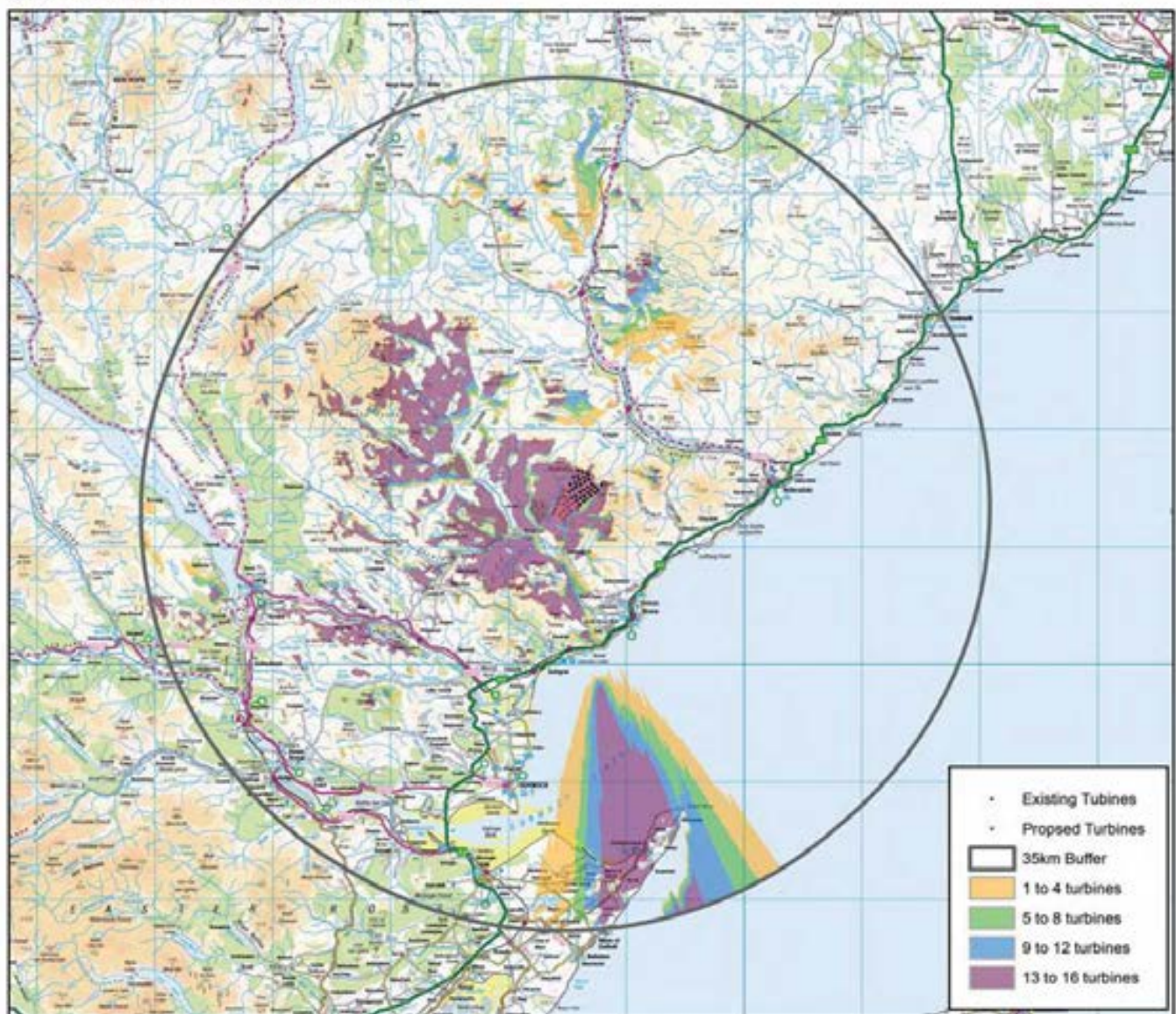
### Zone of theoretical visibility (ZTV)

The landscape and visual considerations for the proposed extension have played a fundamental role in the design process and have been one of the main drivers for the scheme reducing from 20 to 16 turbines. One of the key changes from a landscape and visual perspective has been to pull turbines northwards, away from Strath Brora, in order to reduce visibility of turbines within the Strath and help better integrate the extension with the existing site.

A computer generated 3D visualisation of how the proposed extension will look from specific viewpoints, such as residential properties, is available at this exhibition. Please ask a member of the project team if you would like to see this.

The Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV), illustrated below, shows the indicative theoretical visibility of the proposed turbine layout up to 35km from the site. This is based on bare ground (i.e. without any screening effects such as trees, vegetation or buildings) and represents a worst case scenario of the wind farm extension's visibility.

35km Zone of Theoretical Visibility







# Gordonbush wind farm - proposed extension

## Next steps

### What happens next?

The Environmental Impact Assessment is nearing completion and we anticipate that a S36 application will be submitted to the Scottish Government in the early summer of 2015. The application will be widely publicised once it is submitted and interested parties, including the local Community Councils, will be notified.

A statutory consultation period will be run by the Scottish Government and will provide interested parties with the opportunity to make formal representation on the proposed extension. Following the consultation period the Scottish Government will assess the application against planning and energy policy. All consultee representations will be considered including comments from the local Community Councils, the wider community and general public. The Scottish Government will then make a final decision on whether to grant consent for the proposed extension.

### Commenting on the proposal

The consultation period for formal representations will open once the application has been submitted and will be run by the Scottish Government.

Representations should be made to the Scottish Government by either email at [representations@scotland.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:representations@scotland.gsi.gov.uk) or post to:

The Scottish Government, Energy Consents Unit  
4th Floor, 5 Atlantic Quay  
150 Broomielaw  
Glasgow  
G2 8LU

Representations must be dated and clearly state the name (in block capitals) and full return email or postal address of those making representations. They should also identify the proposal that is being commented on and specify the grounds for representation. Full details on how to provide formal representation on the proposal will be advertised once the application has been submitted.

### Project contact

Please take the time at the exhibition to speak to our project team and raise any questions or concerns that you may have about the proposal.

For further information you can also contact our Liaison Manager. Contact details are as follows:

Ruth Liddicoat  
Liaison Manager (Gordonbush proposed extension)  
SSE Corporate Affairs  
10 Henderson Road  
Inverness  
IV1 1SN [ruth.liddicoat@sse.com](mailto:ruth.liddicoat@sse.com)

If you have any queries, or would like to discuss the proposal or formal representations process, our Liaison Manager is also the first point of contact and can be reached on 07767 852826.

Further information can also be found on our project website at [www.sse.com/gordonbush](http://www.sse.com/gordonbush) by following the links to the proposed extension.



Gordonbush wind farm - existing site





# Gordonbush wind farm - proposed extension

## Investing in the community

### Community investment funds

The development, consent and construction of a wind farm brings with it opportunities for employment, local business involvement and other benefits such as improvements to local roads and infrastructure. However, we recognise that our developments should also bring more direct financial benefits to the communities that host them.

For over ten years now we have established funds to enable communities near our new renewable energy projects to develop sustainably by funding charitable and community initiatives. Since 2002 we have supported over 5,000 community projects across Great Britain, with grants totalling over £15 million.

### Our current policy

We were one of the first developers to pay £5,000 per megawatt (MW) in line with the Scottish Government's current guidance on the recommended level of Community Benefit from onshore renewable projects.

Since January 2012, for all our new wind farms, we have been paying £2,500 per installed MW into a local community fund (supporting local groups, projects and initiatives) and a further £2,500 per installed MW into a regional Sustainable Development Fund (supporting more strategic regional projects) which in the case of Gordonbush wind farm covers the Highland Council local authority area.

Our community investment funds are voluntary payments made during the lifetime of new operational wind farms. You can find out more about our community funds by asking a member of our exhibition team or visiting: [www.sse.com/community/communityfunds](http://www.sse.com/community/communityfunds).

### Gordonbush Community Fund

The Gordonbush fund provides £144,000 each year for the community council areas of Brora, Golspie, Helmsdale and Rogart. Since it was established in 2011 it has granted over £320,000 to community and charitable groups and projects in these areas.

Gordonbush wind farm is also providing additional funding which is being used to support a new apprenticeship scheme. This scheme will create local apprenticeship opportunities with businesses in the four local areas of benefit. It opened for applications in May 2015 with £36,000 of funding for the first year.

To find out more about applying for funding please contact your Community Council directly or visit our website at [www.sse.com/community/communityfunds/Gordonbush](http://www.sse.com/community/communityfunds/Gordonbush).

### Other local funding

SSE is proud to sponsor the Sutherland Schools Pipe Band. Graham MacKenzie, Chairman of the Pipe Band, said "The Sutherland Schools Pipe Band Committee is extremely grateful to SSE Renewables for their sponsorship. Band members are drawn from throughout the Sutherland area with members from Helmsdale, Brora, Golspie, Rogart and Lairg."

SSE's Gordonbush wind farm has also provided £160,000 of funding towards the new state-of-the-art £250,000 Golspie all weather multi-use pitch near Golspie Primary School which opened in 2014.







# Gordonbush wind farm - proposed extension

## Local opportunities

### Working with local businesses

We try to ensure that as many local businesses as possible benefit from the opportunities our new wind developments bring with them. As well as direct employment, our experience shows that other local businesses such as accommodation providers, shops and suppliers can benefit significantly from our projects, particularly during the construction phase.

If the proposed extension is granted consent we would look to hold a 'meet the buyer' business event, prior to construction, where local businesses and suppliers are given the opportunity to meet our construction team and the appointed Principal Contractor in order to offer their services.

Once the wind farm is operational there are often opportunities for local businesses to undertake maintenance work across the site which could include the provision of plant or materials, fencing and drainage work, road repairs and building maintenance.



Strathly North wind farm - local business event

### Wind turbine procurement

In 2013 we increased our stakeholding in Machrihanish based Wind Towers (Scotland) Ltd to 81%, underlining our commitment to ensuring that this business and investment stays in Scotland.



Wind Towers Ltd

Today there are around 130 employees at the factory, many of whom have been recruited from the local area.

Our intention is to procure the towers for all of our Scottish wind farms from Wind Towers, including those required for the proposed extension to Gordonbush wind farm.

### SSE Open4Business portal

To contribute to the economic well-being of the Highlands and Islands community we have developed the SSE Open4Business Highlands and Islands web portal.



Open4Business facilitates trade and engagement between SSE and local suppliers and service providers, providing a platform for SSE to promote any opportunities originating in the Highlands region.

For more information about how you or local businesses you know might benefit please speak to a member of our exhibition team or visit the portal at [www.sseopen4business-highlands.com](http://www.sseopen4business-highlands.com).