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Pre-Application Consultation Report

1.1 Executive Summary

- 1.1.1 In line with The Highland Council's (thereafter referred to a 'THC') pre-application guidance, alongside Planning Advice Note 3/2010 which includes the National Standards for Community Engagement, and Planning Aid for Scotland's SP=EED framework, Bluebell Wind Farm Limited, the joint venture between Infinergy Limited and Loch Luichart Estate, (hereafter referred to as 'the Applicant'), has undertaken two rounds of consultation for its proposed Lochluichart Wind Farm Extension II (hereafter referred as the 'Proposed Development'). The first to introduce the project and seek feedback and the second to present revised plans, where possible incorporating that initial feedback.
- 1.1.2 Consultation activity included:
- distribution of newsletters to local residents;
 - a dedicated project website www.lxxwindfarm.co.uk;
 - a Freephone telephone number and dedicated email address;
 - meetings with the Garve and District Community Council; and
 - Community Open Days held on 2nd and 3rd October 2017 and 3rd April 2018.
- 1.1.3 Local residents, councillors and other interested parties including THC's Ward Members were invited to attend the Community Open Days (CODs). These were publicised through the newsletter, sent out to the district's 178 households and businesses, and advertised in the local newspaper. At each of the CODs members of the development team were on hand to explain the proposals, discuss the wider issues of climate change and energy security as well as demonstrate landscape impact via photomontages and a 3D computer modelling programme. Those attending had the opportunity to complete feedback questionnaires. The local residents also had the opportunity to air their views via the newsletter feedback slips, which could be returned free of charge to Infinergy's Freepost address, as well as the project website, project email address and Freephone telephone number.
- 1.1.4 A total of 36 people attended the CODs (7 of whom attended both rounds) and at the CODs, 8 opinion forms were received either on the day of the CODs or later by Freepost. Eight initial newsletter feedback slips were returned and 6 second newsletter feedback slips were returned. In total we have received 22 official responses from the general public to the Proposed Development consultation.

1.1.5 Of those who responded to the full public consultation programme asking how they felt about the Proposed Development, 54% stated they were very supportive or supportive of the Proposed Development, with 41% either opposed or very opposed. The remaining 5% are, as yet, undecided.

1.1.6 The Applicant has written to all local residents who raised questions or concerns via the various feedback mechanisms. Consultation is on-going and will continue post submission

1.2 Introduction

1.2.1 This Report is part of the Environmental Impact Assessment Report which accompanies the planning application for the Proposed Development. The application has been submitted to THC as a Major Development by 'the Applicant': Bluebell Wind Farm Limited, the joint venture between Infinergy Limited and Loch Luichart Estate. The application is for the construction, operation and decommissioning of a single wind energy scheme, referred to in the EIA Report as the 'Proposed Development'

1.2.2 The Applicant embraces community consultation; it is at the heart of its approach to development. This report provides detailed information regarding the Proposed Development community consultation.

1.3 Framework for pre-application consultation, Lochluichart Wind Farm Extension II

1.3.1 The Applicant's public consultation plans for the Proposed Development were influenced by THC's Pre-Applications Consultation guidance, alongside PAN 3/2010 which includes the National Standards for Community Engagement and Planning Aid for Scotland's SP=EED framework (**Appendix 12**).

1.3.2 These outline how applicants of major infrastructure projects should undertake pre-application consultation with the community. The aim of this procedure is to make sure that communities are made aware of, and have an opportunity to comment on these types of development proposals before a formal application is made. This allows community views to be reflected early in the process and gives the Applicant the opportunity to incorporate them into the proposals where possible before making a formal application, as has been the case for the Proposed Development.

1.3.3 The guidance outlines the following relevant consultation and involvement activities:

- Community Council consultation;
- Adverts and press releases in local media; and
- Public Events (at least one).

- 1.3.4 The Proposed Development as a Major Development application required submission of a Proposal of Application Notice, submitted to THC on 12th February 2018 (**Appendix 1**).

1.4 The approach to community involvement

- 1.4.1 The Applicant's general approach to community involvement in projects includes the following:
- Consultation with community councils and interested community groups;
 - A dedicated project website;
 - Production and circulation of printed information material for local residents; and
 - Hosting of advertised community days prior to submission of the planning application, when the development is at draft design stage.

1.5 Consultation

Introduction

- 1.5.1 Consultation that has taken place so far in the pre-application stage has enabled the Applicant to take forward its commitment to establish a constructive relationship with residents and local representatives within the local community.
- 1.5.2 To consult on the proposals with the local community, the Applicant undertook the following activity, outlined further below:
- **Dedicated website;**
 - **Freephone provision;**
 - **Newsletter distribution;**
 - **Community Liaison; and**
 - **Community Open Days**

Website

- 1.5.3 The website www.lxxwindfarm.co.uk was set up to provide information for residents and their representatives about the proposal and was updated as the proposal developed. It also allowed for questions to be asked via info@lxxwindfarm.co.uk - the dedicated email facility for the project.

Freephone

- 1.5.4 In addition, there is a Freephone telephone number (0800 980 4299) for specific enquiries relating to the proposal, enabling residents to receive additional information and speak to members of the project team.

Newsletters

- 1.5.5 In both September 2017 and April 2018 the Applicant distributed 178 newsletters (**Appendix 2**) to local residents and businesses in the area surrounding the proposed development as well as the local Community Council.
- 1.5.6 The initial newsletters were posted via Royal Mail (1st class) using a specifically sourced address based database. The newsletters provided an invitation to the Community Open Days (CODs), overview/update of the project including site suitability, explanation of the plans, an introduction to the Applicant and a Freepost comment slip.

Community Council

- 1.5.7 The Applicant began a dialogue with the Garve and District Community Council in 2005/06 when the operational Lochluichart Wind Farm and Lochluichart Wind Farm Extension (the 'Operational Schemes') were first proposed. This relationship has continued through the subsequent consent and application for the first extension. The Community Council has been fundamental to the dialogue between the Applicant and the local community, actively assisting in the dissemination of information regarding the consultation process. In addition the Applicant has kept neighbouring Community Councils informed of the proposed scheme.

Community Open Days

- 1.5.8 Two sets of CODs were held on 2nd and 3rd October 2017 in Garve and Achnasheen and again on 3rd April 2018 in Garve. No one attended the first Community Open Day in Achnasheen, and following consultation with the Community Council it was felt that a second open day there was unnecessary. Copies of the CODs information panels can be found in **Appendix 3** and photographs taken at the CODs in **Appendix 4**.
- 1.5.9 As well as being able to discuss the development alongside the wider issues of climate change, energy security, government support etc, members of the development team were able to demonstrate landscape impact via photomontages and by utilising a 3D computer modelling programme able to generate views from any given viewpoint, allowing residents to see just how the development would look from their own homes or other places of interest, for example recreational areas.
- 1.5.10 Following discussion regarding the local bird population at the first round of open days, the expert ornithologist was included as part of the project team for the second round.

Publicity

- 1.5.11 Invitations to the CODs were sent as part of the newsletters, see **Appendix 2**.
- 1.5.12 In order to publicise the CODs to the wider community, press advertisements were placed in:
- The Ross-shire Journal – 29th September 2017; and
 - The Ross-shire Journal – 23rd and 30th March 2018
- 1.5.13 See **Appendix 5** for a copy of the advertisements.

Media

- 1.5.14 A press release was uploaded onto the website and issued to the local newspaper prior to each event. (**Appendix 6**).

Attendance

- 1.5.15 Based on the CODs register, 22 people attended the first open days (all in Garve), where they had the opportunity to inspect the draft proposal, discuss issues with the project team and complete a questionnaire (**Appendix 7**) and/or enquiry request form (**Appendix 8**) for return on the day or via Freepost.
- 1.5.16 14 people attended the second CODs in Garve where they had the chance to view and discuss the revised plans. 7 of those who attended the first round of CODs also attended the second round.

1.6 Consultation Feedback

Introduction

- 1.6.1 We have received both qualitative and quantitative feedback throughout the consultation period. A summary of the key findings is provided in the sections below.

Newsletter

- 1.6.2 A tear-off feedback slip was included as part of each newsletter (**Appendix 2**) and sent out in advance of both sets of CODs (Freepost details were supplied). Of the newsletters delivered directly on each occasion, 8 were returned following the first mailing (approx. 4.5%) and 6 returned following the second mailing (approx. 3.4%). One household responded to both rounds of consultation.

- 1.6.3 The feedback slip provided the opportunity for specific questions or comments to be directed to the Applicant, a selection of which is listed below:

In Support

"Get cracking!"

"More 'Power' to your elbow!"

Objection

"We have great hydro power here but you must destroy our landscape, all for money, nothing to do with 'Green' energy."

"The area has enough wind farms and roads criss crossing our countryside already."

- 1.6.4 The completed feedback slips provided the following results on whether or not respondents supported the Proposed Development: there were 14 responses in total, 9 of which were either opposed or very opposed, one undecided and 5 very supportive.

- 1.6.5 Copies of the returned newsletter feedback slips can be found in **Appendix 9**. All personal details have been removed in accordance with legislation.

Community Open Days (CODs)

- 1.6.6 CODs opinion forms were completed by 8 attendees, many of whom live within 5km of the project.

- 1.6.7 The majority of opinion forms were completed at the events, but a small number of visitors sent in their questionnaire to the freepost address *Freepost Infinergy Ltd* after the events. These questionnaires are taken into account in the overall results of the public consultation exercise. Copies of all returned CODs questionnaires can be found in **Appendix 10**.

- 1.6.8 As can be seen in Figure 1, the majority of people who returned opinion forms at the CODs were supportive. Those who were undecided were in favour of renewable energy in general:

Very supportive	6
Supportive	1
Undecided	1
Opposed	0
Very opposed	0
No comment	0
Total	8

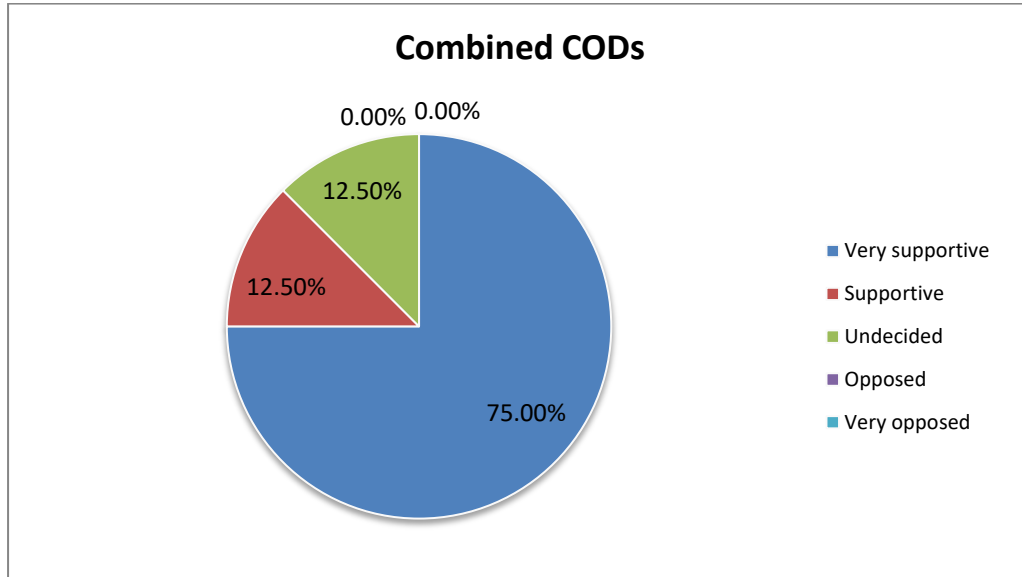


Figure 1: Combined CODs responses

Issues

- 1.6.9 The feedback questionnaires asked respondents if they had any specific issues or concerns about the proposal and a list of possible issues was provided.
- 1.6.10 The first round of CODs provided feedback in relation to a number of issues including visual impact and impact on the ecology of the area, particularly in relation to a recent severe flood event which had occurred locally.

Community Open Day questionnaires

- 1.6.11 In question 5a respondents were asked to indicate which of the following elements of the proposal they were interested in and would like to be kept updated about (note: figures based on total responses rather than individual respondees):

How the Wind Farm might look	2
Local wildlife	2
Potential noise	2
Tourism	0
Electricity output	0
Site traffic during construction	0
CO ₂ savings	0
Local archaeology	0
Potential economic benefits	4
Other (grid connection)	0
Total	10

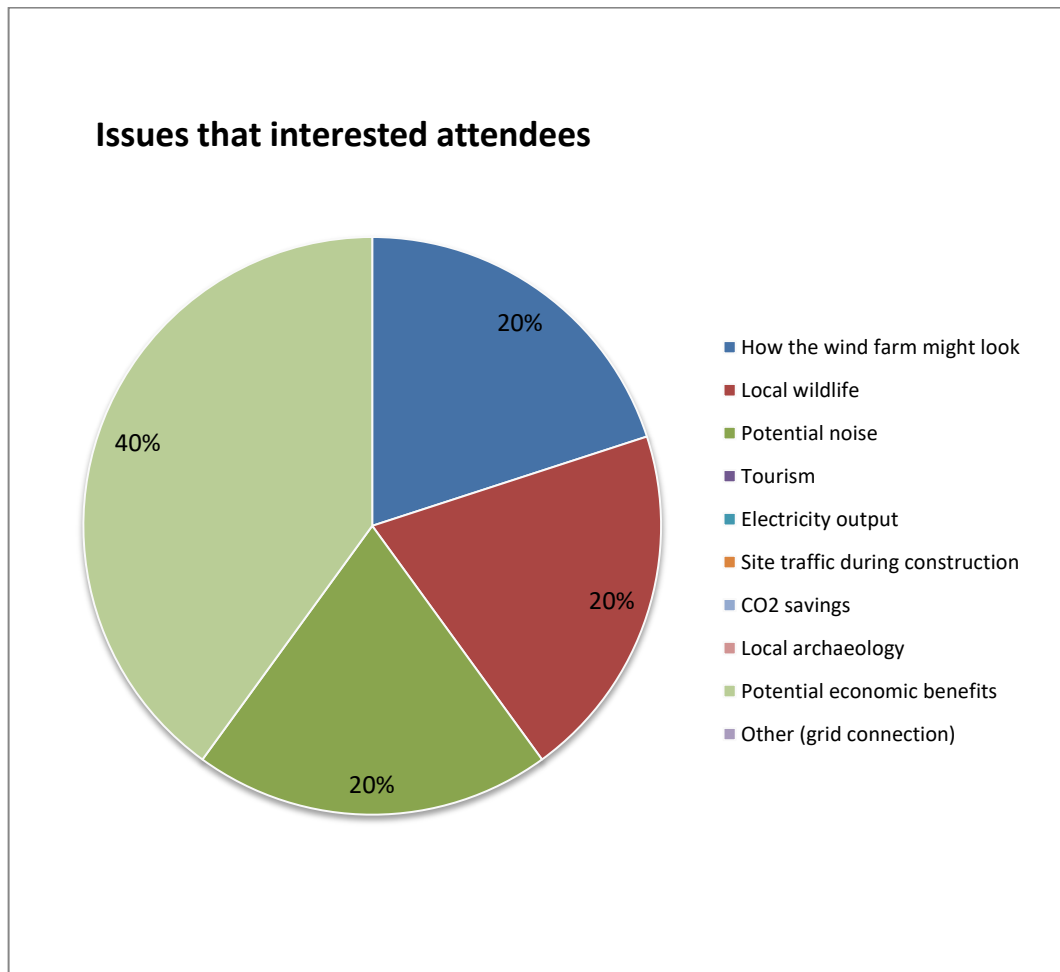


Figure 2: Issues of interest

Summary of Feedback

1.6.12 Taking into account all consultation methods, overall feedback for the Proposed Development to date, shown in Figure 3, is as follows:

Lochluichart Wind Farm Extension II Overall Results

	Newsletter	CODs	Total	%
Very Supportive	5	6	11	50
Supportive	0	1	1	4.5
Undecided	0	1	1	4.5
Opposed	1	0	1	4.5
Very Opposed	8	0	8	36.5
No Comment	0	0	0	0
Total	14	8	22	100%

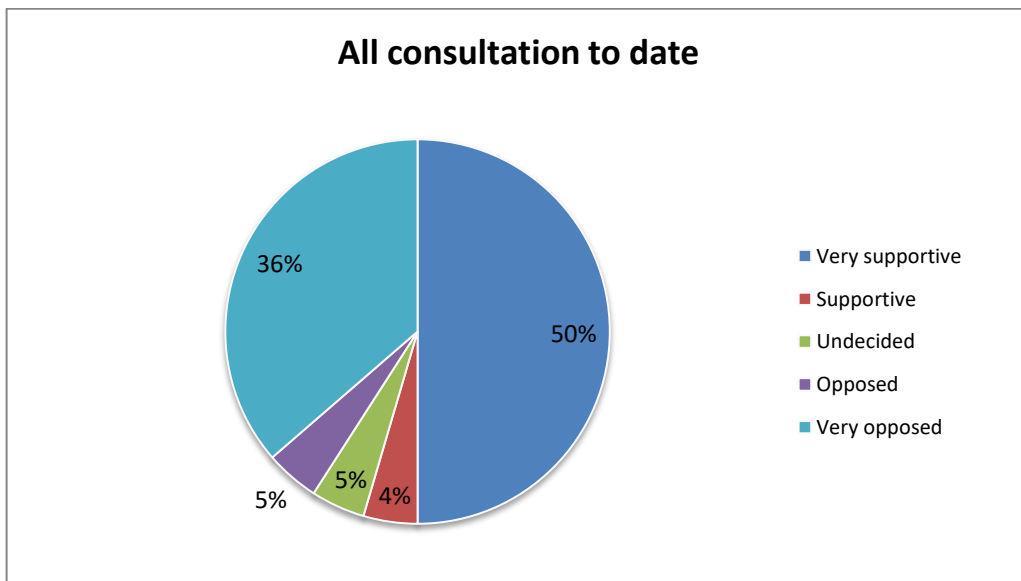


Figure 3: All public consultation

1.7 Community Benefits

Community benefit

- 1.7.1 The Applicant wants to help the communities closest to its renewable energy projects benefit from it in as many ways as possible. The Applicant has committed to the industry standard community benefit amount of £5,000 per MW of installed capacity. This amount is set out in the Scottish Government's 'Good Practice Principles for Community Benefits from Onshore Renewable Energy Developments'.

Community Fund

- 1.7.2 The Operational Schemes gave rise to the Lochluichart Development Trust and has subsequently seen the development of a Community Development Company. The mechanism for distribution of community benefit funds is well established in this area.
- 1.7.3 Via the CODs opinion forms and website, local residents have been encouraged to give suggestions both to the Applicant and to their own Community bodies as to what they would like to see such funds used for. Suggestions so far have included funding for energy efficiency measures such as double glazing in local homes.

1.8 Response to Consultation Feedback

- 1.8.1 Further to the consultation process outlined in this statement, a number of activities have or are being undertaken in order to respond to feedback received. These are detailed as follows:

Letters

- 1.8.2 Following the initial CODs, everyone who completed a feedback form received a follow up letter (**Appendix 11**) from the Applicant, thanking them for their attendance and confirming the Applicant's commitment to further consultation throughout the planning process.
- 1.8.3 Further individual letters were sent to those who raised issues or questions via the CODs or online feedback forms or newsletter comment cards and this will continue throughout the planning process.

Email

- 1.8.4 Everyone who submits a question or query by email direct will be responded to electronically.

1.9 Future Consultation

Next Steps – Pre and Post Submission

- 1.9.1 The Applicant is committed to the continued involvement of and consultation with the local community and other stakeholders throughout the planning process.
- 1.9.2 While the pre-application consultation has been completed, the Applicant is committed to further consultation during the planning determination period, ensuring that local residents and stakeholders continue to be involved in the process and be kept informed of the proposal's progress. These updates will be undertaken at both the Community Councils and at other local community group meetings as requested.

Stakeholder/Interest group briefings

- 1.9.3 Members of the local Development Trust attended the CODs.
- 1.9.4 The Applicant will continue to update the local interest groups about the proposed development's journey through the planning process and will keep all channels for feedback and questions open.

Media relations

- 1.9.5 Media relations activity will be ongoing. Once the application has been submitted, a news release detailing the submitted proposal will be issued to the media. The Applicant will respond to media enquiries and requests for information throughout the determination time period.

Ongoing response to queries

- 1.9.6 The Applicant will continue to respond to queries that are received via the various consultation channels i.e. Freephone telephone number, freepost address, website/email and newsletter.