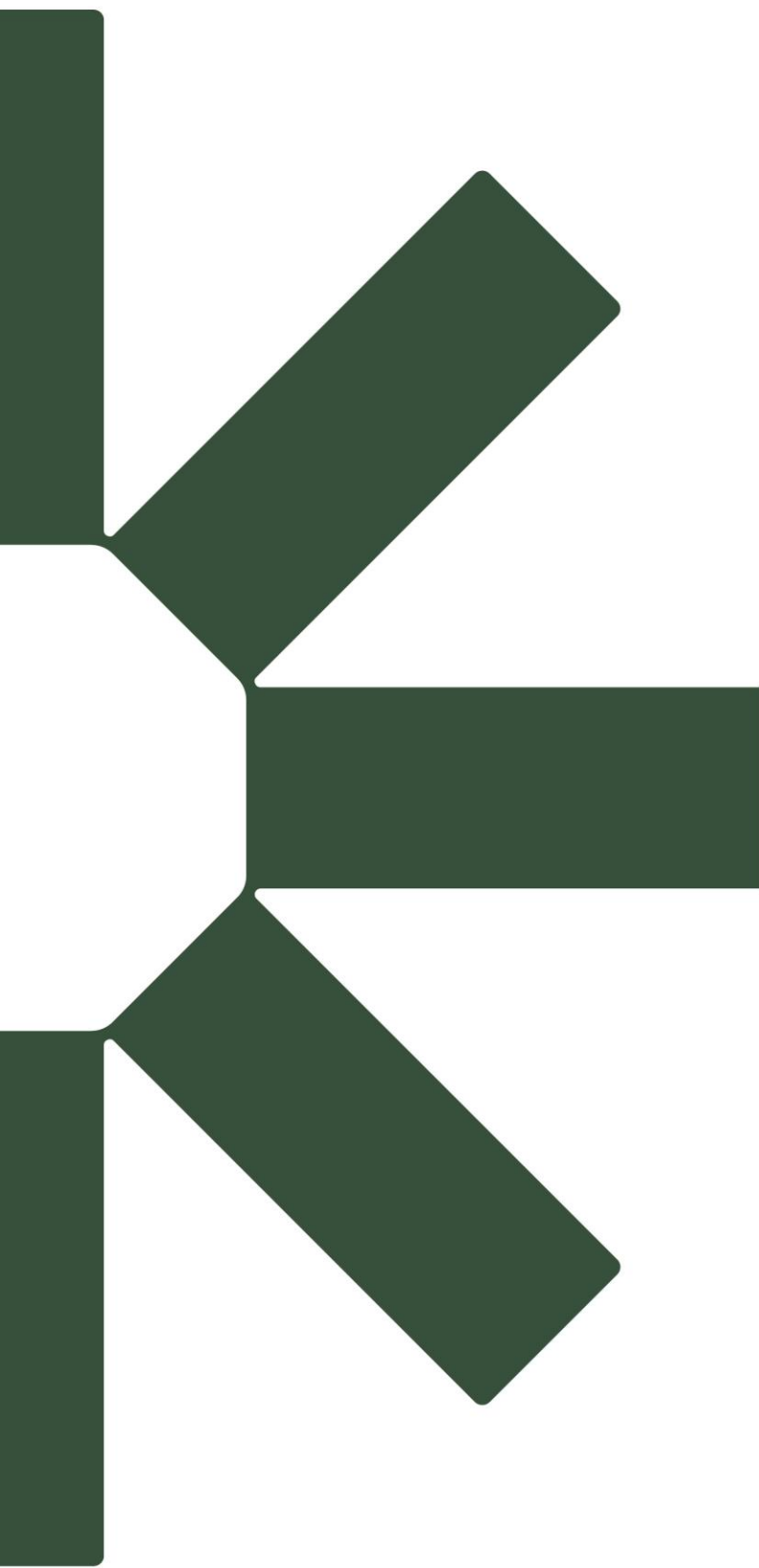




## **Appendix 6.1 Response to The Highland Council Community Wealth Building Strategy**

### **Lochluichart Wind Farm S42**

#### **Supporting Environmental Information Report**

**Bluebell Wind Limited**

SLR Project No.: 405.065579.00001

October 2025

## **Lochluichart Extension II Wind Farm**

**21/02985/FUL**

### **Developer Response to the Highland Council document ‘Developing a Community Wealth Building Strategy’**

#### **Introduction**

Boralex is the applicant of Lochluichart Extension II Wind Farm and a long-term renewables’ asset operator firmly committed to the Highlands of Scotland. As such, it welcomes and supports the aspirations outlined by The Highland Council in its *Community Wealth Building Strategy*.

Boralex recognises that its developments, including the Lochluichart Extension II proposal, are not only about generating renewable energy, but also about creating long-term benefits for the local economy and surrounding communities. By aligning key tenants of the five pillars of Community Wealth Building into its operation and development strategy, it can help to ensure that its activities contribute to the retention of wealth within the Highlands. This includes offering fair employment opportunities, fostering local supply chains, and working with communities to maximise opportunities brought by renewable energy assets. Above all, it aims to ensure that both environmental and economic benefits flow into the region, supporting local businesses and strengthening the resilience of the communities in which it operates.

Delivery of the Wealth Building Strategy will require flexibility, adaption, and a collaborative approach between Council, local organisations and businesses operating within the Highlands. Boralex welcomes the opportunity to discuss and develop its approach to this wealth building strategy as its portfolio develops within the Highlands.

#### **Objective 1: Spending**

- The Lochluichart Extension II project is expected to deliver benefits to the local area and the wider Highlands region, both directly and indirectly. Direct benefits will arise through employment opportunities during construction, operation, and decommissioning. Indirect benefits will be generated through supply chain activity, with local and regional businesses providing goods and services to support the project across its lifecycle.
- The construction of the Proposed Development is considered to have short term, beneficial, direct and indirect effects to the area, through the increase of employment. During construction, the development would support an average of 30 staff on-site per day.
- During its operational period, the project is expected to contribute approximately £588,000 to the local area. This figure represents around 42% of the project’s operational

expenditure and includes business rates, land agreements with the local landowner, and a share of ongoing maintenance costs.

- A community benefit package of £5,000 per MW per annum (index linked) as noted in the EIA Report 2021, will be provided to the Lochluichart Community Trust (LCT). This will bring a community benefit contribution of £4.8 m over the lifetime of the Proposed Development, adding over £120,000 per annum to the existing local community benefit funding pot.

## **Objective 2: Fair Employment**

- The Lochluichart Extension II project has already supported a number of well-paid jobs during its development phase and will go on to create a number of well-paid jobs across the remaining development, construction, and operational phases. A significant portion of these roles will be sourced from and based within the local and regional Highland Council area. With regard to construction, we believe that engaging local contractors not only brings valuable local knowledge but presents us with the opportunity to foster strong relationships with the community, ensuring that the direct benefits of the project are felt by local residents.
- In alignment with Highland Council policy, Boralex is committed to paying a minimum of the 'living wage' and will guarantee this through the procurement of services.
- The Highlands is an important region for Boralex's renewable energy goals. The continued development of the Lochluichart Extension II project alongside the Sallachy project in Sutherland and the operational Limekiln Wind Farm on the north coast, strengthens Boralex's long-term commitment to creating full-time, flexible, and well-paid employment in the Highlands.
- Boralex believes there is a current opportunity to engage with the Council and other stakeholders to discuss the long-term employment and skill requirements to support renewable energy projects. This would help to ensure training initiatives supported or provided by the Council are aligned with the skills and knowledge needed to retain local talent for jobs in the renewable energy sectors. We welcome a collaborative approach with the Council and other stakeholders on this matter.
- As part of a commitment to developing the long-term skills required for renewable energy development within the Highlands, Boralex is seeking to support scholarships at the University of the Highlands and Islands in Inverness in any Masters Degrees that have connections to the renewables industry (for example Sustainable Energy Solutions, Environment or Renewable Energy).
- To help foster an interest in renewable energy careers, Boralex will offer to work with the local school in Dingwall to give a presentation of the renewable energy industry and/or a tour of the Lochluichart Wind Farm (or a Boralex site within the region) once a year during the operational period. Please note that this is conditional on agreement with the local school in Dingwall and the owners of Lochluichart Wind Farm.
- The project will host a 'Meet the Developer' event to promote local and regional employment opportunities.

### **Objective 3: Land and Property**

- Boralex is deeply committed to projects that achieve positive environmental outcomes beyond the generation of renewable energy. For example, the Lochluichart Extension II Habitat Management Plan includes environmental enhancements to improve the biodiversity and structure of forest habitats and increase the quality of bog habitats and available resources for wild fauna. These proposals not only meet the policy requirements of NPF4 but also demonstrate Boralex's long-term commitment to the sustainable stewardship of the land and environment we operate within. The planned environmental improvements will enhance biodiversity in the local area, benefiting future generations.

### **Objective 4: Financial Power**

- The direct employment of local residents and those from the wider Highland area, alongside the significant community benefit contribution committed by the Lochluichart Extension II project, will ensure that the wealth generated by the project plays a vital role in supporting the well-being of local communities and businesses. Engaging a local contractor for the enabling works for example, ensures that local resources and expertise are directly contributing to the project's success.
- The long-term nature of community benefits guarantees that the socioeconomic impact of the proposal will extend well beyond the substantial employment and economic boost during the wind farm's construction phase.
- Boralex welcomes the opportunity to engage with the Highland Employment Partnership to explore how the Lochluichart Extension II project, through its employment and potential training opportunities, could contribute to alleviating poverty in the local area and throughout the wider Highlands.

### **Objective 5: Inclusive Ownership**

- Boralex hopes that the local financial contributions from the Lochluichart Extension II project, coupled with its shorter and longer-term employment opportunities, will lead to the development of stronger inclusive local economic organisations that are able to keep more locally generated wealth within the community.

### **Summary**

It is clearly demonstrated that the Proposed Development would provide economic benefits to the local area which can support wide employment opportunities, and enhance local supply chains, whilst delivering essential renewable energy generation and contributing to energy security at a local and national level. A series of social benefits have also been clearly set out which are important material considerations to the determination of the application.

As regards the Highland Council's' Community Wealth Building Strategy (June 2024), the Applicant supports the principle of communities benefiting from large scale renewables



development in their local areas and has followed Scottish Government's best practice guidance with a commitment to provide a £5000 per MW\* community benefit fund with delivery of the Lochluichart Extension II Wind Farm. Community benefit is not a material planning consideration, rather it is a goodwill contribution voluntarily made by the developer for use to benefit communities hosting the development. The aim of community benefit is that it will have a positive, long-term impact on community, local resources and the local environment.

It is considered that the summary provided above provides a clear overview of the commitment to the local area and opportunities to enhance socio-economic wealth and benefits which can arise from the Lochluichart Extension II Wind Farm.

\* Index linked.