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1. Background

1.1 Introduction

This Pre-Application Consultation (PAC) Report was prepared by Cavendish Consulting to explain, in detail, the consultation activity undertaken by Renewable Energy Systems Ltd (RES) (the Applicant) in relation to the construction and operation of the proposed Blair Hill Wind Farm ('the Proposed Development') which includes up to 14 turbines and associated infrastructure, located approximately 2.7km north of Newton Stewart, Dumfries and Galloway.

The Proposed Development will comprise up to 14 turbines resulting in an overall site generating capacity of approximately 92.4 MW. This is enough to power around 115,700 homes[1] annually with clean, low-cost electricity. The associated infrastructure will include site access, access tracks, crane hardstand areas, underground cabling, on-site substation and control building, transformers and related switchgear, temporary construction compounds, laydown area, potential excavations/borrow workings and temporary concrete batching plant. The components and layout of the Proposed Development are indicated in Figure 1.2 of the EIA Report.

With a generating capacity over 50MW, the Proposed Development is subject to Section 36 of the Electricity Act 1989, administered by the Energy Consents Unit (ECU). A full Planning Application has been submitted to the ECU and this report has been produced to accompany the formal application.

Albeit not a statutory requirement for Section 36 applications, the Applicant has applied the principles of the consultation process recommended for 'major' planning applications as set out in The Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (Scotland) Regulations 2022 and Planning Circular 3:2022-Development Management Procedures. This enables the local community and all those with an interest in the proposals a clear opportunity to view the proposals, and importantly comment and feedback.

This PAC Report details the comments and feedback received from the public exhibitions and local community meetings, as well as those received through a wider community engagement programme. In addition, the PAC Report also illustrates how the Applicant has responded to these comments from members of the public and community groups, and where relevant how these have helped shape and inform the Proposed Development.

1 Calculated by taking the predicted annual electricity generation of the site (based on predicted site generation capacity of 92.4 MW), together with RES' predicted capacity factor of 46.3% and dividing this by the annual average electricity figures from DESNZ showing that the annual GB average domestic household consumption is 3,239 kWh (January 2024). Final wind farm capacity will vary depending on the outcome of planning permission and the turbine selected.

2. Best Practice

2.1 Overview

The Applicant recognises the value of engaging with and seeking to involve local residents in development proposals, both prior to and following the submission of any application and through to the construction and operation should the Applicant's proposals obtain consent.

Planning Advice Note (PAN) 3/2010 – Community Engagement is an update of PAN 81 which advises that in order for the community engagement to be successful, it is important that everyone interested in the future development of the community, village, town, or city they live in, should understand the planning process. Developers are advised to involve residents at the earliest opportunity so that they can feel confident that engagement in the process has been meaningful:

PAN 3/2010 highlights that the term "consultation" is used to mean the:

> *"Dynamic process of dialogue between individuals or groups based on a genuine exchange of views and, normally, with the objective of influencing decisions, policies or programmes of action. The terms 'engagement' and 'involvement' are generally interchangeable and are taken to mean the establishment of effective relationships with individuals or groups. Participation is everything that enables people to influence the decisions and get involved in the actions that affect their lives. In the context of this document engagement is, in effect, giving people a genuine opportunity to have a say on a development plan or proposal which affects them; listening to what they say and reaching a decision in an open and transparent way to ensure they are taking account of all views expressed (page 3, paragraph 1)."*

National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) (2023) also highlights the important role of effective engagement, stating:

> *"Throughout the planning system, opportunities are available to engage in development planning and decisions about future development. Such engagement, undertaken in line with statutory requirements, should be early, collaborative, meaningful and proportionate. Support or concern expressed on matters material to planning must be given careful consideration in the determination of development proposals."*

The Applicant is committed to undertaking effective and early consultation methods in this way, including tailoring its strategies to suit individual communities. Residents' values and issues of importance vary, and the consultation programmes are designed to reflect that.

3. Local Context & Stakeholder Mapping.

3.1 Overview

Prior to undertaking formal consultation, the Applicant carried out desk-based research to identify Key Stakeholders to inform about the Proposed Development and consult with throughout the pre-application period.

3.2 'Host' Community Council

In line with best practice the Applicant identified the following Community Council whose area was within the land on which the Proposed Development was situated:

- Cree Valley Community Council

3.3 Nearby Community Councils

In addition to the 'host' Community Council, the Applicant identified the following Community Councils as being the next closest to the Proposed Development:

- Kirkcowan Community Council; and
- Royal Burgh of Wigtown & District Community Council

3.4 Ward Councillors

The Applicant also identified the following council ward (and their representatives) as being likely to have an interest in the Proposed Development:

- Mid Galloway and Wigtown ward (Dumfries and Galloway Council)

3.5 Constituency MSP and MP

Furthermore, the Applicant identified the MSP for Midlothian Galloway and West Dumfries constituency, as well as the MP for the Dumfries and Galloway constituency as being likely to have an interest in the Proposed Development. The Applicant engaged with both Alister Jack MP, and John Cooper MP after he took office following the July 2024 General Election.

4. Project Launch

On 26th July 2023, the Applicant submitted a request for a Scoping Opinion to Scottish Ministers via the Energy Consents Unit (ECU).

On 13th November 2023, Scottish Ministers provided a Scoping Opinion, with an Addendum to the Scoping Opinion being issued on 6th February 2024. Copies of these letters are attached as Appendices 4.1 and 4.2 in Volume 3 of the EIA Report, and are also available on the ECU website under reference ECU00004878.

4.1 Preliminary Engagement

In July 2023, the Applicant wrote to Key Stakeholders **(Appendix 4.1)** to inform them that the Applicant was in the early stages of developing a wind farm on the site. The letter advised that the Applicant had submitted a request for a Scoping Opinion to the Scottish Ministers.

In addition, the Applicant participated in the Wigtown Show in August 2023 by sponsoring and taking an exhibition stand at the event. This provided a unique opportunity to informally engage with a broad cross-section of the local community. The stand was designed to raise awareness about the operations of the Applicant and the Proposed Development, offering attendees the chance to be introduced to the proposals and ask questions. The well-attended local event served an excellent opportunity to introduce the Proposed Development in a relaxed environment, where a broad cross-section of the local community was in attendance.

5. Phase 1 Consultation.

5.1 Overview

Political stakeholders were informed about the first round of public consultation through a newsletter sent on 20 September 2023 (**Appendix 5.1**). Additionally, the Applicant distributed the newsletter to 4,176 properties within a 15km radius of the site (**Appendix 5.2**). A social media graphic promoting the consultation was also shared with the Cree Valley Community Council (**Appendix 5.3**) who posted it on their social media pages. Posters were also provided to the community council which were displayed on the Cree Valley community noticeboard.

In addition to writing to the aforementioned stakeholders, community councils and local residents, the Applicant placed an advert in the Galloway Gazette on the 22nd of September 2023 (**Appendix 5.4**).

The Applicant also formed a dedicated **project website** (blairhill-windfarm.co.uk) at this stage of the project, which included an outline of the proposals, details of the consultation and contact details for the project team.

The website was updated with relevant information throughout all stages of the project, including all consultation material.

The in-person events were held at the below dates and locations:

- **Tuesday 3rd October 2023 | 3pm to 8pm | McMillan Hall, Newton Stewart, DG8 6EQ**
- **Wednesday 4th October 2023 |3pm to 8pm | Lesser Hall, Wigtown, DG8 9JH**

In addition to consulting with the local community, the Applicant also engaged with various political stakeholders and community groups throughout the consultation period to introduce the project. These included a meeting with Cree Valley Community Council on 21 August 2023 on Zoom to introduce the project. The PowerPoint slides used at the meeting can be viewed in **Appendix 5.5**. The Applicant also met with Emma Harper MSP on Microsoft Teams on 25 October 2023. PowerPoint slides presented by the Applicant at the meeting are available to view in **Appendix 5.6**. The Applicant then met with Councillors Katie Hagmann, David Inglis, and Richard Marsh in November 2023. The PowerPoint slides presented to the councillors are available to view in **Appendix 5.7**. The Applicant offered to meet with Kirkcowan Community Council and Royal Burgh of Wigtown & District Community Council to introduce the project, however no response was received.

Once the Proposed Development became public, several enquiries were received. The Applicant responded by answering questions wherever possible and confirming details about the project, including details of the public consultation events planned for October. Additionally, the Applicant informed people about the newsletter mailing list, which they could join to stay updated and be notified of the October consultation events once details were confirmed.

5.2 In-person exhibition events

The first round of in-person consultation events were held in 2023, with sessions at McMillian Hall in Newton Stewart on Tuesday, 3rd October, and at the Lesser Hall in Wigtown on Wednesday, 4th October. Approximately four hundred visitors attended the events across both days.

On display at both events were exhibition boards (**Appendix 5.8**), which provided an overview of the Proposed Development and the preliminary design. Copies of the exhibition boards were also available from the morning of the first event (3rd October) via the project website. Hard copies or Braille copies of the exhibition boards were also available for anyone who requested this. One Braille copy was requested by a local resident and was provided by the Applicant.

The subject of the boards were:

Alongside the exhibition boards, six projected viewpoints of the wind farm were shown at both consultation events along with a Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) map - 15km (**Appendix 5.9**).

The locations of these viewpoints were:

- Viewpoint 2 - Corsbie Road, Newton Stewart
- Viewpoint 4 - Glenvernoch Fell/ Hill of Ochiltree
- Viewpoint 7 – Merrick
- Viewpoint 8 – A75 near Creetown
- Viewpoint 9 – Kirkcowan
- Viewpoint 10 - NCR73 on Minor Road North of Wigtown

5.3 Survey Responses

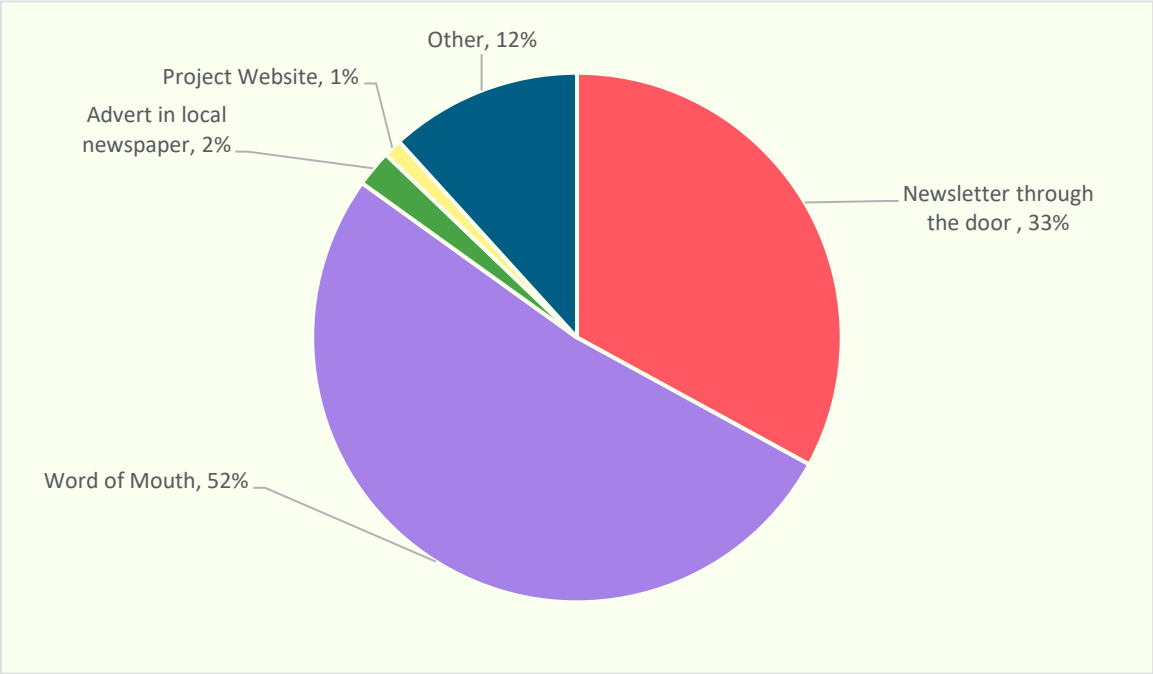
At the in-person exhibitions, and on the project website for the Proposed Development, visitors were invited to complete a survey asking a range of questions related to the scheme.

A total of 260 feedback forms were completed during phase one of the consultation, with a summary of the answers received available below.

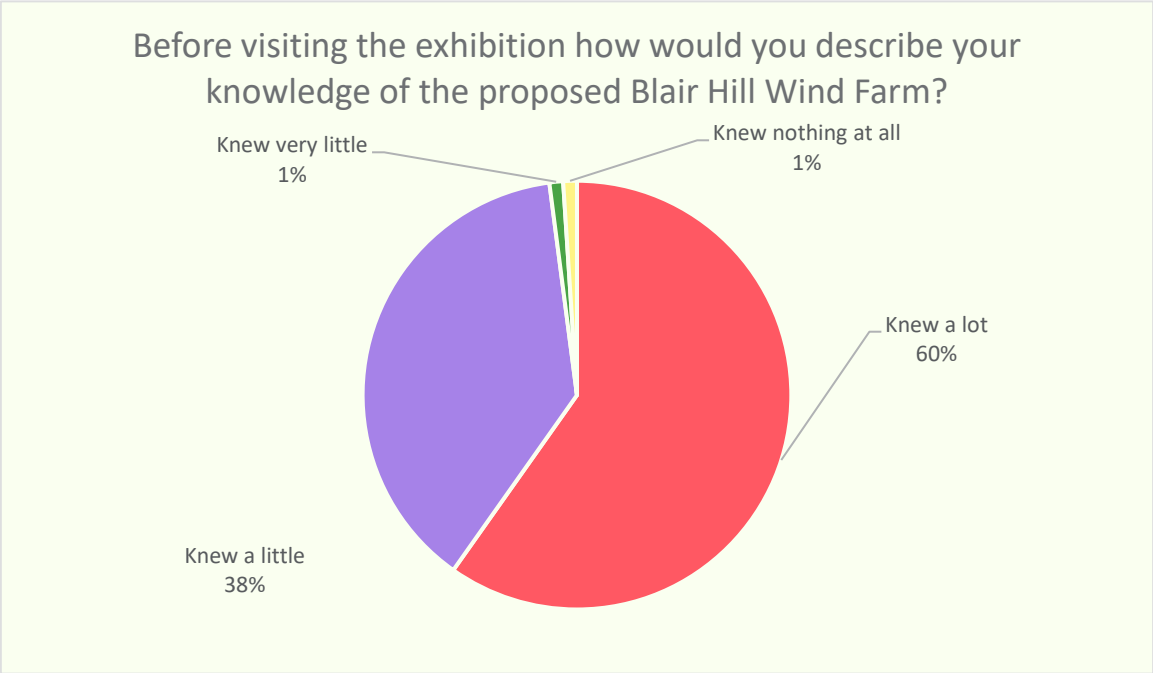
A copy of the feedback form can be viewed in **Appendix 5.10**.

Summary of Responses

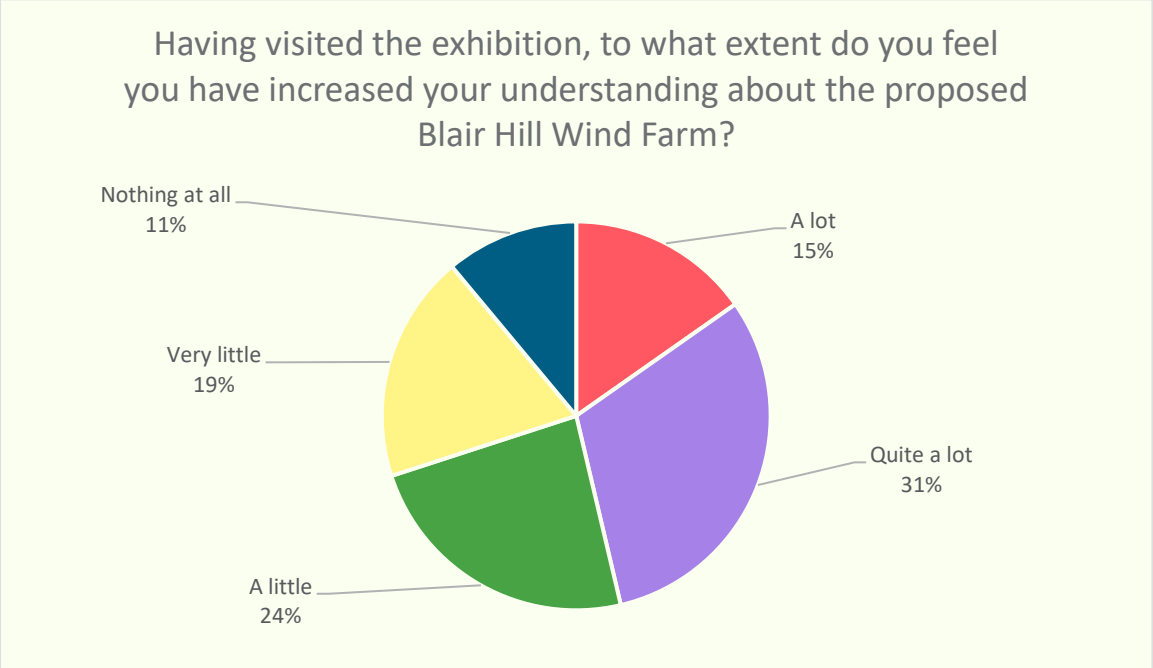
Q1.1 - How did you find out about our public exhibitions?



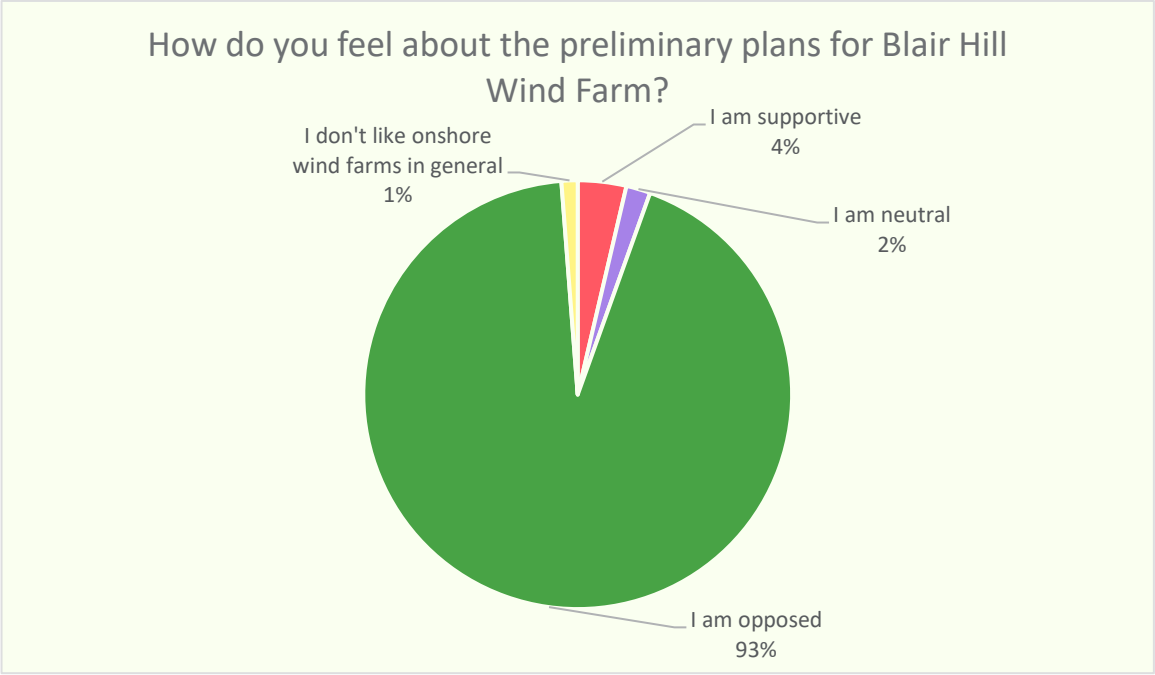
Q1.2 - Before visiting the exhibition how would you describe your knowledge of the proposed Blair Hill Wind Farm?



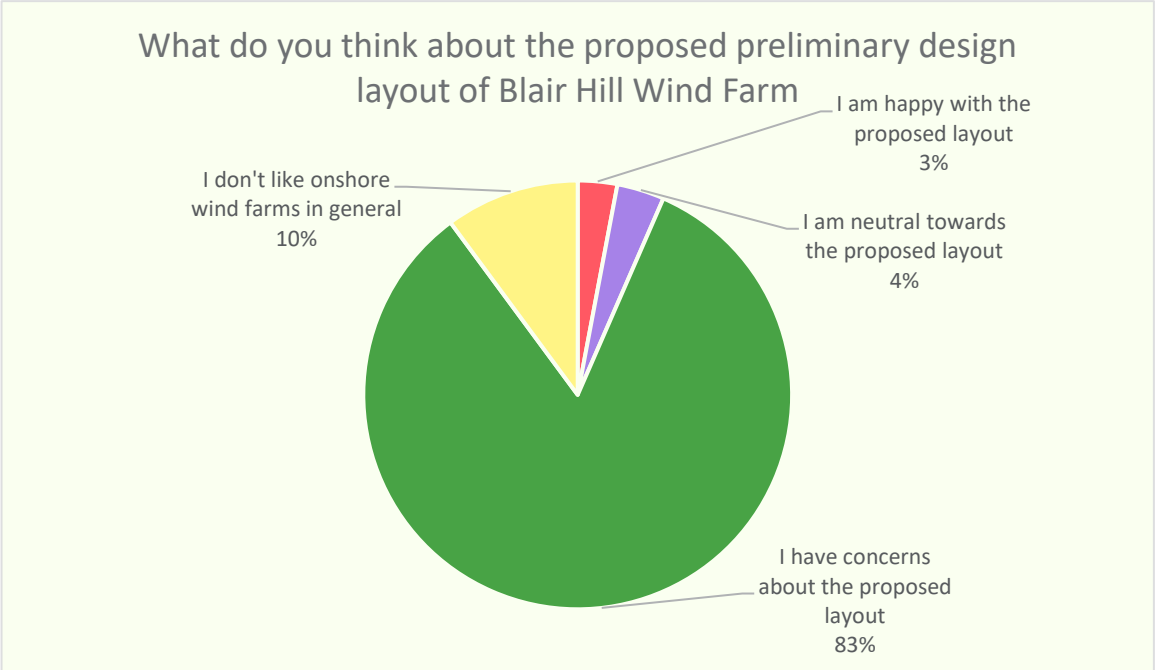
Q1.3 - Having visited the exhibition, to what extent do you feel you have increased your understanding about the proposed Blair Hill Wind Farm?



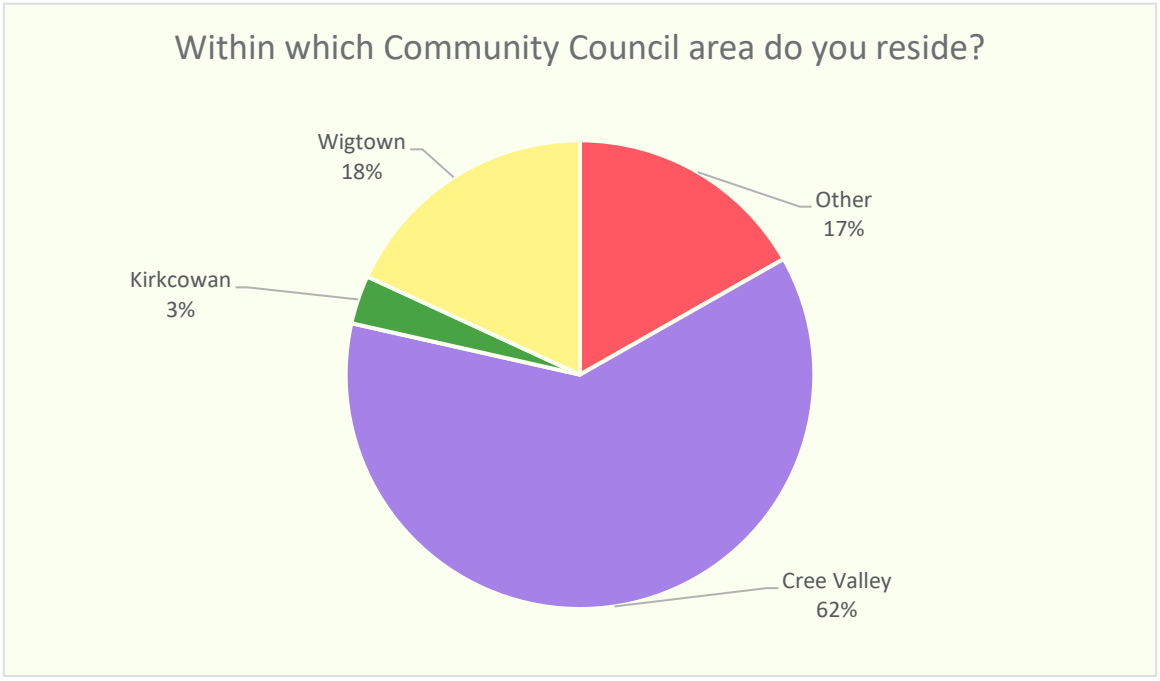
Q2.1 - How do you feel about the preliminary plans for Blair Hill Wind Farm?



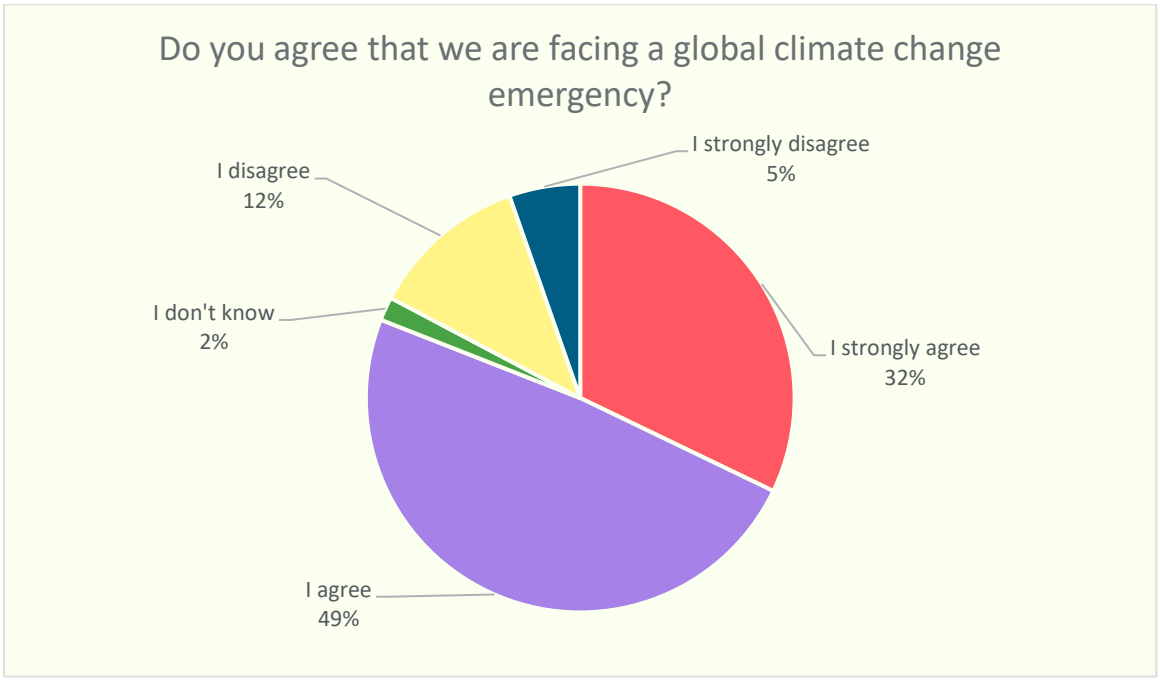
Q2.2 - What do you think about the proposed preliminary design layout of Blair Hill Wind Farm?



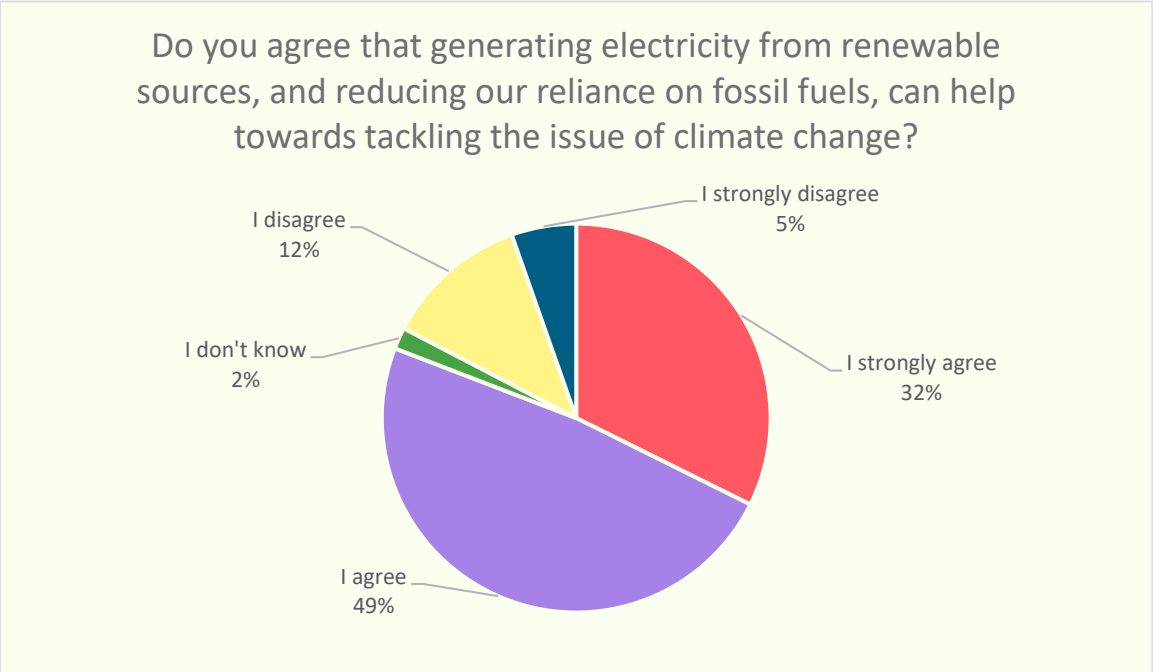
Q3.1 - Within which Community Council area do you reside?



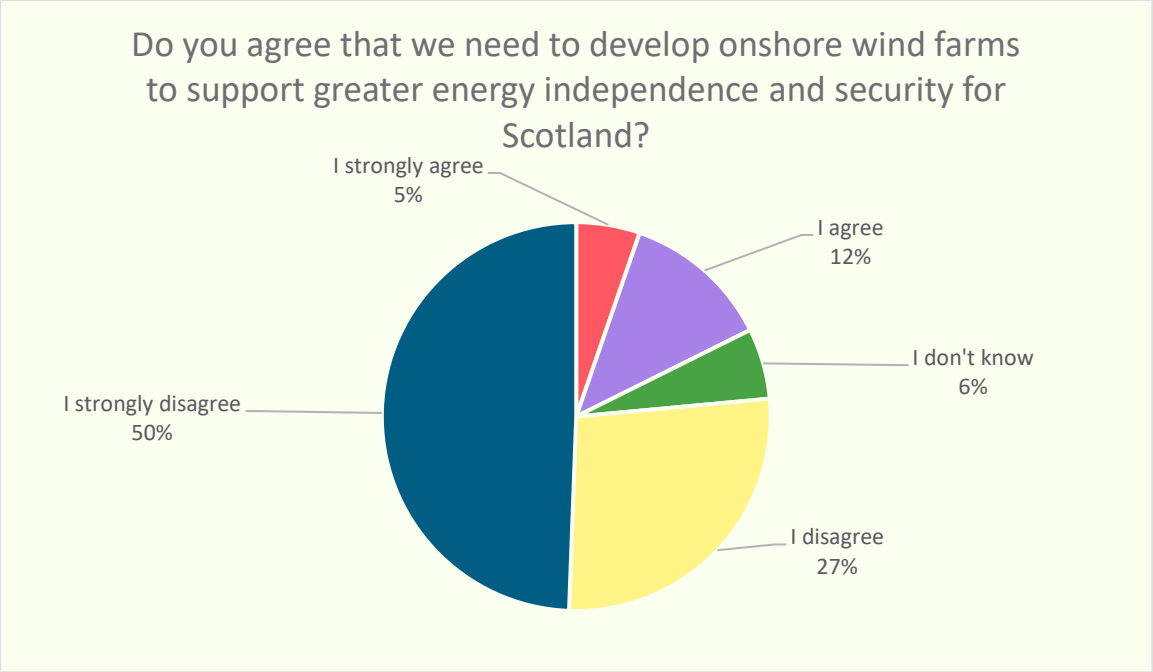
Q4.1 - Do you agree that we are facing a global climate change emergency?



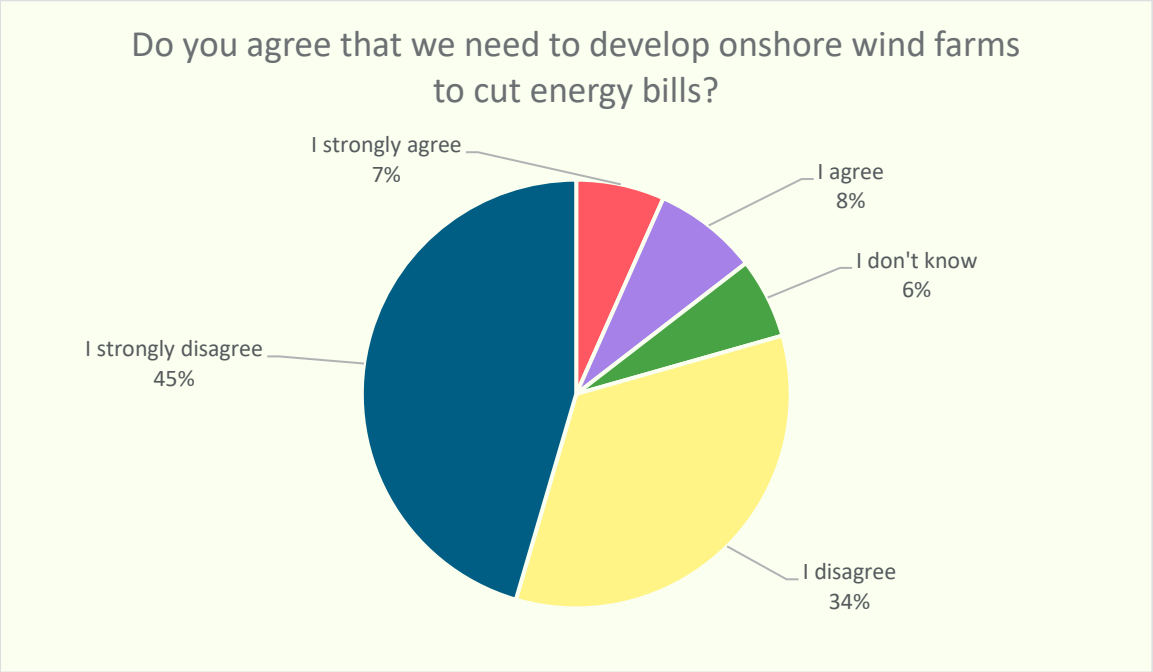
Q4.2 - Do you agree that generating electricity from renewable sources, and reducing our reliance on fossil fuels, can help towards tackling the issue of climate change?



Q4.3 - Do you agree that we need to develop onshore wind farms to support greater energy independence and security for Scotland?



Q4.4 - Do you agree that we need to develop onshore wind farms to cut energy bills?



Images from the consultation events are below:





5.4 Further Engagement

During Phase 1 of the consultation, the Applicant showed a cognisance for the importance of actively responding to the concerns and suggestions raised by the local community and stakeholders. As a result, the Applicant took proactive steps to maximise the effectiveness of the consultation process, carrying out additional means of engagement to ensure a breadth of information was provided to the local community, in response to feedback and topics of discussion raised during the first set of exhibitions.

Resident Visits

In response to specific requests raised by residents, the Applicant arranged visits to meet with them in person. These visits provided an opportunity for direct dialogue, allowing the Applicant to address specific issues in a more personal and detailed manner. Following these visits, the Applicant provided further information to address any specific questions or requests for additional details made by the residents, where possible.

Update Newsletters

Throughout the consultation period, as outlined above, the Applicant produced a series of community newsletters. In December 2023 a newsletter (see **Appendix 5.11**) was produced to provide an update following the conclusion of the first round of exhibitions. This edition provided an update on the project, including a spotlight on the newly developed FAQ page on the website. The FAQ page was created in direct response to feedback received during the consultation and was designed to address the common questions and concerns raised by the community. Additionally, the newsletter informed residents of a separate call for information regarding private water supplies within 2km of the Proposed Development.

Call for information on Private Water Supplies

One of the key areas of concern raised during the consultation was the potential impact of the Proposed Development on private water supplies. In response, the Applicant organised a 'call for information', inviting residents to provide details of their private water supplies to assist in identifying all such supplies within the area. This initiative aimed to supplement the existing data gathered from Dumfries and Galloway Council, as well as the information obtained during the Private Water Supply Risk Assessment (see Technical Appendix 10.2 of the EIA Report) to ensure the most comprehensive data set possible.

The newsletter above (see **Appendix 5.11**) informed local residents about this call for information and explained that, while the Applicant had already collected available supply data from the Council, additional input from the community would help enhance the accuracy of the data. As a result of this outreach, 13 responses were received from local residents who participated in the call for information.

6. Community Liason Group (CLG).

6.1 Overview

In January 2024, the Applicant established a Community Liaison Group (CLG) as a dedicated platform for open dialogue and information exchange.

This initiative was undertaken in direct response to feedback from the local community and elected representatives, emphasising the need for continued engagement beyond the initial exhibitions. The CLG was designed as an advanced platform for transparent communication and detailed discussions, ensuring that community representatives were actively heard, and their contributions could be directly integrated into the project development by the project team where possible.

The CLG has exemplified a proactive and transparent approach to consultation with the local community, by facilitating open dialogue and detailed discussions. RES is committed to continuing this collaborative engagement by maintaining the CLG's establishment beyond the pre-application phase, and into the post-submission/construction phases.

6.2 Formation and membership

The CLG was formed with a diverse membership including locally elected representatives, community groups, and other key stakeholders. Direct invitations to local groups were issued in December 2023, with further sign ups encouraged via the December 2023 community newsletter.

The membership includes:

Stakeholder	Type of Stakeholder	Number of Representatives
Cree Valley Community Council	Community Group	2
Kirkcowan Community Council	Community Group	2
Galloway and Wigtown West Ward Councillors	Elected Representatives	4
Ditch the Blair Hill Project	Community Group	2
Cree Valley Area Development Trust	Community Group	2
Machars and Cree Valley Climate Action Network	Community Group	1
Newton Stewart Initiative	Community Group	2
River Cree District Salmon Fishery Board	Community Group	1
River Cree Hatchery & Habitat Trust	Community Group	1

An invite to join the CLG was declined by the stakeholders and community groups listed below:

Stakeholder	Type of Stakeholder
Ward Officer for Mid-Galloway and Wigtown West	Council Representative
Hands off our Hills	Community Group
The Royal Burgh of Wigtown & District Community Council	Community Group
Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere	Charity
Southern Upland Partnership	Charity
South of Scotland Destination Alliance	Local Business
Galloway Fisheries Trust	Charity
The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds	Charity

6.3 Meetings and Activities

Thus far, the CLG has convened on the following dates:

- 24th January 2024 | 7pm – 8:40pm
- 27th February 2024 | 7pm – 9:10pm
- 9th April 2024 | 7pm – 9pm
- 18th June 2024 | 7pm – 9:30pm
- 27th August 2024 | 7pm – 9.15pm

All meetings have been held at the McMillan Hall, Newton Stewart.

Rather than being selected by the Applicant, at the inaugural meeting, the CLG collectively agreed to appoint a representative from Ditch the Blair Hill Project (DTBHP) as Chair of the CLG. The CLG terms of reference were agreed at the February meeting and are published on the project's dedicated website.

Throughout the series of meetings, the Applicant has provided comprehensive administrative support, including facilitating each meeting and producing the agenda), arranging the attendance of guest speakers, and preparing and uploading meeting minutes to the website.

Engagement and Contributions

- **Advance Questions:** Members were given the opportunity to submit questions in advance of each meeting, as well as ask them during the meetings. RES provided written responses to these questions, which were included in the meeting minutes.
- **Guest Speakers:** A number of guest speakers attended the meetings to deliver presentations on topics requested by the CLG. To date, the CLG has hosted presentations on cultural heritage considerations, wind farm construction and socio-economics and tourism. This provided an opportunity for technical consultants to introduce work relating to their specialism and relating to Blair Hill.

Feedback and Suggestions

Feedback from the CLG has had a significant impact on the project. For example:

- **Viewpoint Selection:** The CLG played a significant role in selecting the viewpoints shown at the second round of exhibitions. They provided local knowledge on the suitability of proposed

viewpoints for the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA), leading to changes in the final list of viewpoints.

- **LiDAR Survey:** The CLG recommended the inclusion of a LiDAR survey as part of the heritage work pre construction, which the Applicant has agreed to.

Documentation

Minutes from all CLG meetings and the Terms of Reference can be found in (**Appendix 6.1**).

7. Phase 2 Consultation.

7.1 Overview

Following Phase 1 of the consultation in October 2023, the Applicant engaged with the local community again through two further in-person consultation events in May 2024. These events were held to present and discuss the updated wind farm design based on the feedback received during the first phase of consultation and the results of site surveys and assessments.

Political stakeholders and community groups were informed about Phase 2 of the consultation through a newsletter distributed via email on 10 May 2024 (**Appendix 7.1**). The newsletter was also distributed to 4,120 properties within a 15km radius of the site. Additionally, a social media graphic promoting the consultation was shared with the Cree Valley Community Council (**Appendix 7.2**).

The consultation events were advertised in the Galloway News on 10th May 2024 (**Appendix 7.3**), as feedback from the first round of consultation events indicated that the Galloway News had a wider readership compared to the Galloway Gazette.

The in-person events were held at the below dates and locations:

- **Tuesday 21st May 2024 | 3pm to 8pm | McMillan Hall, Newton Stewart, DG8 6EQ**
- **Wednesday 22nd May 2024 |3pm to 8pm |St Couans Hall, Kirkcowan, DG8 0HJ**

7.2 In-person exhibition events

The second round of in-person consultation events was held at McMillan Hall, Newton Stewart on Tuesday 21st May 2024, and at St Couans Hall, Kirkcowan on Wednesday 22nd May 2024. Approximately 330 members of the local community attended the events over both days.

Exhibition boards (**Appendix 7.4**) displayed at both events provided updates on the wind farm design and, where available, results from site surveys. Additionally, copies of these exhibition boards were made available on the project website starting from 21st May 2024. The subject of the boards were:

Alongside the exhibition boards, eight projected viewpoints of the wind farm were shown at both consultation events, further illustrating the modifications made to the project design (**Appendix 7.5**).

The locations of these viewpoints were:

- Viewpoint 2 - Corsbie Road, Newton Stewart
- Viewpoint 4 - Glenvernoch Fell/ Hill of Ochiltree
- Viewpoint 6 – Cairnsmore of Fleet
- Viewpoint 7 – Merrick
- Viewpoint 8 – A75 near Creetown
- Viewpoint 9 – Kirkcowan
- Viewpoint 10 - NCR73 on Minor Road North of Wigtown
- Viewpoint 20: Monigaff Parish Church

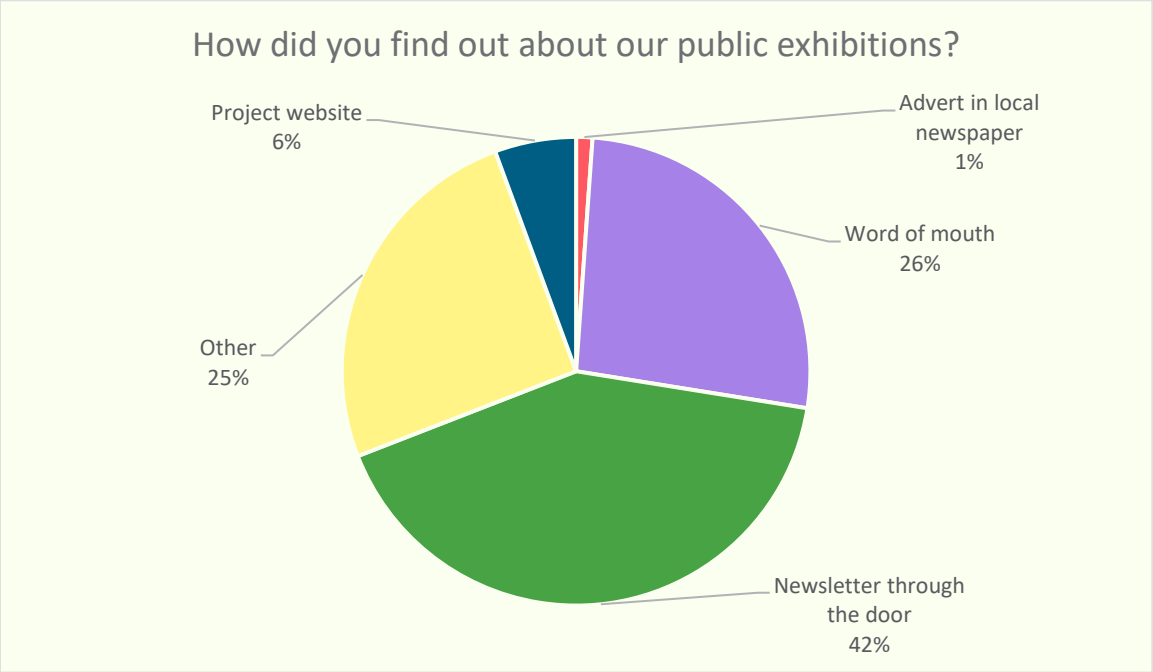
In response to feedback received from the first round of public consultation events and the Community Liaison Group, which expressed interest in viewing the Proposed Development from various locations, a computer-generated fly-through video was created. This video, which shows the Proposed Development from several additional viewpoints based on the feedback provided, was showcased at the second round of consultation events. It is also available for viewing on the project website.

A total of 180 feedback forms were completed during Phase 2 of the consultation, submitted both at the consultation events and online via the project's dedicated website. A copy of the feedback form is available in **Appendix 7.6**.

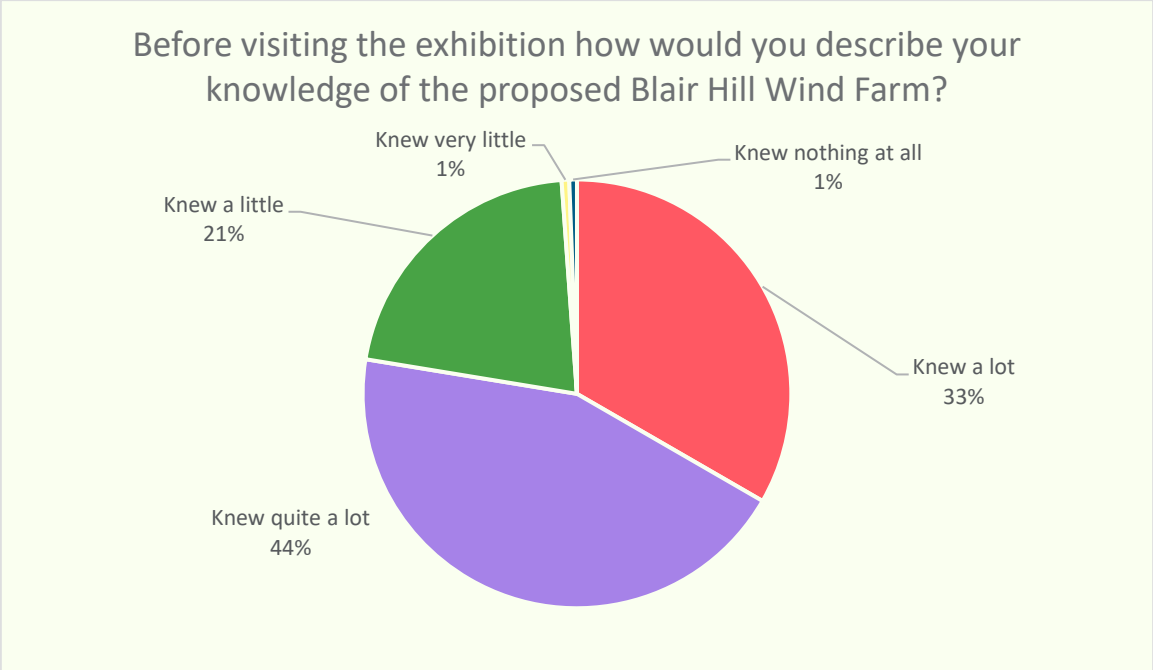
7.3 Survey Responses

180 completed feedback forms throughout phase 2 of the consultation, submitted both at the consultation event and online via the project's dedicated website. The graph below illustrates the key themes raised within the feedback.

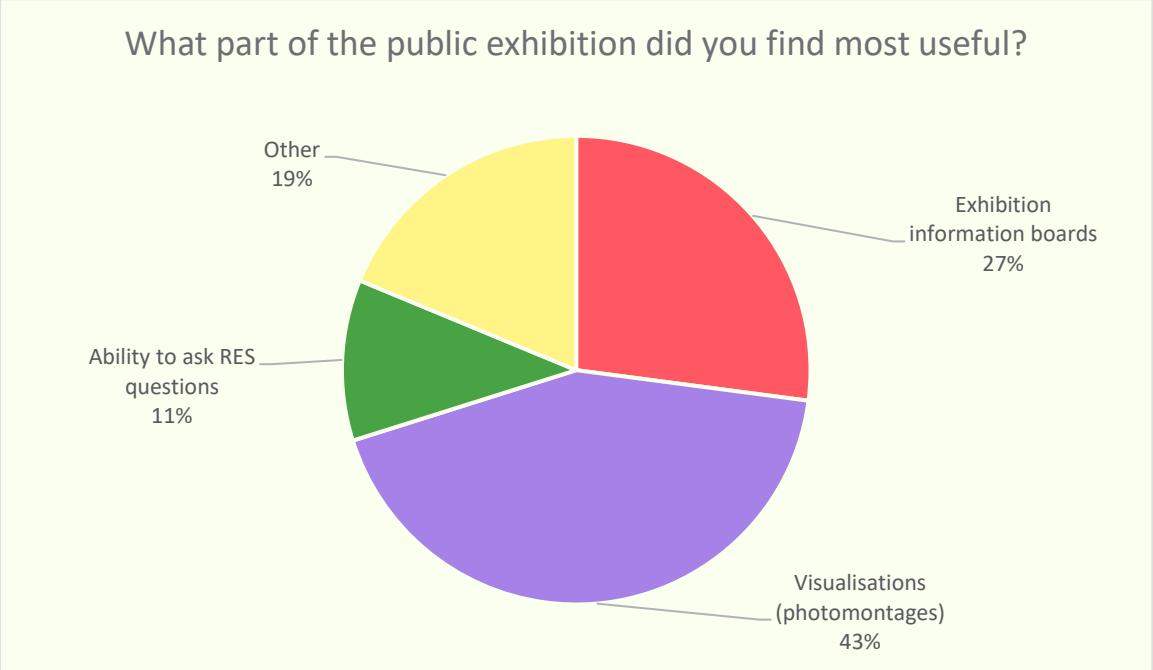
Q1.1 – How did you find out about our public exhibitions?



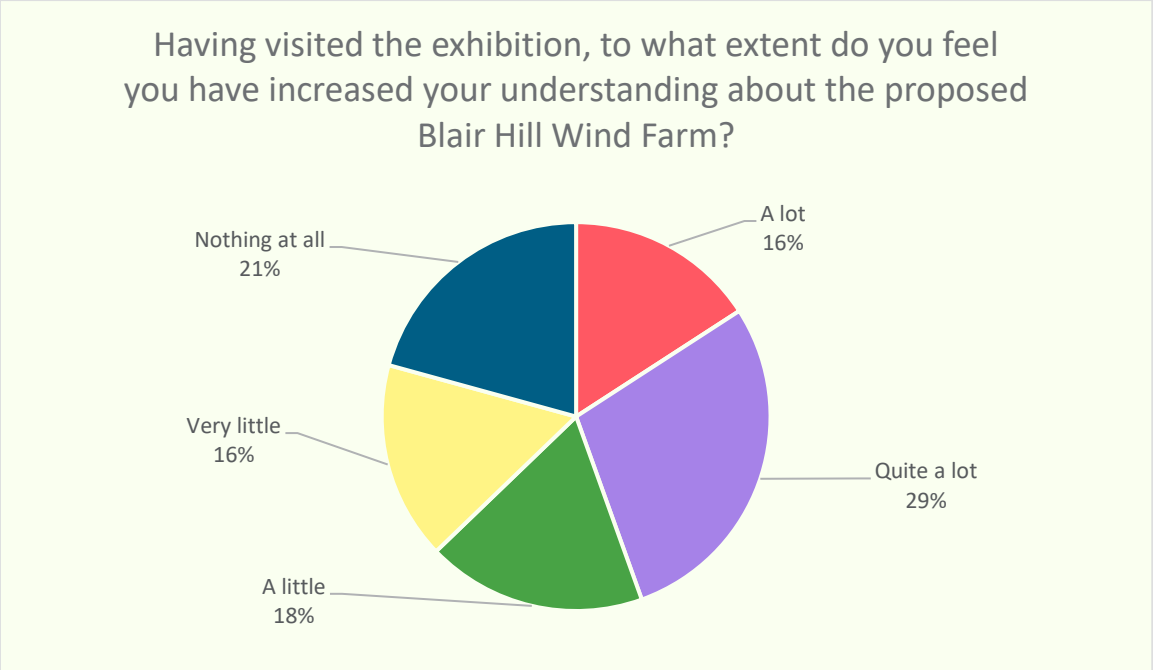
Q1.2 – Before visiting the exhibition how would you describe your knowledge of the proposed Blair Hill Wind Farm?



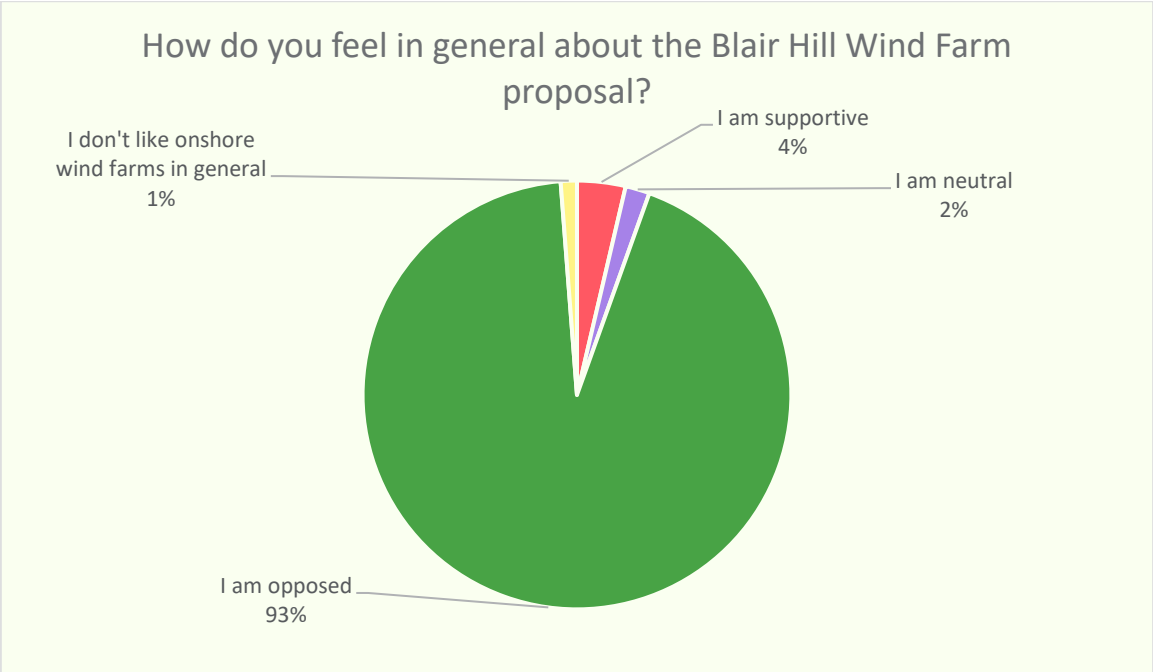
Q1.3 – What part of the public exhibition did you find most useful?



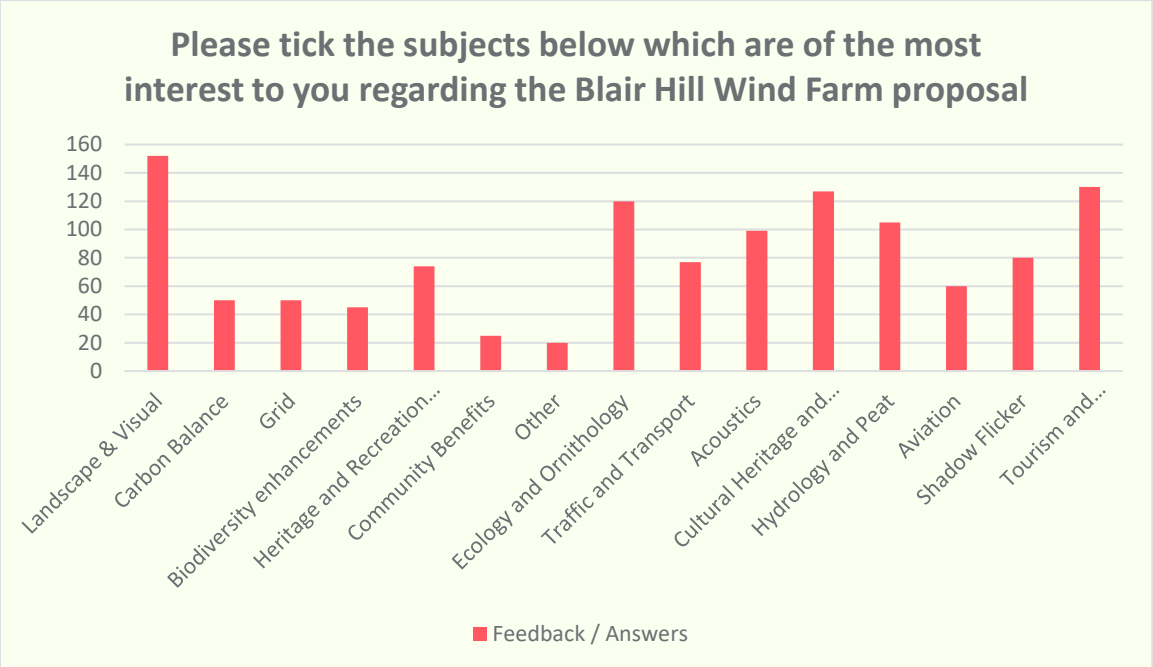
Q1.4 Having visited the exhibition, to what extent do you feel you have increased your understanding about the proposed Blair Hill Wind Farm?



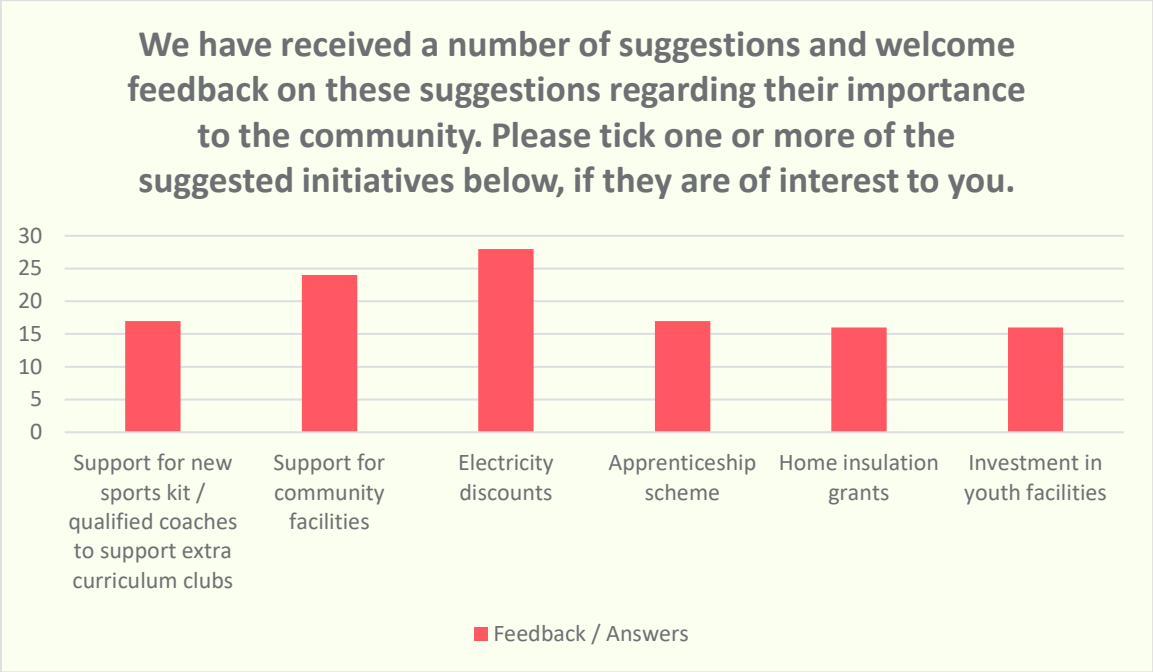
Q2.1 – How do you feel in general about the Blair Hill Wind Farm proposal?



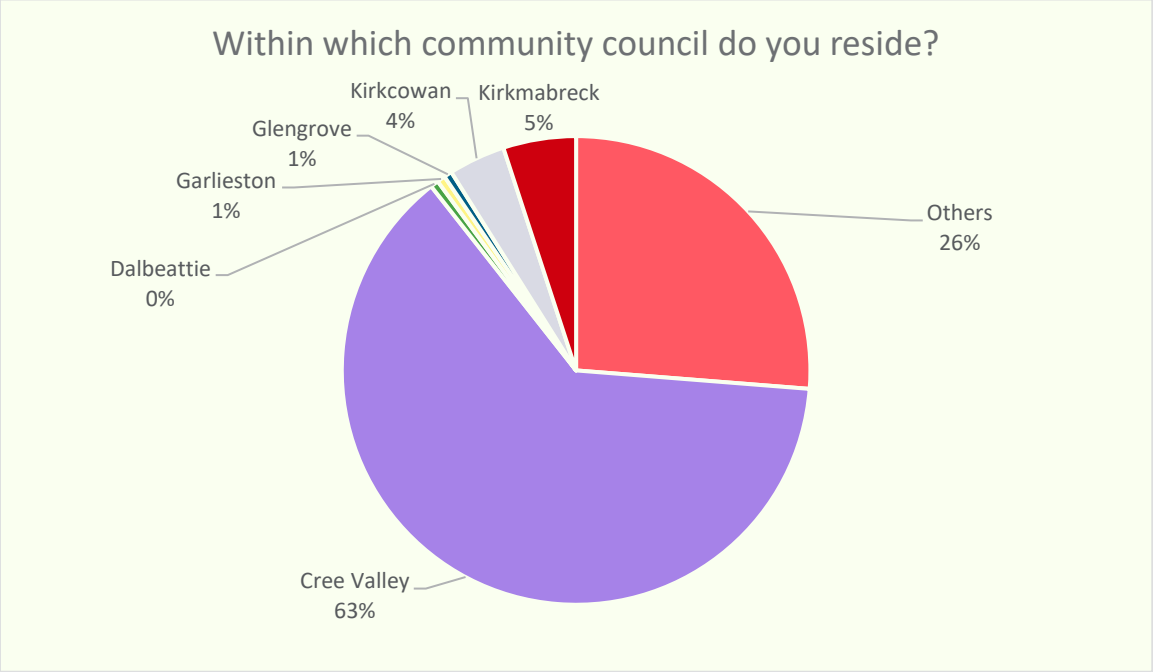
Q2.2 – Please tick the subjects below which are of the most interest to you regarding the Blair Hill Wind Farm proposal.



Q3.1 – We have received a number of suggestions and welcome feedback on these suggestions regarding their importance to the community. Please tick one or more of the suggested initiatives below, if they are of interest to you.



Q3.3 – Within which Community Council do you reside?



Images from the consultation events are below:

8. Additional Engagment.

In addition to the core consultation efforts, the Applicant engaged with the local community through a variety of supportive and interactive initiatives. These activities were designed to foster a deeper connection with the community and demonstrate a commitment to local involvement beyond formal consultation.

8.1 Minigaff Primary School Visit

In February 2024, the Applicant visited Minnigaff Primary School in Newton Stewart to deliver a presentation to Primary 1-5 pupils on the theme "People Who Help Us." The presentation focused on the significance of renewable energy and its positive effects on local communities. The children showed great enthusiasm and engagement, participating actively in discussions about renewable energy, its various forms, and its environmental benefits. The presentation not only educated them on how renewable technology works but also provided insight into the roles of professionals in the renewable energy sector. This interactive session aimed to foster an early appreciation of sustainable practices and their importance for future generations.

8.2 Donation to Community Projects

In November 2023, the Applicant made a donation of £2,000 to support local community initiatives, including the Newton Stewart Christmas Light Group and the Cree Valley Area Development Trust (CVADT) Winter Wonderland Event. This contribution was intended to enhance the community celebrations, while demonstrating the Applicant's commitment to supporting and enriching the local community beyond the scope of the primary project activities.

8.3 Press Advertising

The Applicant also engaged with the local community through strategic press advertising in the bi-monthly Wigtown newsletter, *The Machars Observer*. In the December 2023/January 2024 edition, the Applicant placed a full-colour back-page advertisement, as shown in **Appendix 8.1**.

This was followed by a second full-page piece in the April/May/June 2024 edition (**Appendix 8.2**), which focused on the Applicant's commitment to enhancing biodiversity within its previous wind farm projects, and its intention to replicate these efforts at the current site. These advertisements aimed to inform the community about the Applicant's ongoing initiatives and reinforce their commitment to integrating biodiversity considerations into the project.

8.4 John Cooper MP Meeting

Following his election at the 2024 General Election, the Applicant met with the newly elected MP for Dumfries and Galloway, John Cooper MP on Friday 13th September 2024 to provide a detailed overview of the project since its launch in July 2023, covering both phases of consultation and discussing the establishment of the CLG.

9. Feedback and Applicants Response

All feedback received during the all phases of the consultation has been considered by the Applicant throughout the design iteration and pre-planning stages of the Proposed Development. A summary of feedback, issues and concerns raised, together with the Applicant's response to each can be found in below.

There were 260 completed feedback forms throughout phase 1 of the consultation, submitted both at the consultation event and online via the Proposed Development's dedicated website, and 180 completed feedback forms throughout phase 2 of the consultation. The table below shows the key themes raised within the feedback, and the Applicant's response to these issues.

Key Issue	***Applicant Response***
Landscape and Visual Impact The most common area of feedback received focused on the landscape and visual aspect of the proposal.	The Applicant recognises that the landscape and visual aspect of the Proposed Development was a key concern within the community and has sought to incorporate this feedback in the final design. Following the public exhibitions, the Applicant removed eight turbines from the layout design, reduced the tip height of 2 turbines to 210m (with the other turbines at a tip height of 250m) and revised the remaining turbine locations. One of the key drivers for this change, alongside minimising effects on heritage assets and sensitive habitats, was to reduce visibility from key viewpoints. This includes visibility from the Merrick being reduced from six turbines to two blade tips and reducing the overall spread of the wind farm from views in Wigtown and Newton Stewart. Additionally, these revisions have aimed to minimise the visibility of any necessary aviation lighting from within the Dark Sky Park. Landscape architects have undertaken extensive assessment work to inform the design development and turbine layout. Each turbine location has moved to varying degrees to refine the design and minimise impacts wherever possible. The Applicant is looking to achieve a design that strikes an acceptable balance between the visibility of the Proposed Development and its ability to generate significant amounts of renewable energy. Ultimately, the acceptability of this design will be assessed by the determining authority in relation to current energy policy and planning requirements having considered feedback from consultees as well as representations by members of the community and wider public.
Tourism A large section of respondents referenced concerns over the impact that the proposed wind farm would have on the local area's tourism industry.	Research to date indicates that onshore wind development has had no adverse impact on the tourism industry in Scotland. However, an assessment is included within the S36 Application with specific regard as to whether the Blair Hill project will have any effect on tourism behaviour and the tourism economy. The assessment considers the potential effects that the Proposed Development could have on tourism, following a focused approach on effects related to the Galloway Dark Sky Park and key tourist attractions and recreation assets. For example, the assessment on the

	Galloway Dark Sky Park found that whilst there may be localised impacts from the aviation lighting on a limited number of dark sky locations, it is unlikely that the presence of the Proposed Development would affect dark sky tourism as a whole in the area. The overall conclusions of the assessment found that the Proposed Development is not expected to affect local accommodation providers, recreational activities and tourism attractions. The BiGGAR Economics report: Wind Farms and Tourism Trends in Scotland (2021), found that while the capacity of wind farms had more than quadrupled over the study period, employment in tourism related sectors had increased by more than 20%. It found no relationship between tourism employment and wind farm development, at the level of the Scottish economy, across local authorities nor in the locality of wind farm sites.
Ecology Many respondents focused on ecology in their feedback.	Protecting and minimising any potential direct or indirect impacts on local wildlife and their habitats is of utmost importance and the Applicant takes this responsibility seriously. The Applicant has looked to mitigate any potential effects of the Proposed Development during construction and operation on the habitats and protected species that are found to be present or active within the site. Extensive ecological surveys have been completed across the site for habitats, protected species and fish. The survey findings show that the habitats are a mix of areas of commercial conifer plantation and a mosaic of common upland vegetation types which are grazed by livestock, including areas of acid and marshy grasslands, bracken, wet heath, and bog. The protected species surveys indicate the presence of otter, badger, bats, reptiles and potentially pine marten at, or in close proximity to, the site. The fisheries surveys indicated many of the suitable watercourses on and around the site contained brown trout, with one watercourse downstream having low numbers of Atlantic salmon. The design of the wind farm has included avoidance and buffering from key features. The design of the wind farm has included appropriate buffers on known breeding sites for barn owl and lek sites for black grouse. Updated proposals include a Biodiversity Enhancement and Management Plan that could include Broadleaved woodland creation, Peatland Restoration and Bracken Control/Native Scrub Creation.
Heritage Assets A significant proportion of respondents referenced the impact that the development would have on protected historical monuments.	Within, or directly adjacent to, the site there are six Scheduled Monuments: Dalvaird Cairn (SM1015), Drumfern Cairn and Stone Circle (SM1019), Napper's Cottage Cairn (SM5676), The Thieves, Standing Stone (SM1044), Cordorcan Cairn (SM10385) and Garlies Castle (SM7916). Feedback from Historic Environment Scotland (HES) and Dumfries and Galloway Council, as well as comments from the public consultation, have significantly influenced the final design. The design has been revised to include a larger set back distance from Scheduled Monuments to avoid any adverse impacts on the integrity of their settings. Amongst other changes, the two turbines closest to Garlies Castle has been removed, as well as the four turbines closest to Dalvaird cairn. In addition to these design considerations, the Applicant is actively exploring enhancement proposals to improve public accessibility to the heritage assets within the site. This could be achieved through a

	network of new and upgraded footpaths, forming a signposted heritage trail throughout the site. The Applicant believes that this initiative will unlock the site's heritage, promoting awareness and a better understanding of the historic environment for both the local community and visitors alike.
Noise A significant proportion of respondents referenced the noise that would be generated by the wind farm	The acoustic profile of the turbines is one of many important considerations that has been assessed and carefully managed as part of the site design. The design process has ensured that the Proposed Development doesn't exceed the strict acoustic limits which will be set within the planning conditions should consent be granted. These limits correspond to existing background acoustic levels typical in the local area, which will control the wind farm acoustics in relation to nearby residential properties. Operation and construction acoustic assessments and prediction have been undertaken in accordance with the relevant standards, current assessment methodologies and best practice as determined by the regulatory bodies, which include Dumfries and Galloway Council, the Scottish Government and the UK Institute of Acoustics. In consultation with Dumfries and Galloway Council, we have undertaken a background noise survey at a number of locations around the site to establish the existing background sound levels. Appropriate noise limits were calculated through analysis of baseline conditions and the criteria set specified by the ETSU-R-97 guidelines. These limits will be agreed with the regulatory authority, and the site will be required to comply with these strict noise limits set within planning conditions. A sound propagation model was used to predict the noise levels due to the proposed wind farm at nearby residential properties over a range of wind speeds. The predicted operational noise levels are within noise limits at nearby residential properties at all considered wind speeds. Therefore the Proposed Development complies with the relevant guidance on wind farm noise.
Aviation Lighting Several respondents referenced the aviation lighting as a key issue related to the wind farm proposals	The Applicant appreciates concerns raised about the impacts of aviation lighting on the Dark Sky Park. We have agreed a reduced lighting strategy with the Civil Aviation Authority that means only six out of 14 turbines would need to be lit. Technologies are being developed that include the ability to turn on the lights only when aircraft are approaching the wind farm, and RES is committed to using new technology as it becomes available to reduce impacts further. Decisions to the layout design have sought to reduce potential visibility of any required aviation lighting from within the Dark Sky Park. The red aviation lighting currently used is designed to focus the light across and upwards for the attention of aircraft rather than downward to those at ground level. The light intensity varies in response to weather conditions and visibility – with lighting dimmed to 10% of their intensity in good visibility but maximised in cloudy or foggy weather. In some instances, infra-red lighting may be possible which is invisible to the naked eye. The proposed lighting strategy will be presented in the planning application, which will also include a night-time visual impact assessment, visualisations and Zone of Theoretical Visibility showing the extents of visibility of the agreed aviation lighting scheme.

10. Post-submission engagement.

10.1 Ongoing engagement

The Applicant is committed to maintaining active and ongoing engagement with local stakeholders throughout the entirety of the application process. This commitment extends beyond the initial submission phase and encompasses continuous interaction and communication to ensure transparency throughout the project's lifespan.

To support this ongoing engagement, the Applicant will host two post-submission information sessions, as detailed below. Additionally, regular meetings of the CLG will continue throughout the lifespan of the application, ensuring consistent communication and involvement from the community and political stakeholders.

10.2 Post-submission information sessions

The Applicant will be presenting the final design of the wind farm at two information drop-in sessions in Newton Stewart and Wigtown. These events will offer an opportunity to see how The Applicant has incorporated feedback from the local community to shape the final design of the wind farm. On display at the sessions will be a series of exhibition boards and projected viewpoints that were submitted as part of the Section 36 application.

Members of the project team, including a number of technical consultants, will be on hand to discuss the project and answer any questions the community may have. Details on the locations and times of these events will be shared on the project website and in newsletters sent to households.

The information presented will also be available to view on the dedicated project website.

11. Conclusion.

11.1 Concluding statement

From the outset, the Applicant has been dedicated to engaging with the local community and stakeholders, ensuring a thorough and inclusive consultation process for the Proposed Development.

While not mandated by statute for a Section 36 application, the Applicant has actively pursued and exceeded best practices in the community engagement and public consultation, as evidenced by the two extensive rounds of public consultation and the establishment of the Community Liaison Group.

The Applicant extends sincere appreciation to those who participated in the in-person public exhibitions, reviewed the proposals online, and provided valuable feedback via email and telephone. The feedback received has been invaluable, directly influencing and shaping the project's design in significant ways. In response to community feedback, the Applicant made substantial revisions, including reducing the number of proposed turbines from 22 to 14, with two turbines at a reduced tip height of 210 metres and the remaining 12 at 250 metres. Furthermore, the locations of each turbine have been carefully adjusted to minimise potential impacts and better align with community expectations.

These modifications underscore the Applicant's commitment to ensuring that the development is responsive to local needs and priorities. By integrating community feedback into the project's design, the Applicant has not only met regulatory requirements but also demonstrated a genuine commitment to creating a development that reflects the concerns and values of the local community. This collaborative approach has resulted in a scheme that is both environmentally and socially considerate, highlighting the meaningful impact of the consultation process on the final design

12. Appendices.

4.1 Introductory Stakeholder Email

Renewable Energy Systems Limited
Third Floor, STV, Pacific Quay
Glasgow G51 1PQ, United Kingdom
+44 (0)1414 045 500 | info@res-group.com

[redacted]

31st July 2023

Dear [redacted]

RE: Blair Hill Wind Farm Proposal

I am writing to let you know that RES is in the early stages of exploring the potential for a wind farm located approximately 6km north of Newton Stewart, Dumfries and Galloway.

About RES
RES is the world's largest independent renewable energy company and is active in onshore and offshore wind, solar, energy storage, green hydrogen, transmission and distribution. As an industry innovator for over 40 years, RES has delivered more than 23GW of renewable energy projects across the globe and supports an operational asset portfolio exceeding 12GW worldwide for a large client base.

From its Glasgow office, RES has been developing, constructing and operating wind farms in Scotland since 1993. Across Scotland, RES has developed and/or built twenty one wind farms in Scotland with a total generation capacity of 597MW, including the Solwaybank Wind Farm near Langholm, constructed in 2020.

Scoping Report submission
Having undertaken initial site feasibility work we are now preparing for more detailed environmental and technical site survey work which will be carried out over the coming months to help inform the design. In line with this we have submitted a Scoping Report to the Scottish Government's Energy Consents Unit (ECU) which sets out and seeks feedback on the proposed scope of environmental assessment work.

Project overview
The Scoping Report includes an early design for the proposed scheme comprising up to 22 turbines with a maximum tip height of 250m, resulting in an overall site generating capacity of 145MW. Blair Hill Wind Farm would be capable of generating clean, low-cost renewable electricity for more than 150,000 homes each year (based on the current layout). Onshore wind projects like Blair Hill contribute to Scotland's net zero targets target, enable more energy to be generated domestically improving security of supply, and are the cheapest form of new electricity generation, alongside offshore wind and large-scale solar. This makes developments like Blair Hill not just good for the environment but also for the consumer.

RES is committed to ensuring that, wherever reasonably practicable, local contractors and employees are used in all aspects of wind farm development. Blair Hill Wind Farm could provide a vital economic boost, create skilled, sustainable jobs and help to drive a cleaner and more resilient economy. The development is predicted to deliver around £6 million of inward investment in the form of jobs,

employment and the use of local services. In addition, around £1.5million in business rates will be paid each year to Dumfries and Galloway Council to help fund vital local services within the community.

We also believe that onshore wind should provide direct, lasting benefits to local communities. RES takes a tailored approach and works directly with the community to understand the local priorities, needs and community projects which the community would like the wind farm to support in the local area. RES is proposing that the package of community benefits from Blair Hill Wind Farm will be up to £5,000 per MW (or equivalent) of installed capacity per annum. Consent will be sought for 50 years. The community could, therefore, potentially benefit from financial investment of approximately £36 million during the operational period which would create positive social and economic impacts and provide a lasting legacy in the local area.

Next steps

RES believes in meaningful and effective consultation, and we aim to engage early with the local community and key stakeholders in order to facilitate constructive consultation. This helps to identify issues and concerns, as well as benefits and opportunities, which we can then consider when developing the design.

In the coming weeks, we will be undertaking a number of consultation activities including public exhibitions and launching a dedicated project website. We would welcome the opportunity to organise an introductory telephone or video-call with you to discuss the project and answer any initial questions that you may have at this stage.

RES are pleased to be supporting the Wigtown Show in 2023. If visiting the show on 2nd August, please come along to see us at our stand for more information on how RES are supporting Scotland's Environment, Economy and Consumers.

In the meantime, if you have any questions or would like further information please don't hesitate to get in touch.

Yours sincerely,

[redacted]

Sarah McArthur

Development Project Manager

[redacted]

5.1 Phase 1 Consultation Newsletter (September 2023)

BLAIR HILL WIND FARM

SEPTEMBER 2023

RES is in the early stages of exploring the potential for a wind farm located approximately 6km north of Newton Stewart, Dumfries and Galloway.

Initial environmental and technical surveys have been undertaken to ensure the site is suitable for a wind farm development, and to inform a preliminary layout and design.

Public Exhibitions

We are keen to engage with the local community and as part of our pre-application consultation we are holding public exhibitions in the local area to share more information about the project and to enable you to provide us with your feedback. RES staff will be on hand to answer any questions or queries, and comment forms will be available to gather feedback.

Tuesday 3rd October 2023
3pm to 8pm

McMillan Hall
Dashwood Square, Newton Stewart DG8 6EQ

Wednesday 4th October 2023
3pm to 8pm

Lesser Hall, Wigtown County Buildings
Wigtown, DG8 9JH

All information provided at the public exhibition will also be available at

www.blairhill-windfarm.co.uk

from 3rd October 2023.

The public exhibitions initiate a consultation period being run by RES to gather comments on the proposal. The closing date for comments is Friday 20th October 2023.

Comments forms will be available at the public exhibition. Comment forms will also be available on the website above from the day of the exhibition and can be submitted via email to carey.green@res-group.com. Hard copies can be sent by post to RES, Third Floor, STV, Pacific Quay, Glasgow, G51 1PQ.

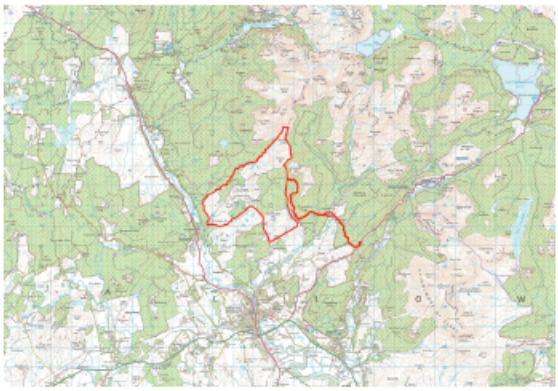
Please note that comments submitted to RES at this time are not representations to the determining authority (Scottish Government's Energy Consents Unit). There will be an opportunity to submit representations to the determining authority should an application be made.

Blair Hill Wind Farm at a Glance

The proposed Blair Hill Wind Farm is located approximately 6km north of Newton Stewart, Dumfries and Galloway. The proposed wind farm is situated in an area identified in the Dumfries and Galloway Council Local Development Plan as being an area with potential for wind farm development.

Based on our initial studies, the wind farm would comprise up to 22 turbines, each with a maximum height of 250m, resulting in an overall site generating capacity of 145MW enough to power around 150,000[1] homes with clean, low-cost electricity. Onshore wind projects like Blair Hill would contribute to the Scottish Government's net zero target of 2045, enable more energy to be generated domestically improving security of supply, and is one of the cheapest form of new electricity generation[2], alongside other renewable energy technologies. This makes developments like Blair Hill not just good for the environment but also for the consumer

RES believes that onshore wind should provide direct, lasting benefits to local communities. As part of our consultation we will work directly with the community to understand how the wind farm could support the local area and help to secure long-term economic, social and environmental benefits. This approach will help to deliver a tailored community benefits package, should the project receive consent, that is aligned with the local communities' priorities.



RES in Scotland

RES, a British company, is the world's largest independent renewable energy company with operations across Europe, the Americas and Asia-Pacific. At the forefront of renewable energy development for over 40 years, RES has developed and/or built more than 23GW of renewable energy capacity worldwide.

From its Glasgow office RES has been developing, constructing and operating wind farms in Scotland since 1993. RES has developed and/or built twenty one wind farms in Scotland with a total generation capacity of 597MW.

Sarah McArthur
Development Project Manager
Sarah.McArthur@res-group.com
07570 291 408

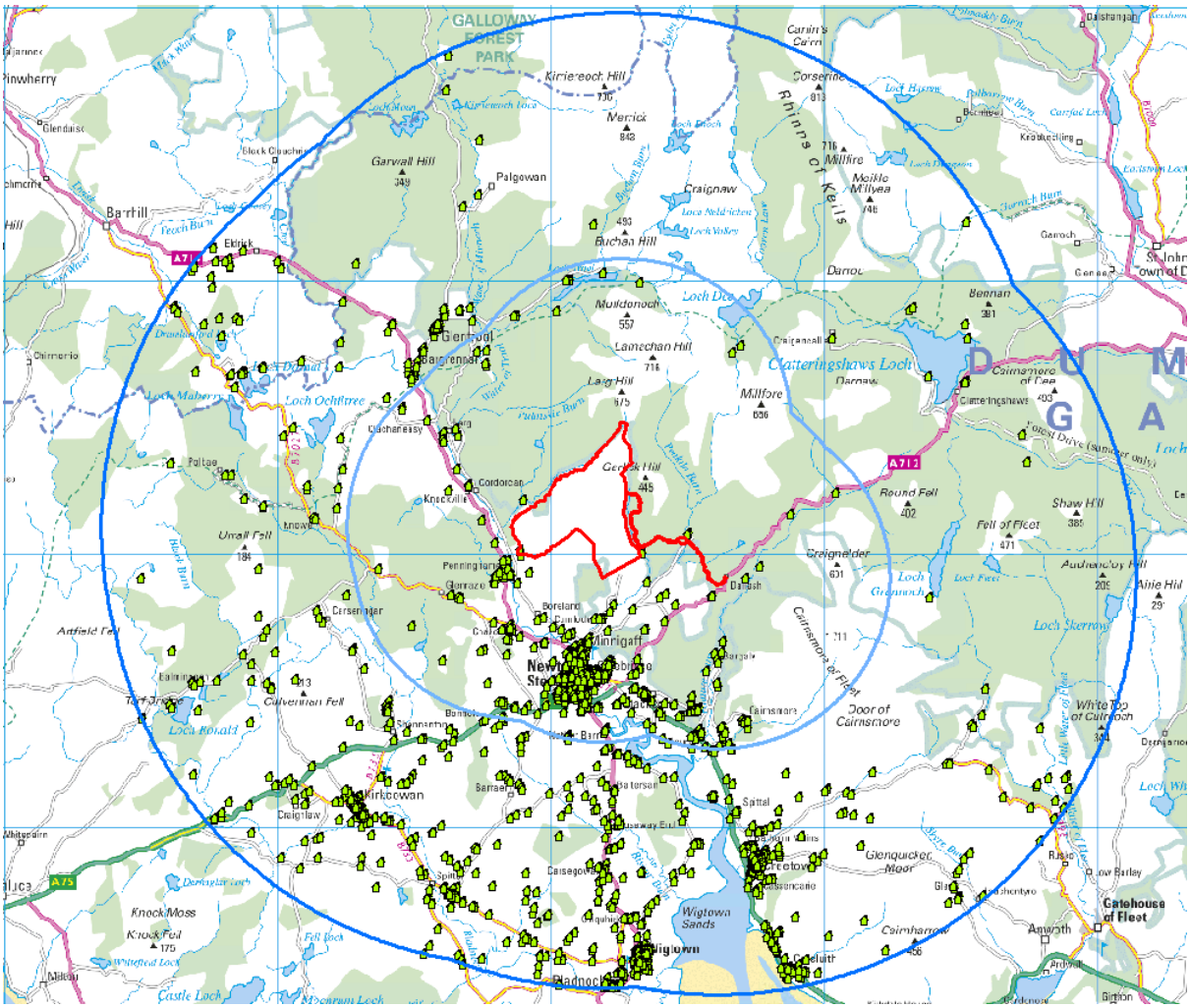
Carey Green
Community Relations Manager
carey.green@res-group.com
01872 226 931

RES, Third Floor, STV, Pacific Quay, Glasgow, G51 1PQ

If you require information in Braille, large text or audio, please let us know.

1 The homes figure has been calculated by taking the predicted annual electricity generation of the site (based on RES assessments Blair Hill has a predicted capacity factor of 42.8%) and dividing this by the annual average electricity figures from the Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) showing that the annual UK average domestic household consumption is 3,509 kWh (Dec 2022).
2 https://www.businessgreen.com/news/4122038/wake-opponents-net-zero-government-predicts-gas-power-times-expensive-renewables-2025

5.2 Phase 1 Consultation Newsletter Mailout Radius (September 2023)



5.3 Social Media Graphic Sent to Cree Valley Community Council to Advertise Consultation

5.4 Galloway Gazette Advertisement (September 2023)

BLAIR HILL WIND FARM
PUBLIC EXHIBITIONS

res
power for good

RES is in the early stages of exploring the potential for a wind farm located approximately 6km north of Newton Stewart, Dumfries and Galloway.

We are keen to engage with the local community and as part of our pre-application consultation we are holding public exhibitions in the local area to enable people to find out more about the proposal and provide us with their views. RES staff will be on hand to answer any questions or queries, and questionnaires will be available to gather feedback.

Tuesday 3rd October 2023 3pm to 8pm	McMillan Hall Dashwood Square, Newton Stewart DG8 6EQ
Wednesday 4th October 2023 3pm to 8pm	Lesser Hall, Wigtown County Buildings Wigtown, DG8 9JH

All information provided at the public exhibitions will also be available at www.blairhill-windfarm.co.uk from 3rd October 2023.

The public exhibitions initiate a consultation period being run by RES to gather comments on the proposal. The closing date for comments is Friday 20th October 2023. Comments will still be accepted after this date but may not be considered in relation to the design development.

Comments forms will be available at the public exhibition. Comment forms will also be available on the website above from the day of the exhibition and can be submitted via email to carey.green@res-group.com. Hard copies can be sent by post to RES, Third Floor, STV, Pacific Quay, Glasgow, G51 1PQ.

Please note that comments submitted to RES at this time are not representations to the determining authority (Scottish Government's Energy Consents Unit). There will be an opportunity to submit representations to the determining authority should an application be made.

For more information, please visit our website at
www.blairhill-windfarm.co.uk

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5.5 PowerPoint Slides from Meeting with CVCC (August 2023)

AGENDA

- Introductions
- About RES
- About the proposal
- Q&A
- AOB

Glenchamber Wind Farm, between New Luce, Kirkcowan and Glenluce

1

RES AT A GLANCE

ACTIVITIES

DEVELOP | CONSTRUCT | SUPPORT SERVICES

TECHNOLOGIES

WIND | SOLAR | STORAGE | T&D | GREEN HYDROGEN

RES is the world's largest independent renewable energy company

RES
IN SCOTLAND

Onshore wind projects in Scotland

RES has developed and/or built and/or operates a range of projects across Scotland including:

1 Forss I and II
2 Cairnmore Hill
3 Kintradwell
4 Hill of Towie I and II
5 Glens of Foudland
6 Cairn Duhie (and redesign)
7 Beinneun
8 Hill of Fare
9 Meikle Carewe
10 Earlseat
11 Little Raith
12 Penmanshiel
13 Black Hill
14 Tormywheel
15 Nellston
16 Kelburn
17 Freasdail
18 Killean
19 Cour
20 Blary Hill
21 Scienteuch
22 Minnygap
23 Solwaybank and Bloch
24 Glenchamber
25 Longcroft
26 Torfichen

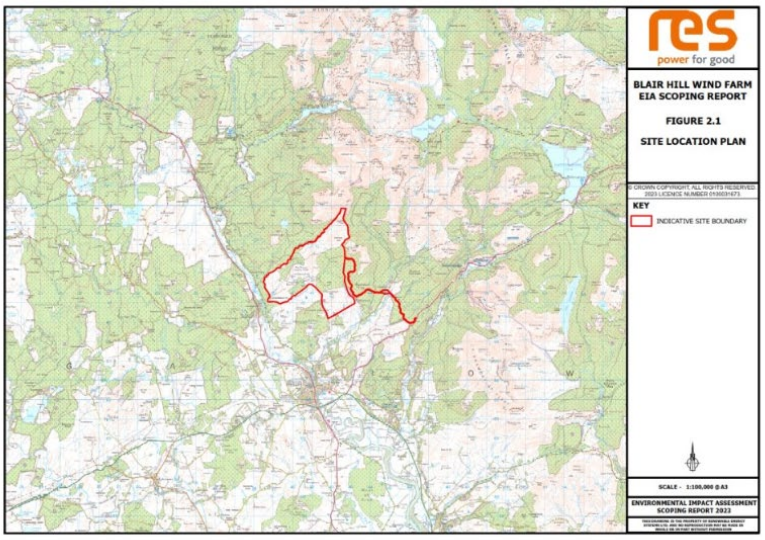
Map updated: May 2023

BLAIR HILL WIND FARM
WHY WIND?

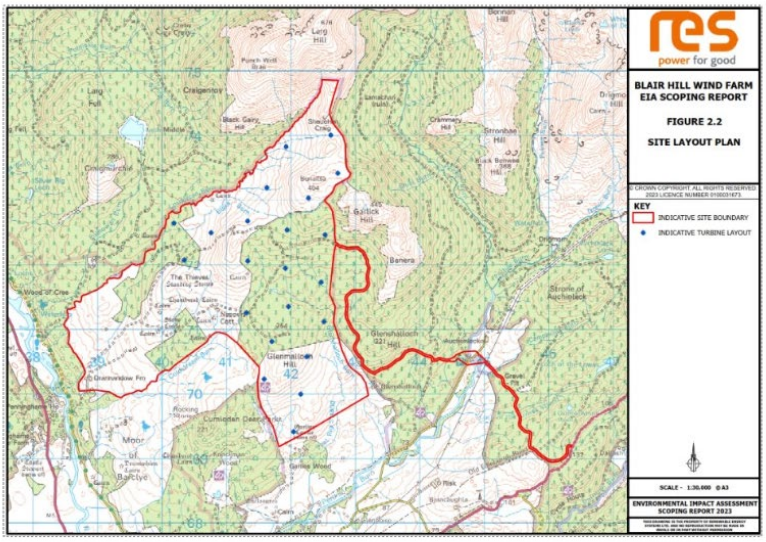
- National Development
- Net zero carbon targets
- Energy security
- Low-cost electricity
- Improved performance and output

Hill of Towie Wind Farm, Moray

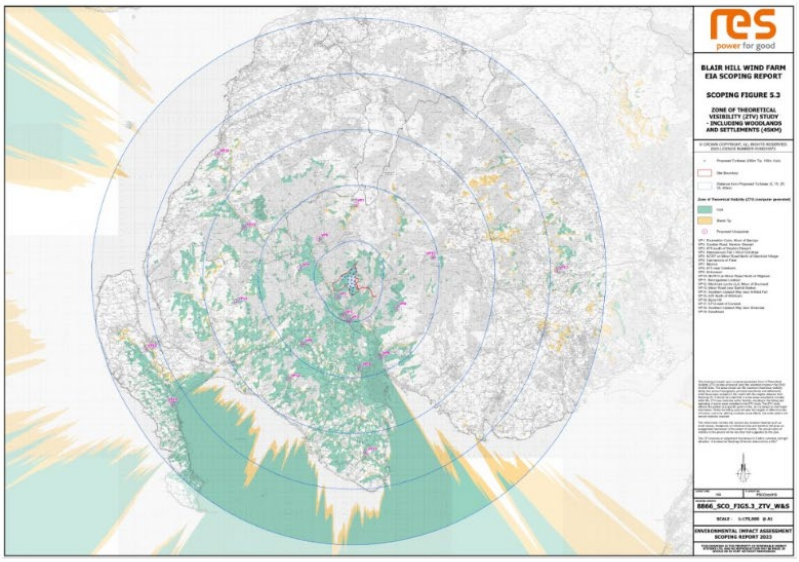
BLAIR HILL WIND FARM
ABOUT THE PROJECT



BLAIR HILL WIND FARM
DESIGN LAYOUT AND INFRASTRUCTURE

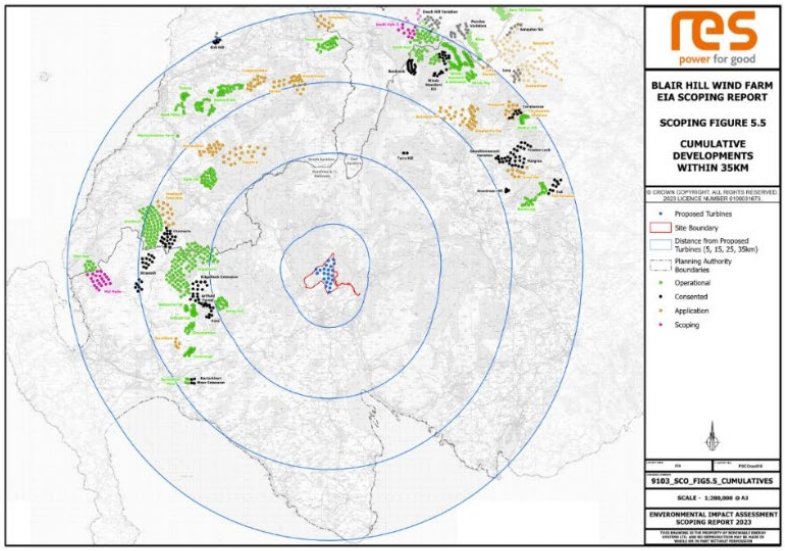


BLAIR HILL WIND FARM
LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL



CAVENDISH

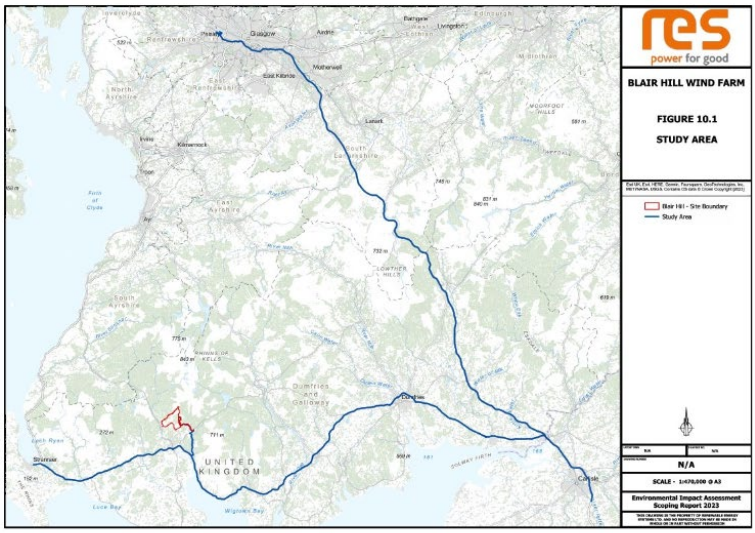
BLAIR HILL WIND FARM
CUMULATIVE IMPACT



BLAIR HILL WIND FARM
ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS

- Landscape and Visual
- Cultural Heritage
- Ecology
- Ornithology
- Geology, Hydrology & Hydrogeology
- Traffic and Transport
- Noise and Vibration
- Climate Balance
- Forestry
- Aviation
- Other Issues (Shadow Flicker and Telecommunications)

BLAIR HILL WIND FARM
TRANSPORT AND ACCESS



BLAIR HILL WIND FARM
MAXIMISING LOCAL BENEFIT

- Potential £6m inward investment
- Supply chain opportunities
- £1.5m business rates/annum
- Community Ownership

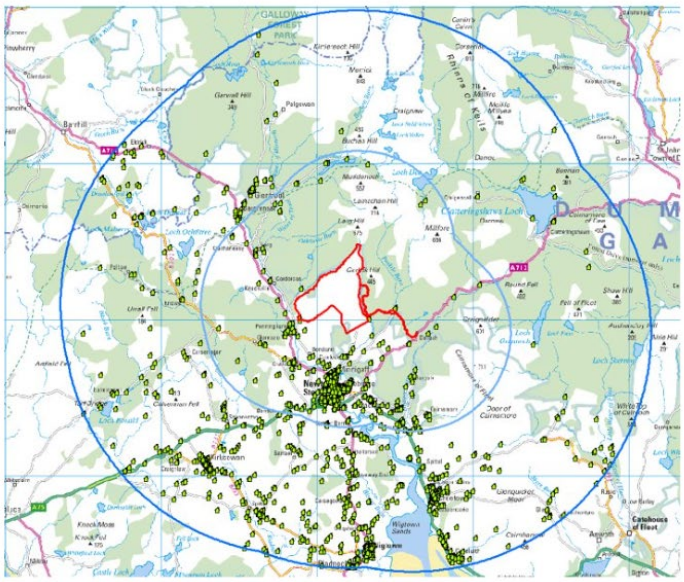
BLAIR HILL WIND FARM
COMMUNITY BENEFITS

- Tailored community benefit package
- Equivalent to £5k/MW
- LEDS

Local Electricity Discount Scheme

BLAIR HILL WIND FARM
CONSULTATION

- First public exhibition
- Consultation zone
- Feedback opportunities
- Iterative design process
- Second public exhibition



Thank you!

Sarah McArthur
Project Development Manager
+44 7570 291 408
sarah.mcarthur@res-group.com

Carey Green
Community Relations Manager
+44 01872 226931
carey.green@res-group.com




www.res-group.com

5.6 PowerPoint Slides from meeting with Emma Harper MSP (October 2023)

AGENDA

- Introductions
- Project overview
- Q&A
- AOB

Glenchamber Wind Farm, between New Luce, Kirkcowan and Glenluce

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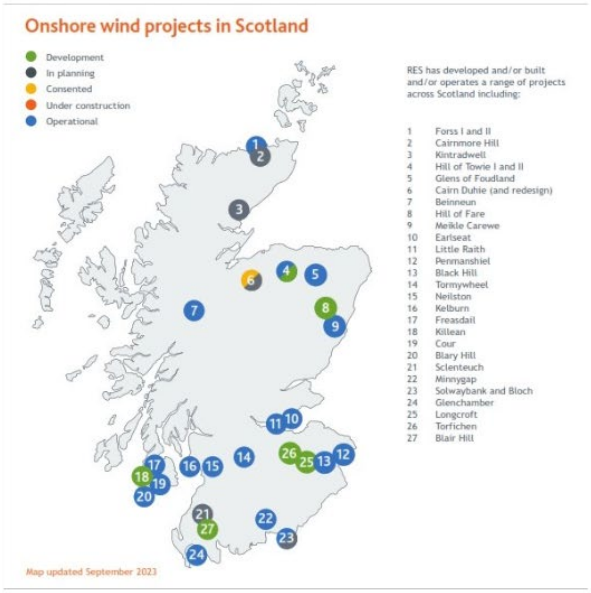
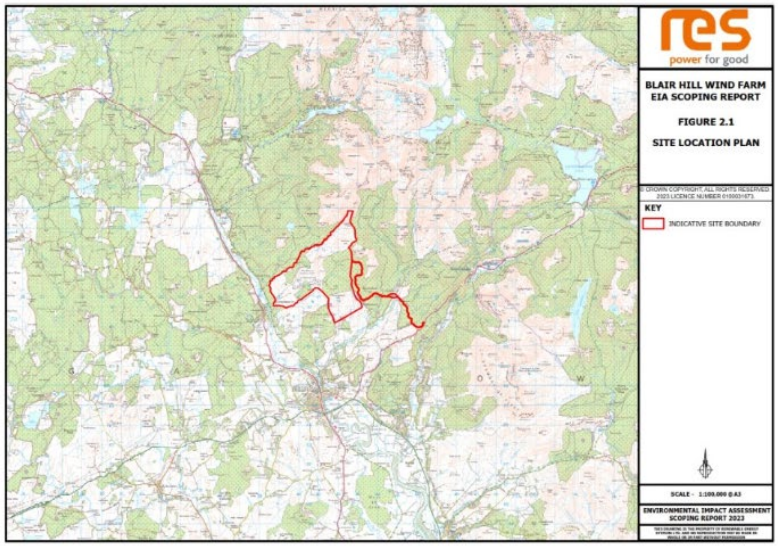
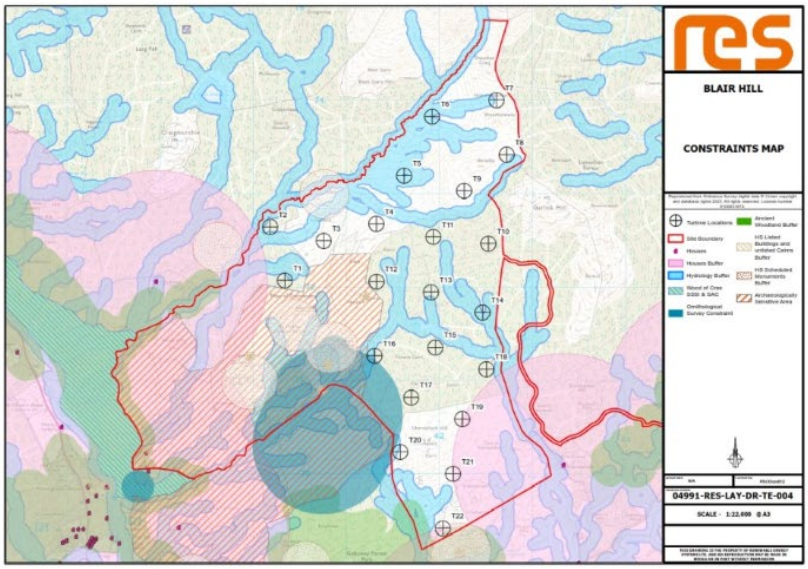
RES IN SCOTLAND



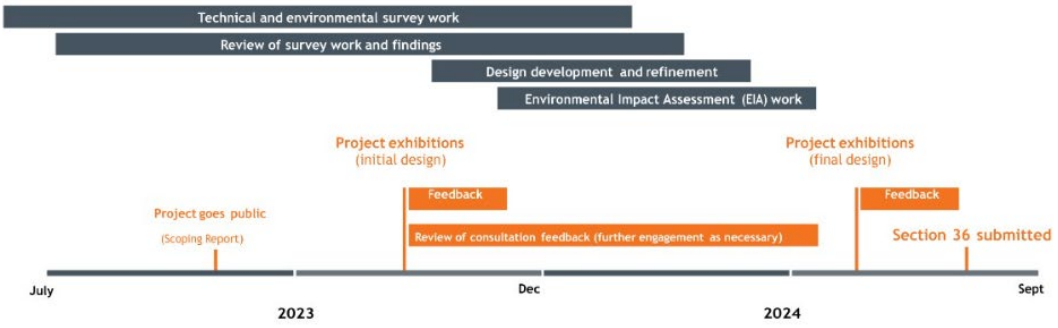
BLAIR HILL WIND FARM
ABOUT THE PROJECT



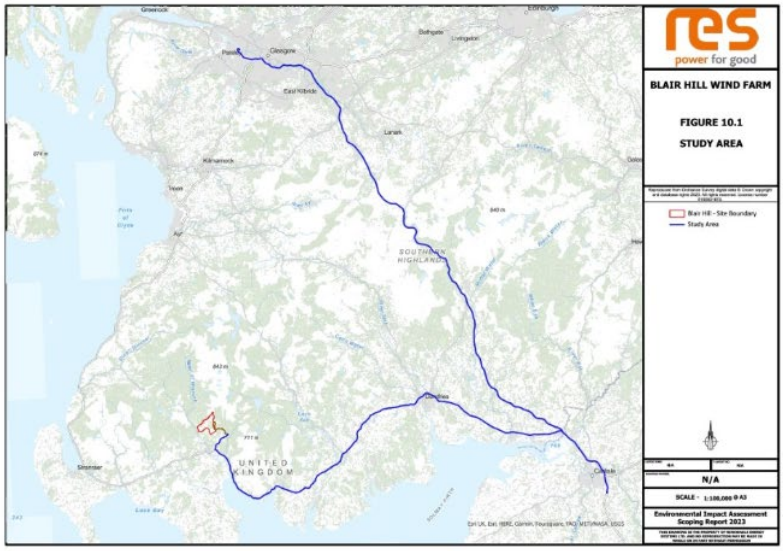
BLAIR HILL WIND FARM
CONSTRAINTS PLAN



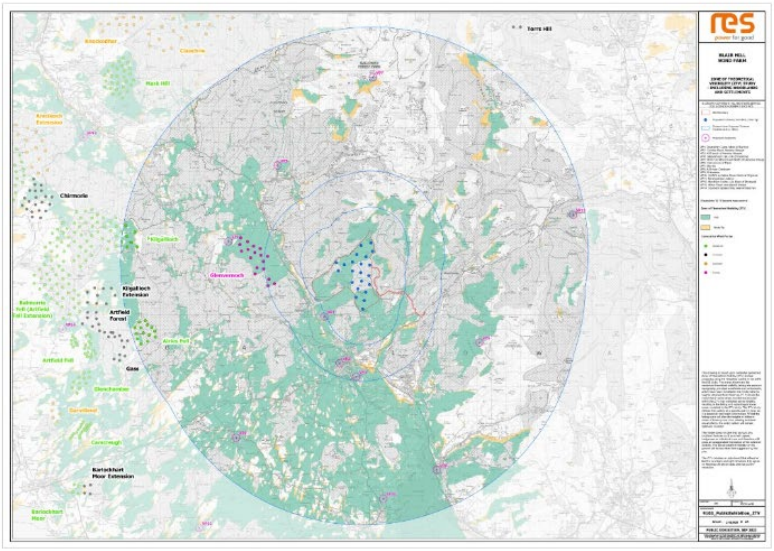
BLAIR HILL WIND FARM
INDICATIVE TIMELINE



BLAIR HILL WIND FARM
TRANSPORT AND ACCESS



BLAIR HILL WIND FARM
LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL



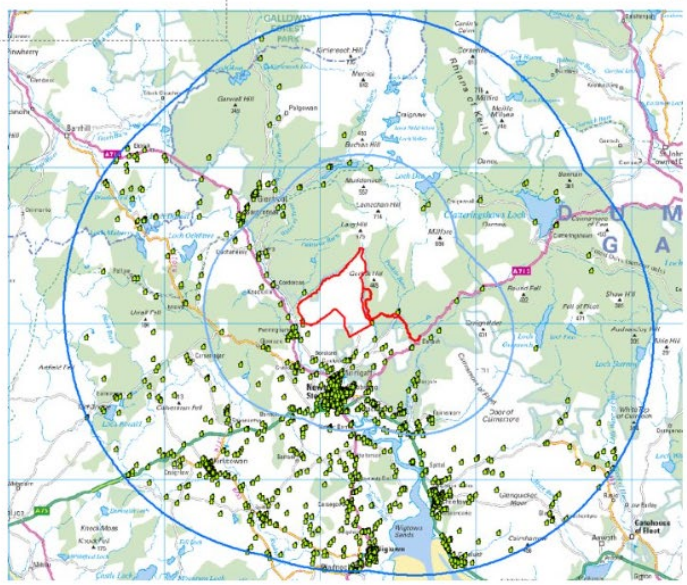
BLAIR HILL WIND FARM
MAXIMISING LOCAL BENEFIT

- Tailored community benefit package
- LEDS
- Working with the local supply chain
- Shared ownership

Local Electricity Discount Scheme

BLAIR HILL WIND FARM
FEEDBACK

- Early engagement
- Feedback opportunities
- Iterative design process



BLAIR HILL WIND FARM
NEXT STEPS

- Design evolution
- Ongoing consultation
- Second public exhibition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5.7 PowerPoint Slides from meeting with Mid Galloway and Wigtown Ward Councillors (November 2023)

AGENDA

- Introductions
- Project overview
- Consultation overview
- Next steps
- AOB

Glenchamber Wind Farm, between New Luce, Kirkcowan and Glenluce

1

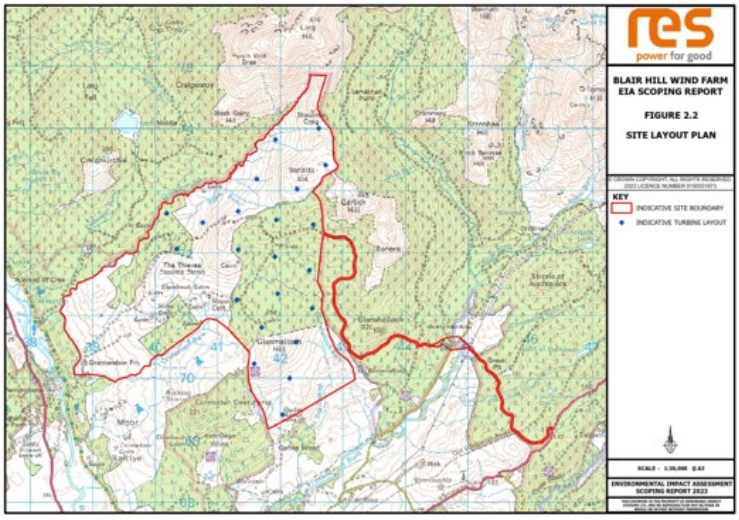
RES IN SCOTLAND

Onshore wind projects in Scotland

RES has developed and/or built and/or operates a range of projects across Scotland including:

1 Forss I and II
2 Cairnmore Hill
3 Kintradwell
4 Hill of Towie I and II
5 Glens of Foudland
6 Cairn Duhie (and redesign)
7 Beinneun
8 Hill of Fare
9 Menkle Carewe
10 Earlseat
11 Little Raith
12 Penmanshiel
13 Black Hill
14 Tormywheel
15 Neilston
16 Kelburn
17 Freasdail
18 Killean
19 Cour
20 Blary Hill
21 Sclenteuch
22 Minnygap
23 Solwaybank and Bloch
24 Glenchamber
25 Longcroft
26 Torfichen
27 Blair Hill

BLAIR HILL WIND FARM
PROJECT OVERVIEW AND UPDATE

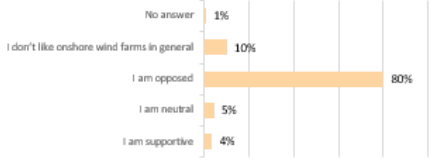


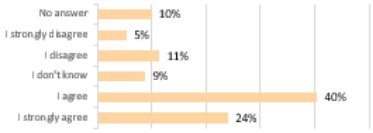
BLAIR HILL WIND FARM
CONSULTATION OVERVIEW

4176
Newsletters

c.350
Unique Visitors

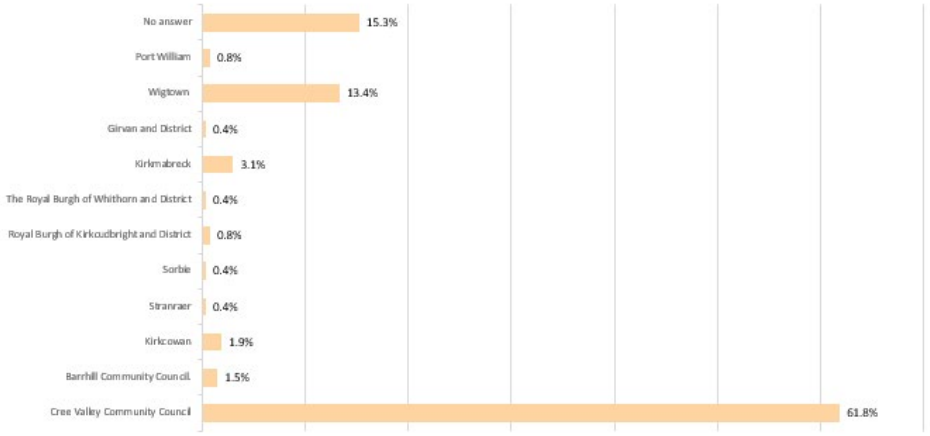
262
Comment Forms



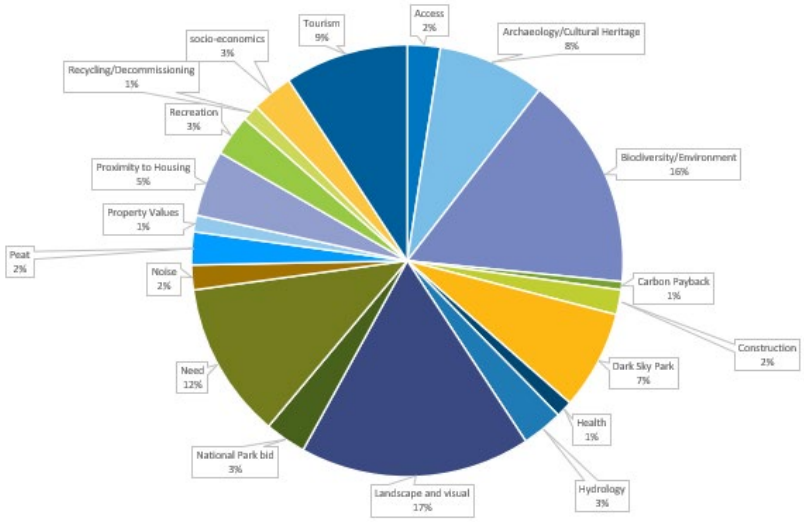


CAVENDISH

BLAIR HILL WIND FARM
CONSULTATION OVERVIEW

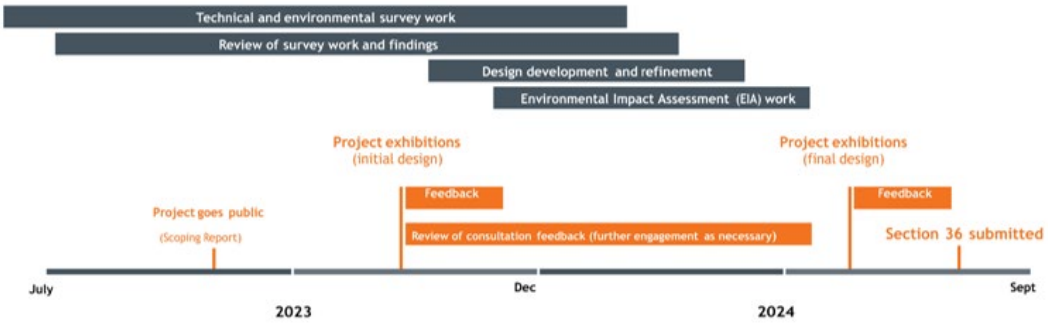


BLAIR HILL WIND FARM
CONSULTATION OVERVIEW



CAVENDISH

BLAIR HILL WIND FARM
INDICATIVE TIMELINE



BLAIR HILL WIND FARM
NEXT STEPS

- Design evolution
- Second public exhibition
- Ongoing consultation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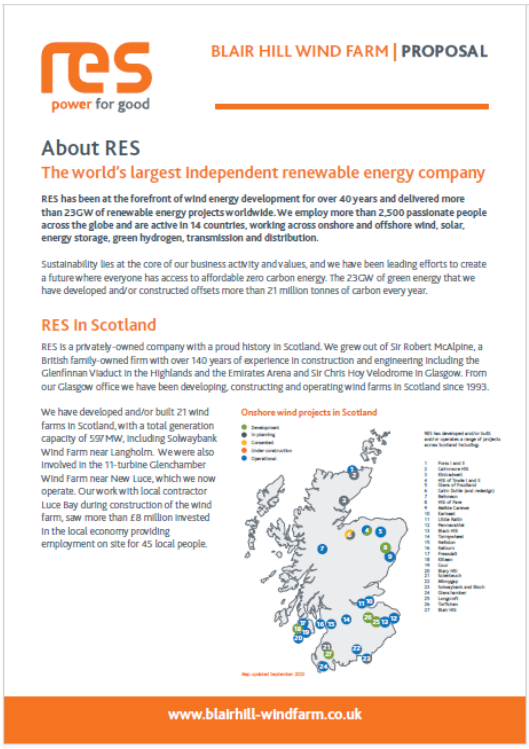
5.8 October 2023 Consultation Boards



BLAIR HILL WIND FARM | PROPOSAL

power for good

About RES

The world's largest independent renewable energy company

RES has been at the forefront of wind energy development for over 40 years and delivered more than 23GW of renewable energy projects worldwide. We employ more than 2,500 passionate people across the globe and are active in 14 countries, working across onshore and offshore wind, solar, energy storage, green hydrogen, transmission and distribution.

Sustainability lies at the core of our business activity and values, and we have been leading efforts to create a future where everyone has access to affordable zero carbon energy. The 23GW of green energy that we have developed and/or constructed offsets more than 21 million tonnes of carbon every year.

RES In Scotland

RES is a privately-owned company with a proud history in Scotland. We grew out of Sir Robert McAlpine, a British family-owned firm with over 140 years of experience in construction and engineering including the Glenfinnan Viaduct in the Highlands and the Emirates Arena and Sir Chris Hoy Velodrome in Glasgow. From our Glasgow office we have been developing, constructing and operating wind farms in Scotland since 1993.

We have developed and/or built 21 wind farms in Scotland, with a total generation capacity of 597MW, including Solwaybank Wind Farm near Langholm. We were also involved in the 11-turbine Glenchamber Wind Farm near New Luce, which we now operate. Our work with local contractor Luce Bay during construction of the wind farm, saw more than £8 million invested in the local economy providing employment on site for 45 local people.

Onshore wind projects in Scotland

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BLAIR HILL WIND FARM | PROPOSAL

power for good

About the Project

We are seeking your views on the preliminary design, which has been informed by initial technical and environmental surveys, for our Blair Hill Wind Farm proposal.

The proposed Blair Hill Wind Farm is located approximately 6km north of Newton Stewart, Dumfries and Galloway. The site was chosen because it has good wind resource, few ecological constraints, straightforward access and is close to a viable grid connection. It is also identified in the Dumfries and Galloway Council Local Development Plan as being an area with potential for wind farm development.

Based on our initial studies, the wind farm would comprise up to 22 turbines, each with a maximum height of 250m, resulting in an overall site generating capacity of 145MW. Turbine technology has advanced considerably in recent years, meaning that turbines are now taller and more efficient which enables them to generate a significantly greater amount of renewable electricity per turbine. If consented, Blair Hill would be capable of generating clean, low-cost renewable electricity for around 150,000† homes each year.

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BLAIR HILL WIND FARM | PROPOSAL

About the Project

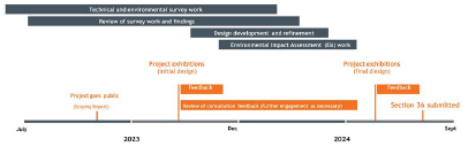
A battery storage facility is also proposed with a power output of around 100MW and a storage capacity of around 200MWh to help increase the flexibility and generation opportunities of the site.

In August 2023, we submitted a Scoping Report to the Scottish Government's Energy Consents Unit (ECU) which sets out and seeks feedback on the proposed scope of environmental assessment work. Consultee feedback to the Scoping Report continues to be reviewed and any necessary changes made to the proposed scope of environmental and technical work.

Detailed Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) studies and surveys will continue to be undertaken over the coming months to inform the design. The findings from this EIA work, together with feedback from the local community and stakeholders will be considered as part of the design development.

The Blair Hill Wind Farm proposal will have an installed generating capacity greater than 50MW. As such, the application for planning consent will be submitted by RES to the Scottish Government's Energy Consents Unit under Section 36 of the Electricity Act 1989 (the Electricity Act) and determined by Scottish Ministers. Dumfries and Galloway Council will be a statutory consultee in the process. We currently expect to submit the Section 36 application around summer 2024.

Indicative timeline



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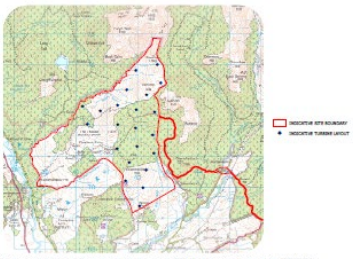
BLAIR HILL WIND FARM | PROPOSAL

Design Layout and Infrastructure

The drawing below shows the proposed site layout at this early stage of the project. This design is based on the constraints that have been mapped so far and are explained on the EIA Considerations boards.

There is a lot of work still to do over the coming months, and the design will be developed and refined during this time in response to both the findings from technical and environmental survey work as well as consideration of feedback from stakeholders and the local community.

Feedback at this early stage has the potential to influence the design and improve the overall quality of the planning application. Please talk to our project team if you have questions about the design or ideas for ways in which it could be improved.



In addition to the wind turbines and foundations, the site infrastructure is expected to include:

- temporary construction compound(s)
- crane pads
- temporary laydown areas adjacent to the turbines
- access tracks
- watercourse crossings
- underground cables between turbines
- electrical switching station
- on-site substation and control building
- battery storage infrastructure
- a gatehouse compound
- telecoms mast
- concrete batching plant
- potential drainage and drainage attenuation measures
- potential excavations/borrow pit workings.

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Evironmental Considerations

As part of the planning process RES will undertake an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA). The purpose of an EIA is to identify any significant potential effects of a development on the environment and, where applicable, identify mitigation measures to avoid or reduce potential effects. It also identifies opportunities for restoration and enhancement. The EIA for Blair Hill Wind Farm will include the following assessments:

Ecology

The non-avian Ecology Impact Assessment will involve a range of studies including habitats, protected species, notable species (e.g. national and European Protected Species) and locally protected species. Further habitat and species assessment work will be undertaken over the coming months as the design develops and infrastructure siting is refined.

Ornithology

Avoiding impacts on bird species, wherever possible, is an important factor in the design of the site. Already, we have commissioned over 500 hours of baseline ornithological survey work over the last two years during breeding and non breeding seasons to build our understanding of the species on site.

Surveys have included flight path activity, breeding behaviour and winter walkover surveys.

Shadow flicker

Shadow flicker is a phenomenon where, under certain circumstances of geographical position and time of day, the sun may pass behind the rotors of a wind turbine and cast a shadow over neighbouring properties. When the blades rotate, the shadow flicks on and off. It only occurs inside buildings where the flicker appears through a narrow window opening.

The Blair Hill Wind Farm proposal is being designed in a way that will minimise any potential for shadow flicker. Shadow flicker can be easily modelled and mitigated in a number of ways (e.g. shadow detection technology on relevant turbines to create a shutdown timetable if necessary).

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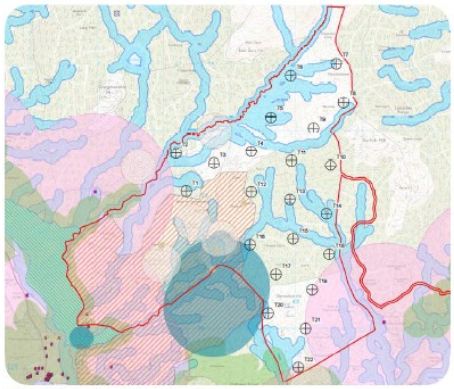
Constraints Map

We have considered a number of site-specific constraints and buffers, as shown in the plan below, to inform the preliminary design of the wind farm.



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turbines.

A high-level appraisal has been carried out in relation to Scheduled Monuments, Listed Buildings, Inventoried Gardens and Designated Landscapes and Inventoried Battlefields which have been identified within the vicinity of the site. These include remains of Garlies Castle (SM7916) and Cairnsmore of Fleet, Cairn (SM2316) to the south-west. Potential impacts will be assessed and a programme of mitigation proposed where appropriate.

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We will shortly be commissioning a range of background acoustic studies at selected properties in the local area which will be agreed with Dumfries and Galloway's Environmental Health Officer. The surveys will measure the acoustics at different times of the day and night in order to establish a baseline. The results of the background sound survey will inform the setting of the noise limits for the operation of the wind farm.

The acoustic impact of the wind farm will be modelled, and the output of this modelling work will be presented in the Acoustics chapter of the Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) which will accompany the planning application. The Acoustics chapter of the EIA R will demonstrate that RES has considered all appropriate measures in the design, construction and operational phases of the wind farm to minimise the acoustic impact.

Aviation lighting

The turbines proposed for Blair Hill are above 150m in height and will therefore require aviation lighting so that the turbines are visible to aircraft. We will be consulting with the Civil Aviation Authority, local airports, the Ministry of Defence and any other relevant consultees over the coming months to agree a lighting strategy with them.

It is worth noting that not all turbines are likely to be required to be lit - for example, lighting may just be required on outermost turbines. Furthermore, the red aviation lighting is designed to focus the light across and upwards for the attention of aircraft rather than downward to those at ground level. There are also variations in the intensity of the lighting with lower levels required in good visibility and higher levels required in cloudy or foggy weather. In some instances, infra-red lighting may be possible which is invisible to the naked eye. The proposed lighting strategy will be presented in the planning application.

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BLAIR HILL WIND FARM | PROPOSAL

Have Your Say

We believe in meaningful and effective consultation.

The aims of our consultation process are to:

- Engage early with the local community to facilitate a constructive consultation process to help identify and understand concerns.
- Assist the local community in understanding the benefits and potential impacts of the proposed energy storage system.
- Add value and improve the quality of our proposal through meaningful and productive consultation.

We will hold second public exhibitions in 2024, ahead of submitting any planning application, to present an updated design which will take into consideration feedback from the local community and stakeholders. At the second public exhibitions, we will present a Report on Feedback which will summarise the written feedback received during these exhibitions and will explain any changes made to the design in response to this feedback.

Before we submit a planning application, we will create a Pre-Application Consultation Report (PAC), that documents the community engagement process and will also include details of any steps we have taken to adapt our proposal.

At this stage we are inviting the local community to submit comments directly to RES. If an application is submitted there will be the opportunity to submit representations to the determining Planning Authority at that time.

We are keen to understand your views on the proposal and the information available at this exhibition.

Please take a few minutes to fill out a comment form with your feedback.

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BLAIR HILL WIND FARM | PROPOSAL

Maximising Local Benefit

A power for good

RES seeks to be a power for good in communities that neighbour our projects by working openly and constructively to ensure tangible local benefits. We believe that onshore wind should provide direct, lasting benefits to local communities and there are a number of ways that this can be achieved.

We take a tailored approach and work directly with the community to understand how the wind farm could support the local area and help to secure long-term economic, social and environmental benefits. This approach will help to deliver a tailored community benefits package, that would be worth £5,000 per MW (or equivalent) of installed capacity per annum, that is aligned with the priorities of the local community and could, for instance, provide funding for projects that sit outside the parameters of a traditional application-based fund.

As part of this exhibition and consultation period we are seeking feedback on your ideas for local benefits and priority projects that you would like to see supported or delivered in your community from Blair Hill Wind Farm, should it receive consent. Some examples from other communities that we've worked with include:

- biodiversity initiatives
- apprenticeships/educational schemes
- funding for schools and local community groups
- improved broadband provision
- improvements to local footpaths and/or signage
- business start-up initiatives
- improvements to village halls
- community defibrillators
- electric car charging points
- funding for local groups and organisations

Any feedback which may tie into the design is particularly important for us to capture at this early stage so that it can be considered in relation to the development and refinement of the scheme over the coming months. It is important to note that voluntary community benefits are not a material planning consideration.

Local Electricity Discount Scheme

Our unique Local Electricity Discount Scheme (LEDS) seeks to deliver direct and tangible benefits to people living and working closest to RES' operational wind farms.

Developed in response to research and feedback from local communities around RES' operational wind farms, LEDS offers an annual discount to the electricity bills of those properties closest to a participating RES wind farm. If this is something that you are interested in as a potential part of a tailored community benefits package at Blair Hill, please note this in your written feedback to RES and let our project team knows if you would like more information.

Local Electricity Discount Scheme

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BLAIR HILL WIND FARM | PROPOSAL

Maximising Local Benefit

Working with the local supply chain

Some of the most direct and meaningful benefits that can be delivered from a project like this are jobs and employment for local businesses and contractors, in addition to the use of local services and amenities, all of which can generate a significant amount of inward investment within the area.

RES is committed to ensuring that, wherever reasonably practical, local contractors are used in all aspects of wind farm development. In order to maximise the opportunities from the Blair Hill Wind Farm proposal we are looking to build our knowledge of the local skills and capabilities within the area.

Expenditure in the local economy during the development, construction and operation of wind farms varies from project to project due to various factors including project size, project duration, and the availability of local suppliers. In recent years, RES has seen typical spend with local stakeholders, suppliers and service providers in the region of £279,000 per wind turbine during the development, construction and first year of project operation. In some cases, it has been possible to significantly improve on this number. The Blair Hill Wind Farm proposal is predicted to deliver approximately £6 million of inward investment to the area in the form of jobs, employment, and use of local services during the development, construction and first year of operation.

If you're a local business, or know one, interested in getting involved in onshore wind please speak to our project team.

Glenchamber Wind Farm – case study

Glenchamber, an 11-turbine wind farm located in Dumfries and Galloway has an installed capacity of 27.5MW and began operating in 2016. In keeping with our commitment to maximise economic benefit to the local area, the civil engineering contractor chosen for Glenchamber was Luce Bay Group who are based just 8 miles from the wind farm. RES' work with Luce Bay saw more than £8 million invested into the local economy and provided employment for 45 local people.

Shared Ownership

RES is interested to understand whether there is any appetite from the community in exploring the potential for shared ownership in the wind farm. If this is something that interests you, please put this in your comments form and speak to our project team. Local Energy Scotland is the independent body that manages the Scottish Government's Community and Renewable Energy Scheme (CARES). To find out more about the scheme visit: **https://localenergy.scot/hub/shared-ownership/**.

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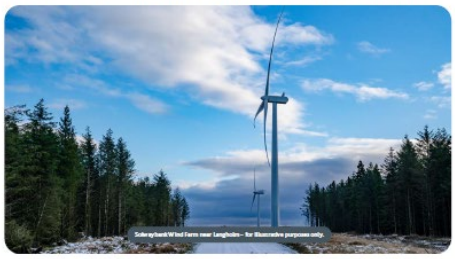
BLAIR HILL WIND FARM | PROPOSAL

The Need for Onshore Wind

National Development

We are in a climate emergency, nature crisis, cost of living crisis and face issues with security of energy supply. Onshore wind can address all of these. This is recognised by the Scottish Government's National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) which was published in February 2023. It is Scotland's long term spatial strategy and categorises onshore wind projects with a generating capacity in excess of 50MW as National Development. In principle it supports all forms of renewable energy generation including onshore wind. There are national targets for reaching Net Zero by 2045 and installing 20GW of onshore wind by 2030.



Low-cost electricity

Onshore wind, alongside other renewable technologies, are the cheapest form of electricity generation[1]. It can be deployed quickly and delivered at lower costs than hydro, marine technologies, and nuclear. If consented, the Blair Hill Wind Farm scheme would be capable of generating enough clean, low-cost renewable electricity for more than 150,000 homes[2] each year, based on the preliminary design presented at this exhibition. With the rising cost of living and climate change emergency, it is imperative that we deliver electricity efficiently and at the lowest cost to the consumer.

1 https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1216137/electricity-generation-cost-report-2020.pdf

2 The homes figure has been calculated by taking the predicted annual electricity generation of the site (based on RES assessments Blair Hill has a predicted capacity factor of 42.8%) and dividing this by the annual average electricity figures from the Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) showing that the annual UK average domestic household consumption is 3,509 kWh (Dec 2022).

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Energy Security

Wind energy is a free and inexhaustible resource which has an important role to play as part of a balanced energy mix. It increases energy security by reducing our reliance on imports and builds our resilience to sudden fossil fuel price fluctuations or the uncertainty of global markets. Advancements in energy storage solutions will also help capture excess energy generation. The current Blair Hill Wind Farm proposal also includes a 100MW output battery storage facility to help maximise the efficiency of the site and further contribute to energy security.

Improved performance and output

Turbine technology has advanced considerably in recent years, meaning that turbines are now taller and more efficient which enables them to generate a significantly greater amount of renewable electricity per turbine. Modern taller turbines provide more electricity, which helps address the climate emergency, cost of living crisis, and security of energy supply. The 250m turbines proposed at Blair Hill would allow for far greater benefits in terms of renewable electricity generation per turbine than smaller turbines would.

The turbines currently under consideration for Blair Hill would have a generating capacity of 6.6MW each. Each turbine would have the capacity to generate enough clean electricity for around 6,800 homes. By comparison, a 100m turbine would have a generating capacity of around 2.3MW, enough to power approximately 1,800 homes.

Net zero carbon targets

A climate emergency was declared by the UK Government and the Scottish Government in 2019. The UK Government has set a legally binding target for reducing greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by 2050 and the Scottish Government has a net zero target of 2045. Renewables, and specifically onshore wind, will play an important role in helping achieve these targets.

To support net zero delivery across all sectors, including heat, transport and industrial processes, which are currently heavily reliant on fossil fuels, it is expected that there will be a substantial increase in demand for electricity in the coming decades. National Grid's Future Energy Scenarios† forecast that Scotland's peak demand for electricity will at least double within the next twenty years. This will require a substantial increase in installed capacity across all renewable technologies, including onshore wind.

Scotland currently has around 9.3GW of installed onshore wind capacity. The Scottish Government has set a target of 20GW of onshore wind by 2030 in order to help meet their legally-binding net zero targets. This is a substantial increase and will require significant deployment of new onshore wind projects in order to meet this extra demand for green, zero-carbon electricity.

† https://www.nationalgrideso.com/future-energy/future-energy-scenarios

BLAIR HILL WIND FARM | PROPOSAL

Traffic and Access

Traffic is one of the key considerations when selecting a potential wind farm site, particularly with regard to the turbine deliveries. The delivery route for turbine components is expected to be via the M74 to Carlisle where they will take the A75 before taking the A712 to the site access. This route avoids Newton Stewart.

Safety is the key consideration and RES will be undertaking a detailed swept path analysis of the turbine delivery route, as well as careful assessment of the main site access options. The preferred access point and turbine delivery route are shown on the map below.

Over the next few months, we will consult with the local authority (Transport Scotland and BEAR Scotland), the emergency services, the local community and other relevant bodies on our transport plans.

A transport assessment will be undertaken as part of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) process and, if the wind farm is given consent, a detailed Traffic Management Plan will be agreed with the roads authority and the police. Wherever reasonably practicable we will use materials available on site and source construction materials locally in order to help reduce traffic movements.

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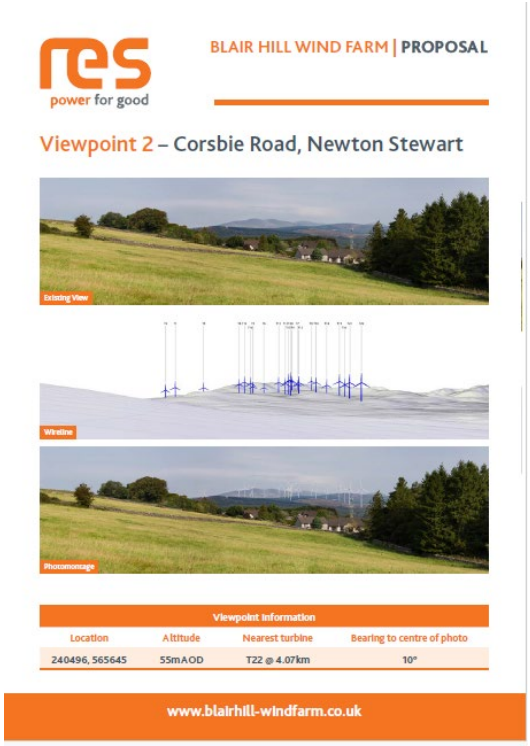
5.9 October 2023 Projected Viewpoints



BLAIR HILL WIND FARM | PROPOSAL

Viewpoint 7 – Merrick

Viewpoint information			
Location	Altitude	Nearest turbine	Bearing to centre of photo
242760, 585539	842m AOD	T7 @ 11.54km	186°

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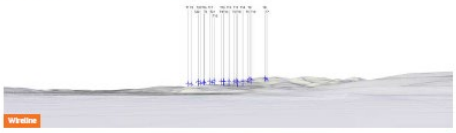
BLAIR HILL WIND FARM | PROPOSAL

Viewpoint 8 – A75 near Creetown



Viewpoint information			
Location	Altitude	Nearest turbine	Bearing to centre of photo
247182, 558175	5m AOD	T22 @ 12.36km	339°

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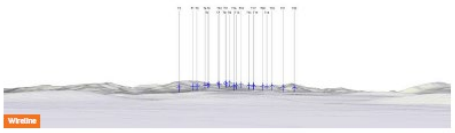
BLAIR HILL WIND FARM | PROPOSAL

Viewpoint 9 – Kirkcowan



Viewpoint information			
Location	Altitude	Nearest turbine	Bearing to centre of photo
233244, 560488	46m AOD	T22 @ 12.53km	36°

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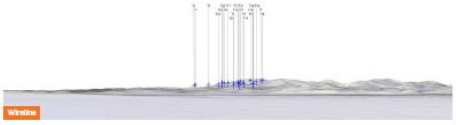
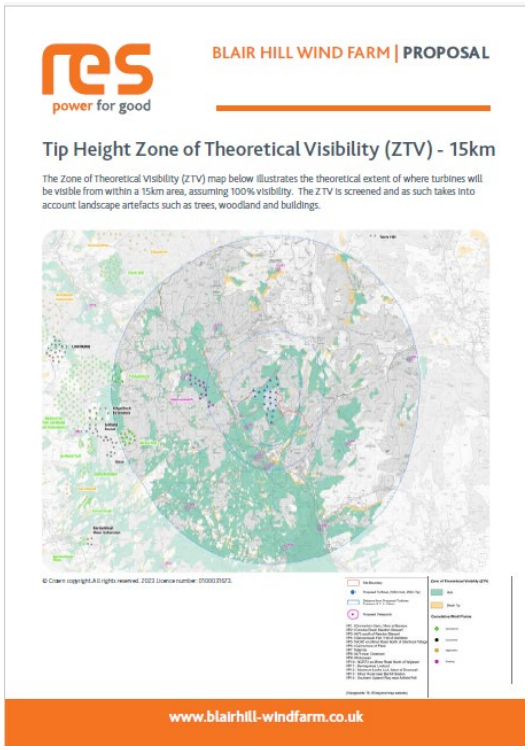
BLAIR HILL WIND FARM | PROPOSAL

Viewpoint 10 – NCR73 on Minor Road North of Wigtown



Viewpoint information			
Location	Altitude	Nearest turbine	Bearing to centre of photo
243494, 556206	9m AOD	T22 @ 13.29km	353°

www.blairhill-windfarm.co.uk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BLAIR HILL WIND FARM | PROPOSAL
Tip Height Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) - 15km
The Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) map below illustrates the theoretical extent of where turbines will be visible from within a 15km area, assuming 100% visibility. The ZTV is screened and as such takes into account landscape artefacts such as trees, woodland and buildings.
www.blairhill-windfarm.co.uk

5.10 October 2023 Feedback Form

power for good

Blair Hill Farm Proposal
Comments Form

RES believes in meaningful and productive consultation, and we aim to engage early with the local community and key stakeholders in order to facilitate constructive consultation. This helps to identify issues and concerns, as well as benefits and opportunities, which we can then consider when developing the design of the proposal.

At the Public Exhibitions we have presented preliminary design drawings. Feedback from the local community is important at this stage of our pre-application consultation when it can have a direct influence on the final design of the project.

We would be grateful if you could take the time to fill out this comments form with your feedback. Please provide feedback by 20th October 2023. Comments will still be accepted after this date but may not be considered in relation to the design development.

Please note that comments submitted to RES at this time are not representations to the determining authority (Scottish Government Energy Consents Unit). There will be an opportunity to submit representations to the determining authority should an application be made.

1 Blair Hill Wind Farm public exhibition

1.1 How did you find out about our public exhibitions?

- ☐ Newsletter through the door
- ☐ Advert in local newspaper
- ☐ Project website - www.blairhill-windfarm.co.uk
- ☐ Word of mouth
- ☐ Other (please specify)

1.2 Before visiting the exhibition how would you describe your knowledge of the proposed Blair Hill Wind Farm?

- ☐ Knew a lot
- ☐ Knew quite a lot
- ☐ Knew a little
- ☐ Knew very little
- ☐ Knew nothing at all

1.3 Having visited the exhibition, to what extent do you feel you have increased your understanding about the proposed Blair Hill Wind Farm?

- ☐ A lot
- ☐ Quite a lot
- ☐ A little
- ☐ Very little
- ☐ Nothing at all

1.4 Do you have any suggestions for ways in which we could have improved our exhibition?

2 Blair Hill Wind Farm Proposal

Your views on the Blair Hill Wind Farm proposal - specifically the preliminary layout of the project where people's comments can have a direct influence - will be considered in relation to the design development of the project.

2.1 How do you feel about the preliminary plans for Blair Hill Wind Farm?

- ☐ I am supportive
- ☐ I am neutral
- ☐ I am opposed
- ☐ I don't like onshore wind farms in general

Further comments:

2.2 What do you think about the proposed preliminary design layout of Blair Hill Wind Farm?

- ☐ I am happy with the proposed layout
- ☐ I am neutral towards the proposed layout
- ☐ I have concerns about the proposed layout (please provide further details in the box below)
- ☐ I don't like onshore wind farms in general

Further comments:

2.3 Please provide us with any further suggestions or comments regarding the proposed Blair Hill Wind Farm

3 Local benefits

RES is proposing to deliver a tailored community benefits package aligned with the priorities of the local community. This package would be worth £5,000 per megawatt (or equivalent) of installed capacity per annum and could include RES' unique Local Electricity Discount Scheme (LEDS), which offers an annual discount to the electricity bills of those properties closest to a participating wind farm. The community benefit package will be informed by feedback from the community so we are keen to understand what initiatives the community would like to see supported by the benefits package.

3.1 Within which Community Council are do you reside?

3.2 Do you have any suggestions or comments regarding ideas, local priorities, or community projects that you would like to see benefitting from Blair Hill Wind Farm, should it go ahead? Examples could include biodiversity initiatives, apprenticeships/educational schemes, funding for schools and local community groups, improved broadband provision, etc.

3.3 Do you have any other comments or feedback with regard to the community benefit package?

4 Climate change, energy security and renewables

The below section is optional and designed to help us understand people's thoughts on how renewables can help to tackle climate change and improve energy security.

4.1 Do you agree that we are facing a global climate change emergency?

- ☐ I strongly agree
- ☐ I agree
- ☐ I don't know
- ☐ I disagree
- ☐ I strongly disagree

Further comments:

4.2 Do you agree that generating electricity from renewable sources, and reducing our reliance on fossil fuels, can help towards tackling the issue of climate change?

- ☐ I strongly agree
- ☐ I agree
- ☐ I don't know
- ☐ I disagree
- ☐ I strongly disagree

Further comments:

4.3 Do you agree that we need to develop onshore wind farms to support greater energy independence and security for Scotland?

- ☐ I strongly agree
- ☐ I agree
- ☐ I don't know
- ☐ I disagree
- ☐ I strongly disagree

Further comments:

4.4 Do you agree that we need to develop onshore wind farms to cut energy bills?

- ☐ I strongly agree
- ☐ I agree
- ☐ I don't know
- ☐ I disagree
- ☐ I strongly disagree

Further comments:

5 Your details

Please provide your name and contact details below.

Your contact details will be treated by RES with the strictest of confidence, in line with the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) 2018. We may at times share your contact details, in confidence, with third parties who we employ to help process your comments or update you on the project and by providing your details below you consent to this. You may write to RES at any time to ask that your contact details be removed from our records and from any third parties we work with.

Name	
Email	
Address	

If you would like to be kept up to date with the project, please tick this box ☐

Thank you for taking the time to complete this comments form, your feedback is important to us.

5.11 December 2023 Project Newsletter

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Blair Hill Wind Farm Proposal

PROJECT UPDATE – DECEMBER 2023

- Capable of generating clean, green electricity for the equivalent of approximately 150,000 homes[1] annually
- Around £6 million inward investment in the form of jobs, employment and the use of local services
- Providing a community benefit package equivalent to £5,000 per MW aligned with the local communities' priorities
- Saving an estimated 11 million[2] tonnes of CO_2 over the lifetime of the project

RES distributed the first in a series of project newsletters in September 2023, to around 4000 local properties, to introduce the Blair Hill Wind Farm proposal and provide further information on the public exhibitions held in October 2023.

In our second newsletter in the series, we are pleased to give an update on the proposal and also provide further information in response to common questions and concerns raised at the consultation events.

Keeping you informed

We were pleased to speak to around 400 attendees at public exhibitions we held in Newton Stewart and Wigtown and would like to thank everyone for attending and for showing an interest in the project. All feedback we received will be considered as the project design is refined.

We know that local people can make a valuable contribution to the proposals by offering their local knowledge and raising issues that may not have been considered and we're committed to keeping you informed.

We will shortly be establishing a Community Liaison Group (CLG) whose members will include locally elected representatives plus representatives from local community groups, local businesses and other stakeholders. The key objectives of the CLG are to provide a forum for discussion and the exchange of information and to create and maintain effective and constructive channels of communication between RES and the local community. If you are a local group representing the community and would like to be considered for membership of the CLG, please get in touch at blairhill.windfarm@res-group.com.

We will hold second public exhibitions in Spring 2024, ahead of submitting any planning application, to present an updated design for the Blair Hill Wind Farm proposal. We will also refer to the written feedback received from the October 2023 exhibitions and explain any changes made to the design in response to the feedback.

A Power for Good

Onshore wind farms contribute to Net Zero carbon emission reduction targets, enable more energy to be generated domestically improving security of supply, and are the cheapest form of new electricity generation[3] alongside other renewable technologies. This makes wind farms, like Blair Hill, not just good for the environment but also for the consumer.

A tailored community benefits package to support the local area and help to secure long-term economic, social and environmental benefits would be delivered if the project is consented. The community fund is not linked to profit but a set sum equivalent to £5,000 per MW and would be index-linked. Some of the ideas received to date include biodiversity initiatives,

(cont'd on page 2)

1 The homes figure has been calculated by taking the predicted annual electricity generation of the site (based on RES assessments Blair Hill has a predicted capacity factor of 42.8%) and dividing this by the annual average electricity figures from the Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) showing that the annual UK average domestic household consumption is 3,500 kWh (Dec 2022).
2 RES uses DESNZ's "all non-renewable fuels" emissions statistic of 424 tonnes of carbon dioxide per GWh of electricity supplied in the Digest of UK Energy Statistics (July 2023) Table 5.14 ("Estimated carbon dioxide emissions from electricity supplied"). Carbon reduction is calculated by multiplying the total amount of electricity generated by the wind farm per year by the number of tonnes of carbon which fossil fuels would have produced to generate the same amount of electricity.
3 https://www.businessgreen.com/news/4122038/wales-opponents-net-zero-government-predicts-gas-power-times-expensive-renewables-2025

RES also work with communities local to our projects during the development phase providing sponsorship towards community initiatives and events. We are delighted to have recently supported two local organisations.

The incredible fundraising efforts of the Newton Stewart Christmas Light Group, supported by individuals, businesses and sponsors, has seen the group raise a fantastic amount of money towards a new light display for the town. RES were pleased to contribute to this worthy initiative with a donation of £2,000.

A £2,000 donation from RES enabled Cree Valley Development Trust's activities at the Winter Wonderland in aid of Newton Stewart Community Fire Station, to be provided free of charge to the community. We hope everyone who attended had a great day.

a local apprenticeship scheme, home insulation grants, funding for community facilities like the Newton Stewart cinema and a walkway to Garlies Castle. We welcome further ideas for local benefits and priority projects that you would like to see supported or delivered in your community from Blair Hill Wind Farm, should it receive consent.

RES is committed to using local contractors in all aspects of the project. If you're a local business interested in getting involved in onshore wind then please contact us.

The Development

Based on our initial studies, the wind farm would comprise up to 22 turbines, each with a maximum height of 250m, resulting in an overall site generating capacity of 145MW. If consented, Blair Hill would be capable of generating clean, low-cost renewable electricity for around 150,000 homes each year.

A Scoping Opinion was received from Scottish Government's Energy Consents Unit (ECU) in November 2023 and this is available to view at https://www.blairhill-windfarm.co.uk/about-the-project/and also on the ECU website (Ref: number: ECU00004878)

We continue to undertake a wide range of further environmental surveys and detailed studies, to build our understanding of the site, in addition to considering the consultation feedback received from the public exhibitions as well as key consultees. This will shape and refine the wind farm design over the coming months.

The following sections address some of the common questions and concerns raised during our initial consultation.

Landscape and Visual

Our preliminary design is for 22 turbines up to 250m in height although this is subject to change and will be informed by the ongoing Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA).

For the public exhibitions, landscape architects at LDA Design Consulting Ltd (LDA) produced a small number of visualisations based on the preliminary layout from some of the proposed viewpoint locations, produced in accordance with NatureScot's Visualisation of Wind Farms Best Practice[4]. The visualisations depicted the turbines at 250m, not at any other height.

We have received feedback from a range of consultees, including local residents and community councils, on the original 19 viewpoints proposed within the Scoping Report. We are now using this feedback and working with LDA on the updated viewpoints to be included with the LVIA.

At our second round of public exhibitions, to be held in Spring 2024, we will present updated visualisations, based on the updated design, as well as a 3D model so people may see what the wind farm would look like from chosen locations.

Ecology and Ornithology

Comprehensive studies are still in progress to identify any potentially significant effects of the proposed wind farm on the local ecology and, where applicable, identify mitigation measures to avoid or reduce potential effects.

There are currently a range of pressures being exerted on Scotland's natural environment, including the direct impacts of human induced climate change - the recent State of Nature Report[5] suggests there has been a 15% decline in average species abundance in Scotland across closely monitored wildlife since 1994 – and the Blair Hill proposal provides an opportunity to deliver a biodiversity net gain on the site. A Biodiversity Enhancement Management Plan will be developed for the operational phase and agreed with consultees, to mitigate or enhance habitat for important ornithological and ecological features and to provide wider biodiversity improvements.

Flooding

Following assessment of desk-based resources, it was noted that river and surface water flooding risk is present at the River Cree tributaries located within the site (Washing Burn and Cordorcan Burn). As part of the design of the wind farm, infrastructure will be kept a minimum of 50m from watercourses, except where required for a watercourse crossing.

Any potential flood risk will be assessed as part of the application and in accordance with the scoping responses from SEPA and their Flood Risk Standing Advice. To further reduce flood risk across the site, existing tracks will be utilised as far as practicable.

4 https://www.nature.scot/doc/visual-representation-wind-farms-guidance
5 https://stateofnature.org.uk/countries/scotland/
6 https://www.sepa.org.uk/media/520492/sepa-flood-risk-standing-advice-for-planning-authorities-and-developers.pdf

Peat

An initial peat depth survey was undertaken across the site in October 2023 to understand the nature of peat on the site. Peat is not uniform across the site and siting of infrastructure will be located in areas to minimise disturbance of peat.

As the wind farm design is refined and finalised, a final detailed peat survey will be conducted at the proposed turbine and infrastructure locations to complete our peat data. This will identify any areas of peatland habitat which would be sensitive to direct or indirect changes as a result of the proposed wind farm. Best practice construction methods will be used throughout to ensure minimal disruption and we will seek to undertake restoration and enhancement measures.

Private Water supply

In order to identify and protect private water supplies, hydrologists at ITPEnergised have undertaken consultation with Dumfries and Galloway Council, who have provided the location of properties with a registered private water supply within 2km of Blair Hill along with other information they hold about the supply.

The hydrologists also ground-truth this information with site-walkover surveys and follow-up with local residents where necessary, in order to ensure that people's private water supply locations have been identified, and that our data is as robust as possible.

Properties within 2km of Blair Hill with a registered private water supply, will receive a separate letter with a call for information.

The call for information invites local residents who have private water supplies linked to Blair Hill to get in touch with ITPEnergised, with details of their private water supplies so that we can ensure all supplies are checked.

Grid Infrastructure

RES has requested a grid connection for Blair Hill Wind Farm from the grid Transmission Owner (TO), in this case Scottish Power Transmission.

The TO is responsible for maintaining and investing in the grid in the south of Scotland. This includes designing connections for Transmission grid applications, such as that for the Blair Hill proposal, and submitting the grid route applications for these connections.

As such, the grid route is subject to a separate application from the wind farm – and will be submitted as a separate Section 37 application under the Electricity Act by the TO once they have finalised their design. There will be a consultation period in which details of the route and method will be available for the public to provide comment to the TO as part of the application process.

To enable Blair Hill Wind Farm to connect to the National Grid, the expected infrastructure will comprise one 132kV overhead wood pole line.

Recreation

During construction of any infrastructure project the developer has a responsibility to ensure that the public is kept safe from any construction activity on the site. This inevitably means that access to some parts of the wind farm site would be temporarily restricted in the interests of public safety during construction of the project, but this will be temporary in nature. Once the wind farm is up and running the statutory Scottish 'right to roam' (Land Reform [Scotland] Act 2003) will apply and the public will have full access to the site for activities like walking, cycling and horse-riding.

We are considering opportunities to enhance the current recreational access facilities on the site and welcome feedback from the community on ways this can be achieved.

Tourism

It has been consistently found that wind farms do not impact tourism. The BIGGAR Economics Report Wind Farms and Tourism Trends in Scotland (2021[7]), found that while the capacity of wind farms had more than quadrupled over the study period, employment in tourism related sectors had increased by more than 20%. It found no relationship between tourism employment and wind farm development, at the level of the Scottish economy, across local authorities nor in the locality of wind farm sites.

Galloway National Park Bid

We understand the importance of the campaign to create the Galloway National Park to the local community.

Guidance[8] published by the Scottish Government in October 2023 in relation to nominations for national park status states:

> **"All areas of Scotland are eligible to submit nominations to become a new National Park (including those that have current or potential onshore wind developments). To ensure any National Park addresses the climate emergency and supports progressive development, we will develop new bespoke planning policy on onshore wind to be applied in new National Parks. This means that a new National Park will be treated differently to existing National Parks with respect to NPF4 policy for onshore wind."**

The Blair Hill wind farm proposal would not affect the potential for the area to be designated as a National Park.

7 https:// https://biggareconomics.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/BIGGAR-Economics-Wind-farms-and-Tourism-2021.pdf
8 https://www.gov.scot/publications/new-national-parks-nominations-guidance-appraisal-framework/

Impact on Health

Whilst multiple, peer reviewed and independent studies have shown there is no connection between wind turbines and negative health effects, it is still a matter we take seriously. One of the most common concerns relates to low-frequency noise commonly known as infrasound.

Low frequency noise is not audible or perceptible to humans as it occurs at similar levels to pre-existing background levels. Multiple organisations and studies from around the world, including the World Health Organisation, indicate that there is no evidence that any infrasound/low frequency noise from wind turbines directly causes health impacts or can otherwise impact on the amenity of those living or working near wind turbines.

Need for the Development

Concerns were raised over Scotland's level of electricity generation in relation to current demand. It is important to note, carbon reduction is required across all sectors, including heat, transport and industrial processes, which are currently heavily reliant on fossil fuels. It is forecast that Scotland's peak demand for electricity will at least double within the next twenty years as a result [9]. This will require a substantial increase in installed capacity across all renewable technologies, including onshore wind.

There are significant grid infrastructure development plans in place that will build out throughout the second half of this decade that will allow for a far higher output of electricity generation from wind and other renewables in Scotland and reduce our reliance on expensive gas back up.

Until the grid network is fit for purpose, National Grid will pay all sources of electricity generation (including nuclear and gas) to switch off (this is known as constraint costs) as the most efficient option to balance supply and demand.

Carbon payback

Harnessing of wind for the generation of electricity may rely on a renewable source of energy, but it must also prove to be sustainable. A typical modern wind turbine's carbon payback time ranges from 1 to 3 years, equating to between 1% and 4% of the wind turbine's lifetime. A modern wind turbine would be expected to return at least 20 times the energy invested in it as renewable electricity. The final carbon calculation for the Blair Hill proposal will be undertaken once the design has

been finalised and captured in the final Environmental Impact Assessment Report which will accompany the planning application.

Wind farm recycling

While about 90% of turbines are easily recyclable, turbine blades are not widely recyclable yet. The industry recognises this and extensive work is underway to establish a circular economy. There is research underway into producing a 100% recyclable turbine blade and a recent pilot project in Northern Ireland has developed a scalable method to recycle 100% of turbine blades, ensuring that valuable resources are turned into new products that can substitute materials such as virgin plastics, steel, and concrete instead of simply going to waste.

There are also options for blade re-purposing. Blade material is incredibly strong and when in a suitable condition, it can be repurposed for new structures. This reduces landfill, retains embodied carbon in the material, reduces the need for virgin material and creates skilled jobs.

Whilst there are a finite number of other structures which could be constructed from blade material, there is also potential to refurbish blades for use as second-hand blades.

[9] National Grid's Future Energy Scenarios

6.1 CLG Terms of Reference and Meetings Minutes

6.1.1 Terms of Reference

COMMUNITY LIAISON GROUP (CLG) OVERVIEW

RES has established the Blair Hill Wind Farm CLG to provide a forum for discussion and exchange of information as well as to create an effective channel of communication between RES, the local community and stakeholders. The local community is defined as those living or working in the vicinity of the proposed Blair Hill Wind Farm.

The objectives of the CLG are:

- To provide a forum for discussion and the exchange of information
- To create and maintain channels of communication between representatives of RES and the local community
- To receive progress updates on the development of the Blair Hill Wind Farm planning process
- To consider any issues arising from the planning development of Blair Hill Wind Farm

1

CLG TERMS OF REFERENCE

1. **CLG Membership**
   The founding members of the CLG will be based on locally elected representatives, local community groups and representatives from RES. The CLG membership will be reviewed if the wind farm is consented. The CLG membership will be finalised at the second CLG meeting and subsequent requests to join the CLG will be considered by all founding members and approval of such request must be by majority vote of the founding CLG membership. A proxy member from each group represented on the CLG may attend the CLG meeting if a principal member(s) are unavailable.

2. **Meetings**
   The date, time and venue for the next meeting will be agreed at each CLG meeting. Extraordinary meetings may be held by majority vote of the CLG members. Meetings may be held in-person or via an online platform.

3. **RES Commitments**

   RES commits to undertake the following:

   - Draft minutes as a record of the meetings. These will be issued to the CLG members by RES within 5 working days of each CLG meeting
   - Publish copies of all meeting notices, confirmed minutes and presentations on the Blair Hill Wind Farm website and distribute the same in soft copy to all CLG members
   - To issue agendas to the CLG at least five days in advance of each meeting
   - Organise relevant external/guest speakers to address the CLG on any issues of interest articulated by the members relating to Blair Hill Wind Farm
   - Finance the venue hire, any documents and advertising costs associated with running the CLG

2

CLG TERMS OF REFERENCE

3. **CLG Member Commitments**

   The CLG members commit to undertake the following:

   - Disseminate information back to and make representation on behalf of the communities they represent
   - Address questions and concerns arising from the surrounding communities
   - Review the minutes issued by RES, within 5 working days and approve or request amendment(s)
   - To raise any topics, questions and agenda items for the next CLG meeting within 5 working days of the next scheduled meeting

4. **Chairperson**
   The CLG will identify a Chair. The Chair of the group is responsible for the orderly running of the meetings, adherence to the agenda and enforcement of the CLG's Terms of Reference. In the event the elected Chair is unable to attend a CLG meeting, a temporary Chair will be agreed at the relevant meeting by majority vote of the CLG members.

5 **Minutes**
Minutes of the meeting will be taken by RES and issued to members within 5 working days of the meeting. CLG members will review and approve, or request changes to, the minutes within 5 working days of receiving the minutes from RES. Approved minutes will be published at www.blairhill-windfarm.co.uk/community-liaison-group/ within a maximum of 2 weeks of the CLG meeting.

6 **Dissolution**
The CLG may be dissolved at any time by majority vote of the CLG members.

3

CLG TERMS OF REFERENCE

7. Agenda

The topic schedule for ongoing meetings will be discussed and addressed at the inaugural meeting. The meeting agenda will include:

- Welcome and introductions
- Apologies
- Matters arising
- Blair Hill Project Update
- Questions from previous meeting
- Q&A
- Any other business
- Date and time of next meeting

Terms of Reference approved 27th February 2024

The Terms of Reference may be reviewed at any time. Any changes must be approved by majority vote of the CLG members.

4

6.1.2 January 2024 Minutes

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MINUTES

Blair Hill Wind Farm
Community Liaison Group (CLG)

17/01/24
7pm - 8.40pm

Attendees	Name	Representing
	Cllr Katie Hagmann (KH)	Ward member for D&G Galloway and Wigtown West
	Cllr David Inglis (DI)	Ward member for D&G Galloway and Wigtown West
	Clifford Smithers (CS)	Cree Valley Community Council
	Richard Kay (RK)	Cree Valley Community Council
	Mary Harkness (MH)	Kirkcowan Community Council
	Hazel Matthews (HM)	Kirkcowan Community Council
	Iain Service (IS)	Ditch the Blair Hill Project
	Sarah More (SM)	Cree Valley Area Development Trust
	Terence Flanagan (TF)	River Cree Hatchery & Habitat Trust SCIO
	Alan Howatson (AH)	River Cree Hatchery & Habitat Trust SCIO
	Scott Jones (SJ)	Machars and Cree Valley Climate Action Network
	David Bleasdale (DB)	Newton Stewart Initiative
	Linda Woodfield	Newton Stewart Initiative
	Sarah McArthur (SMc)	RES
	Carey Green (CG)	RES
	Graeme Kerr (GK)	RES

Apologies	Name	Representing
	Craig McMilken	Ditch the Blair Hill Project
	Cllr Jackie McCamon	Ward member for D&G Galloway and Wigtown West
	Cllr Richard Marsh	Ward member for D&G Galloway and Wigtown West
	Jamie Hyslop	River Cree District Salmon Fishery Board

Agenda Item	Activity	Actions
Welcome, introductions & apologies	All members introduced themselves and advised which group or organisation they were representing.	
CLG Purpose, membership and chair	CG advised that the purpose of the CLG was to create an open and constructive forum for discussion and the sharing of information across the community. It is understood and respected that there are differing views on the proposal and the aim of the CLG was not to try to change people's opinion. An invitation to join the CLG was declined by Hands off our Hills, The Royal Burgh of Wigtown & District Community Council, the ward officer for Mid-Galloway and Wigtown West, Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere, Southern Upland Partnership, South of Scotland Destination Alliance, Galloway Fisheries Trust and RSPB. The invitation remains open to the above groups at this time. CG asked if any of the CLG members present had any suggestions for other groups or organisations who should receive an invitation to the CLG. No other groups or organisations identified. TF proposed IS be CLG Chair, seconded by CS. It was unanimously agreed that IS would be Chair. It was agreed that should the CLG Chair be unavailable for a meeting then a temporary Chair would be appointed at the relevant meeting by majority vote of the members. It was agreed, as the CLG is a forum for discussion and information sharing and not decision-making, that a quorum was not required.	

CLG Terms of Reference	CLG members were presented with draft Terms of Reference (ToR) and it was advised that the ToR would be publicly available on the Blair Hill website, once approved.	
	It was agreed by the CLG members that membership of the CLG would be finalised at the next meeting. Subsequent requests for membership to be agreed by a majority vote of the founding CLG members. It was agreed that CLG membership would be reviewed if the wind farm receives planning consent.	
	It was agreed that draft minutes will be circulated by RES within 5 working days of a meeting with requests for changes or approval from CLG members within a further 5 working days. Approved minutes will be published on the Blair Hill website within 2 weeks of a meeting.	
	It was agreed that any request for an extraordinary meeting should be agreed by majority vote of the CLG members.	
	It was agreed that a proxy member from each group represented on the CLG may attend a CLG meeting if a principal member(s) is unavailable.	
	Dissolution clause to be added to the ToR.	RES
	It was agreed that CLG members should raise any agenda items with RES within 5 days of the next meeting.	
	Updated ToR to be approved at the next meetings, updated draft to be circulated in advance.	RES
Project Update	SMc advised that the environmental site surveys are almost complete, and consultation is ongoing with stakeholders like Historic Environment Scotland. Both of these, along with feedback received from the local community will inform changes to the design that will be made prior to the submission of an application.	
	A scope has been agreed with the EHO for baseline noise surveys which will inform a Noise Impact Assessment.	
	To account for feedback received at Scoping, an updated list of viewpoints that will be included in the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment has been proposed. This is currently being agreed with Dumfries and Galloway Council and will be shared thereafter.	
	An updated design for the wind farm will be presented at the second public exhibitions in late spring. It was agreed that CLG members would feed into the exhibition materials to be presented at these exhibitions. Feedback from the first set of public exhibitions will be referred to at the second public exhibitions.	

Project Q&A	SJ asked if a social economic impact assessment will be carried out for the project and SM confirmed that a socio-economic report (which will include an assessment on tourism) will be provided and submitted as part of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA). It was agreed that RES will provide a detailed response to this for the next CLG meeting.	RES
	CM provided a number of questions in advance of the meeting relating to construction traffic. It was agreed that RES would provide a detailed response on construction traffic after leaving the A75 for the next CLG meeting.	RES
	IS requested more information on the proposed grid connection route for the project. SMc & GK explained that the final grid connection design is a matter for the National Grid Electricity System Operator (NGESO)/Scottish Power Transmission (SPT) and an application for a grid connection will be submitted to NGESO shortly. Once RES receive more information from the NGESO/SPT, RES will provide more information at a CLG meeting ahead of the second public exhibitions.	RES
Any Other Business	SJ requested that RES provide further information on the costs of wind energy (specifically carbon payback and use of rare earth metals) to the CLG members at a future meeting.	RES
Date and Time of Next Meeting	The next meeting to be held in-person on 27th February 2024 at 7.00pm. RES to book venue.	RES
	The meeting closed at 8.40pm.	

6.1.3 February 2024 Minutes

power for good

MINUTES

Blair Hill Wind Farm
Community Liaison Group (CLG)

27/02/24
7pm - 9.10pm

Attendees	Name	Representing
	Clifford Smithers (CS)	Cree Valley Community Council
	Richard Kay (RK)	Cree Valley Community Council
	Mary Harkness (MH)	Kirkcowan Community Council
	Jamie Hyslop (JH)	River Cree District Salmon Fishery Board
	Alan Howatson (AH)	River Cree Hatchery & Habitat Trust SCIO
	Sarah More (SM)	Cree Valley Area Development Trust
	Craig McMilken (CM)	Ditch the Blair Hill Project
	Iain Service (IS)	Ditch the Blair Hill Project
	Scott Jones (SJ)	Machars and Cree Valley Climate Action Network
	Linda Woodfield (LW)	Newton Stewart Initiative
	Sarah McArthur (SMc)	RES
	Will Beresford (WB)	RES
	Graeme Kerr (GK)	RES

Apologies	Name	Representing
	Terence Flanagan	River Cree Hatchery & Habitat Trust SCIO
	Hazel Matthews	Kirkcowan Community Council
	Cllr Katie Hagmann	Ward member for D&G Galloway and Wigtown West
	Cllr David Inglis	Ward member for D&G Galloway and Wigtown West
	Cllr Jackie McCamon	Ward member for D&G Galloway and Wigtown West
	Cllr Richard Marsh	Ward member for D&G Galloway and Wigtown West

Agenda Item	Activity	Actions
Welcome, introductions & apologies	All members introduced themselves and advised which group or organisation they were representing.	
CLG membership/ enquiries from members of the public	SMc advised that no new parties have requested to be a member of the CLG. It was unanimously agreed that membership of the CLG was confirmed as those parties present at this meeting or the inaugural meeting in January. An email was received by RES from a member of the public querying the involvement of Ditch the Blair Hill Project (DTBHP) in the CLG and who the group comprised of, given there is yet no online presence. The email also raised concerns around involvement of IS in the Newton Stewart Cinema given it was highlighted by members of the public as something they would like to see supported by community benefit funding. IS explained that DTBHP are not a constituted group but a movement claiming to speak for the large strand of local opinion that does not want to see a wind farm built on the site. IS also explained that he is not directly involved in the Newton Stewart cinema. SMc clarified that Newton Stewart cinema, as a potential recipient of the community benefit fund, was a suggestion received by RES by the community during the public consultation events in May 2023. SMc agreed that RES will get consent to name groups in any further communications. CLG members agreed that they were content for Ditch the Blair Hill Project to remain part of the CLG.	
CLG Terms of Reference	Terms of Reference were unanimously agreed. RES to upload to Blair Hill project website.	RES

Project Update	SMc advised that that RES are close to having a finalised turbine design as a result of consultation and site surveys. Supporting infrastructure is also being designed. RES anticipate the final turbine layout to be between 16-18 turbines, but this is still to be confirmed. Some of the reasons behind reduced turbine numbers include heritage, landscape and ecology inputs. More detailed peat depth and sampling surveys will be conducted over the coming months and an updated plan will be shared once available. RK noted that an intensive survey was done at Drannandow around the time of tree planting in 1980s. JH asked if there was any deep peat on site and if turbines are sited on it. SMc confirmed that whilst there are pockets of deep peat on site, it is mostly shallow depths or no peat on the site. No turbines are to be sited on peat over 0.5m.	RES
Socio-Economic	RES provided a written response to the question raised by SJ at the previous meeting. The written response is appended to these minutes. SMc advised that IS had submitted a question on socio-economics and tourism ahead of the meeting. Discussion followed around the socio-economic report being conducted for the project and SMc/GK confirmed that it will carry equal weight to all EIA documents in the planning application. RES to provide copy of the scoping report that outlines the methodology to be employed. All members agreed that it would be useful to have a representative of BiGGAR Economics attend a future meeting as a guest speaker on socio-economics and tourism. RES to arrange. SJ asked if a social impact assessment is being conducted and advised he could share a study commissioned by Marine Scotland on this that may provide a useful reference. He stated that socio-economic assessments tend to focus on what was relatively easy to quantify and monetise, while a social impact assessment (SIA) should also be undertaken, since SIA focusses more on the lived experience of people, their sense of place, what they value in their lives, and how these things might be impacted.	RES RES SJ

Traffic & Transport	RES provided a written response to questions raised by CM ahead of the the previous meeting. The written response is appended to these minutes. JH asked what mitigation will be put in place to prevent watercourse pollution during the construction phase and SMc confirmed that RES are legally obliged to adhere to stringent pollution prevention measures, which will be included in the Construction Environmental Management Plan. An Environmental Clerks of Works will be appointed to monitor construction work. Water quality monitoring is typically undertaken to ensure the development does not impact on local watercourses. Specific procedures such as sustainable drainage system (SuDS) will be implemented to provide surface water management techniques to mitigate any potential adverse impact on hydrology. CM asked how much traffic will be travelling to the site and SMc confirmed that this will be included as part of the traffic and transport assessment submitted as part of the EIA. SJ asked if the environmental impacts of the concrete used in the turbine foundations is considered and SMc responded that it would be included in the carbon balance assessment, which is an online tool provided by SEPA that all onshore wind developments have to complete. RES to share link to tool. The swept path assessments for the A712 are still being finalised, but they will be shared with the CLG and wider public as part of the EIA.	RES
Grid	RES provided a written response to questions raised by IS at the previous meeting. The written response is appended to these minutes. SMc outlined that RES are awaiting a grid connection offer but expect to connect into Glenlee substation. RES will keep the CLG updated on the progress of the application and an indicative grid connection route will be included in the EIA.	

Community Benefit/Shared Ownership	SMc outlined the proposed community benefits package for Blair Hill Wind Farm (£5k/ MW per annum) and advised that shared community ownership of the project was something RES were keen to explore. It was confirmed that neither of these are material considerations in the determination of the planning application and that shared ownership would be offered on top of community benefits. If there was interest from the CLG, RES could present more information on shared ownership at the next meeting. SMc offered to connect the CLG with Local Energy Scotland who offer advice and funding around community shared ownership. Previous CLGs on other RES projects have been involved in the administration of the community benefits package and SMc highlighted that this is something the Blair Hill CLG may wish to consider. CLG members decided that they did not want to discuss shared ownership or community benefits until such time that the project was consented. SMc/GK advised they respect the CLG's position although RES would continue to seek input and feedback from the community on local benefits and priority projects that they would like to see supported or delivered in their community from Blair Hill Wind Farm, should it receive consent. CS advised that CVCC are remaining neutral on the proposed development at this stage and would not engage on the matter of community benefits as they feel it is not the appropriate time.	
Guest Speakers.	It was agreed that CLG members would like guest speakers to talk to the group on socio-economics & tourism, heritage and pollution prevention. RES to arrange a guest speaker for the next meeting, subject to availability.	RES
Any Other Business	IS requested that questions submitted by CLG members in advance of each meeting be shared with the rest of the group. SMc agreed to include these when sharing the agenda going forward. CM asked if RES could share the results from the feedback received at the public exhibitions in Oct. SMc advised that this will be made available around the time of the second public exhibitions later in the Spring. CS advised that CVCC intend to conduct a survey once a planning application is submitted to assist in identifying the views and opinions of the general public.	
Date and Time of Next Meeting	The next meeting to be held in-person on 9th April 2024 at 7.00pm. RES to book venue. The meeting closed at 9:10pm.	RES

The below questions were received by RES from Ditch the Blair Hill Project on 18/02/24.

GRID CONNECTION

What comments does RES have on the below?

RES state on the Blair Hill website that the site was chosen because it was close to a viable grid connection. This is not correct. A grid connection for Blair Hill is not viable. The simple fact is that the site cannot be connected to the national grid until 2032, if at all.

Published by the Scottish Government in 2023, The onshore wind sector deal set out various commitments from the Scottish Government and the onshore wind industry to deliver upon their collective ambition of 20 GW of onshore wind in Scotland by 2030. Among the commitments made as part of the deal were;

" By the end of 2023 we will provide clear information on the expected pipeline of new wind farms, extensions to existing wind farms, life extensions and re-powering projects expected between 2024 and 2030. This spatial vision for the delivery of the 2030 ambition will build on the pipeline analysis committed to under the Planning section of the sector"

And, a commitment;

" To provide an evidence base to support National Grid ESO and Scotland's network companies to deliver strategic network planning."

Following on from these commitments, the dataset, spd-dg-connections-info was published on 26th January 2024. This dataset lists all of the local SPEN electrical substations and details the respective current capacity constraints that they are under.

At 3 miles distant the main Newton Stewart substation, or Grid Supply Point (GSP), is the closest GSP to Blair Hill. The other nearby GSPs ; Glenluce, Glenlee, and Tongland; are all approximately 20 miles from Blair Hill. This makes Newton Stewart the only plausible place where the Blair Hill Wind Farm can connect to the National Grid.

The dataset referred to above indicates that the Newton Stewart GSP currently has no spare export capacity. As a consequence, contrary to their claim, there is not a viable connection to the national grid, available to RES, for the Blair Hill project. The reason given by SPEN for the current absence of additional export capacity at Newton Stewart is; " No thermal capacity, requires significant transmission works for additional projects to connect" The timetable which also forms part of the dataset, indicates that the significant transmission works referred to are not targeted to be completed until 2032. Past experience of large construction projects in Scotland suggests that the 2032 target will be overshot by several years.

TOURISM

Can RES issue an invitation to BIGGAR Economics to send someone to the next CLG meeting to speak as an expert on the effects of wind farms on tourism ?

When the Blair Hill project pops up as a topic of conversation in and around Newton Stewart, the subject of tourism always crops up. Most people think that the project will damage the Cree Valley landscape and make the area less appealing to tourists The attraction of the area was well summed up in a recent trip advisor comment.." Beautiful scenery and woodlands , small lochs and plentiful wildlife. Of course if you are there at night you may get chance to see the wonderful stars. Popular place for cyclists but plenty of space for walkers."

There is genuine concern in the local community that, if it is ever built, the Blair Hill Wind Farm will shatter the above perception and cause serious damage to the local tourism industry.

A simple tick sheet survey drawn up by DTBHP was placed in a few shops in Newton Stewart on 10th of February. It asked visitors to the area whether or not a large wind farm would make them; more likely, less likely, or make no difference to the likelihood of them revisiting Newton Stewart in the future. Of the 37 completed questionnaires collected in by 19th February, 17 said no difference, and 20 said less likely. Our survey was far from scientific and cannot be relied on. However it does prove that the local community are justified in being concerned about the effect of the Blair Hill Project on tourism.

In the December project update RES stated with confidence that " It has been consistently found that wind farms do not impact tourism. The BIGGAR Economics Report Wind Farms and Tourism Trends in Scotland (2021), found that while the capacity of wind farms had more than quadrupled over the study period, employment in tourism related sectors had increased by more than 20%. It found no relationship between tourism employment and wind farm development, at the level of the Scottish economy, across local authorities nor in the locality of wind farm sites."

RES has cited the BIGGAR Economics Report, as being "consistent proof" that tourism is not affected by wind farms. DTBHP consider that consistent proof requires reference to be made to several named and qualified attributable sources of evidence rather than one unidentified author working at BIGGAR Economics.

On close inspection the figures produced in the BIGGAR Economics Report for the Wind Farms near to Newton Stewart appear to be inconsistent with each other and completely wrong. DTBHP find it incredible that the BIGGAR Economics Report can suggest that over 2000 people work in tourism in the area around the Arecleoch Windfarm at Barrhill. While, suggesting that only 230 people work in tourism at the Mark Hill Wind Farm, which is literally next door, on the other side of Barrhill. The figures contained in the Biggar Economics Report do not appear to be credible

In order to shed some light on this DTBHP asked a local student to analyse the BIGGAR Economics Report. These are his findings

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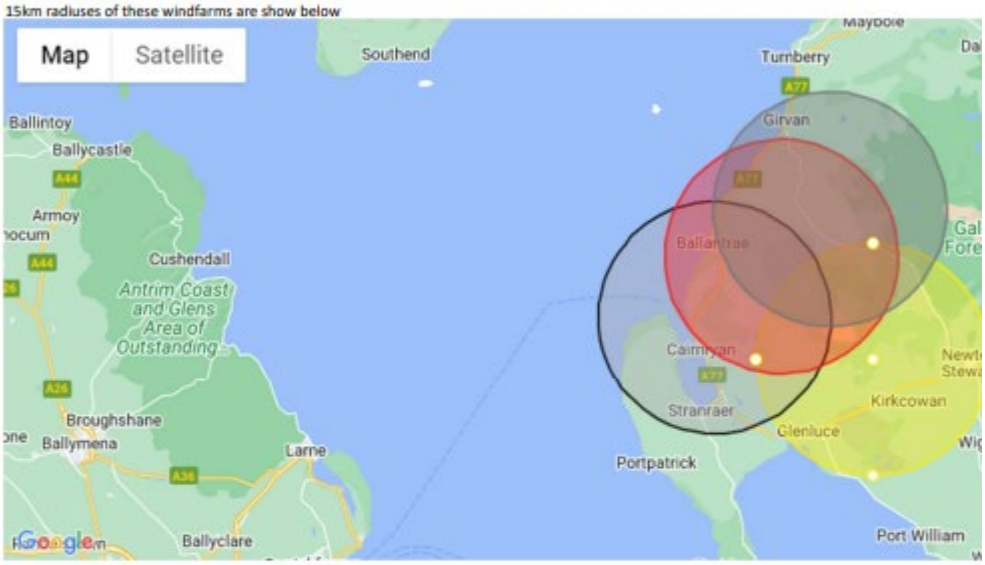
Wind Farms & Tourism Trends in Scotland: Evidence from 44 Wind Farms

From Biggar Economics Published: 2021

On the first page in the final paragraph, it states that "study areas were based on a 15km radius". This implies to me that in a 15km radius around each wind farm area is where the tourism employment data was collected from.

In tables 5-1 and 6-1 on pages 17 and 22 respectively there are 4 pertinent rows in the tables which are important to this information. In table 5-1 these rows are Airies Farm and Glen App and for table 6-1 these rows are Mark Hill and Arecleoch. The 15km radiuses of these windfarms are show below



- Black circle – Glen App
- Red circle – Arecleoch
- Gray circle – Mark hill
- Yellow circle – Airies Farm

In this study the information shows that in the surrounding area of each of these wind farms the tourism employment is as follows:

Wind Farm Area	Tourism Employment 2015	Tourism Employment 2019	Change from 2015-2019
Glen App	670	655	-2.2%
Airies Farm	375	405	8.0%
Mark Hill	110	230	109.1%
Arecleoch	2525	2125	-15.8%

From this data we can see that for both in 2015 and 2019 the sum of the tourism employment in Glen App, Airies Farm and Mark Hill is less than that of Arecleoch.

The study states the sum of Glen App, Airies Farm and Mark Hill for2015 is 1155 and the sum for 2019 is 1290.

These figures are collectively both less than the 2525 and 2125 stated for Arecleoch. This is where we run into an issue as can be seen from the map above. Here we see that the zones for data collection for Airies Farm, Mark Hill and Glen App all overlap the zone for Arecloch. This suggests that the sum of the tourism employment in Airies Farm, Mark Hill and Glen App should be greater or equal to that of Arecloch but this isn't what we see.

This suggests that the method for data collection must have some flaws leading to these skewed numbers which could suggest that the study may be flawed all together.

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DTBHP believe that it would be helpful if RES could arrange for an expert to attend the CLG to help narrow the gulf in understanding that clearly exists between many local people and RES on the potential impact of the Blair Hill wind farm proposal on local tourism

COMMUNITY BENEFITS

Have RES had discussions with Mr Inglis and other local councillors where it was decided that they would be the only community representatives in the negotiations to set up the community benefit fund, and have RES agreed to pay £1.4 million per year into the community benefit fund ?

The official guidance on community benefits is contained in the 2019 publication, Scottish Government Good Practice Principles for Community Benefits from Onshore Renewable Developments, SGGPP. It states;

"Community benefits packages can take many forms, and decisions on the details are best led locally based on consensus between the renewable energy business and the community/communities concerned. The provision of community benefits (including flexible packages of benefits) is not a material consideration, and has no bearing in the planning process."

And goes on to state;

"Consultation is an important component of identifying appropriate communities that will be involved in community benefits schemes. This can also help to avoid division and ill-feeling locally, helping to ensure the community benefits offer is viewed positively over the longer term. The Scottish Government encourages this process to begin at an early stage, pre-consent where possible, to allow community groups time to consolidate their available resource and build capacity, as well as to enable discussion and identification of an appropriate area of benefit.

The creation of mutual trust and strengthening of relationships is integral to the overall process. Consultation should be open, timely, fair and inclusive; enabling everyone with an interest the opportunity to be involved and heard. Although local opponents to the development itself may deem such conversations inappropriate, in the longer term it is the considered view of the Scottish

Government that early stage conversations help build engagement in and commitment to local renewable energy developments.

Discussions on the provision of community benefits are not a material consideration in the planning process.To maintain this distinction, Scottish Government recommends that discussions on the development itself and discussions on community benefits proposals are held in two separate forums or at separate times in the development process. However, it is recognised that this may not always be possible owing to the timescale of the project or available resource and capacity within a community. Therefore, when the concept of and approach to community benefits is introduced, it should be made clear to the community that it is independent of the planning process and is not a material consideration in deciding an application."

The above guidance is very clear.

DTBHP have played no part in the social media squabble which has developed around the Blair Hill project. However we are not unaware of what has been said. One comment made by local councillor, David Inglis, grabbed our attention. During an email exchange with a constituent on whether or not CVCC will object to the planning application for the Blair Hill project, he stated; " Whilst I have had many emails from constituents who are opposed to the current proposals. I have also had representations showing support or are neutral therefore they have no opinion either way. Some constituents believe that the £1.4 million community benefit fund will do a lot of good in the area. Cree Valley Community Council have said that they will carry out a survey of their constituents and the wider community, to gauge the views of the public and they will publish their findings This will determine the CC planning response as a statutory consultee"

The above comment by Councillor Inglis is out of line with the official guidance. He is saying that community benefits are a material consideration in planning matters. DTBHP wish to make it clear that, according to SGGPP, and the law, community benefits are not a material consideration in planning matters. Cree Valley CC must not take community benefit funding into account when acting in the role of statutory consultee for the determination of the Blair Hill Wind Farm planning application.

DTBHP are also concerned by the £1.4 million figure quoted by Councillor Inglis. Our calculations, from the information provided by RES, is that the amount being offered is less than £750000.

DTBHP also wish to make it clear that, not once in its 36 pages does SGGPP suggest that local councillors should be given the role of negotiating on behalf of local communities when community benefit funds are being discussed. Yet, the RES Blair Hill website states. "Should the project receive consent, the area of benefit for Blair Hill Wind Farm will be determined in consultation with locally elected representatives from the closest communities." It appears that despite the official guidance of SGGPP, RES have decided that councillors should represent all stakeholders within the local community

DTBHP wish to emphasise that we expect RES to follow SGGPP

We reiterate that. "The creation of mutual trust and strengthening of relationships is integral to the overall process. Consultation should be open, timely, fair and inclusive; enabling everyone with an interest the opportunity to be involved and heard"

Blair Hill Wind Farm

Community Liaison Group

27th February 2024

RES has prepared this written response to questions received from members of the Community Liaison Group at the inaugural meeting on 17th January 2024.

Socioeconomics and Tourism

"Will a socioeconomic impact assessment be carried out for the project?"

Yes.

The publication of National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) puts a greater emphasis on socioeconomic analysis outwith the standard Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) format. It states that *"Development proposals will only be supported where they maximise net economic impact, including local and community socio-economic benefits such as employment, associated business and supply chain opportunities."*[1] Therefore, a separate report on socioeconomics and tourism will be provided alongside the EIA. This report will contain a socioeconomic, tourism and recreation impact assessment, but this format will also allow for a fuller analysis of measures to enhance the beneficial socioeconomic impacts of the proposed Blair Hill Wind Farm.

In the Scoping Report submitted to the ECU in August 2023, it was proposed to scope out socioeconomics and tourism of the EIA. Consultees agreed with this approach and it is compliant with EIA regulations. Socioeconomics and tourism has been scoped out of EIA assessments for other wind farms across Scotland and the approach proposed for Blair Hill wind farm is not new.

1 Scottish Government (2023) National Planning Framework 4. Available at: https://www.gov.scot/publications/national-planning-framework-4/pages/3/

Traffic and Transport

"Is there a detailed plan of the works to be carried out on the road construction after leaving the A75? How long will the road be closed? Where will the materials come from? Has a carbon audit been carried out on the construction phase been carried out and can RES share a copy?"

With regard to the proposed route from the A75 road to site, we're still undertaking surveys and discussing options with landowners. A transport assessment will be undertaken as part of the EIA process and RES is currently consulting with Dumfries and Galloway Council and Transport Scotland on our transport plans. A detailed swept path analysis of the turbine delivery route, including the A712 is underway and will be available to view once it is complete. It will be included in documentation submitted as part of the planning application.

We aim to keep traffic movements to a minimum and will seek to use construction materials available on site wherever practicable. The A712 has been assessed as suitable to transport abnormal loads to the site, with some minor modifications required such as the temporary removal of signage or fencing in certain locations. No new road construction is proposed along this route.

A carbon balance assessment will be undertaken once the design of the wind farm is complete and provided in the EIA. The EIA will accompany the planning application and be available for public viewing and comment as part of the formal consultation period run by the determining authority once the planning application is submitted.

Grid

"Can RES provide more information on the proposed grid connection route for the project?"

RES is awaiting a grid offer from the grid Transmission Owner (TO), in this case Scottish Power Transmission. We expect the project to be connected into a substation at Glenlee, approximately 20km from the site, although this will be confirmed by the TO in the coming months.

To enable Blair Hill Wind Farm to connect to the National Grid, the expected infrastructure will comprise one 132kV overhead wood pole line. The grid route application for this connection will be submitted by the TO, however indicative details of the anticipated route of the grid connection for the project will also be in included in the Project Description chapter of the EIA which will accompany the planning application. RES envisages this would follow existing grid routes where possible.

RES will provide further updates to the CLG at future meetings when more information is received.

blairhill.windfarm@res-group.com www.blairhill-windfarm.co.uk

6.1.4 April 2024 Minutes

power for good

MINUTES

Blair Hill Wind Farm
Community Liaison Group (CLG)

09/04/24
7pm - 9.00pm

Attendees	Name	Representing
	Clifford Smithers (CS)	Cree Valley Community Council
	Mary Harkness (MH)	Kirkcowan Community Council
	Jamie Hyslop (JH)	River Cree District Salmon Fishery Board
	Alan Howatson (AH)	River Cree Hatchery & Habitat Trust SCIO
	Terence Flanagan (TF)	River Cree Hatchery & Habitat Trust SCIO
	Sarah More (SM)	Cree Valley Area Development Trust
	Craig McMilken (CM)	Ditch the Blair Hill Project
	Iain Service (IS)	Ditch the Blair Hill Project
	Scott Jones (SJ)	Machars and Cree Valley Climate Action Network
	Linda Woodfield (LW)	Newton Stewart Initiative
	Sarah McArthur (SMc)	RES
	Carey Green (CG)	RES
	Beth Gray (BG)	SLR Consulting
	Dario Ewing (DE)	Cavendish
Apologies	**Name**	**Representing**
	Hazel Matthews	Kirkcowan Community Council
	Cllr Katie Hagmann	Ward member for D&G Galloway and Wigtown West
	Cllr David Inglis	Ward member for D&G Galloway and Wigtown West
	Cllr Jackie McCamon	Ward member for D&G Galloway and Wigtown West
	Cllr Richard Marsh	Ward member for D&G Galloway and Wigtown West

Agenda Item	Activity	Actions
Welcome, introductions & apologies	CG, BG & DE introduced themselves as members of the project team.	
Project Update	SMc updated that the site surveys have been completed and RES are close to finalising the site layout. The EIA will then be undertaken before submitting the planning application in the summer. SMc updated that RES are preparing for the second round of public consultations and are seeking feedback from the CLG on the information to be presented at the exhibitions.	
Guest Speaker - Cultural Heritage Expert.	BG delivered a presentation on the heritage of the site, outlining the identified historical assets and illustrating how the project's design has evolved in consideration of those assets. A copy of the presentation is appended to these minutes. SJ emphasised the significance of acknowledging the lived experience associated with the area's heritage and queried whether SLR had collaborated with the Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere concerning this matter. BG and SMc noted the comment and confirmed that Biosphere has been consulted as part of the Scoping request, however they did not provide a response. JH referenced a passage from the response received from HES in the Scoping Report and enquired about the measures proposed in the project's design to accommodate these comments. In response, BG explained that the project had gone through several layout iterations to specifically address the feedback provided by HES. BG advised that HES had undertaken a site visit and had a meeting with RES/ SLR to discuss the project. CM queried whether SLR had undertaken an evaluation to determine the suitability of the site for wind farm development. In response, BG advised that they were involved in the site feasibility and clarified that this was the responsibility of the Scottish Ministers assessing the application, who would need to consider the assessments made both by RES (via SLR) and HES. IS emphasised his view that industrialisation and heavy machinery had yet to touch the site and the importance of preserving the entirety of assets on the site. He stated that on the first edition OS map, the Deil's Dyke, a late Roman boundary feature, is shown traversing the site and appears to pass very close to a proposed turbine base in the commercial forestry. The CLG concluded that they would like a LiDAR survey to be conducted as a condition of consent, to be included in the Schedule of Commitments, and this was agreed by RES.	

Public Exhibitions	SMc offered further context on the upcoming exhibitions, to be held on 21st May from 3pm to 8pm at the McMillan Hall in Newton Stewart and on 22nd May from 3pm to 8pm at St Couans Hall in Kirkcowan. RES provided a handout of the proposed exhibition content and invited feedback from the CLG members. A copy of the handout is appended to these minutes.	
	JH stressed the importance of presenting new information at the second round of consultation with particular emphasis on the number of viewpoints presented. SMc responded by stating that viewpoints comparing the old and new designs would be included to demonstrate the evolution of the scheme informed by consultation. SMc also agreed that RES would share the list of viewpoints to be assessed in the Environmental Impact Assessment, as agreed with statutory consultees, and proposed viewpoints to be shown at the exhibitions with the CLG. Members could feedback on which viewpoints they would like presented at the exhibition. It was agreed that RES would follow up with the CLG via email to coordinate this process.	RES
	Some CLG members felt that the presentation of information on comparisons between the preliminary and updated designs was not required. RES advised that most of the exhibition content would comprise new and updated information, however, showing information on design evolution, particularly in response to feedback, was also important.	
	CM asked if the Traffic and Transport information would include the access route which RES confirmed this would be included.	
	CM questioned if the information presented on traffic and transport would include detailed modelling on the impact of construction traffic. SMc said that while an overview of the information would be provided at the exhibition, the detailed modelling would be completed for the EIA.	
	Following the request by RES, the members of the CLG agreed to assist in promoting the exhibitions within their respective communities.	
	CM enquired about the inclusion of details regarding the carbon assessment of the development in the upcoming consultations. SMc clarified that while the comprehensive assessments would not be finalised for the consultation, RES would present the methodology that will be employed to conduct the assessment.	

Grid Connection & Markets	RES provided a written response to the questions raised by IS ahead of the previous meeting. The written response is appended to these minutes. IS expressed his concerns that information on the grid connection offer to RES was an important consideration for the local community and requested more information on when RES intended to apply for a grid connection. SMc stated that an application should be made in the next six weeks and that it would take at least a further 3 months for an offer to be made. SMc undertook to inform the CLG when the application is made and details of the offer accepted by RES. IS raised concerns about the possibility of wind farms being abandoned if developers cease operations. SMc assured that wind farms cannot legally be left inoperable. Most planning consents will carry a condition whereby a wind farm must be decommissioned if it has been inoperable for a certain period. Decommissioning agreements and bonds are typically entered into, which serve as financial assurances to cover the costs of dismantling infrastructure and restoring the land once the wind farm's operational life concludes.	
Guest Speaker	It was agreed that RES would arrange a speaker, subject to availability, from Biggar Economics to present on the socio-economic and tourism assessment for Blair Hill. RES will also arrange for a guest speaker to present on construction and pollution control.	
Date and Time of Next meeting	SMc noted that local ward councillors have expressed interest in attending the CLG meetings and requested if multiple dates could be offered for the upcoming meeting. The CLG agreed to propose either June 4th or June 18th at 7:00pm as options for the next meeting to be held in-person. RES to book venue. The meeting concluded at 9:00 pm.	RES

The below questions were received by RES from Ditch the Blair Hill Project on 28/03/24.

One of the display boards produced by RES for the October public consultations at the Macmillan Hall and Wigtown County Buildings included the statement;

" With the rising cost of living and climate emergency, it is imperative that we deliver electricity efficiently and at the lowest cost to the consumer"

DTBHP agree with this statement, but, having studied the facts that are available to us, we are confident that the Blair Hill project is not capable of delivering low cost electricity to the consumer. Our questions, on Grid Connection, and Net Zero Market Reform give RES the opportunity to produce fresh facts to correct us, if we are wrong.

GRID CONNECTION

DTBHP realise that the local Transmission Operator, SPEN are legally bound to make a "connection offer" to RES for the Blair Hill project should RES request one. However "an offer" could stipulate a date well in the future and be curtailed in capacity to such an extent that it renders investing in the Blair Hill project unviable

In answer to our first grid connection question, RES stated that "they expect to receive an offer from SPEN to connect the project to a substation at Glenlee, about 20km from the site, along a new 132KVA overhead line, following existing grid routes where possible."

We do not believe that any such offer is very likely to be made for the following reasons.

1) The Glenlee substation is currently being upgraded, the works involved have not been completed because the necessary planning application, first lodged in 2019, has yet to be approved. The site plans drawn up by SPEN for the current Glenlee upgrade indicate that there will be no space left for a third overhead 132KVA circuit to access the substation from the direction of Newton Stewart. The current SPEN KTR plan is to divert the two existing 132KVA overhead lines before reconnecting them to the substation from the west without interfering with the penstock of the Glenlee Hydroelectric Plant. A further expansion and modification of the electrical plant at the substation to accommodate a 132KVA overhead power line from the Blair Hill project would be impossible without relocating the entire

compound, away from the constricted space it currently occupies adjacent to the Drax owned hydroelectric plant and its associated penstock. It is highly unlikely that SPEN would be prepared to even consider reconfiguring the Glenlee site so soon after pleading to the local residents and the relevant authorities that the detailed substation design contained in the KTR project planning application documents had been carefully thought through and was future proofed to be fit for purpose.

2) The 1989 Electricity Act imposes upon SPEN a statutory duty to "have regard to the desirability of preserving natural beauty, of conserving fauna, fauna, and geological or physiographical features of special interest", and, " to do what it reasonably can to mitigate any effects which the proposal would have on the natural beauty of the countryside".

RES is expecting to be allowed to run a set of 132KVA overhead power lines for a distance of 25km, through the Galloway Forest Park, close to, and parallel to the existing set of 132KVA power lines running from the Newton Stewart substation to Glenlee. According to the provisions of the 1989 Act, and the nationally recognised Electricity Network Standards, SPEN cannot easily permit this.

Before they can even begin to build any new power lines RES must satisfy the planning authorities with both the physical design and the route of the power lines. They must also satisfy the UK Electrical System Operator, the ESO, of the need for the development and they must state the economic case for it and justify the significant additional network integration investment that would be necessary as a consequence of it.

The current KTR project at Glenlee has been in consultation and planning since 2015 and, as mentioned above, has yet to gain planning permission. It can be assumed from this, that it is highly unlikely that the Blair Hill project can be physically connected into the national grid transmission network at Glenlee substation within the next ten or fifteen years

4) It is highly probable, owing to the now frequent requirement of the UK Electrical System Operator to constrain electricity production from wind farms north of the English border (the B6 boundary), that the transmission services required by RES for the Blairhill project are not physically capable of being delivered by SPEN at Glenlee, because SPEN as the local District System Operator is not permitted, under the terms of their licence agreement with the ESO , to enter into any contract which could result in the accepted operational capability limits of the national grid network being exceeded.

In other words, it is very likely, owing to too much electricity already being produced locally from wind turbines on windy days, that there is not enough spare capacity in the Scottish electricity transmission network for the power generated by the Blair Hill project to be safely fed into the national grid network at Glenlee

5) On the 19th March 2024, the ESO published "BEYOND 2030" the national blueprint for a decarbonised electricity system for Great Britain.

BEYOND 2030 is the Official UK Government Policy.

The introduction to BEYOND 2030 states, " Investment in renewable energy generation has exceeded investment in transmission capacity over the past decade, resulting in bottlenecks on the electricity network. Currently, energy is being wasted as the grid cannot transport it to where it can be used. Because of these bottlenecks, as the system operator, we sometimes have to ask wind farms to switch off to prevent the grid becoming overloaded – wasting cheap, sustainable, home- grown wind power"

Later on, describing the existing situation in Southern Scotland, BEYOND 2030 states, "As the level of energy ambition in Scotland scales up, existing challenges on the electricity network become more dominant. Currently, one of the most congested areas on Great Britain's electricity network is the area around the border between Scotland and England. This congestion is projected to get worse, and significant investment is required to ensure the system can be run in an economic and efficient manner. Without this investment, this one specific part of the network has the potential to cost consumers across Great Britain hundreds of millions of pounds per year.

This is because, in the absence of the investment recommended, renewable electricity generated in Scotland will not be able to be moved to where it can be used because of these capacity constraints. This means that renewable generators in Scotland will have to be paid to turn off, while additional gas and other non-renewable generation would have to be switched on across the south of the network in order to balance supply and demand - but the recommended investments would heavily reduce the requirement to do this. If network capacity in the region is not improved, the costs to consumers and the amount of renewable electricity generators we would need to pay not to generate will grow year on year.

We are looking to address this congestion in part by designing a network that provides significant additional capacity using offshore cables (which was recommended, in part, by our previous network planning recommendations), reducing, although not avoiding, the need for new infrastructure throughout the Central Belt and Borders. We are also recommending further upgrades to the existing onshore system and new infrastructure to further increase transmission capacity"

In other words the annual cost of paying wind farms in the south of Scotland not to produce electricity is accelerating in line with the number of new ones being built. Now that this fact has been officially recognised, it is difficult to imagine that the ESO are at all keen for SPEN to make it easy for RES to connect yet another wind farm into the national grid at Glenlee. Especially when BEYOND 2030 does not include any of the transmission bottlenecks that currently exist between Glenluce, Newton Stewart, Glenlee, New Cumnock and the B6 boundary in the long list of grid upgrades that have been prioritised by the ESO in their £58 billion, ten year investment plan for the national grid.

QUESTION 1

HAVE RES ACTUALLY RECEIVED ANY ASSURANCES FROM EITHER SPEN OR OFGEM THAT AN ACTUAL USEABLE AND DELIVERABLE GRID CONNECTION FOR THE BLAIR HILL PROJECT WILL BE OFFERED IF ONE IS REQUESTED ?

NET ZERO MARKET REFORM

In the foreword to the November 2023 fourth phase report of the Net Zero Market Reform, NZMR, review carried out by the Electricity System Operator, the ESO , the Head of Market Development at the ESO, Cian McLeavey-Reville, says;

"The reality is that the current package of market design and policy is no longer fit for purpose, and if left unchanged will result in significant unnecessary costs and will risk GB missing its carbon targets. Evidence of this has continued to mount over 2022 and 2023; for example on 1st July 2023 we incurred a cost of £20.3 million when we had to bid 88 GWh of wind down. These are but a sign of what is yet to come – we believe these trends will only accelerate as the system continues to decarbonise, unless markets and policy undergo fundamental reform"

The report goes on to identify the various issues that have arisen as a result of shortcomings in the design of the current national electricity supply balancing mechanism system, the BM, shortcomings that are crying out to be dealt with urgently. The ESO sees the four key issues involved as;

1. Constraint costs are rising at a dramatic rate
2. Balancing the network is becoming more challenging and requires increasing levels of inefficient redispatch
3. National pricing can sometimes send perverse incentives to flexible assets, that worsen constraints
4. Current market design does not unlock the full potential of flexibility from supply and demand.

Further on in the report the BM, in its current form, is criticised for distorting the market by having created a situation where " bidding is based on lost subsidies" and that there is, "a perverse incentive for generators to locate where congestion exists"

The conclusions from the Stage Four Report of the NZMR are:

"The ESO consider cost-reflective, granular temporal and locational signals are ultimately needed in the wholesale market to provide real-time transparency of system needs across supply and demand and to maximise flexible resources' arbitrage revenues. As discussed in our Phase 3 report, we consider these signals would be most effectively deployed via shorter settlement periods and locational energy pricing.

Considerable investment will be needed in flexible resources to meet the changing system needs in all timescales driven by growth in weather-dependent renewables. Locationally and temporally accurate market signals are needed to incentivise flexible assets to locate and dispatch where they can minimise whole system costs"

In the earlier Phase 3 Report the conclusions reached were:

"Our analysis shows that the status quo will not deliver net zero cost effectively, as current market design creates inefficient behaviours, particularly in dispatch, resulting in dramatic and rising costs for consumers."

"The most efficient solution to this is real-time dynamic locational signals, and our assessment of the three locational market design options finds that neither national nor zonal pricing can deliver these effectively."

" Our analysis shows that a nodal pricing market with central dispatch has the potential to deliver significant consumer benefits through facilitating efficient dispatch of generation, demand and flexible assets; and optimising siting decisions across the whole electricity system."

"It creates the opportunity for consumers and industry to access low-cost, low-carbon electricity when and where it is abundant."

"We think it is credible to implement nodal pricing and central dispatch within 5 years. There are some key questions that need to be answered, such as what are the additional market reforms required to complement nodal pricing, and to what extent should consumers be exposed to locational price signals."

From these conclusions it can be safely assumed that:

The ESO is intent that new legislation will soon be introduced and that nodal pricing will replace national pricing sometime around 2030.

Clearly, if RES end up gaining planning permission for the Blair Hill project and then go on to build it, they will not be able to benefit from the current single nationally priced system of constraint payments that have allowed similarly, poorly located wind farms to prosper up until now. The " perverse incentive to locate where congestion exists" will have gone by the time Blair Hill is ready to be commissioned. The wind farm will have to operate under a new nodally priced market system where electricity generators are rewarded for being located where energy is needed and paid for providing energy at the time it is required as opposed to being paid compensation for not producing energy when it is not needed.

The node that will determine the price of electricity generated at Blair Hill will be in south west Scotland, home to the most congested part of the UK transmission network on windy days. As a consequence, regardless of the exact location of the node, once the nodal pricing system is introduced, the price that the market will be prepared to offer Blair Hill for wind generated electricity; or offer them to constrain generation, will be much less than it would be if the current single national pricing system were to remain in place.

If RES don't ditch the Blair Hill project they will be "locating where congestion exists", having made a " suboptimal siting decision" through failing to realise the financial implications that the imminent reform of UK energy markets will have for weather dependent generators on the wrong side of the transmission bottlenecks in South West Scotland.

QUESTION 2

ARE RES AWARE OF THE SCALE OF THE FINANCIAL IMPACT THAT " NET ZERO MARKET REFORM" WILL HAVE ON THE VIABILITY OF BLAIR HILL PROJECT ?

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Blair Hill Wind Farm

Community Liaison Group

9th April 2024

RES has prepared this written response to questions received from members of the Community Liaison Group ahead of the meeting on 9th April 2024.

Grid

"Have RES actually received any assurances from either SPEN or OFGEM that an actual useable and deliverable grid connection for the Blair Hill Project will be offered if one is requested?"

As stated in the submission to RES, National Grid ESO (NGESO) and SP Transmission Limited (SPT) are obliged under the Electricity Act 1989 and also under their respective Electricity Transmission Licences to offer terms for connection. There are very exceptional hypothetical circumstances under which this obligation does not apply, however, in the 40 years in which RES has operated, RES has never encountered them nor is it aware of any other instance in which an electricity transmission licensee has refused to offer terms on grounds of useability or deliverability.

When investigating the feasibility of grid connection for any new renewables project, RES would always consult informally with the relevant grid company. Such informal discussions are always only indicative and without commitment from the relevant grid company. As such RES would never expect to receive "assurances" from SPT on the useability or deliverability of any grid connection solution. It is therefore worth reiterating that as RES haven't received an offer to connect to the grid network so the assertions made in the submission to RES are a matter of opinion. Ofgem would never comment on the feasibility of any individual grid connection as their responsibility is to regulate the energy market.

SPT will be responsible for obtaining the necessary consents and then construction of the grid connection for Blair Hill Wind Farm. They have a statutory duty to offer a grid connection if one if requested. The application for planning consent will be made by SPT under s37 of the Electricity Act 1989, which is a separate process to RES' application for the proposed wind farm. An Environmental Impact Assessment will likely be carried out for the proposed grid connection, however this is not carried out by RES.

The progress of the Kendoon to Tongland Reinforcement (KTR) project has no weight or bearing on the success or otherwise of any proposal to connect the Blair Hill project (should it be consented) to the grid network which will be considered on its own merits when an application is eventually made.

RES held discussions with SPT in the autumn of 2023 on the grid connection possibilities for Blair Hill and we will be revisiting these discussions later this month before submitting a Connection Application to SPT via NGESO. The resulting Connection Offer that we will receive will outline SPT's proposed connection solution for Blair Hill and it is only at this point that we will properly understand the detailed plans for grid connection of Blair Hill and how this will integrate with its wider strategic plans for upgrading of its transmission system necessary to achieve decarbonisation and Net Zero targets. Once we accept the connection offer, the point of integration into the transmission system and the delivery timescale will become public knowledge through the NGESO TEC register.

For the avoidance of doubt, the Glenlee Substation Extension has been consented. The KTR Project is awaiting a decision from Scottish Ministers following a Public Local Inquiry.

Net Zero Market Reform

"Are RES aware of the scale of the financial impact that Net Zero Market Reform will have on the viability of Blair Hill Project?"

RES welcomes the Net Zero Market Reform to support the delivery of the UK Government's aim of fully decarbonising electricity generation by 2035.

It is important to note that the Electricity System Operator (soon to be the National Energy System Operator, the body who was responsible for publishing comment on Nodal Marginal Pricing noted in the submission) is not responsible for deciding Government policy. The ESO themselves state in the Net Zero Market Reform: Phase 4 Assessment and Conclusions report[1]: *"the ESO will continue to support the Government and Ofgem on the design and implementation of reform options as they are narrowed down in REMA, specifically advising on their impact on GB electricity system operation."*

Furthermore, the assumption in the submission to RES that Nodal Marginal Pricing is set to be introduced is incorrect. Since the Net Zero Market Reform: Phase 4 Assessment and Conclusions report was published in November 2023, a second consultation under the Review of Electricity Market Arrangements (REMA) has been published by the Government in which it rules out moving to Nodal Marginal Pricing[2]. Several other options are being considered by the Government that will address operational issues while still ensuring deliverability of the Government 2035 decarbonisation target; Nodal Marginal Pricing is not one of them. Significant new investment in transmission infrastructure in order to integrate low cost renewables is required in all scenarios, and the Government understands this. RES fully understands the impact of Net Zero Market Reform on renewable generation and supports this change to market design for a net zero future.

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[1] https://www.nationalgrideso.com/document/294656/download
[2] https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/review-of-electricity-market-arrangements-rema-second-consultation

1 Landscape and Visual

1.1 Introduction

Following the receipt of scoping responses from consultees in relation to the proposed Blair Hill Wind Farm, including additional comments received from D&G dated 2 February 2024, the proposed LVIA viewpoints set out in the scoping report have been reviewed and the following list prepared.

Updated ZTV studies based on an updated scheme layout have been used to review suggested viewpoint locations for use in the LVIA. Consideration has been given to D&Gs 2020 Supplementary Guidance 'Part 1 Wind Energy Development: Development Management Considerations Appendix 'C' D&G Wind Farm Landscape Capacity Study' and South Ayrshire's 2018 'Landscape Wind Capacity Study' which identify key viewpoints and landmark hills within the study area. Consideration has also been given to viewpoints identified within the recent Arecleoch Variation (ECU ref: ECU00001864) and South Kyle II (ECU ref: ECU00003429) applications, alongside the Artfield Forest application (ECU ref: ECU00003245), for potential cumulative effects.

It is proposed that the 26 locations set out below are included as viewpoints in the LVIA. The locations, which are illustrated on the revised ZTV, included with this document, represent visual receptors, character types and designative/sensitive landscapes at a range of distances and directions from the Site. These representative viewpoints will be used as 'samples' on which to base judgements of the scale of effects on visual receptors and represent a wide range of receptors - including not only those actually at the viewpoint, but also those nearby, at a similar distance and/or direction. It is anticipated that some viewpoints may be subject to localised micrositing when investigated on site, as well as alternative suggested locations being reviewed to ensure that worst case scenarios are selected. Where this is relevant comment is made within the table below.

1

Proposed LVIA Viewpoints

Viewpoint	Distance and direction from closest proposed turbine	View / receptors represented	Type of visualisation to be prepared
VP1: Drumwhirn Cairn, Moor of Barclye (239370, 568878)	2.6 km, south-west	Represents users of the RSPB moorland and users of NCR7 along to minor road to the south-west of the Site. Within RSA and LLA.	Photomontage
VP2: Corsbie Road, Newton Stewart (240445, 565633)	4.6 km, south west	Represents the experience of visitors and residents along the northern edge of Newton Stewart. On edge of RSA and LLA. Close to viewpoint requested by Cree Valley Community Council.	Photomontage Night-time photomontage
VP3: A75 south of Newton Stewart (241585, 564705 or 241875, 563640 or 242300, 560800)	5.3 km, south or 6.4 km, south or 9.4 km, south	Represents users of the A75, visitors and residents on the outskirts of Newton Stewart and users of NCR73 which passes below the A75. Within RSA and LLA. May be relocated to the cycle path adjacent to the A714 at the entrance to the Nether Barr Steading Self Catering Holiday Lodges, a location requested by Cree Valley Community Council, or further south near Causeway End as suggested by D&G, following further site investigation.	Photomontage
VP4: Glenvernoch Fell / Hill of Ochiltree (232711, 574115)	8.6 km, west	Represents recreational users of the Southern Upland Way around Glenverloch Fell.	Photomontage

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Viewpoint	Distance and direction from closest proposed turbine	View / receptors represented	Type of visualisation to be prepared
VP5: NCR7 on Minor Road North of Glentrool Village (236118, 579390 or 237256, 578536)	8.2 km, north-west or 6.8 km, north-west	Represents visitors and residents of Glentrool Village, users of NCR7 and recreational users of Glentrool Forest. On edge of RSA and LLA. Within Galloway Forest Park boundary. May be relocated to the Glentrool Visitor Centre car park, a location requested by Cree Valley Community Council, following further site investigation.	Wireline
VP6: Cairnsmore of Fleet (250150, 567089)	8.6 km, east	Represents users of the recreational landscape to the east. Endorsed by Mountaineering Scotland. Within RSA and LLA.	Photomontage
VP7: Merrick (242748, 585514)	11.3 km, north	Represents recreational users of the landscape to the north, including the Dark Sky Park. Consideration has been given to views from the approach via Benyellary, but the view from Merrick represents the worse case scenario. Within RSA, LLA, Wild Land Area and Dark Sky Park Core Area. Within Galloway Forest Park boundary.	Photomontage

Viewpoint	Distance and direction from closest proposed turbine	View / receptors represented	Type of visualisation to be prepared
VP8: A75 near Creetown (247180, 558229 or 247196, 557737)	13.0 km, south or 13.5 km, south	Represents users of the A75 travelling towards the Proposed Development and visitors and residents on the outskirts of Creetown. Within RSA and LLA. May be relocated to the layby at Point Fishery as suggested by D&G and Cree Valley Community Council, following further site investigation.	Photomontage Night-time photomontage
VP9: Kirkcowan (233241, 560466 or 232752, 560954)	12.7 km, south-west	Represents visitors and residents of Kirkcowan and users of the neighbouring minor roads. Close to viewpoint requested by Cree Valley Community Council. Both viewpoints will be reviewed on site and the most appropriate location chosen for the assessment.	Photomontage Night-time photomontage

Viewpoint	Distance and direction from closest proposed turbine	View / receptors represented	Type of visualisation to be prepared
VP10: NCR73 on Minor Road North of Wigtown (243472, 556227) or Martyr's Monument (243054, 555420) or nr bird hide (244000, 554900) or Kirkland Hill/Lover's Walk (243300, 556000) or A714/B7005 Junction north of Wigtown (242711, 556790)	13.4 km, south or 14.7 km, south or 15.3 km, south or 14.1 km, south or 13.3 km, south	Represents visitors and residents on the outskirts of Wigtown and users of NCR73. Within RSA and LLA. A number of alternative locations have been suggested by D&G and Cree Valley Community Council. These will be reviewed on site and the most appropriate location chosen for the assessment.	Photomontage Night-time photomontage
VP11: Benniguinea Lookout (256655, 575970)	14.1 km, east	Represents users of the recreational landscape to the east. Within RSA, LLA and Dark Sky Park. Within Galloway Forest Park boundary.	Wireline
VP12: Mochrum Lochs LLA, Moor of Drumwall (230678, 554200 or 231917, 556693)	19.3 km, south-west or 16.5 km, south-west	Represents the LLA and users of the minor roads to the south-west around Gargrie Moor. Within RSA and LLA. An alternative location has been suggested by D&G on the core path to the north. This will be reviewed on site and the most appropriate location chosen for the assessment.	Wireline

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Viewpoint	Distance and direction from closest proposed turbine	View / receptors represented	Type of visualisation to be prepared
VP13: Minor Road near Barhill Station (222659, 581336 or 232752, 560954)	20.5 km, north-west or 20.7 km, north-west	Represents visibility to the north-west from areas around Barhill. On edge of LLA. Close to viewpoint requested by Cree Valley Community Council. Both viewpoints will be reviewed on site and the most appropriate location chosen for the assessment.	Wireline
VP14: Southern Upland Way near Artfield Fell (221186, 568010)	20.6 km, west	Represents recreational users of the Southern Upland Way to the west.	Wireline
VP15: A76 North of Whithorn (244468, 541031)	29.1 km, south	Represents users of the A76 and residents and visitors to Whithorn, south of the Site.	Wireline
VP16: Byne Hill (217864, 594554)	31.9 km, north-west	Represents users of the recreational landscapes to the north-west near Girvan. Within LLA.	Wireline
VP17: A712 east of Corsock (278887, 573612)	36.2 km, east	Represents users of the A712 to the east.	Wireline
VP18: Southern Upland Way near Stranraer (205814, 558888)	37.5 km, south-west	Represents recreational users of the Southern Upland Way, recreational landscapes and minor roads near Stranraer.	Wireline

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Viewpoint	Distance and direction from closest proposed turbine	View / receptors represented	Type of visualisation to be prepared
VP19: Sandhead (209777, 549724)	37.8 km, south-west	Represents residents and visitors of Sandhead, users of the beach and other recreational landscapes.	Wireline
New viewpoint VP20: Monigaff Parish Church (241016, 566654)	3.4km, south west	Represents the experience of visitors and residents along the northern edge of Minnigaff. Within RSA and LLA. Requested by Cree Valley Community Council.	Photomontage
New viewpoint VP21: Lamachan Hill (243451, 576873)	2.8km, north east	Represents users of the recreational landscape to the north east. Located slightly off the summit in area of greater visibility. Within RSA, LLA and Dark Sky Park Core Area. Within Galloway Forest Park boundary. Proposed by Mountaineering Scotland.	Wireframe only (no photography)
New viewpoint VP22: Millfore (247803, 575448)	5.4km, north east	Represents users of the recreational landscape to the north east. Within RSA, LLA and Dark Sky Park Core Area. Within Galloway Forest Park boundary. Proposed by Mountaineering Scotland.	Wireframe only (no photography)

7

1.1.1 Visualisations

Visualisations will be prepared in accordance with NatureScot's 'Visualisation of Wind Farms Best Practice'. Wirelines and photomontage visualisations will be used to aid the assessment. These will be generated from a 3-dimensional (3D) model of the proposed wind turbines, site and surrounding topography, using key landmarks and compass bearings to match the modelled views to the photographs.

Photographs, wirelines and photomontages will be shown on figures supporting the LVIA. It is anticipated that a baseline panorama and wireline (including cumulative schemes) and a wireline of the Proposed Development will be provided for all suggested viewpoints, unless indicated otherwise above. Photomontages will be prepared for all viewpoints within 5 km of the Proposed Development, and a selection of the more distant viewpoints. Night-time photomontages will be prepared to support the night-time assessment, utilising a selection of the daytime viewpoints as indicated above.

6.1.4 June 2024 Minutes

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MINUTES

Blair Hill Wind Farm
Community Liaison Group (CLG)

18/06/24
7pm - 9.30pm

Attendees	Name	Representing
	Clifford Smithers (CS)	Cree Valley Community Council
	Richard Kay (RK)	Cree Valley Community Council
	Jamie Hyslop (JH)	River Cree District Salmon Fishery Board
	Terence Flanagan (TF)	River Cree Hatchery & Habitat Trust SCIO
	Sarah More (SM)	Cree Valley Area Development Trust
	Craig McMilken (CM)	Ditch the Blair Hill Project
	Iain Service (IS)	Ditch the Blair Hill Project
	Linda Woodfield (LW)	Newton Stewart Initiative
	Cllr David Inglis	Ward member for Mid Galloway and Wigtown West
	Sarah McArthur (SMc)	RES
	Iain MacCallum (IM)	RES
	Dario Ewing (DE)	Cavendish
Apologies	**Name**	**Representing**
	Hazel Matthews	Kirkcowan Community Council
	Mary Harkness	Kirkcowan Community Council
	Cllr Katie Hagmann	Ward member for Mid Galloway and Wigtown West
	Cllr Jackie McCamon	Ward member for Mid Galloway and Wigtown West
	Cllr Richard Marsh	Ward member for Mid Galloway and Wigtown West

Agenda Item	Activity	Actions
Apologies	Apologies were noted from Hazel Matthews, Mary Harkness and Cllrs Katie Hagmann, Jackie McCamon and Richard Marsh.	
Project Update	SMc updated that a design freeze has now been agreed, resulting in a few tweaks to the turbine locations as result of further comments from HES on the setting of the chambered cairn at Napper's Cottage, chambered cairn (SM5676). She noted that these changes are minimal from the turbine locations presented at the May public exhibitions. SMc provided copies of the revised design. It is appended to the meeting minutes. SMc updated that the grid application has been submitted by RES. SMc updated that under the current project timeline, the application submission is expected in late August/September 2024. RES will write to stakeholders and send out newsletters to households when the application is submitted. To coincide with the submission and public representation period, RES intends to hold drop in information sessions where copies of the planning application will be available to view ensure the local community understands the final submitted plans.	
Public Exhibition Feedback	DE provided an overview of the feedback received from the recent public exhibitions, highlighting the key themes and issues raised, attitudes towards the development, and the effectiveness of the exhibitions. The presentation slides are attached to the meeting minutes. DI questioned whether the community newsletter included details of the feedback questionnaire and response slips. DE clarified that the newsletter provided an update on recent project work and invited people to attend the exhibitions and participate in the consultation. DI queried how the views of those who had not attended either exhibition were to be sought, as it was his responsibility to represent the view of the whole community and not just those who attend the public exhibitions. IS insisted that everyone had had an opportunity to express their opinion through the public exhibitions and that 95% are against the wind farm. JH suggested it was misleading to imply that the survey responses were not representative of the community. DE explained that it is not suggested there aren't high levels of objection within the community, but rather that a significant portion of the community did not participate in the consultation. DI agreed with this statement.	

Guest Speaker - Construction	IM provided an overview of the construction management process throughout the various stages of a development's lifecycle, including the planning, pre-construction, and construction phases. The presentation slides are attached to the meeting minutes.	
	IS questioned who would be accountable for any issues or accidents during construction. IM clarified that ultimate responsibility would lie with the principal contractor who is appointed to oversee the construction phase of a project, under CDM (Construction Design and Management) Regulations.	
	RK asked about RES's engagement with SEPA prior to submission. SMc clarified that RES engaged with SEPA through the ECU scoping process to agree the scope of the EIA methodology. When a planning application is submitted, SEPA will provide a consultation response that will either raise no objection or raise an objection. It will also include recommendations for conditions to be included as part of any planning consent.	
	JH raised concerns about the site's sensitivity and the potential for pollution in the River Cree affecting fish populations, questioning how the wind farm could be developed without adverse effects. IM and SMc explained that this would be managed through mitigation measures agreed upon through consultation and engagement with SEPA and DGC.	
	JH inquired if RES had other sites with similar levels of complex sensitivities/constraints and asked for examples. SMc clarified that RES has worked on numerous sensitive projects and whilst she wasn't aware of any projects with a salmon hatchery near to the site, she would take this question away and provide further information.	RES
	JH asked how RES could demonstrate to the Newton Stewart Flood Prevention Group that there would be no adverse impact on flooding, as they had advised him that developers of the wind farm would have to prove that there would be no increased risk of flooding to Newton Stewart by the development. SMc explained that a detailed Flood Risk Assessment had been scoped out of assessment. This is because it is proposed potential flood risk can be suitably mitigated by good practice measures, such as 50m buffers from watercourses and appropriate design of watercourse crossings. SEPA raised no issue with this. Runoff would be controlled through suitable construction drainage provision. She advised that while no discussions had taken place yet, RES would be happy to engage with the Flood Prevention Group.	
	IS asked how much concrete would be used for the project. IM noted that his experience on projects with 120m turbines saw them generally have 250-300m^3 of concrete, however he couldn't comment on the exact volume required for Blair Hill. SMc said that the final volume would be known pre-construction as it would be subject to detailed ground investigation. However an indicative wind turbine foundation figure will be included as part of the EIA and the likely maximum total volume of concrete required will be included in the Carbon Balance Assessment.	
	IS asked where stone for the site construction would be delivered from. IM confirmed that if the borrow pit search areas on site yielded material of acceptable quality, this would be used to construct site tracks and crane hardstandings. Specialist engineering material may still be required underneath the wind turbine foundation if the ground below the foundation was not of a competent quality i.e. it was clay.	
	JH asked how water would be supplied to the proposed batching plant. IM responded that it is typically delivered onto site in water tankers, however this would be confirmed pre-construction.	
	IM explained that any haulage plans would be subject to the agreement of a Construction Traffic Management Plan with Transport Scotland and Dumfries and Galloway Council.	

AOB	IS and JH noted the usefulness of the 3D model video shown at the exhibitions. JH asked if it could be included within the planning application submission. SMc responded that all visualisations had to be produced to NatureScot standards, so it was unlikely to be possible to include it in the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment. She agreed to check whether the video could be submitted as part of the wider planning application.	RES
	IS raised the viewpoints suggested by the CVCC, noting some confusion over the inclusion of the viewpoint at A714. He insisted that the viewpoint from the monument at the A75 should be included in the planning application. SMc advised that RES could not share the final list of viewpoints as these had not yet been finalized by D&G Council.	RES
	IS questioned whether a legal agreement could be secured with RES, committing them to providing the Community Benefit Fund. SMc stated that RES would enter a legal agreement with the party who administers the fund. Whilst RES don't typically sign an agreement pre-consent, she agreed to check internally if it would be possible to get an agreement in place pre-consent. She noted that RES adheres to the Scottish Government's Guidance on Good Practice Principles for Community Benefits from Onshore Renewable Energy Developments (2019).	
	RK questioned if RES would pay a new figure recommended by the Scottish Government if it were to increase before the wind farm becomes operational, or if they would be tied to £5,000/ MW. SMc confirmed that RES would commit to whatever figure the Good Practice Guidance states at the time the site is commissioned.	
	JH mentioned the recently proposed Shennanton Wind Farm following a scoping request submitted to the ECU. IS questioned whether this would be included in the assessment of cumulative impact in the EIA. SMc advised that later applications are not typically included in the EIA. She would check with the project landscape consultant to see if Shennanton would be included and noted that it would be agreed with the Energy Consents Unit.	RES
	CS referenced the discussion between IS and DI, noting that while he understood both sides, he agreed with DI regarding the representativeness of the consultation respondents. IS insisted that evidence must be produced to support this view. JH stated that at present there had been one exit poll taken at the first public exhibition and two at the second. Along with emails received by CVCC and responses to RES' comments forms, approximately 95% of those are against the proposed development. He maintained that it should be concluded that the local community is hugely against the proposal.	
Date and Time of Next meeting	SMc agreed to circulate dates for the next meeting, likely in late August/ early September. RES will provide options for meeting dates and book the venue once agreed.	RES
	The meeting concluded at 9:30 pm.	

Overview

Consultation Recap

- Consultation period: running from 22nd May – 7th June
- Two in-person public exhibitions:
  - McMillan Hall
  - Kirkcowan Hall
- Approx. 330 Attendees
- Online feedback form and information available on the project website.
- 180 Respondents

CAVENDISH

2

Section 1: The Consultation

Advertising		Awareness		Useful Aspect		Understanding	
41.6%	Newsletter	35.3%	Knew a lot	43.1%	Photomontages	15.9%	A lot
27.2%	Word of Mouth	43.9%	Knew quite a lot	27.1%	Exhibition Boards	28.7%	Quite a lot
5.2%	Project Website	21.4%	Knew a little	11.1%	Engage with project team	18.3%	A little
26%	Other	1.2%	Knew very little/nothing	18.8%	Other	37.2%	Very little/nothing

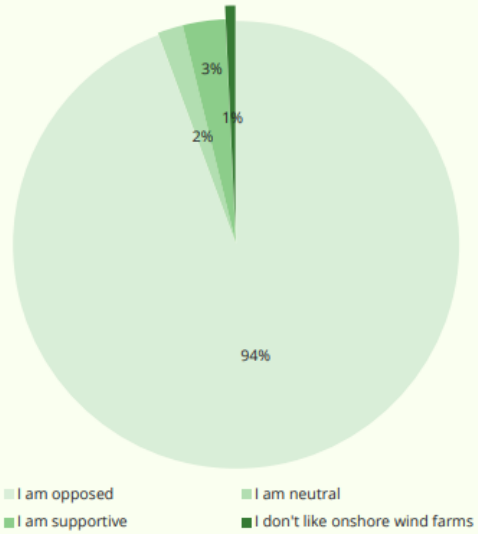
CAVENDISH 3

Attitudes

Respondents were asked about their attitudes towards the proposals – with a strong majority outlining they were opposed to the plans.

Concerns raised over:

- Environmental impact
- Landscape
- Saturation and overconcentration
- Need for renewable development

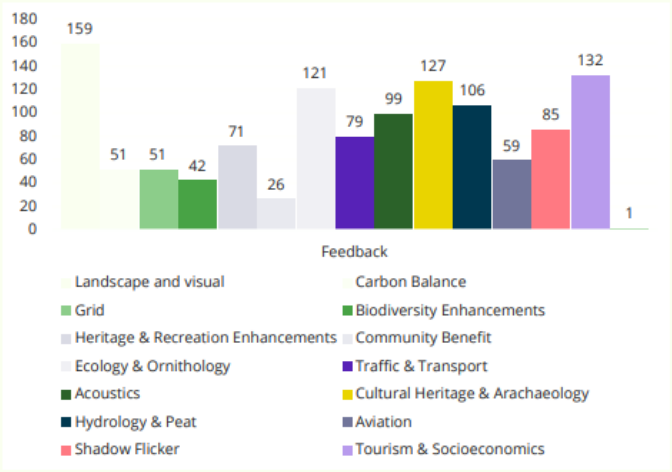


CAVENDISH 4

Issues of Interest

Key issues:

- Landscape and Visual
- Tourism & Socioeconomics
- Cultural Heritage & Archaeology
- Ecology & Ornithology



CAVENDISH 5

Community Benefit

Community Infrastructure

- Operational Cour Wind Farm– Fund used to help the community purchase the local post office and turn it into the Carradale Community Shop & Post Office, which opened in 2021
- Bloch Wind Farm – Fund used to set up an Educational Trust for the community

CAVENDISH

"Purchase one of the many old buildings in the town centre and upgrade it to an 'energy hub'"

"New primary school"

"more childcare facilities in the area"

"Making paths and cycle ways suitable for accessible bikes which are very wide"

"High street regeneration" 6

Community Benefit

Local Electricity Discount

- Existing structures set up within RES to deliver lower energy discount scheme (LEDs) and deliver energy savings for the local community.

CAVENDISH

"Reduced electricity bills"

"Everyone in NS should get free electricity"

"Properties immediately adjacent to the wind farm should be sufficiently recompensed...with respect to energy costs etc."

7

Community Benefit

Housing Infrastructure

- Kelburn Wind Farm – Fund use to promote energy efficiency measures & solar panels at the Millport Town Hall and energy efficiency measures at the Largs Thistle Community Club.

CAVENDISH

"Energy conservation, efficiency measures for housing / industrial retrofit projects.

"Buy empty properties in High Street – convert to affordable housing if you can get council to agree"

8

Biodiversity

Enhancement & Management Plan

Updated proposals include a Biodiversity Enhancement and Management Plan that could include:

- Broadleaved woodland creation
- Peatland Restoration
- Bracken Control/Native Scrub Creation

CAVENDISH

"I would like to see increased biodiversity, possibly by means of a native broadleaved tree planting program"

"Mechanisms to preserve and enhance the peatland on the site"

"Ensure cattle and sheep can still graze at the site."

9

Heritage & Recreation

Enhancement & Management Plan

- Updated proposals include plans to 'unlock' the Heritage of the area, making it more accessible through delivery of heritage and walking trails.

CAVENDISH

Public walkway through the wind farm with Toilet Facilities seating area benches view point telescopes anything that gets the locals and visitors involved. THIS IS a once in a lifetime chance for the good of Newton Stewart RES and FOR the PLANET.

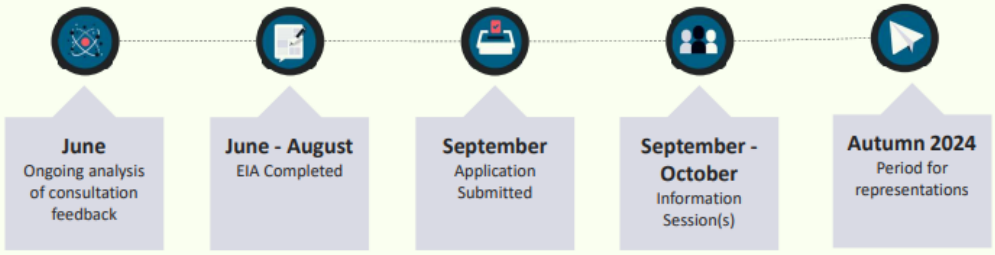
"More wheelchair, buggy, accessible bike paths into our amazing countryside would be a good thing."

"It needs to be aimed at local people and create local jobs not just bring new people in from out with the area."

10

*Indicative on current project timescales

Next Steps



June
Ongoing analysis of consultation feedback

June - August
EIA Completed

September
Application Submitted

September - October
Information Session(s)

Autumn 2024
Period for representations

CAVENDISH

11

CAVENDISH

Thank you for your time.

Agenda

Introduction

Development Phase:

- Legislation
- Industry guidance
- Planning phase
  - EIA
  - CEMP

Pre-construction Phase:

- Preparation & Procurement
- SEPA Construction Site Licence

Construction Phase:

- Monitoring Arrangements
- SUDS
- RES Good Working Practice Guide

Q&A*

**Questions shall be taken at the end*

1

Introduction

Speaker:

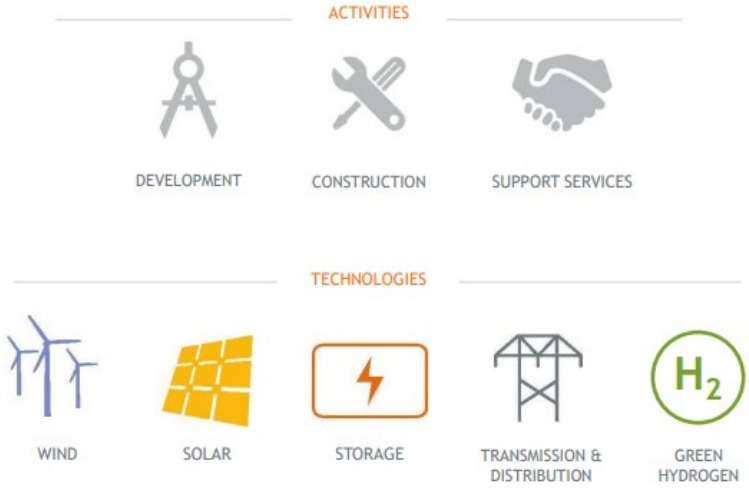
- **Iain MacCallum BEng (Hons) CEng MICE MCIOB**
- RES UK&I Construction Senior Management Team
- 15 Years Construction Experience, 13 in Renewables
- Provision of Owner's Engineer & Consultancy Services

Company:

- **Renewable Energy Systems (RES)**
- World's largest independent renewables business
- 40+ years
- 4500+ people

2

RES Services and Technologies



3

Legislation

The development and construction of wind farms in the UK is heavily regulated, particularly Scotland has a robust process in place to ensure pollution prevention is prioritised.

The regulations encompass several aspects including planning, environmental impact and safety.

1. **Planning Permission**: Wind farm projects require planning permission from local planning authorities or the Scottish Ministers for larger projects. This involves detailed planning applications, adherence to local development plans and policies and approval from statutory consultees such as SEPA and NatureScot.
2. **Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)**: Large wind farm projects undergo an EIA to assess their potential environmental impacts. This includes the impact on wildlife, landscape, noise, and peat.

Overall, the regulatory framework aims to balance the promotion of renewable energy with the protection of the environment.

4

Industry Guidance

A working group comprising representatives from NatureScot, SEPA, FCS, Scottish Renewables and several member companies with extensive wind farm development experience have developed guidance on Good Practice during Wind Farm Construction to help address the effects on the natural environment. It builds on the experience of over 20 years of wind farm construction in Scotland.

Developers, planning officers, construction firms and others can use the guidance at the post-consent, pre-construction planning phase of wind farm development.

The guidance focuses on:
- pollution prevention
- nature conservation
- landscape
- hydrology

Members include:

- Forestry Commission Scotland
- Historic Environment Scotland
- Scottish Renewables
- MacArthur Green
- Natural Power
- NatureScot

SEPA's pollution prevention role includes regulating activities that could lead to pollution or environmental damage, and monitoring the quality of Scotland's air, land, and water

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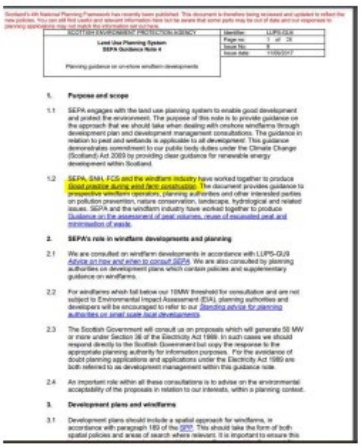
Industry Guidance



SCOTTISH ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION AGENCY

Land Use Planning System
SEPA Guidance Note 4

Planning guidance on on-shore windfarm developments

1. **Purpose and scope**

1.1 SEPA engages with the land use planning system to enable good development and protect the environment. The purpose of this note is to provide guidance on the approach that we should take when dealing with onshore windfarms through development plan and development management consultations. The guidance in relation to peat and wetlands is applicable to all development. This guidance demonstrates commitment to our public body duties under the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 by providing clear guidance for renewable energy development within Scotland.

1.2 SEPA, SNH, FCS and the windfarm industry have worked together to produce Good practice during wind farm construction. The document provides guidance to prospective windfarm operators, planning authorities and other interested parties on pollution prevention, nature conservation, landscape, hydrological and related issues. SEPA and the windfarm industry have worked together to produce Guidance on the assessment of peat volumes, reuse of excavated peat and minimisation of waste.

2. **SEPA's role in windfarm developments and planning**

2.1 We are consulted on windfarm developments in accordance with LUPS-GU9 Advice on how and when to consult SEPA. We are also consulted by planning authorities on development plans which contain policies and supplementary guidance on windfarms.

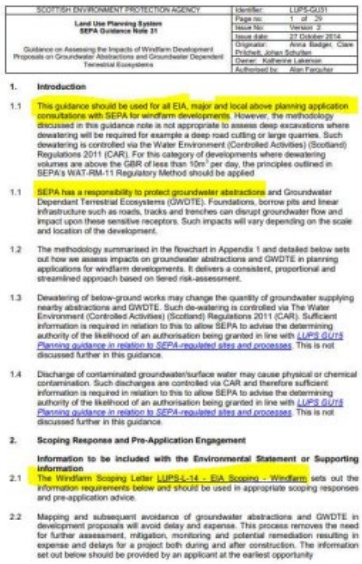
2.2 For windfarms which fall below our 10MW threshold for consultation and are not subject to Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), planning authorities and developers will be encouraged to refer to our Standing advice for planning authorities on small scale local developments.

2.3 The Scottish Government will consult us on proposals which will generate 50 MW or more under Section 36 of the Electricity Act 1989. In such cases we should respond directly to the Scottish Government but copy the response to the appropriate planning authority for information purposes. For the avoidance of doubt planning applications and applications under the Electricity Act 1989 are both referred to as development management within this guidance note.

2.4 An important role within all these consultations is to advise on the environmental acceptability of the proposals in relation to our interests, within a planning context.

3. **Development plans and windfarms**

3.1 Development plans should include a spatial approach for windfarms, in accordance with paragraph 169 of the SPP. This should take the form of both spatial policies and areas of search where relevant. It is important to ensure this



SCOTTISH ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION AGENCY

Land Use Planning System
SEPA Guidance Note 31

Guidance on Assessing the Impacts of Windfarm Development Proposals on Groundwater Abstractions and Groundwater Dependent Terrestrial Ecosystems

Identifier:	LUPS-GU31
Page no:	1 of 29
Issue No:	Version 3
Issue date:	27 October 2014
Originator:	Anna Badger, Clare Pritchett, Johan Schutten
Owner:	Katherine Lakeman
Authorised by:	Alan Ferguhar

1. **Introduction**

1.1 This guidance should be used for all EIA, major and local above planning application consultations with SEPA for windfarm developments. However, the methodology discussed in this guidance note is not appropriate to assess deep excavations where dewatering will be required for example a deep road cutting or large quarries. Such dewatering is controlled via the Water Environment (Controlled Activities) (Scotland) Regulations 2011 (CAR). For this category of developments where dewatering volumes are above the GBR of less than 10m³ per day, the principles outlined in SEPA's WAT-RM-11 Regulatory Method should be applied

1.1 SEPA has a responsibility to protect groundwater abstractions and Groundwater Dependant Terrestrial Ecosystems (GWDTE). Foundations, borrow pits and linear infrastructure such as roads, tracks and trenches can disrupt groundwater flow and impact upon these sensitive receptors. Such impacts will vary depending on the scale and location of the development.

1.2 The methodology summarised in the flowchart in Appendix 1 and detailed below sets out how we assess impacts on groundwater abstractions and GWDTE in planning applications for windfarm developments. It delivers a consistent, proportional and streamlined approach based on tiered risk-assessment.

1.3 Dewatering of below-ground works may change the quantity of groundwater supplying nearby abstractions and GWDTE. Such de-watering is controlled via The Water Environment (Controlled Activities) (Scotland) Regulations 2011 (CAR). Sufficient information is required in relation to this to allow SEPA to advise the determining authority of the likelihood of an authorisation being granted in line with LUPS GU15 Planning guidance in relation to SEPA-regulated sites and processes. This is not discussed further in this guidance.

1.4 Discharge of contaminated groundwater/surface water may cause physical or chemical contamination. Such discharges are controlled via CAR and therefore sufficient information is required in relation to this to allow SEPA to advise the determining authority of the likelihood of an authorisation being granted in line with LUPS GU15 Planning guidance in relation to SEPA-regulated sites and processes. This is not discussed further in this guidance.

2. **Scoping Response and Pre-Application Engagement**

Information to be included with the Environmental Statement or Supporting Information

2.1 The Windfarm Scoping Letter LUPS-L-14 - EIA Scoping - Windfarm sets out the information requirements below and should be used in appropriate scoping responses and pre-application advice.

2.2 Mapping and subsequent avoidance of groundwater abstractions and GWDTE in development proposals will avoid delay and expense. This process removes the need for further assessment, mitigation, monitoring and potential remediation resulting in expense and delays for a project both during and after construction. The information set out below should be provided by an applicant at the earliest opportunity

ciria

Department for Environment Food & Rural Affairs

6

Planning Phase - EIA & CEMP Production

1. Pre-planning:
   - A detailed Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) will be carried out and submitted for review and approval as part of the planning process. This will identify measures to mitigate or manage any significant adverse effects.
   - Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) – an outline CEMP is prepared as part of the planning application, this sets out the overarching construction management philosophy. This document is key and covers environmental management in detail, other key documents may form part of this master document as appendices:
     - Pollution Prevention Plan (PPP)
     - Peat Management Plan (PMP)
     - Surface Water Management Plan
2. Post-planning the Principal Contractor (CDM Regulations) appointed to construct the proposed development shall refine and develop this outline CEMP prior to construction to ensure it is fit for purpose – this is a long and detailed process and includes:
   1. Production of a detailed CEMP and all associated plans
   2. Submission to, and review by statutory consultees – e.g. SEPA and NatureScot being two key parties
   3. This usually involves multiple iterations of each document before the CEMP will be approved by the LPA – approval will only be provided on the basis of statutory consultees comments being addressed, i.e. no construction can commence until SEPA are satisfied
3. A preliminary SUDS design will be established with a detailed analysis and design being undertaken following a site visit by specialist hydrology engineers – this will form part of the approved PPP – SEPA want to see this philosophy to show any discharge locations have been selected by competent specialists and are placed at suitable locations.

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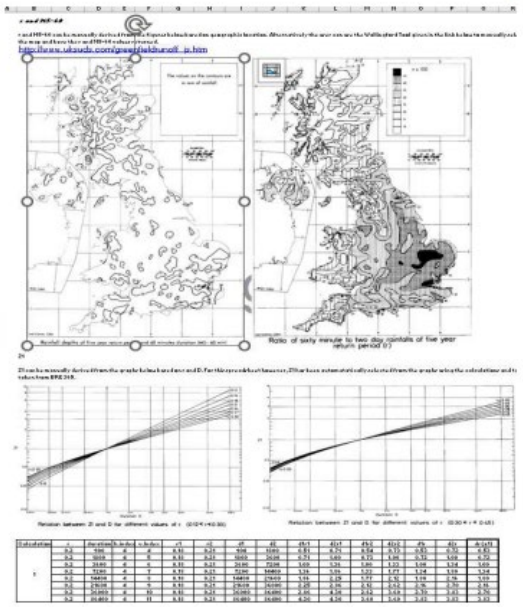
Planning Phase - EIA & CEMP Production

1. PPP to be provided to SEPA for comment and approval with an application for a Complex License under The Water Environment (Controlled Activities) (Scotland) Regulations 2011 (CAR). We will come back to discuss this licence separately.
2. A bespoke Water Quality Monitoring plan will be prepared and implemented by a specialist hydrology consultant, as part of the surface water management plan/PPP to ensure there are no impacts. Conditions and parameters will be checked before, during and after construction, using a baseline survey undertaken prior to the development starting.
3. A spoil/peat management plan will be established which is a major part of surface water management.
4. The philosophy is for existing drainage to remain intact and new drainage designed to suit infrastructure network – clean water cut off ditches are installed (diverting any clean water around or through the development) and site tracks run-off will be managed separately to ensure clean and dirty water are kept separate.



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Pre-Construction Phase

1. A Construction Phase Plan will be established for contractors to comply with, this shall include a site environmental management plan with specific environmental procedures on how to deal with spills etc.
2. Procurement of contractors and consultants – all of this information is taken and included within the construction contracts (planning consent, full CEMP, PPP, construction site licence etc), to ensure the contractor installing the civil infrastructure is contractually and legally obliged (under contract law) to comply with the conditions of the contract.
3. Dedicated drainage team for installation and maintenance.
4. SEPA's construction site licence (CAR licence) is transferred to the relevant contractor notifying SEPA of who will be undertaking the civil engineering works (including drainage) – so SEPA know well in advance of a spade going in the ground, which contractor will be undertaking the works.
5. Contractors then carry out detailed design in accordance with the contract, legislation and industry guidance – including all the important documents we have just discussed.

SCOTTISH ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION AGENCY

WATER USE LICENCE

AUTHORISING THE DISCHARGE OF WATER RUN-OFF FROM . WIND FARM, CONSTRUCTION SITE TO THE WATER ENVIRONMENT

LICENCE NO.: CAR/L/

RESPONSIBLE PERSON:

SITE OR LOCATION OF ACTIVITY/ACTIVITIES: WIND FARM

This authorisation has been given by the Scottish Environment Protection Agency in exercise of its powers under regulations 8 and 15 of the Water Environment (Controlled Activities) (Scotland) Regulations 2011.

It permits the discharge of water run-off to the water environment from the area of land comprising the construction site shown in Map 1.

The authorisation applies to any water run-off from the site arising following commencement of any construction work on the site, including any preparatory groundwork.

The following person is responsible for securing compliance with this authorisation and the conditions to which it is subject:

The authorisation takes effect from date of signing. It is subject to compliance with the conditions set out in the Authorisation Conditions.

Signed: ..... Date:

Authorised to sign on behalf of the Scottish Environment Protection Agency

Right of Appeal: You are entitled to appeal to the Scottish Ministers, within three months of the date of this licence, if you have been granted a form of authorisation which is different from the form of authorisation which you believe ought to have been granted (under regulation 50(b) of the Regulations) or against any condition or conditions of this licence (under

9

SEPA's Construction Site Licence (CAR Licence)

SEPA's Controlled Activities Regulations were updated in 2018 which has led to a "cradle to grave" type approach whereby SEPA remain involved throughout the project and undertake site visits to ensure compliance.

What is required and when does this come into force?

From 1 September 2018, a construction project which falls into one of the above categories cannot be commenced until you have:

1. obtained a CAR licence from SEPA; and
2. submitted a pollution prevention plan for the construction site to SEPA for review / approval.

SEPA has detailed guidance about what is to be included in the pollution prevention plan and the plan can be submitted to SEPA at the same time as the application for the CAR licence. It may take SEPA up to 4 months to determine whether to issue a CAR licence and to review and agree the pollution prevention plan. The pollution prevention plan can be varied at a later date and must be complied with as a condition to the CAR licence.
The cost of obtaining a CAR licence depends on the size of the construction activity. For more information, refer to SEPA's website which details the application process / fees.

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SEPA's Construction Site Licence (CAR Licence)

Who has to do this?

The CAR licence is to be applied for by a "Responsible Person", being the person/organisation responsible for securing compliance with the licence. Given the CAR licence has to be applied for in advance of the works commencing, the licence can be transferred to the relevant party overseeing the construction works on site at a later date (once this party is known).

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Construction Phase - Monitoring Arrangements

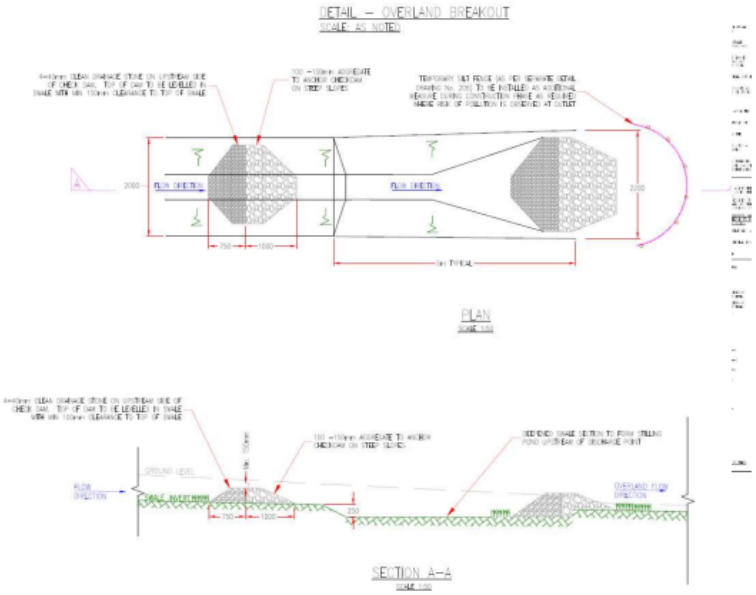
When constructing wind farms, a breach of environmental legislation through a pollution event is as devastating as having a serious accident on your site, the reputational damage is so great it risks loss of work and jobs.

For e.g. a breach of a water use licence would typically involve enforcement action by SEPA including financial penalties, your business being named and shamed and a licence suspension - the impact of a licence suspension alone would have an extremely adverse financial impact for a contractor, e.g. a large EPC contract may have significant liquidated damages tied to the contract programme, if a project loses two months to a licence suspension delaying the infrastructure works, that contractor can expect to incur significant financial loss, with a follow on impact that they have try and survive through reputational damage and loss of business.

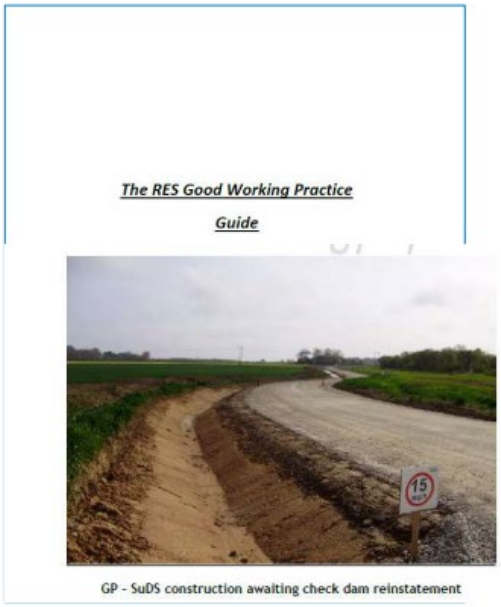
A "responsible person" may ultimately be subject to criminal liability if the terms of the licence are breached.

Sustainable Drainage Design (SUDS)

1. SUDS will be installed using appropriate mitigation measures for the site, ditch dimensions determined by cross sectional calcs, checkdams installed to restrict flows and filter sediment from water, attenuation basins, settlement ponds etc
2. Clean water cut-off ditches shall be installed
3. Culverts shall be installed to divert clean water as required
4. Silt fencing installed to filter out sediments
5. ECoW monitors installation and maintenance standards against agreed design



RES Good Working Practice Guide



GP - SuDS construction awaiting check dam reinstatement

14

RES Good Working Practice Guide

Silt fencing is an effective way of capturing larger sediment particles. Care should be taken so that fencing is not over-whelmed and the receiving habitat can act as filter strip without becoming saturated.

GP - SuDS with check dams installed and maintained and good vegetation from grass seed as per Ecology Plan

Settlement lagoons

Large capacity settlement lagoons require careful planning and location consideration. Calculate and forecast the expected volumes of flows that they will be required to cope with rainfall as necessary. Lagoons are particularly effective where a large run-off volume is expected and small scale dispersal to suitable vegetation would not be successful.

In some locations substantial 'Step' designed settlement lagoons may be required to manage large volumes of contaminated run-off.

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Marketing Email |...

power for good

Q&A

www.res-group.com

6.1.4 August 2024 Minutes

power for good

MINUTES

Blair Hill Wind Farm
Community Liaison Group (CLG)

27/08/24
7pm - 9.30pm

Attendees	Name	Representing
	Clifford Smithers (CS)	Cree Valley Community Council
	Hazel Matthews (HM)	Kirkcowan Community Council
	Mary Harkness (MH)	Kirkcowan Community Council
	Alan Howatson (AH)	River Cree Hatchery & Habitat Trust SCIO
	Jamie Hyslop (JH)	River Cree District Salmon Fishery Board
	Charles Marshall (CMa)	Cree Valley Area Development Trust
	Scott Jones (SJ)	Machars and Cree Valley Climate Action Network
	Nicola Garmory (NG)	Machars and Cree Valley Climate Action Network
	Craig McMilken (CM)	Ditch the Blair Hill Project
	Iain Service (IS)	Ditch the Blair Hill Project
	Linda Woodfield (LW)	Newton Stewart Initiative
	Sarah McArthur (SMc)	RES
	Simon Cleary (SC)	BiGGAR Economics
	Dario Ewing (DE)	Cavendish
Apologies	**Name**	**Representing**
	Cllr Katie Hagmann	Ward member for Mid Galloway and Wigtown West
	Cllr Jackie McCamon	Ward member for Mid Galloway and Wigtown West
	Cllr Richard Marsh	Ward member for Mid Galloway and Wigtown West
	Terence Flanagan (TF)	River Cree Hatchery & Habitat Trust SCIO
	Cllr David Inglis	Ward member for Mid Galloway and Wigtown West
	Sarah More	Cree Valley Area Development Trust

Agenda Item	Activity	Actions
Apologies	Apologies were noted from Sarah More (substituted by Charles Marshall).	
Project Update	SMc advised that the finalised viewpoint list for the LVIA had been circulated to CLG members and is appended to the minutes. A query was raised at the previous meeting regarding using the 3D video model for the LVIA; however, SMc clarified that it would not be possible to use it for assessment purpose in the LVIA does not meet the guidelines set by NatureScot. It will remain available on the project website for public viewing. SMc explained that the Shennanton Wind Farm would not be included in cumulative assessments submitted as part of the EIA as only operational, consented or in planning projects. Glenvernoch Wind Farm will be included due to being at a similar stage to Blair Hill. SMc advised that the RES are working towards an application submission by the end of September, thought stressed that a specific date cannot be committed to. IS inquired about the submission process; SMc clarified that it would be submitted to both the Energy Consents Unit (ECU) and the local planning authority, with the validation period typically taking between 2-6 weeks. SMc advised that sufficient period for representations will be given and committed to updating the CLG on submission of the application when it is made. JH inquired about the grid connection application status. No updates were available and SMc stated that a grid offer is expected to be made in October. IS cited the Carn na Saobhaidh Wind Farm example, highlighting the contrast as a grid connection offer had already been secured there. He explained that people should be able to understand the proposed route given its potential impact. SMc highlighted that RES identify the best time to submit an application based on each region. She noted that the grid route would most likely follow existing overhead lines to Glenlee.	

Post Submission Drop-in Sessions	DE provided an overview of the plans to hold information sessions following submission of the application. He explained that the format will follow that of the exhibition, with details of the plans in their submitted form provided, and copies of the EIA document available to read. JH stressed the importance of holding an event in Wigtown. DE clarified that this is the intention among the project team, following feedback on the second round of exhibitions whereby a venue in Wigtown was unavailable. IS questioned how long a period for representation would be afforded. SMc clarified that it is typically four months, but there is potential for this to be extended at the request of statutory consultees. SMc asked where the most appropriate venue to make hardcopies of the EIA available for public viewing. The CLG agreed on the suggestion of the Newton Stewart Library. SMc highlighted that these events would be advertised in another community newsletter to residents. This would also provide details/links to the Cree Valley Community Council survey on the project.

Guest Speakers - Socio Economics and Tourism	SC delivered a presentation on the socio economic and tourism assessment for Blair Hill wind farm. A copy of the presentation is appended to these minutes.
	SC provided an overview of tourism drivers, and the socio-economic impacts assessed under National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4). He explained how natural capital can enhance other forms of capital in the region, such as human and financial capital. The economic impacts of the Blair Hill Wind Farm project have been provisionally assessed for Dumfries & Galloway (D&G) as a whole, with a projected gross value added (GVA) of £11 million and a peak employment of 60-70 jobs. Across Scotland, the project is expected to generate a GVA of £32 million and support 160-180 jobs.
	SC emphasised that the impacts of wind farms on tourism and recreation are generally more localised and depend on several factors, including the visibility and audibility of the turbines and whether they disrupt popular recreational paths. The assessment considers how environmental impacts might affect visitor experiences and behaviour, analysing how sensitive visitors might be to changes and how they might react to the presence of wind farms.
	The presentation highlighted that since 2015 in Mid Galloway and Wigtown West, there has been an improvement in the Accommodation and Food services sectors in the region, which are key drivers of the local economy. Conversely, the education sector has experienced the largest decline, attributed to a decrease in the number of school-aged children and consequently, a reduction in teaching staff.
	The specific impacts of the Blair Hill Wind Farm on tourism and recreation are still under evaluation, as the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) has not yet been completed. However, SC noted that visibility of the turbines does not necessarily result in detrimental impacts on tourism.
	IS raised concerns about the figures given for the Arecleoch wind farm in the BiGGAR Economics Report: Wind Farm and Tourism Trends in Scotland (2021). He highlighted that a local student had produced a report containing Venn diagrams which had been submitted to a previous CLG meeting. SC acknowledged that there was an error in the Arecleoch figures given in the BIGGAR Economics Report. He said that the ONS data for the postcode of the Local Authority Headquarters, Ayr, had been used in error and thanked members for spotting the error. He explained that the error would be rectified and an updated report would be issued, although not in time for the Blair Hill application. JH confirmed with SC that the report had not been peer reviewed and noted that this error might have been spotted if it had. JH and IS added that the ONS urges caution in the use of potentially inaccurate data extrapolated from its own estimated figures. SC clarified that as it was not academic research piece, a peer review is not typically undertaken. JH raised his concern that the error identified cast doubt on the validity of the Biggar report and that there may be further errors in the report. JH asked that the ECU be made aware of the error.

SC confirmed that the conclusions of the BIGGAR report would not change with the correct figures included and that the ECU would be made aware. It would not change any conclusions of the assessment relating to Blair Hill wind farm.

SJ noted the socio-economic impact assessment, suggesting that a different approach might be necessary for natural landscapes, in order to capture the "social" and "lived experience" of the land. Discussion followed on the possibility of conducting a social impact assessment, but SC and SMc clarified that whilst they agreed it may be a worthwhile assessment it is currently not part of the accepted guidance for assessing the impacts of onshore wind.

IS and SJ questioned whether a socio-economic assessment that is standalone from the EIA is as thorough. SC and SMc advised that including the socio-economic assessments outside of the EIA delivers allow for easier access, understanding and clarity. Traditional EIA formats are better suited to purely environmental assessments, such as on peat or ecology. National Planning Framework 4 has increased the focus on socio-economic issues for renewable energy development and the stand alone nature of the socio-economic assessment allows for a fuller assessment in line with this new policy.

CM questioned the nature of BiGGAR's clients. SC clarified that their biggest contracts lie with the public sector or other public bodies reporting to the Scottish Government, focussing on research for policy evaluations and city or region deals.

There were inquiries regarding the impact of wind farms on house prices. SC cited research by the University of Edinburgh, which found no significant effect on house prices unless properties are in close proximity to the wind farm. IS further questioned why wind farm companies often provide compensation to nearby residents, to which SMc responded that compensation typically relates to properties affected by noise levels exceeding set threshold. This is not proposed for Blair Hill Wind Farm.

SC mentioned that the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) is expected to be completed by the end of the week, with assessments to be made by BiGGAR Economics thereafter.

CM asked if local population opinions are considered in the assessments. SC stated that surveys of perception are not typically conducted because there is often a difference between perception and actual experience of change, and such surveys may not be representative of the data or community.

IS emphasised the importance of choosing viewpoints that align with where tourists frequently visit, suggesting that viewpoints should reflect popular cycling, walking, and tourist routes. SMv confirmed that the viewpoint list includes a range of these routes and will also be part of the cultural heritage considerations.

SJ inquired about how planning officials would handle information provided by groups critiquing data. SMc noted that Energy Consents Unit

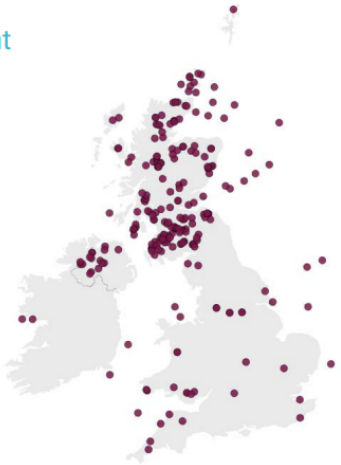
	would only consider such information if it is submitted as a formal representation once the application is made. The CLG agreed to consider including a formal representation in the application, outlining key points that the group has wants RES should address.	
AOB	JH asked whether the establishment of a Galloway National Park would alter RES's approach to the Blair Hill Wind Farm project. SMc responded that it would not, as the designation has not been confirmed yet. NatureScot still needs to publish a report on the matter, and the Scottish Government must release further guidance. Until these steps are completed, the national park status would not be considered as a material consideration.	
Date and Time of Next meeting	The next meeting will be scheduled approximately two weeks after the planned drop-in information sessions. Dates to be communicated by RES.	RES
	The meeting concluded at 9.15.	

e

BiGGAR Economics Experience – Energy Transition

BiGGAR Economics is the leading economic development consultancy in the UK for the energy transition

- Assessed the impact of over 200 energy projects
- Leading the development of guidance for the assessment of socio-economic impacts of onshore wind
- Have worked on onshore wind since 2004 and the construction of Clyde Wind Farm
- Have considered the impacts of projects prior to construction and then evaluated these impacts post construction



BiGGAR Economics

Blair Hill Wind Farm: Socio-economics Assessment

August 2024

Simon Cleary – Energy Transition Director

BiGGAR Economics Experience - Tourism

What are we doing for Blair Hill Wind Farm?

What does the policy say?

National Planning Framework 4 has increased the focus on socio-economic issues for renewable energy developments

Policy 11c

- Development proposals will only be supported where they **maximise net economic impact**, including local and community socio-economic benefits such as employment, associated business and supply chain opportunities

Policy 25

- Development proposals which contribute to local or regional **community wealth building** strategies and are consistent with local economic priorities will be supported

What is Community Wealth Building?

Community wealth building is an approach organisations and projects can take to maximise their socio-economic benefits by building up the four capitals of surrounding communities

Natural Capital | **Financial Capital** | **Social Capital** | **Human Capital**

How does this relate to onshore wind?

Onshore wind developments can utilise the Natural Capital of an area (wind) to build up capitals in other areas

Financial Capital

Social Capital

Human Capital

Natural Capital

What have we found?

Economic Impacts

Economic impacts have been quantified for Dumfries and Galloway and Scotland

Inputs

- Economic impacts are determined by expenditure
- Distribution of contracts is estimated by considering current capacity in relevant sectors and previous D&G experience;
  - Opportunities for growth

Emerging Findings

- The primary opportunity during the construction phase will be in the construction sector and supporting services
- In D&G construction is estimated to support:
  - £11m Gross Value Added; and
  - Peak employment of 60 – 70 jobs
- Across Scotland, the construction will support:
  - £32m Gross Value Added; and
  - Peak employment of 160 – 180 jobs.

Tourism and Recreation Impacts Approach

Tourism and Recreation impacts are focused more locally, determined by where other environmental impacts are experienced

Change in Employment

Total change in employment by Sector since 2015 in Mid Galloway and Wigtown West

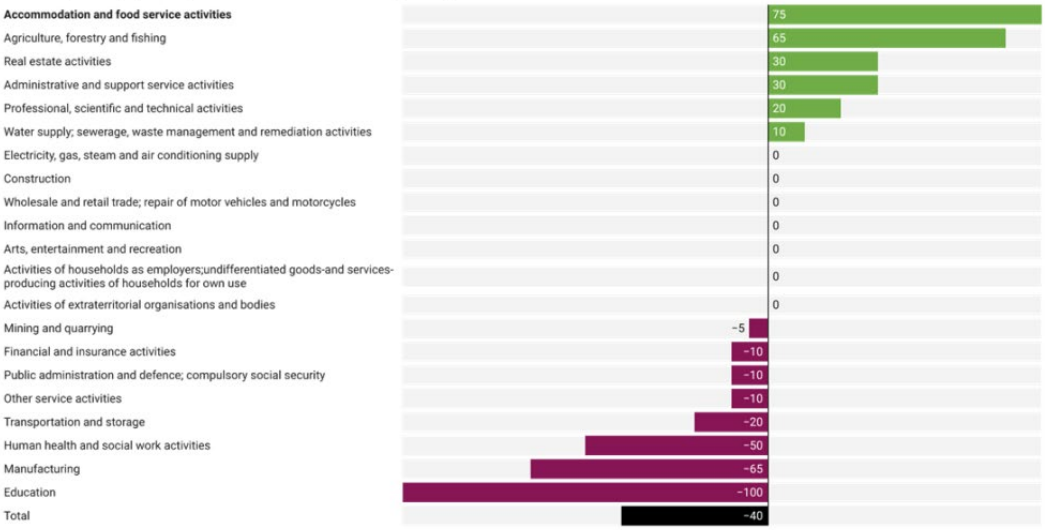


Chart: BiGGAR Economics • Source: ONS • Created with Datawrapper

Tourism and Recreation Impacts Next Steps

The tourism and recreation impact assessment is ongoing

Impacts considered

- Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment has not been completed yet, so unable to assess specifics;
- However likely turbines will be visible from tourism and recreation receptors across the region;
- Visibility of turbines does not necessarily mean detrimental impacts on tourism
- Awaiting LVIA findings before reaching conclusions, particularly on more sensitive receptors such as Galloway Dark Skies

Enhancement

- What are the sensitivities and opportunities in the local tourism sector that could be supported by Blair Hill Wind Farm?
  - Examples of capacity building
  - Enhancing the human and financial capital in the tourism sector using Community Benefit Funding
  - Maximising Impact of Worker Accommodation Income
- Enhancing the visibility of and recreational enjoyment of on-site heritage assets as part of the core project

1 Landscape and Visual

1.1 Introduction

Following the receipt of scoping responses from consultees in relation to the proposed Blair Hill Wind Farm, including additional comments received from D&G dated 2 February 2024, the proposed LVIA viewpoints set out in the scoping report have been reviewed and a finalised list prepared.

Updated ZTV studies based on an updated scheme layout have been used to review suggested viewpoint locations for use in the LVIA. Consideration has been given to D&Gs 2020 Supplementary Guidance 'Part 1 Wind Energy Development: Development Management Considerations Appendix 'C' D&G Wind Farm Landscape Capacity Study' and South Ayrshire's 2018 'Landscape Wind Capacity Study' which identify key viewpoints and landmark hills within the study area. Consideration has also been given to viewpoints identified within the recent Arecleoch Variation (ECU ref: ECU00001864) and South Kyle II (ECU ref: ECU00003429) applications, alongside the Artfield Forest application (ECU ref: ECU00003245), for potential cumulative effects.

It is proposed that the 26 locations set out below are included as viewpoints in the LVIA. The locations, which are illustrated on the revised ZTV, included with this document, represent visual receptors, character types and designative/sensitive landscapes at a range of distances and directions from the Site. These representative viewpoints will be used as 'samples' on which to base judgements of the scale of effects on visual receptors and represent a wide range of receptors – including not only those actually at the viewpoint, but also those nearby, at a similar distance and/or direction. It is anticipated that some viewpoints may be subject to localised micrositing when investigated on site, as well as alternative suggested locations being reviewed to ensure that worst case scenarios are selected. Where this is relevant comment is made within the table below.

Locations that have been selected for heritage visualisations are also shown on the updated ZTVs for information.

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Proposed LVIA Viewpoints

Viewpoint	Distance and direction from closest proposed turbine	View / receptors represented	Type of visualisation to be prepared
VP1: Drumwhirn Cairn, Moor of Barclye (239370, 568878)	2.6 km, south-west	Represents users of the RSPB moorland and users of NCR7 along to minor road to the south-west of the Site. Within RSA and LLA. Requested by Cree Valley Community Council. Viewpoints discounted – alternative location at Mill Hill within Moor of Barclye to allow heritage asset to be covered by viewpoint.	Photomontage
VP2: Corsbie Road, Newton Stewart (240445, 565633)	4.5 km, south west	Represents the experience of visitors and residents along the northern edge of Newton Stewart. On edge of RSA and LLA. Close to viewpoint requested by Cree Valley Community Council. Viewpoints discounted – viewpoint closer to Douglas Ewart High School/The Merrick Leisure Centre as foreground buildings would largely obscure proposed turbines.	Photomontage Night-time photomontage

Viewpoint	Distance and direction from closest proposed turbine	View / receptors represented	Type of visualisation to be prepared
VP3: Cycleway adjacent to A714 south of Newton Stewart (241883, 563672)	6.4 km, south	Represents users of the A75, visitors and residents on the outskirts of Newton Stewart and users of NCR73 which passes below the A75. Within RSA and LLA. Viewpoints discounted - A75 south of Newton Stewart as views from the bridge over the River Cree would be relatively restricted by riverside vegetation, and further south on the A714 near Causeway End as suggested by D&G as roadside vegetation would frequently obscure views towards the Proposed Development in this vicinity and safe stopping places to undertake photography were not readily available.	Photomontage
VP4: Glenvernoch Fell / Hill of Ochiltree (232711, 574115)	8.7 km, west	Represents recreational users of the Southern Upland Way around Glenverloch Fell. Requested by Cree Valley Community Council.	Photomontage
VP5: NCR7 on Minor Road North of Glentrool Village (236126, 579128)	8.2 km, north-west	Represents visitors and residents of Glentrool Village, users of NCR7 and recreational users of Glentrool Forest. On edge of RSA and LLA. Within Galloway Forest Park boundary. Viewpoints discounted - locations closer to the Glentrool visitor centre as views towards the proposed development were largely obscured by trees.	Wireline

Viewpoint	Distance and direction from closest proposed turbine	View / receptors represented	Type of visualisation to be prepared
VP6: Cairnsmore of Fleet (250121, 567049)	8.6 km, east	Represents users of the recreational landscape to the east. Endorsed by Mountaineering Scotland. Within RSA and LLA. Requested by Cree Valley Community Council.	Photomontage
VP7: Merrick (242760, 585539)	11.3 km, north	Represents recreational users of the landscape to the north, including the Dark Sky Park. Consideration has been given to views from the approach via Benyellary, but the view from Merrick represents the worse case scenario. Within RSA, LLA, Wild Land Area and Dark Sky Park Core Area. Within Galloway Forest Park boundary. Endorsed by Mountaineering Scotland. Requested by Cree Valley Community Council. Viewpoints discounted - Benyellary summit as visibility would be less than the already limited visibility from the summit of Merrick.	Photomontage
VP8: A75 near Creetown (247182, 558175)	13.1 km, south	Represents users of the A75 travelling towards the Proposed Development and visitors and residents on the outskirts of Creetown. Within RSA and LLA. Viewpoints discounted - layby at Point Fishery as suggested by D&G and Cree Valley Community Council as foreground vegetation would largely obscure views towards the Proposed Development.	Photomontage Night-time photomontage

Viewpoint	Distance and direction from closest proposed turbine	View / receptors represented	Type of visualisation to be prepared
VP9: Kirkcowan (233244, 560488)	12.7 km, south-west	Represents visitors and residents of Kirkcowan and users of the neighbouring minor roads. Close to viewpoint requested by Cree Valley Community Council. Viewpoints discounted - location near church in Kirkcowan as the Proposed Development would be partially obscured by built development in the village.	Photomontage Night-time photomontage
VP10: NCR73 on Minor Road North of Wigtown (243498, 556203)	14.0 km, south	Represents visitors and residents on the outskirts of Wigtown and users of NCR73. Within RSA and LLA. Viewpoints discounted - Martyr's Monument as only a channelled view that isn't representative of the surrounding views is possible; near the bird hide at Wigtown Harbour as views from a single side of the hide are not representative of surrounding views; Kirkland Hill/Lover's Walk, as only single location along Lover's walk with potential views of the Proposed Development; and the A714/B7005 Junction north of Wigtown as although there would be views of the Proposed Development, visual receptors would be less sensitive than those at the chosen location.	Photomontage Night-time photomontage
VP11: Benniguinea Lookout (256619, 575944)	14.1 km, east	Represents users of the recreational landscape to the east. Within RSA, LLA and Dark Sky Park. Within Galloway Forest Park boundary. Endorsed by Mountaineering Scotland.	Wireline

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Viewpoint	Distance and direction from closest proposed turbine	View / receptors represented	Type of visualisation to be prepared
VP12: Mochrum Lochs LLA, Moor of Drumwall (230701, 554249)	19.2 km, south-west	Represents the LLA and users of the minor roads to the south-west around Gargrie Moor. Within RSA and LLA. Viewpoints discounted - core path to the north but access through Craigeach was not possible.	Wireline
VP13: Minor Road near Barhill Station (222672, 581317)	20.5 km, north-west	Represents visibility to the north-west from areas around Barhill. On edge of LLA. Close to viewpoint requested by Cree Valley Community Council. Viewpoints discounted - Barhill Station as visibility from the station or the platforms would be very restricted.	Wireline
VP14: Southern Upland Way near Artfield Fell (221186, 568010)	20.6 km, west	Represents recreational users of the Southern Upland Way to the west. Requested by Cree Valley Community Council.	Wireline
VP15: A76 North of Whithorn (244468, 541031)	29.1 km, south	Represents users of the A76 and residents and visitors to Whithorn, south of the Site. Requested by Cree Valley Community Council.	Wireline
VP16: Byne Hill (217864, 594554)	31.9 km, north-west	Represents users of the recreational landscapes to the north-west near Girvan. Within LLA. Requested by Cree Valley Community Council.	Wireline
VP17: A712 east of Corsock (278887, 573612)	36.2 km, east	Represents users of the A712 to the east.	Wireline

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Viewpoint	Distance and direction from closest proposed turbine	View / receptors represented	Type of visualisation to be prepared
VP18: Southern Upland Way near Stranraer (205814, 558888)	37.5 km, south-west	Represents recreational users of the Southern Upland Way, recreational landscapes and minor roads near Stranraer. Requested by Cree Valley Community Council.	Wireline
VP19: Sandhead (209777, 549724)	37.8 km, south-west	Represents residents and visitors of Sandhead, users of the beach and other recreational landscapes. Requested by Cree Valley Community Council.	Wireline
VP20: Monigaff Parish Church (241019, 566638)	3.5km, south west	Represents the experience of visitors and residents along the northern edge of Minnigaff. Within RSA and LLA. Requested by Cree Valley Community Council.	Photomontage
VP21: Lamachan Hill (243510, 577015)	3.0km, north east	Represents users of the recreational landscape to the north east. Located slightly off the summit in area of greater visibility. Within RSA, LLA and Dark Sky Park Core Area. Within Galloway Forest Park boundary. Proposed by Mountaineering Scotland.	Wireframe only (no photography)
VP22: Millfore (247803, 575448)	5.4km, north east	Represents users of the recreational landscape to the north east. Within RSA, LLA and Dark Sky Park Core Area. Within Galloway Forest Park boundary. Proposed by Mountaineering Scotland.	Wireframe only (no photography)

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Viewpoint	Distance and direction from closest proposed turbine	View / receptors represented	Type of visualisation to be prepared
VP23: Meikle Millyea (251536, 582539)	12.3km, north east	Represents users of the recreational landscape to the north east. Located slightly off the summit in area of greater visibility. Within RSA, LLA and Dark Sky Park. Within Galloway Forest Park boundary. Replacement for viewpoint proposed by Mountaineering Scotland at Corserine as revised layout has resulted in almost no visibility from Corserine.	Wireframe only (no photography)
VP24: Innerwell Fishery approach (247607, 549209)	21.7km, south	Represents users of core path and minor roads north of Garliston. Within RSA and LLA. Requested by D&G.	Wireline
VP25: Penninghame Estate pond, Castle Stewart (237471, 569247)	4.3km, west	Represents visitors to recreational space to the east and local design landscape. Requested by D&G.	Photomontage
VP26: Challoch Church (238565, 569247)	4.0km, south	Represents visitors to church and road users. Requested by D&G. Replacement for viewpoint at Knockman Woods where visibility would be very limited.	Photomontage

8

Proposed Heritage Viewpoints

Viewpoint	Location	Distance and direction from closest proposed turbine	Type of visualisation to be prepared
VP H1: The Thieves, Standing Stones (SM1044)	240439, 571598	1.2km, west	Photomontage
VP H2: Drumfern, Cairn (SM1019)	239965, 570984	1.6km, west	Photomontage
VP H3: Nappers Cottage, Cairn (SM5676)	240852, 571351	700m, west	Photomontage
VP H4: Dalvaird, Cairn (SM1015)	240758, 572991	600m, north west	Photomontage
VP H5: Drannandow, Farmhouse (LB17056)	238858, 570193	2.8km, west	Photomontage
VP H6: Garlies Castle (SM7916)	242157, 569120	1km, south	Photomontage from approach to the Castle.
VP H8: Drumwhirn, Cairn (SM1021)	239352, 568852	2.6km, south west	Photomontage as also LVIA viewpoint
VP H9: Cordorcan, Cairn (SM10385	239621, 572433	1.6km, west	Photomontage
VP H11: White Cairn (SM1048), White Cairn (SM1049)	234234, 579093	9.5km, north west	Wirelines
VP H12: Deil's Dike (SM1966)	232589, 573924	8.7km, north west	Wirelines
VP H13: Cairnsmore of Fleet, Cairn (SM2316)	250121, 567049	8.6kn, south east	Photomontage

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1.1.1 Visualisations

Visualisations will be prepared in accordance with NatureScot's 'Visualisation of Wind Farms Best Practice'. Wirelines and photomontage visualisations will be used to aid the assessment. These will be generated from a 3-dimensional (3D) model of the proposed wind turbines, site and surrounding topography, using key landmarks and compass bearings to match the modelled views to the photographs.

Photographs, wirelines and photomontages will be shown on figures supporting the LVIA. It is anticipated that a baseline panorama and wireline (including cumulative schemes) and a wireline of the Proposed Development will be provided for all suggested viewpoints, unless indicated otherwise above. Photomontages will be prepared for all viewpoints within 5 km of the Proposed Development, and a selection of the more distant viewpoints, which includes most viewpoints within15 km. Night-time photomontages will be prepared to support the night-time assessment, utilising a selection of the daytime viewpoints as indicated above.

Blair Hill Wind Farm

April 2024

Welcome to our latest newsletter for Blair Hill Wind farm, a proposed onshore wind development, the nearest turbine of which would be located approximately 4.5km north of the centre of Newton Stewart, Dumfries and Galloway.

Project update

Since our first public exhibitions in October 2023 when we presented a preliminary design for the proposed Blair Hill Wind Farm, we have undertaken further extensive site survey work to build our understanding of the site. The findings from this, together with the comments received from the community and stakeholders, has resulted in an updated design.

See how our plans have evolved

Reduction in turbine numbers
After careful consideration of site characteristics and community input we have removed seven turbines from the scheme.

Tip height reduction
Addressing concerns related to visual impact, we have lowered the tip height of two turbines.

Revised site layout
As a result of our site analysis and consultation feedback, we have revised the proposed turbine locations to minimise any impact on historically significant landmarks, reduce visibility from key viewpoints like the Merrick and to avoid disturbing sensitive peat habitats.

Preliminary Plans for Heritage Trail
We are currently exploring the potential to deliver a heritage trail within the site. This trail could offer a unique opportunity to explore and unlock the area's cultural and natural heritage.

Preliminary Plans for Biodiversity Enhancement
We are currently developing plans to enhance biodiversity on the site, including measures such as peatland restoration, native broadleaf planting and bracken control for grassland restoration.

Generating clean, green electricity for the equivalent of approximately **123,000 homes**[1] annually.

Providing a community benefit package equivalent to **£5,000** per MW aligned with the local communities' priorities.

Predicted to deliver around **£4.1 million** inward investment in the form of jobs, employment and the use of local services.

Saving an estimated **8.5 million**[2] tonnes of CO_2 over the lifetime of the project.

[1] The homes figure has been calculated by taking the predicted annual electricity generation of the site (based on RES assessments Blair Hill has a predicted capacity factor of 46.3%) and dividing this by the annual average electricity figures from the DESNZ showing that the annual GB average domestic household consumption is 2,228 MWh (January 2024).

[2] RES uses DESNZ's "all non-renewable fuels" emissions statistic of 434 tonnes of carbon dioxide per GWh of electricity supplied in the Digest of UK Energy Statistics (July 2022) Table 5.14 ("Estimated carbon dioxide emissions from electricity supplied"). Carbon reduction is calculated by multiplying the total amount of electricity generated by the wind farm per year by the number of tonnes of carbon which fossil fuels would have produced to generate the same amount of electricity.

7.1 April 2024 Newsletter

Public Exhibitions

We will be presenting the updated design for the wind farm at our second set of public exhibitions. These events will provide more detailed information on the project, including how we have taken on board constructive feedback from the local community to help shape our designs and proposals. As part of the consultation materials available at the exhibition, there will be a comprehensive report summarising the feedback gathered from the first consultation and illustrating how this feedback has fed into the iterative design process.

Members of the project team, including a number of technical consultants, will be on hand to discuss the project and answer any questions the local community may have. Comment forms will be available to complete and submit at the public exhibitions.

The information presented, including the opportunity to submit feedback will also be available to view on the website **blairhill-windfarm.co.uk** from Tuesday 21st May. Hard copies of comment forms can be sent by post to RES, Third Floor, STV, Pacific Quay, Glasgow, G51 1PQ.

Tuesday 21st May, 3pm to 8pm
McMillan Hall, Dashwood Square,
Newton Stewart DG8 6EQ

Wednesday 22nd May, 3pm to 8pm
St Couans Hall,
4 Main Street Kirkcowan DG8 0HG

Please submit feedback on the updated design by Friday 7th June 2024.

Please note that comments submitted to RES at this time are not representations to the determining authority (Scottish Government's Energy Consents Unit). There will be an opportunity to submit representations to the determining authority should an application be made.

Community Engagement

Community Liaison Group

At RES, we are committed to open communication and collaboration with the local community and stakeholders throughout the project's lifespan.

In January 2024, we established a Community Liaison Group (CLG) as a dedicated platform for open dialogue and information exchange as well as to create an effective channel of communication between RES, the local community and stakeholders. Membership of the CLG comprises of locally elected representatives, community groups, and other key stakeholders.

We have held three CLG meetings, to date, and the meetings have provided valuable forums for discussion, where various topics have been explored in depth, including the potential impacts on traffic & transportation as well as the grid connection for the project.

During our April meeting, we had the pleasure of hosting our Lead Heritage Consultant from SLR Consulting, who delivered a short presentation focussing on the key cultural heritage considerations at the site, and their influence on the project's development. We're looking forward to having more guest speakers join us in the future to share their insights and expertise.

Minutes and presentation slides from the CLG meetings are available at:
blairhill-windfarm.co.uk/community-liaison-group/

Inspiring the Next Generation

In February, representatives from RES visited Minnigaff Primary School in Newton Stewart to deliver a presentation to the Primary 1-5 pupils on the topic "people who help us". Within our presentation we highlighted the importance of renewable energy and its positive impact on local communities.

The children were engaged and enthusiastic throughout the presentation, eagerly participating in discussions about renewable energy and its benefits. In addition to learning about the various forms of renewable energy, the pupils gained a deeper understanding of how the technology works and its importance for the environment and future generations. They also learned about the role of professionals in the renewable energy sectors, inspiring them to consider careers in the field!

We're thankful to Minnigaff school for the opportunity to empower the next generation by promoting environmental awareness and education.

About RES

As a British family-owned firm, RES has a proud history in Scotland where we have developed and/or built 22 wind farms to date, with a total generation capacity of c.660MW.

RES is committed to improving everyday life and long-term futures. We are driven by our vision to create a future where everyone has access to affordable zero-carbon energy. Visit **www.res-group.com** to find out more.

For more information:
blairhill.windfarm@res-group.com | blairhill-windfarm.co.uk

7.2 Social Media Graphic Sent to Cree Valley Community Council to Advertise Consultation

7.3 Galloway News

School news

Ready for action The Springholm over-11s team

Lacrosse teams learn a lot in finals

A group of 12 Springholm Primary pupils recently headed to Balfron High School near Stirling to compete in the Scottish Schools Lacrosse finals.

They had qualified through the regional tournament by finishing as first under-11 team and third over-11 team.

After an early start, they arrived in a very sunny Balfron ready for the day.

Both teams played really well and came second in their respective groups and went on to play the very experienced teams from Strathblane Primary in the semi-finals.

They then went on to play the bronze medal matches where they fought hard and finished in fourth place against Killearn (overs) and Drymen (unders).

Throughout the day they were enthusiastic, and their skill level and confidence increased with each match they played, which was great to see. Both teams finished as the top Dumfries and Galloway sides.

Kyle said: "It was great to play against different teams and the weather was fab!"

Eva added: "Playing against tougher and rougher opponents was good as we learned a lot."

The school would like to thank Throave Rovers for the use of their minibus and to the fantastic driver Davie for giving up his time to ensure that the children were able to take full advantage of this brilliant opportunity.

Thanks also go to parents who raised funds for the trip and to Tesco for donating some much appreciated snacks and water.

This was the first year some of the pupils have played lacrosse so qualifying for the finals was a fantastic achievement.

Springholm Primary is very proud of all of them and their super achievements.

Under 11 The pupils were looking forward to a great day

Pupils grab a pizza the action

Pupils and staff at Dalbeattie High School spent a morning at Pizza Express at Gretna Caledonia Retail Park.

They learnt all about the ingredients and the processes involved in making pizzas. They tried their hands at shaping the dough, throwing it and catching it like true Italian chefs, before adding their toppings and waiting for it to bake in the ovens.

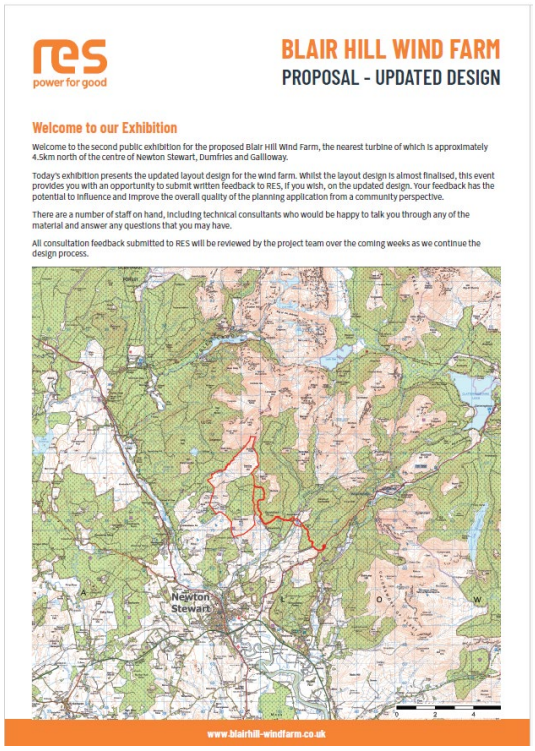
They were welcomed by Kinga, Heather, Pati and Ewa, who led them patiently through every stage and rewarded everyone with their own Pizzaiolo certificates at the end of the morning.

Grazie, Pizza Express!

Great day Pupils and staff at Dalbeattie High School spent a morning at Pizza Express

Advertisement (May 2024)

7.4 May 2024 Exhibition Boards



BLAIR HILL WIND FARM
PROPOSAL - UPDATED DESIGN

Welcome to our Exhibition

Welcome to the second public exhibition for the proposed Blair Hill Wind Farm, the nearest turbine of which is approximately 4.5km north of the centre of Newton Stewart, Dumfries and Galloway.

Today's exhibition presents the updated layout design for the wind farm. Whilst the layout design is almost finalised, this event provides you with an opportunity to submit written feedback to RES, if you wish, on the updated design. Your feedback has the potential to influence and improve the overall quality of the planning application from a community perspective.

There are a number of staff on hand, including technical consultants who would be happy to talk you through any of the material and answer any questions that you may have.

All consultation feedback submitted to RES will be reviewed by the project team over the coming weeks as we continue the design process.

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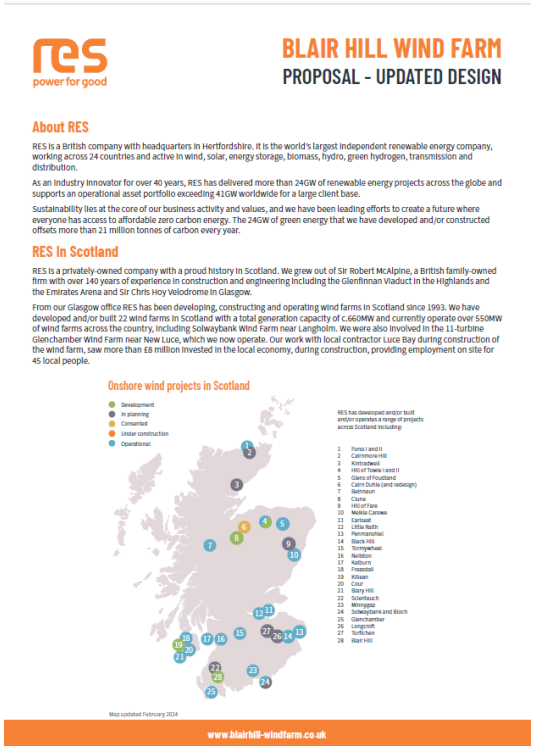

BLAIR HILL WIND FARM
PROPOSAL - UPDATED DESIGN

About RES

RES is a British company with headquarters in Hertfordshire. It is the world's largest independent renewable energy company, working across 24 countries and active in wind, solar, energy storage, biomass, hydro, green hydrogen, transmission and distribution.

As an industry innovator for over 40 years, RES has delivered more than 24GW of renewable energy projects across the globe and supports an operational asset portfolio exceeding 41GW worldwide for a large client base.

Sustainability lies at the core of our business activity and values, and we have been leading efforts to create a future where everyone has access to affordable zero carbon energy. The 24GW of green energy that we have developed and/or constructed offsets more than 21 million tonnes of carbon every year.

RES in Scotland

RES is a privately-owned company with a proud history in Scotland. We grew out of Sir Robert McAlpine, a British family-owned firm with over 140 years of experience in construction and engineering including the Glenfinnan Viaduct in the Highlands and the Emirates Arena and Sir Chris Hoy Velodrome in Glasgow.

From our Glasgow office RES has been developing, constructing and operating wind farms in Scotland since 1993. We have developed and/or built 22 wind farms in Scotland with a total generation capacity of c.660MW and currently operate over 550MW of wind farms across the country, including Solwaybank Wind Farm near Langholm. We were also involved in the 11-turbine Glenchamber Wind Farm near New Luce, which we now operate. Our work with local contractor Luce Bay during construction of the wind farm, saw more than £8 million invested in the local economy, during construction, providing employment on site for 45 local people.

Onshore wind projects in Scotland

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BLAIR HILL WIND FARM
PROPOSAL - UPDATED DESIGN

Onshore Wind

Scotland plans to reach Net Zero by 2045 and National Grid predicts that Scotland's peak demand for electricity will at least double in the next two decades[1]. Renewable energy projects will make up a significant proportion of Scotland's electricity supply and will help meet this increase in peak demand.

To achieve this, the Scottish Government has set the ambition to deploy a minimum of 20GW of onshore wind in Scotland by 2030, with projects such as the Blair Hill Wind Farm playing a key role in achieving this.

In addition to the environmental benefits, the onshore wind industry supports a supply chain across the country which employs close to 9,000 people[2], and brings benefits to Scotland in the form of investment and skill development.

Low-cost electricity

Onshore wind, alongside other renewable technologies, are the cheapest form of electricity generation.

It can be deployed quickly and delivered at lower costs than hydro, marine technologies, and nuclear. If consented, the Blair Hill Wind Farm scheme would be capable of generating enough clean, low-cost renewable electricity for more than 123,000 homes[3] each year, based on the updated design presented at this exhibition. With the rising cost of living and climate change emergency, it is imperative that we deliver electricity efficiently and at the lowest cost to the consumer.

Energy Security

Wind energy is a free and inexhaustible resource which has an important role to play as part of a balanced energy mix. It increases energy security by reducing our reliance on imports and builds our resilience to sudden fossil fuel price fluctuations or the uncertainty of global markets.

[1] National Grid's Future Energy Scenarios
[2] https://www.scottishrenewables.com/publications/857-untitled
[3] The homes figure has been calculated by taking the predicted annual electricity generation of the site (based on RES assessments Blair Hill has a predicted capacity factor of 46.3%) and dividing this by the annual average electricity figures from DESNZ showing that the annual GB average domestic household consumption is 3,239 kWh (January 2024).

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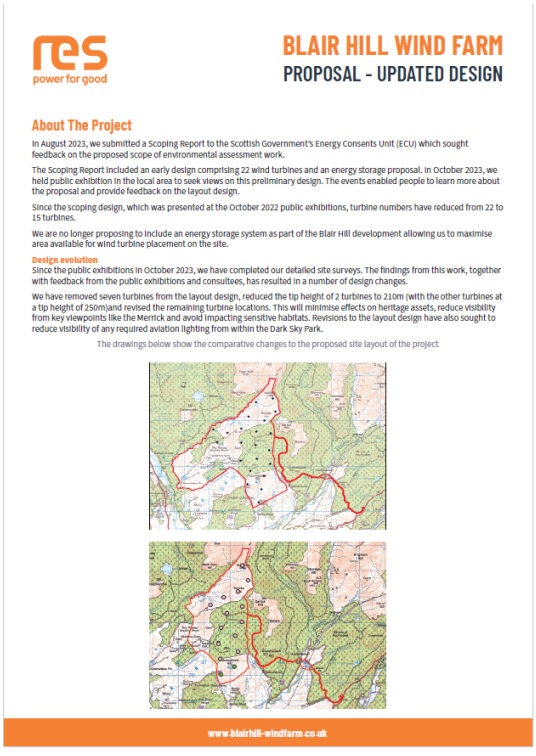

BLAIR HILL WIND FARM
PROPOSAL - UPDATED DESIGN

About The Project

In August 2023, we submitted a Scoping Report to the Scottish Government's Energy Consents Unit (ECU) which sought feedback on the proposed scope of environmental assessment work.

The Scoping Report included an early design comprising 22 wind turbines and an energy storage proposal. In October 2023, we held public exhibition in the local area to seek views on this preliminary design. The events enabled people to learn more about the proposal and provide feedback on the layout design.

Since the scoping design, which was presented at the October 2022 public exhibitions, turbine numbers have reduced from 22 to 15 turbines.

We are no longer proposing to include an energy storage system as part of the Blair Hill development allowing us to maximise area available for wind turbine placement on the site.

Design evolution

Since the public exhibitions in October 2023, we have completed our detailed site surveys. The findings from this work, together with feedback from the public exhibitions and consultees, has resulted in a number of design changes.

We have removed seven turbines from the layout design, reduced the tip height of 2 turbines to 210m (with the other turbines at a tip height of 250m)and revised the remaining turbine locations. This will minimise effects on heritage assets, reduce visibility from key viewpoints like the Merrick and avoid impacting sensitive habitats. Revisions to the layout design have also sought to reduce visibility of any required aviation lighting from within the Dark Sky Park.

The drawings below show the comparative changes to the proposed site layout of the project

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BLAIR HILL WIND FARM
PROPOSAL - UPDATED DESIGN

Dpdated Design Layout and Infrastructure

Wind turbines
Since the scoping design, which was presented at the October 2023 public exhibitions, the number of wind turbines has been reduced from 22 to 15. Two turbines have a tip height of 210m and 13 are 250m.

Furthermore, each wind turbine location has moved to varying degrees to refine the design and minimise impacts wherever possible. The total installed generating capacity has also reduced since the previous proposal from around 145MW to approximately 100MW due to the reduction in wind turbine numbers.

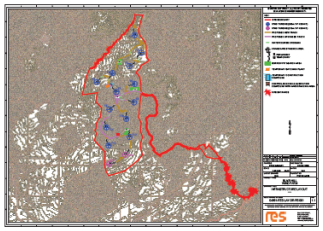
Tracks
Existing tracks will be utilised wherever possible. Sections of new tracks have been aligned to avoid, as much as possible, crossing of watercourses and areas of deeper peat. For construction of the access tracks, alternative methods would be utilised for different areas of the site, depending on site specific conditions. For each method, the access track running width shall be approximately 5m and will be constructed of compacted crushed stone.

Onsite substation
The proposal will also include an onsite substation. The electricity generated from each turbine is low voltage and needs to be converted into a higher voltage to be exported onto the National Grid.

Underground cables organised into arrays, transport the electricity generated to the on-site substation whereupon it is converted into the higher voltage of 132kV. This electricity is then transported via a 'grid connection' (a 132kV trident overhead wood pole line is expected for the Blair Hill Wind Farm) onto the National Grid.

Grid Connection
RES is awaiting a grid offer from the grid Transmission Owner (TO), in this case Scottish Power Transmission via National Grid ESO (NGESO). We expect the project to be connected into a substation at Glenlee, approximately 20km from the site, although this will be confirmed by the TO in the coming months.

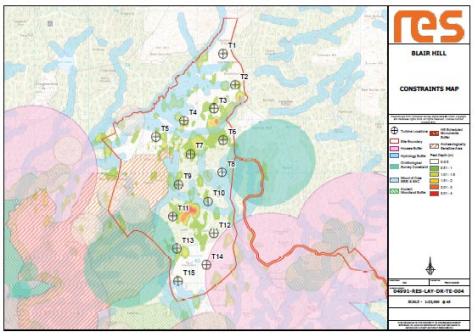
To enable Blair Hill Wind Farm to connect to the National Grid, the expected infrastructure will comprise one 132kV overhead wood pole line. The grid route application for this connection will be submitted by the TO, however indicative details of the anticipated route of the grid connection for the project will also be in included in the Project Description chapter of the EIA which will accompany the planning application. RES envisages this would follow existing grid routes where possible.



BLAIR HILL WIND FARM
PROPOSAL - UPDATED DESIGN

Constraints Map

Site-specific constraints and buffers, as shown in the plan below, have also been used to inform the updated design of the wind farm.



BLAIR HILL WIND FARM
PROPOSAL - UPDATED DESIGN

Environmental Considerations

An Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Report will be submitted as part of the project's Section 36 application. This will report the findings of a comprehensive EIA which Scottish Ministers will take into account when deciding whether or not to grant consent.

Over the last two years, RES has undertaken a wide range of technical and environmental surveys on the site, including:

- Acoustics
- Archaeology and Cultural Heritage
- Hydrology and Peat
- Landscape and Visual
- Ornithology and Ecology
- Traffic and Transport
- Landscape and Visual

Our landscape architects have undertaken extensive assessment work to inform the design development and turbine layout. Key changes (since the scoping design) include the reduction in turbine numbers from 22 to 15, reduction in height of two turbines, and the movement of each wind turbine location to varying degrees to refine the design and minimise impacts wherever possible.

The photomontages presented at this exhibition have been prepared to NatureScot guidance and help to give an impression of what the proposal could look like from different viewpoints surrounding the site.

We are looking to achieve a design that strikes an acceptable balance between the visibility of the proposal and its ability to generate significant amounts of renewable energy. Ultimately, the acceptability of this design will be assessed by the Scottish Ministers in relation to current energy policy and planning requirements, having considered feedback from consultees as well as representations by members of the community and wider public.

Cultural Heritage
Our cultural heritage consultants have completed extensive site surveys, including an archaeological walkover, a setting assessment on designated assets and an accompanied site visit with Historic Environment Scotland (HES).

There are several designated assets within the site boundary that are prehistoric in date and form part of a wider prehistoric landscape along the Cree Valley. The layout design has been revised in response to feedback from HES to minimise impacts on these designated assets as far as possible.

Ecology
Extensive ecological surveys have been completed across the site for habitats, protected species and fish. The survey findings show that the habitats are a mix of areas of commercial conifer plantation and a mosaic of common upland vegetation types which are grazed by livestock, including areas of acid and marshy grasslands, bracken, wet heath and bog. The protected species surveys indicate the presence of otter, badger, bats, reptiles and potentially pine marten at, or in close proximity to, the site. The fisheries surveys indicated many of the suitable watercourses on and around the site contained brown trout, with one watercourse downstream having low numbers of Atlantic salmon. The design of the wind farm has included avoidance and buffering off key features. Full survey details and results will be presented in the EIA Report. The results of the surveys will help to inform the development an outline Biodiversity Enhancement Management Plan.

Ornithology
Extensive ornithological surveys have been undertaken across the site. These comprised of targeted flight activity surveys and a range of distribution and abundance surveys for breeding waders, raptors and owls, black grouse and wintering birds. The survey findings showed limited presence of breeding waders with only snipe recorded breeding in relatively low numbers. Barn owl were identified to be nesting at one location within the site and potentially nesting at a second. Black grouse were also identified to be lekking at two locations within the survey area with one to two males present at each lek location.

The design of the wind farm has included appropriate buffers on known breeding sites for barn owl and lek sites for black grouse. Full survey details will be presented in the EIA Report.

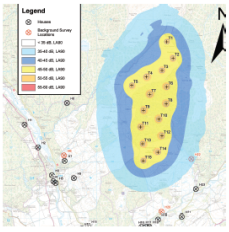
BLAIR HILL WIND FARM
PROPOSAL - UPDATED DESIGN

Acoustics
Strict guidelines exist concerning sound emissions from wind turbines and the final design of the wind farm will take full account of these guidelines. Acoustic assessments are undertaken in accordance with the relevant standards, current assessment methodologies and best practice as determined by the regulatory bodies, which include D&G Council, the Scottish Government and the UK Institute of Acoustics.

In consultation with D&G Council, we are undertaking a background sound survey at a number of locations around the site. The results from this survey will be analysed by our acoustics team and will inform the sound emission limits for the operation of the wind farm. These will be agreed with the Council and the wind farm will be required to comply with these as a condition of planning consent.

The acoustic impact of the wind farm will be modelled and the output of this modelled work will be presented in the acoustic chapter of the extensive EIA Report which will accompany the planning application.

The acoustic chapter of the EIAR will demonstrate that RES has considered all appropriate measures in the design, construction, and operation phases to minimise the acoustic impact of the wind farm.



Shadow flicker
Shadow flicker is a phenomenon where, under certain circumstances of geographical position and time of day, the sun may pass behind the rotors of a wind turbine and cast a shadow over neighbouring properties. When the blades rotate, the shadow flicks on and off.

Shadow flicker can be predicted, modelled and mitigated using specialised software. The Blair Hill Wind Farm proposal is being designed to minimise any potential for shadow flicker. Where shadow flicker is predicted, monitoring software can shut down certain turbines at a particular time of day or in certain weather conditions. This shadow flicker modelling work and potential mitigation measures will be presented in the EIA Report. These mitigation measures would also be in included in the conditions of any planning consent.

Hydrology and private water supply
Surveys of the site have been undertaken to establish baseline conditions across the site and determine where sensitive water features are located. The updated layout design will avoid such areas.

A private water supply assessment is being carried out for inclusion in the EIA Report. In accordance with SEPA Regulations[1], physical measures or additional protection would be in put in place where appropriate to minimise the risk to water quality.

Peat
Peat depth surveys have been undertaken to understand peat depths and quality across the site. The surveys found that peat depth varied greatly, but in general indicated peat of less than 0.5m with some pockets of deeper peat.

The scheme has been designed to reduce infrastructure on areas of deep peat to avoid the sensitive habitats which it supports.

https://www.sepa.org.uk/regulations/water

[1]https://www.sepa.org.uk/regulations/water

BLAIR HILL WIND FARM
PROPOSAL - UPDATED DESIGN

A Power for Good - Environmental Benefits

At RES, we are committed to leaving the natural environment in the areas where we operate in a better state that we found them.

Biodiversity enhancement
We are proposing the implementation of a Biodiversity Enhancement Management Plan which will offer opportunities for interrelated environmental enhancements at the site with respect to peat, biodiversity and forestry. This will be prepared and submitted with the section 36 application, and an outline of the initial proposals is included below. Further proposals are also under consideration, details of which will be in the EIA Report.

Broadleaved Woodland Creation
Native woodlands are an important part of Scotland's natural and cultural heritage, providing us with a range of environmental, social and economic benefits. The site currently has a relatively low diversity of tree species as woodland resource is dominated by commercial conifer plantation. We are proposing to increase native broadleaved woodland cover across the site.

Peatland Restoration
We have identified areas on the site that may be suitable for peatland restoration. This work will aim to improve the quality of peatland habitats on site, including reducing areas of exposed peat which release carbon if left untreated.

Bracken Control for Grassland/Native Scrub Creation
Targeted bracken control is an important measure to protect more sensitive habitats. We are proposing to remove or control the bracken in order to allow local acid grasslands and species rich scrub regenerate.

The control of bracken will improve the floral diversity of the site and increase wildflower cover for insects and pollinators.

Carbon Offset
If consented, the Blair Hill Wind Farm will go beyond supplying clean, low-cost electricity to thousands of households. It could also save an estimated 8.5 million tonnes of CO2e over the project lifespan compared to equivalent generation from fossil fuels.

The EIA Report will evaluate the effects of the proposed Blair Hill Wind Farm on climate change and carbon balance and will be accompanied by a carbon balance assessment which employs the Scottish Government's Carbon Calculator Tools, which is currently the best method to date to undertake this kind of assessment and is endorsed by SEPA and the Scottish Government.

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BLAIR HILL WIND FARM
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Tourism and Socio-economics

A socio-economic, tourism and recreation impact assessment of Blair Hill Wind Farm will be submitted as part of the planning application.

Tourism

All research to date indicates that onshore wind development has had no adverse impact on the tourism industry in Scotland. However, an assessment will be included within the application with specific regard to whether the Blair Hill project will have any effect on tourism behaviour and the tourism economy.

The assessment will consider the potential effects that the development could have on tourism following a focused approach on effects related to the UNESCO Biosphere and key tourist attractions and recreation assets.

The BIGGAR Economics report: Wind Farms and Tourism Trends in Scotland (2021), found that while the capacity of wind farms had more than quadrupled over the study period, employment in tourism related sectors had increased by more than 20%. It found no relationship between tourism employment and wind farm development, at the level of the Scottish economy, across local authorities nor in the locality of wind farm sites.

Supporting Local Businesses

Some of the most direct and meaningful benefits that can be delivered from a project like this are jobs and employment for local businesses and contractors, in addition to the use of local services and amenities, all of which can generate a significant amount of inward investment within the area.

RES is committed to ensuring that, wherever reasonably practical, local contractors are used in all aspects of wind farm development. In order to maximise the opportunities from the Blair Hill Wind Farm proposal we are looking to build our knowledge of the local skills and capabilities within the area.

The Blair Hill Wind Farm proposal is predicted to deliver approximately £4.1 million of inward investment to the area in the form of jobs, employment, and use of local services during the development, construction and first year of operation.

If you're a local business, or know one, interested in getting involved in onshore wind, please speak to a member of the project team.

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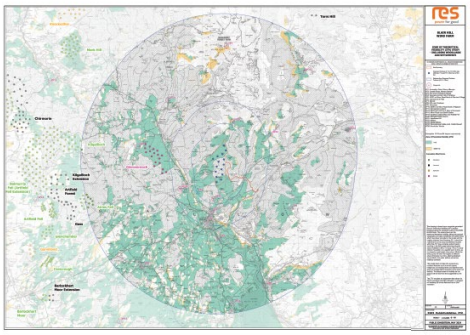
BLAIR HILL WIND FARM
PROPOSAL - UPDATED DESIGN

Landscape and Visual Impact

To help identify which landscape and visual resources may be affected by the proposed wind farm, a computer-modelled zone of theoretical visibility (ZTV) plan has been produced, as shown below.

This illustrates the maximum theoretical area of visibility of the proposed wind farm based on topography.



A series of photomontages are available on view at today's consultation, providing projected viewpoints from 7 different representative locations for the updated design of 15 turbines.

In addition, we have created a 3D model video which is on display here today which shows what the wind farm could look like from a number of extra viewpoints, in addition to those to be included in the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment.

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BLAIR HILL WIND FARM
PROPOSAL - UPDATED DESIGN

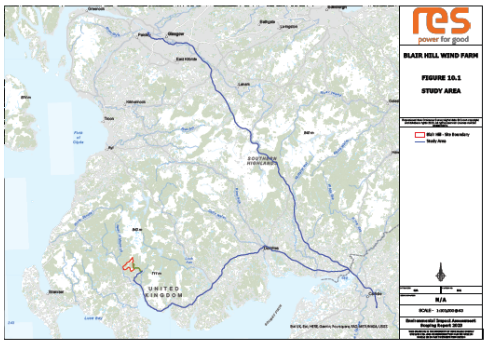
Traffic and Transport

The delivery route, as shown on the plan below, for turbine components is expected to be via the M74 to Carlisle where they will take the A75 before taking the A712 to the site access. We are proposing the construction of a new watercourse crossing near the existing bridge at Auchenleck as it is unsuitable for abnormal loads. Our aim is for this to be a temporary feature. This route avoids Newton Stewart.

A transport assessment will consider the impacts of increased traffic volumes expected on local roads during construction and how to minimise this impact. Likely measures include a 'Wear and Tear' Agreement with D&G Council to ensure the roads are returned to the same condition they were in before construction, and the production of a Construction Traffic Management Plan to be agreed by D&G Council.

All road works and measures required to ensure the safe and efficient access for the turbine deliveries will be published in the EIA Report.

Wherever reasonably practicable we will use materials available on site and source construction materials locally in order to help reduce traffic movements. The A712 has been assessed as suitable to transport abnormal loads to the site, with some minor modifications required such as the temporary removal of signage or fencing in certain locations.



BLAIR HILL WIND FARM
PROPOSAL - UPDATED DESIGN

A Power for Good - Community benefits

Community Benefit

The Blair Hill Wind Farm, if consented, will deliver a tailored community benefits package, worth £5,000 per MW (or equivalent) of installed capacity per annum, that is aligned with the priorities of the local community.

We thank members of the local community and community groups who have provided feedback and ideas for local benefits and priority projects that you would like to see supported or delivered in the community from the wind farm, should it receive consent.

These ideas include:

- Support for new sports kit and qualified coaches to support extra curriculum clubs at local schools
- Support for community facilities
- Electricity discounts

We are asking people today to consider the ideas above and their importance to them, as well as any other ideas and suggestions to inform the community benefit package. Please see our comment form for more information.

Local Electricity Discount Scheme

Description automatically generatedOur unique Local Electricity Discount Scheme (LEDS) seeks to deliver direct and tangible benefits to people living and working closest to participating wind farms.

LEDS offers an annual discount to the electricity bills of those properties closest to a participating RES wind farm. If this is something that you are interested in as a potential part of a tailored community benefits package at Blair Hill, please note this in your written feedback to RES.

Shared Ownership

RES is interested to understand whether there is any appetite from the community in exploring the potential for shared ownership in the wind farm. If this is something that interests you, please put this in your comments form.

Local Energy Scotlad is the independent body that manages the Scottish Government's Community and Renewable Energy Scheme (CARES). To find out more about the scheme visit: https://localenergy.scot/hub/shared-ownership/.

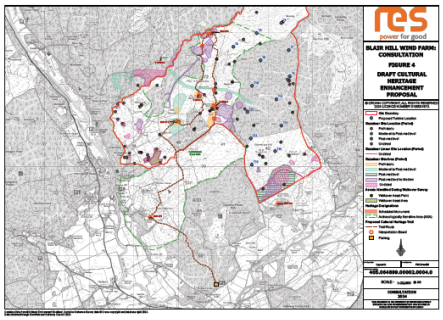
BLAIR HILL WIND FARM
PROPOSAL - UPDATED DESIGN

A Power for Good - Cultural Heritage & Recreation Enhancement

Within, or directly adjacent to, the site there are six Scheduled Monuments: Dalvaird Cairn, Drumforn Cairn and Stone Circle, Nappar's Cottage Cairn (SM5676), The Thieves, Standing Stone (SM1044), Cordocan Cairn (SM10385) and Garlies Castle (SM7916). The site also contains a number of non-designated heritage assets, ranging from prehistoric to post-medieval in date. The site has been in use for thousands of years, with the prehistoric assets indicating a use of the landscape for funerary and ritualistic practices and the post-medieval assets being agricultural in nature.

Heritage Trails

The land within the site boasts a rich archaeological background, however due to the location and condition of the site at present it is not accessible for the large majority of the public. As well as protecting the heritage within and surrounding the development, RES are exploring enhancement proposals to make this heritage more accessible for everyone, including those who can't physically access the site. We are proposing a network of new and upgraded footpaths that will form a signposted heritage trail throughout the site.



Note: this is an initial plan of what the proposals may look like and it will be refined ahead of a planning submission.

Digital models of certain assets could be created to enable viewing of the assets by people who may not be physically able to come to site. The assets could be recorded by local community archaeology groups or students, in order to provide training in the recording of heritage assets.

Once operational, the wind farm tracks will be opened up to increase access to the countryside. We are also exploring other opportunities to promote recreational access to the site for other users, such as cyclists. We would welcome your feedback on this.

Parts of the site are used for farming operations, and it is crucial that our plans do not impact current land users, and so responsible access will be promoted throughout the site.

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BLAIR HILL WIND FARM
PROPOSAL - UPDATED DESIGN

Next Steps

Timeline

We currently expect to submit the Section 36 application in Summer 2024. Once the Section 36 planning application has been submitted, the determining authority will advertise the planning submission and hold a statutory consultation period whereupon members of the public, as well as statutory consultees, can submit their formal comments on the proposal. These representations will then be assessed against the proposal and a planning decision made by the determining authority in due course.

We intend to hold a number of drop-in information events once the application has been submitted. The drop-in sessions will enable local residents and interested parties to find out more about the planning application, view key documents and ask any questions they may have.

If you would like to be kept up to date with the proposal and informed about the next steps, please fill in a comment form with your details or speak to one of the project team.

Further information

If you have any questions, or would require further information about the proposals, please contact us at:

https://blairhill-windfarm.co.uk

Blair Hill Wind Farm Team, RES, Third Floor - STV, Pacific Quay, Glasgow, G51 1PQ

blairhill.windfarm@res-group.com.

www.blairhill-windfarm.co.uk

BLAIR HILL WIND FARM
PROPOSAL - UPDATED DESIGN

Keeping the community informed

Consultation

Available here today is a Report on Feedback which summarises the feedback from our first exhibitions and how we've taken on board this constructive feedback from the local community to help shape our designs and proposals.

As part of this exhibition and consultation period we are providing the opportunity for you to give feedback on the updated design. Please provide feedback by Friday 7th June 2024.

All consultation feedback submitted to RES will be reviewed by the project team over the coming weeks as we continue to a final project design.

Please note that comments submitted to RES at this time are not representations to the determining authority (Scottish Government's Energy Consents Unit). There will be an opportunity to submit representations to the determining authority should an application be made.

PAC Report

A Pre-Application Consultation (PAC) Report will accompany the planning application submission. The report will summarise the communications activity that has been undertaken on the project and consultation feedback received.

The PAC will document the entire consultation process. It will showcase RES' commitment to engagement with the community and proactiveness in addressing concerns raised by stakeholders and the community throughout the consultation process.

Community Liaison Group (CLG)

At RES, we are committed to open communication and collaboration with the local community and stakeholders throughout the project's lifetime.

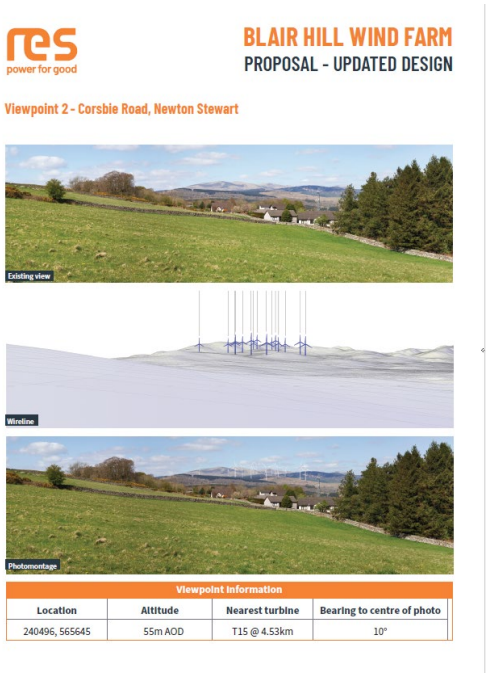
In January 2024, we established a Community Liaison Group (CLG) as a dedicated platform for open dialogue and information exchange as well as to create an effective channel of communication between RES, the local community and stakeholders. Membership of the CLG comprises of locally elected representatives, community groups, and other key stakeholders.

We have held three CLG meetings, to date, and the meetings have provided valuable forums for discussion, where various topics have been explored in depth, including the potential impacts on traffic & transportation as well as the grid connection for the project.

During our April meeting, we had the pleasure of hosting our Lead Heritage Consultant from SLR Consulting, who delivered a short presentation focussing on the key cultural heritage considerations at the site, and their influence on the project's development. We're looking forward to having more guest speakers join us in the future to share their insights and expertise.

Minutes and presentation slides from the CLG meetings are available at

7.5 May 2024 Exhibitions Viewpoints



BLAIR HILL WIND FARM
PROPOSAL - UPDATED DESIGN

Viewpoint 2 - Corsbie Road, Newton Stewart

Existing view

Wireline

Photomontage

Viewpoint Information			
Location	Altitude	Nearest turbine	Bearing to centre of photo
240496, 565645	55m AOD	T15 @ 4.53km	10°

BLAIR HILL WIND FARM
PROPOSAL - UPDATED DESIGN

Viewpoint 4 - Glenvernoch Fell / Hill of Ochiltree

Existing view

Wireline

Photomontage

Viewpoint Information			
Location	Altitude	Nearest turbine	Bearing to centre of photo
232707, 574101	180m AOD	T5 @ 8.65km	103°

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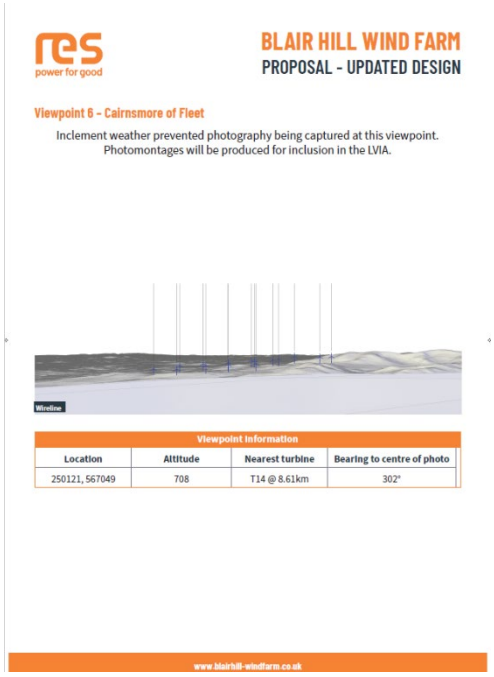

BLAIR HILL WIND FARM
PROPOSAL - UPDATED DESIGN

Viewpoint 6 - Cairnsmore of Fleet

Inclement weather prevented photography being captured at this viewpoint. Photomontages will be produced for inclusion in the LVIA.

Wireline

Viewpoint Information			
Location	Altitude	Nearest turbine	Bearing to centre of photo
250121, 567049	708	T14 @ 8.61km	302°

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PROPOSAL - UPDATED DESIGN

Viewpoint 7 - Merrick

Existing view

Wireline

Photomontage

Viewpoint Information			
Location	Altitude	Nearest turbine	Bearing to centre of photo
242760, 585539	842m AOD	T1 @ 11.33km	186°

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BLAIR HILL WIND FARM
PROPOSAL - UPDATED DESIGN

Viewpoint 8 - A75 near Creetown

Viewpoint Information			
Location	Altitude	Nearest turbine	Bearing to centre of photo
247182, 558175	5m AOD	T15 @ 13.08km	339°

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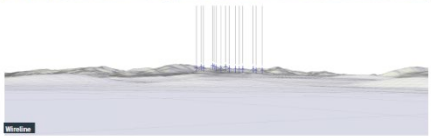
BLAIR HILL WIND FARM
PROPOSAL - UPDATED DESIGN

Viewpoint 9 - Kirkcowan



Viewpoint Information			
Location	Altitude	Nearest turbine	Bearing to centre of photo
233244, 560488	46m AOD	T15 @ 12.71km	36°

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BLAIR HILL WIND FARM
PROPOSAL - UPDATED DESIGN

Viewpoint 10 - NCR73 on Minor Road North of Wigtown

Viewpoint Information			
Location	Altitude	Nearest turbine	Bearing to centre of photo
243498, 556203	9m AOD	T15 @ 13.95km	353°

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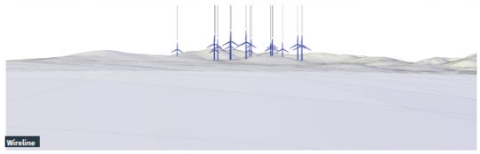
BLAIR HILL WIND FARM
PROPOSAL - UPDATED DESIGN

Viewpoint 20 - Monigaff Parish Church



Viewpoint Information			
Location	Altitude	Nearest turbine	Bearing to centre of photo
243498, 556203	9m AOD	T15 @ 13.95km	353°

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7.6 May 2024 Feedback Form

Blair Hill Farm Proposal
Comments Form

Your Feedback Counts

Since our first public exhibitions in October 2023 when we presented a preliminary design for the proposed Blair Hill Wind Farm, we have undertaken further extensive site survey work to build our understanding of the site. The findings from this, together with the comments received from the community and stakeholders, has resulted in an updated design.

Today's exhibition presents the updated layout design for the wind farm. Whilst the layout design is almost finalised, this event provides you with an opportunity to submit written feedback to RES, if you wish, on the updated design. Your feedback has the potential to influence and improve the overall quality of the planning application from a community perspective.

We would be grateful if you could take the time to fill out this comments form with your feedback. Please provide feedback by 7th June 2024. Comments will still be accepted after this date but may not be considered in relation to the design development.

Please note that comments submitted to RES at this time are not representations to the determining authority (Scottish Government Energy Consents Unit). There will be an opportunity to submit representations to the determining authority should an application be made.

1 Blair Hill Wind Farm public exhibition

1.1 How did you find out about our public exhibition?

- ☐ Newsletter through the door
- ☐ Advert in local newspaper
- ☐ Project website - www.blairhill-windfarm.co.uk
- ☐ Word of mouth
- ☐ Other (please specify)

☐

1.2 Before visiting the exhibition how would you describe your knowledge of the proposed Blair Hill Wind Farm?

- ☐ Knew a lot
- ☐ Knew quite a lot
- ☐ Knew a little
- ☐ Knew very little
- ☐ Knew nothing at all

1.3 What part of the public exhibition did you find most useful?

- ☐ Exhibition information boards
- ☐ Visualisations (photomontages)
- ☐ Ability to ask RES questions
- ☐ Other (please specify)

1.4 Having visited the exhibition, to what extent do you feel you have increased your understanding about the proposed Blair Hill Wind Farm?

- ☐ A lot
- ☐ Quite a lot
- ☐ A little
- ☐ Very little
- ☐ Nothing at all

1.5 Do you have any suggestions for ways in which we could have improved our exhibition?

2 Blair Hill Wind Farm Proposal

2.1 How do you feel in general about the Blair Hill Wind Farm proposal?

- ☐ I am supportive
- ☐ I am neutral
- ☐ I am opposed
- ☐ I don't like onshore wind farms in general

Further comments:

power for good

Blair Hill Farm Proposal

Comments Form

2.2 Please tick the subjects below which are of the most interest to you regarding the Blair Hill Wind Farm proposal?

Landscape & Visual	☐	Ecology & Ornithology	☐	Traffic & Transport	☐	Acoustics	☐
Cultural Heritage & Archaeology	☐	Hydrology & Peat	☐	Aviation	☐	Shadow Flicker	☐
Tourism & Socioeconomics	☐	Carbon Balance	☐	Grid	☐	Biodiversity enhancements	☐
Heritage & Recreation Enhancements	☐	Community Benefits	☐	Other	☐		

If you have ticked other above, please provide further comments below:

2.3 Please provide us with any further suggestions or comments regarding the proposed Blair Hill Wind Farm

power for good

Blair Hill Farm Proposal

Comments Form

3 Local benefits

RES is proposing to deliver a tailored community benefits package aligned with the priorities of the local community. This package would be worth £5,000 per megawatt (or equivalent) of installed capacity per annum and could include RES' unique Local Electricity Discount Scheme (LEDS), which offers an annual discount to the electricity bills of those properties closest to a participating wind farm. The community benefit package will be informed by feedback from the community so we are keen to understand what initiatives the community would like to see supported by the benefits package.

3.1 We have received a number of suggestions and welcome feedback on these suggestions regarding their importance to the community. Please tick one or more of the suggested initiatives below, if they are of interest to you.

- Support for new sports kit/qualified coaches to support extra curriculum clubs ☐
- Support for community facilities ☐
- Electricity discounts ☐
- Apprenticeship scheme ☐
- Home insulation grants ☐
- Investment in youth facilities ☐

3.2 Do you have any other such suggestions or comments regarding ideas, local priorities, or community projects that you would like to see benefitting from Blair Hill Wind Farm, should it go ahead?

3.3 Within which Community Council area do you reside?

3.4 We are proposing the implementation of a Biodiversity Enhancement Management Plan which will offer opportunities for interrelated environmental enhancements at the site with respect to peat, biodiversity and forestry. Do you have any comments or feedback with regard to biodiversity enhancement on the site?

3.5 Do you have any comments or suggestions in relation to the Cultural Heritage & Recreation Enhancement plans presented here today?

4 Your details

Please provide your name and contact details below in order to authenticate this comments form. Providing this information gives context to your feedback, facilitates a better understanding of community views and priorities, and enables us to respond to any questions raised. However, if you are not comfortable providing us with your full contact details **please include your postcode as a minimum.**

Your contact details will be treated by RES with the strictest of confidence, in line with the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) 2018. We may at times share your contact details, in confidence, with third parties who we employ to help process your comments or update you on the project and by providing your details below you consent to this. You may write to RES at any time to ask that your contact details be removed from our records and from any third parties we work with.

Name	
Email	
Address/Postcode	

If you would like to be kept up to date with the project, please tick this box ☐

Hard copy comments forms can be handed in at the exhibitions or posted back to RES at Blair Hill Wind Farm Project Team, c/o Cavendish Consulting, SPACES, 1 West Regent Street, G2 1RW or scanned and emailed to BlairhillWF@cavendishconsulting.com.

Thank you for taking the time to complete this comments form, your feedback is important to us.

8.1 December 23 / January 24 Machars Observer

This is a paid for Advertisement by RES

Blair Hill Wind Farm: Committed to enhancing our precious biodiversity

By RES

Did you know that the Blair Hill Wind Farm, if consented, goes beyond supplying eco-friendly, low-cost electricity to thousands of households? In addition to saving an estimated 11 million[1] tonnes of CO^2 over the project lifespan and injecting millions of pounds into the local economy, the project is also poised to deliver additional benefits in terms of biodiversity net gain.

At RES, we are committed to leaving the natural environment in the areas where we operate in a better state that we found them. We promote biodiversity by providing habitat opportunities and fostering ecological balance. We utilise the spaces around and between the wind turbines for conservation purposes, such as planting native vegetation, creating pollinator habitats, and restoring natural ecosystems.

RES' commitment to preserving and enhancing site biodiversity is demonstrated at the RES developed and managed Glenchamber Wind Farm, situated between New Luce, Kirkcowan, and Glenluce. At Glenchamber, a Habitat Management Plan has been implemented with a primary focus on enhancing biodiversity and managing habitats.

One key objective of the project involved the restoration of peat bogs, encompassing the revitalisation of degraded areas and surpassing targets set by the Scottish Government. This initiative reaps benefits such as carbon capture, flood prevention, and the creation of improved habitats for various species like Curlew and Snipe.

We've also planted native trees at Glenchamber to establish habitats for protected species, particularly otters and bats. We carefully selected specific areas for this native woodland creation to encourage the presence of these species and protect them from any disruption by wind farm infrastructure.

Ongoing monitoring will continue throughout the wind farm's operation to assess the effectiveness of the habitat management plans put in place.

Furthermore, encouraging findings from a post construction monitoring report highlighted good water quality, with a SEPA River Classification score of 'Excellent' at the majority of sampling locations. Notably, no long-term adverse impacts on macro-invertebrate populations have been observed due to wind farm construction and operation.

Our approach to biodiversity enhancement and habitat management at the Glenchamber Wind Farm demonstrates our commitment to environmental sustainability. By prioritising the restoration of peat bogs, the creation of native woodlands, and rigorous monitoring practices, we are not only fulfilling our responsibility as custodians of the land but also actively contributing to the preservation of our precious natural heritage for generations to come.

A Biodiversity Enhancement Management Plan is being developed for the Blair Hill Wind Farm and more information will be provided at our second round of public exhibitions in Spring 2024.

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1 RES uses DESNZ's "all non-renewable fuels" emissions statistic of 424 tonnes of carbon dioxide per GWh of electricity supplied in the Digest of UK Energy Statistics (July 2023) Table 5.14 ("Estimated carbon dioxide emissions from electricity supplied"). Carbon reduction is calculated by multiplying the total amount of electricity generated by the wind farm per year by the number of tonnes of carbon which fossil fuels would have produced to generate the same amount of electricity

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8.2 April / May / June 24 Machars Observer

CAVENDISH

Have questions?

For any further support, please contact:
Blairhill-wind farm@res-group.com