



ORKNEY

ISLANDS COUNCIL

Orkney's Community Wind Farm Project

Hoy Pre Application Consultation

Guide to consultation boards

Introduction

This document accompanies the consultation material for the Pre-Application Consultation (PAC) for Orkney's Community Wind Farm Project – Hoy. You should have it to hand whilst you are looking through the consultation material.

Both documents are part of the revised arrangements that have been put in place by Orkney Islands Council for consulting with the public on proposed plans for the development.

As the development is classed as a 'major development' there is a requirement to submit a Proposal of Application Notice (PAN) to the planning authority and carry out a Pre-Application Consultation (PAC) – which usually would include a public event or exhibition.

A public event had been planned for Hoy to take place in March 2020, but this was cancelled due to the ongoing restrictions put in place as a result of the coronavirus pandemic.

With the Scottish Government having recently passed emergency legislation to allow developers to carry out pre-application consultation without the need for a face to face public event, alternative plans have been put in place following government guidance – which will still allow members of the public to talk directly to the project team about the plans and raise any questions or concerns they may have – before a planning application is submitted.

The project is part of 'Orkney's Community Wind Farm Project' which also includes proposed wind farm developments at Quanterness and on Faray in the North Isles

The objective of the PAC is for communities to be better informed about major and national development proposals and to have an opportunity to contribute their views before a formal planning application is submitted to the planning authority.

It should be noted that comments made to OIC through this PAC process are not representations to the planning authority. If a planning application is subsequently submitted, neighbour notification and publicity will be undertaken, and individuals and communities will have an opportunity to make representations on that application to the planning authority at that time.

All consultation material, including options for discussing the project with the project team and for submitting comments is available at www.orkney.gov.uk/HoyPAC. For further enquiries please contact Kirsty Groundwater, Project Officer, Orkney Islands Council by email on kirsty.groundwater@orkney.gov.uk or by phone on 07818508323

The deadline for submitting comments to the Project Team will be Monday 8 June 2020 at 12.00.

Why are we consulting online and not face to face?

This consultation is part of the pre application consultation process in advance of submission of a planning application for Orkney's Community Wind Farm Project – Hoy.

As the development is classed as a 'major development' there is a requirement to submit a Proposal of Application Notice (PAN) to the planning authority and carry out a Pre-Application Consultation (PAC) – which usually would include a public event or exhibition.

A public event had been planned for Hoy to take place in March 2020, but this was cancelled due to the ongoing restrictions put in place as a result of the coronavirus pandemic.

We are hugely disappointed that we can't come out and talk to folk face to face to the community about the latest plans, but given the current situation we hope you can understand why it wouldn't be possible or sensible to do so and why we had to cancel the event planned for March.

The Scottish Government recently introduced emergency legislation which allows pre application consultation to take place without a physical public event, recognising the economic need to keep the planning system functioning, and also the uncertainty around when restrictions might be lifted.

That is particularly important for this project given the tight deadline we have been given if we want to meet the Needs Case conditions set out by OFGEM to secure a new electricity interconnector for Orkney. If we don't keep moving towards a planning application now, we significantly risk wasting the resources that have been put into this project to date.

As an alternative, we have put considerable effort into designing a consultation which we hope can reach as many people as possible and give everyone the opportunity to understand the proposals and to make your opinions heard.

What we are doing includes:

- Making project information and feedback sheets available online at www.orkney.gov.uk/HoyPAC, by email or by post, answering questions, and taking comments via those channels as well
- Offering one to one discussions on the phone or via Skype where we can talk through the proposals and any questions you might have, and take feedback.
- Holding a live and interactive web based event where people can hear from the project team and ask questions.

All of the details for this will be published in the local press, on social media and is available on the project pre application consultation webpage www.orkney.gov.uk/HoyPAC

‘What is ‘Orkney’s Community Wind Farm Project’?

This first page of the consultation material is titled 'What is Orkney's Community Wind Farm Project' and includes a map showing the locations of wind farms under investigation in Orkney.

Whilst the purpose of this consultation is to discuss the Hoy project, it is important to consider the big picture of where this project fits within the wider proposals in Orkney.

‘Orkney’s Community Wind Farm Project’ includes three potential wind farm sites - one in Hoy in the area around Wee Fea, another on Faray in the North Isles, and at Quanterness in St Ola.

You can see where each of these projects is located on the map, highlighted with a red mark.

You will notice that the map also displays several other potential wind farm sites that are being investigated by private developers and the Finstown substation where it is likely any new project will have to connect back to.

In terms of the Council projects - at this stage of the design each site has the potential capacity for six turbines at approximately 150m and a generating capacity of 28MW on each site.

The notable thing here is the size of the turbines which are larger than any on Orkney and more than twice the height of the Hoy community Turbine.

There are several goals we look to achieve by developing the project, with the aim of:

- generating income from publicly owned wind farm projects to support services in the local community and deliver community benefit.
- together with the other developers, supporting the needs case for a new interconnector for Orkney which would open up wider economic benefits via further opportunities within Orkney’s energy industry
- making sure that, if we have a new cable, that as much of the benefits as possible stick within Orkney. The best way of doing that is to have local ownership which benefits everybody, not just the shareholders.

What are the benefits for Orkney? (Part 1).

The second page of the consultation material is titled 'What are the benefits for Orkney?' and there is a subheading of 'Income and Community Benefits'.

One of the key aims of the project is to generate additional income and to essentially use that money to deliver community benefit in various ways.

As a Council we have significant issues around continually reducing budgets and increasing demand for public services and additional income from Orkney's Community Wind Farm project could make a big difference to that and to people's lives in Orkney.

This project is being developed for the benefit of Orkney and if the proposed sites are found through the planning process to be appropriate and the project goes forward, there are multiple community benefits to be gained from a council owned wind farm project.

- Significant income could be generated by the project, helping us to not only tackle the challenge of budget cuts but the increasing demand for public services.
- All profits would remain in Orkney helping preserve and enhance key services, like social care, education and transport.
- Job creation throughout the lifespan of the project.

The issue of community benefit has been raised frequently with the project team at previous public events. Since then, in September last year, the Council has agreed on some guiding principles for community benefit from the project which will help to clarify the aims;

- The key purpose of Orkney's Community Wind Farm Project is to generate profit to be used for the benefit of the people of Orkney.
- This will be done via a 'Community Fund' to be used in the interests of Orkney and its inhabitants.
- The project will be financed in such a way that we can achieve profit which can be used for community benefit as soon as reasonably practicable.
- It won't be possible for private individuals to take a shareholding in any project.
- As the communities located closest to projects will be impacted most by developments these communities will get a 'location-specific community benefit payment'.

The exact way in which 'location-specific community benefit payment' will be delivered has not been decided and we would like your views on how you think this should be done. We'll be running a public consultation exercise later this year.

What are the benefits for Orkney? (Part 2)

The third page of the consultation material is titled 'What are the benefits for Orkney' and there are two sub headings 'Securing a new cable' and 'Creating a carbon neutral future'.

On top of the direct financial benefits to the community, the project will enable the Council to join other local developers in meeting the requirements for securing a new interconnector for Orkney.

As you may be aware the grid in Orkney is completely full now and it is very difficult for any new energy projects to be developed. We think that a new cable will bring significant economic benefit to Orkney and will substantially support the vital renewable energy industry in Orkney.

OFGEM has now conditionally approved proposals from SSEN to build a 220MW interconnector linking Orkney with the Scottish mainland. Approval is dependent on at least 135 MW of new wind farm projects in Orkney either being awarded a Contract for Difference (CfD) or being judged 'likely to be developed' by December 2021.

'Likely to be developed' means that the project should:

- be financially viable
- have signed a relevant grid connection agreement
- have planning permission

The wider economic development value of a new cable to Orkney could be highly significant, but what is critical in maximizing that benefit is making sure that we have a substantial proportion of local ownership of projects connecting to the cable – that is something which is critical in helping jobs and income remain in the county and is a key driver behind 'Orkneys' Community Wind Farm Project'.

Climate change and the imperative to reduce carbon emissions is another important driver for the project, which could go a long way in helping to create a carbon neutral future for our islands.

As you may or may not be aware Orkney has produced more than 100% of its electricity needs from renewable energy since 2014, but we still produce a lot of carbon, particularly in transport and heating, and there is still a lot more we can and need to do to decarbonise.

To give some context on this issue the Office of National Statistics estimates Orkney's carbon emissions at 192,000 tonnes of CO2 equivalent per year, and we think each of our projects, if built, could offset around 40,000 tonnes of CO2 each a year. For three projects that's 120,000 tonnes per year, so they really could make a big difference.

We also have national targets to contribute to - net-zero greenhouse gas emissions in Scotland by 2045 and in the UK by 2050 - and to meet these targets, emissions from homes, transport, farming and industry will all have to be addressed.

Why have we chosen these particular sites?

The fourth page of the consultation material is titled 'Why have we chosen these particular sites'. It includes a map of Orkney showing where our sites are and some of the constraints on site choice.

At public events on the project, we regularly get asked about why we have selected the three sites we have and indeed why we haven't selected other potential sites.

This section of the consultation material demonstrates that we have been through a rigorous process in selecting sites that we feel offer sufficient scale to be economically viable and have a reasonable chance of gaining consent.

On the map of Orkney we've drawn a pink 700m buffer around all residential properties as these are areas that are likely to be unsuitable for development. We have also in the hatched areas superimposed all the internationally designated areas in Orkney, where it would also be highly unlikely that consent could be achieved.

That leaves a number of white patches to investigate further and we have essentially looked at any white patch of sufficient scale for a project and ruled it in or out for any number of reasons. We have then whittled our list down to what we see as our three best options – Hoy, Faray and Quanterness.

The site on Hoy is the largest of the three sites, where initially there was potential to accommodate up to 30 turbines. Having performed various site assessments and undertaken two years of bird studies it was found that the site could realistically host up to six turbines.

The Quanterness site has several practical advantages being in an agricultural landscape outwith ecological or landscape designations, having good access and being a reasonable distance from residential properties. Due to it being relatively close to Kirkwall it also allows us the opportunity to potentially explore a separate project in which the Council could directly supply electricity to its own buildings as a means to reduce costs. Faray has no residential properties on the island and came into Council ownership in early 2019.

What else have we included on the site?

The fifth page of the consultation material is titled 'What else have we included on the site?' and includes a map of the potential site at Wee Fea in Hoy. It shows a full layout of the Hoy site and explains the various components including access roads, wind farm components, construction components and grid connections.

Having given you an overview of 'Orkney's Community Wind Farm project, the rest of the consultation material offers more specifics around the site at Hoy - beginning with what to expect on the site.

The proposed site is in the area around Wee Fea to the west of Lyness pier.

Components would be delivered to Lyness and then transported along the B9048. It is anticipated that loads would then cross the B9047 and join the unclassified track heading west to site. From this point existing tracks will be upgraded, and new tracks constructed to accommodate component delivery to turbine locations.

The permanent infrastructure that will be installed onsite will be the six turbines up to a tip height of 149.9m, permanent hardstanding at the base of each turbine for the construction and maintenance of the turbines, an onshore substation, a permanent met mast and underground cabling connection the turbines to the substation.

During the construction of the wind farm there will be several temporary infrastructures, a compound to store materials and machinery, a laydown area for blades and various components at each turbine location and potentially excavation and borrow pits.

Power generated from the turbines would be transferred via underground cables to the onsite substation before onward transmission which will likely be to Finstown substation.

The offsite grid infrastructure of this project will be designed by SSEN and will be subject to a separate planning application, SSEN will endeavour to determine the best solution to connect to the grid. It is too early in the design process to have any clarity on what options may be available.

What are the key design considerations?

The sixth page of the consultation material is titled 'What are the key design considerations?' and includes a map of the potential site, as well as a key describing several factors that are being considered in the ongoing site design process.

The project team visited Hoy in January 2019 to present an initial design showing how the proposed layout for the development might look. Since then there has been considerable work done and the layout has evolved.

The map shows the initial turbine locations marked as grey triangles and the new turbine locations as black circles. The turbines have been moved to the east of the site, which moves several of the turbines outside the wild land area and reduces any impact we may have on the local bird population. We have managed to do this without coming significantly closer to any of the residential properties to the east of the site.

Moving the infrastructure to the east of the site has brought several turbines closer to the underground tanks below Wee Fea. The development has been designed to ensure there is an adequate safety buffer between the existing substructure and the proposed turbine infrastructure.

Other aspects you can pick out on the map are the residential properties and the 600m buffer around the properties, the Burn of Ore and several other watercourse s that run through the site, as well as the natural heritage sites to the west, and the telecommunications link that runs to the east of the site.

How are we addressing these key design considerations?

The seventh page of the consultation material is titled 'How are we addressing these key design considerations?'. It follows on from the issues raised in the previous slide and covers topics such as landscape and visual issues, ecology and ornithology and archaeology and cultural heritage.

There are a number of factors to consider when analysing the potential impact on the local area from a wind farm development. Careful and informed consideration of all these aspects is used to optimise the design and to produce the environmental impact assessment report.

An important element of any development like this is 'what will the visual impact of these large turbines be on our landscape?' As part of the assessment we have undertaken a landscape visual impact analysis which has fed into the siting of the turbines and we have maintained an acceptable distance from residential properties

As wind farm developments can affect wildlife and birds during construction and operation, the potential impacts on them have been a key component of the design process. The surveys we have carried out have influenced the turbine locations. To reduce the potential impacts, turbines have been moved further away from the natural heritage sites to the west. During the analysis our team have consulted closely with Scottish Natural Heritage to ensure best practices are followed.

In and around the site there are several wartime heritage assets, this includes the underground fuel tanks and the formal naval headquarters at Lyness. Consultation with Historic Environment Scotland is ongoing, the siting of turbines has considered the potential impacts on these and this will be addressed in the EIA.

How are we addressing these key design considerations?

The eighth page of the consultation material is also titled 'How are we addressing these key design considerations?'. It too follows on from the issues raised in the previous slides and this time covers noise, transport and traffic and certain site specific issues.

At our previous consultation events we had been asked about the noise impact of turbines of this size on local homes. Our background noise surveys have indicated that due to the distance between the closest home and the site the possible noise levels experienced will be minimal and below the guidance threshold.

Another question we are asked regularly is about shadow flicker, which is an effect that can occur when rotating wind turbine blades periodically cast shadows through windows of neighbouring properties. Due to the distance and location of the nearest home to the site, the impact of shadow flicker is limited however a full assessment has been included in the EIA.

During the construction period a construction environmental management plan will be produced which will minimise noise and set out agreed working hours.

Part of the construction plan will include a traffic management plan. It is likely there will be an increase in traffic during the construction phase with slight disruption to other road users during the transportation of the turbine components, such as blades. The traffic management plan will outline the project requirements and look to keep any disruption to a minimum.

Other aspects that we have been considering are:

- consulting with telecommunication operators to ensure turbines do not interfere with any links
- being an adequate distance from any watercourses in the area.
- avoiding any exceptionally deep peatland areas.

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'Where are we at in the process and how can you make your views known?'

The ninth page of the consultation material is titled 'Where are we at in the process and how can you make your views known?'. It shows a timeline of where the project is currently at and the opportunities for you to contribute your views.

The timeline shows information on when the site was selected and when a scoping report was submitted to the local planning authority in 2018.

Following feedback received from Planning and other consultees such as Scottish Natural Heritage, Historic Environment Scotland and SEPA we proceeded to the next stage of this timeline, the Environmental Impact Assessment - which is an analysis of all the impacts our project may have on the local area. This includes site surveys, desk top studies and multiple expert consultations and helps us to determine the best design for all parties involved.

At this stage you can let us know as developers what your thoughts are on the project. This can be done in several ways as specified on the webpage.

The next stage of the process will be the submission of the planning application, which for the Hoy site is likely to be before Autumn this year. Once the local planning authority has validated the application, all relevant documentation will be made available to the public and this is when you can submit your letters of support or objections to OIC Planning department or to the Scottish Government if they decide to handle the application.

The local planning authority or the Scottish Government will then determine if the project is to be approved.

Viewpoint Visualisations

In order to assess the potential visual effects of the proposed wind farm at Hoy we have selected a number of viewpoints to represent the views of residents, road users, walkers and ferry passengers both in the local and wider area

Five of the viewpoints are presented in the consultation document. Each slide comprises a photomontage to represent how the view will be changed by the proposed development.

Lyness Cemetery

The first viewpoint is taken from the Lyness Naval Cemetery and was selected to represent the views of visitors to the cemetery, as well as road users on the B9046. The view looks south west towards Wee Fea and would be located at just over 1km to the closest turbine. While all six turbines would be visible, they would all be partly screened by the ridge line of Wee Fea, apart from the two closest turbines which would be seen at their full height.

North Walls School

The second viewpoint is located at North Walls School on the B9047 south of Lyness. It has been selected to represent the views of people at the school as well as road users and local residents. The view looks north-west towards Wee Fea at just over 2km to the closest turbine. The school faces south to catch the scenic views towards South Walls, it also opens up across the hills towards the west and north where the proposed development can be seen to its full extent. This view also includes the existing single turbine at Ore Brae, set at the base of the hill to the right of the proposed turbines.

Longhope

The third viewpoint is located in the village of Longhope on the north coast of South Walls. It has been selected to represent the views of residents, as well as road users on the B9047 which passes through the village. The natural view from Longhope is north across the water. The key feature is the low moorland hills upon which the proposed development would be situated. The closest turbine is a distance of 3.5km. All six turbines would be visible, seen set across the hill slopes of Wee Fea and west into the valley of the Ore Burn. The existing Ore Brae turbine is visible in the right of the photo.

View from the ferry

The fourth viewpoint is located on the Houton to Lyness ferry as it passes through the sound, with Hoy to the west and Fara to the east. It has been selected to represent the views of passengers on the ferry traveling to and from Hoy. The view looks south west across Hoy's eastern coastline towards Wee Fea where the closest turbine would be a distance of 3.5km away. While all six turbines would be visible only two would be visible to their full extent, while the other four would be partly screened by the ridge line of Wee Fea.

Orphir

The fifth viewpoint is located on the western edge of the village of Orphir on the mainland of Orkney. It has been selected to represent the views of road users on the A964 and residents in the village of Orphir and the surrounding rural area. Views are mostly orientated south east over Scapa Flow to South Ronaldsay and south towards Flotta. They also extend south east towards Hoy and it is in this direction the proposed development is seen at a distance of 12.5km. From this longer range the turbines would appear as relatively small scale and distant features, occupying a much smaller proportion of the open view of Scapa Flow. They would be seen associated with the much lower moorland hills to the south of the island, separate to the higher hills in the north.