

# Carn Fearna Wind Farm - Consultation Report

## 14 November - 5 December 2023



### 1. INTRODUCTION

**1.1** This report outlines the process and key findings of the Carn Fearna Wind Farm public consultation which took place between 14 November and 5 December 2023.

**1.2** Carn Fearna Wind Farm is a new wind farm, proposed for an area of land 1.5km east of Garve and 7km north-west of Strathpeffer within the Highlands. It is proposed that the wind farm will consist of up to 11 turbines with a maximum height of 200m and potential generation capacity of 72.6MW.

**1.3** A programme of public engagement began following the submission of the project's Scoping Request to the Scottish Government Energy Consents Unit in June 2023.

### 2. CONSULTATION ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITY

**2.1** Key stakeholders and community figures were identified prior to the commencement of the engagement programme. This was a desk-based exercise by a local consultant, which was intended to identify key political figures, the host and surrounding community councils, local organisations and businesses with an interest in the project. Key local issues were also identified as part of this exercise.

**2.2** The programme of communication and consultation began with the submission of a Scoping Request to the Scottish Government Energy Consents Unit in June 2023 and is currently ongoing. Statkraft has worked with local communications consultants to establish and continue extensive engagement with key stakeholders; community councils, political representatives, and residents in the surrounding area ahead of the first round of public exhibitions in November 2023.

**2.3** An initial round of introduction to the community councils, MP and MSP and local ward councillors was made by email in July 2023. Monthly community council meetings were attended by key Statkraft development team members, including a bespoke meeting, specifically to present Carn Fearna's plans to the Garve & District Community Council and attendees from the local area.

**2.4** The details for the first round of public exhibitions were promoted via:

- The project website
- A mailer distributed to over 1700 properties within a 10km radius of the proposed site
- Advertisements in the Ross-shire Journal and Press & Journal
- Posters sent to a variety of public locations in the area
- Emails to host and neighbouring community councils, elected representatives and community groups

### 3. WEBSITE

**3.1** A website was created for the project at [www.Carn-Fearna.co.uk](http://www.Carn-Fearna.co.uk) in June 2023.

**3.2.** The website replicates the information on display at the public exhibitions. Information includes key details of the proposed Carn Fearna site as well as information on the developers and development team. The extensive information on the website includes a project timeline,

information about the site location, community benefit fund information, feedback facilities and a link to project documents, such as material showcased during public engagement events. Importantly, it provides visitors with the opportunity to submit questions and feedback regarding the project.

**3.3** A virtual exhibition was hosted via on the Carn Fearna project website between 14 November - 5 December 2023 to allow those unable to attend the physical events to participate in the consultation. All the materials available at the in-person exhibitions were available to view. The online feedback box remained open after this period to allow for on-going feedback to be submitted. The website also provided functionality to directly contact the Carn Fearna development team to ask questions and leave comments.

**3.4** During the exhibition, the dedicated virtual exhibition page received 34 unique visitors.

**3.5** The team responded to feedback to give more prominence to contact details for the project team on the website. Additionally, action was taken to rectify an IT security issue which resulted in a small amount of electronic correspondence being sent to a containment area for hazardous emails.

## 4. IN-PERSON PUBLIC EXHIBITIONS

**4.1** The first round of exhibitions encompassed four separate physical exhibitions over the week commencing 20 November.

DATE	LOCATION	TIME SLOTS
21 November 2023	Contin Hall	10:00 – 13:45
21 November 2023	Tarvie Café	16:00 – 19:00
22 November 2023	Strathpeffer Community Centre	12:30 – 19:00*
23 November 2023	Ross County FC, Hamilton Suite, Victoria Park, Dingwall	10:00 – 14:00

\* Originally advertised as closing at 5.30pm but extended after incorrect times were posted by a member of the public on a local Facebook group.

**4.2** The project team aimed to host exhibitions in the closest venue to Garve, given the proximity of Garve to the proposed wind farm site. Due to the reconstruction of Garve Village Hall, the Hall was unavailable for use by the exhibitions. Strathgarve Primary School was selected as an alternative venue with the cooperation of the school staff, however the failure of a roof at the school prevented the use of the school as a venue. Tarvie Cafe was selected as an alternative. Garve Village Hall is expected to be available for the second round of exhibitions.

**4.3** To ensure the correct expertise, knowledge and staffing were on hand at the exhibitions, Statkraft had a wide range of expert professionals in a team of 10 working at the public events to discuss the proposal in detail, hear local people’s thoughts and answer their questions. In attendance were:

- Statkraft’s development team
- Consultants and experts in visualisation, SLR
- A consultant landscape architect
- Communications consultants to support organisation and running of the event

**4.4** The exhibitions comprised of a set of pop-up banners, visual 3D flythroughs of various site viewpoints and large maps. There were also Ecology and Ornithology Reports available at the exhibitions.

**4.5** A welcome desk at the exhibition allowed the team to establish specific areas of interest so attendees could be introduced to the most relevant member of the exhibition team.

**4.6** In total, 59 people attended the in-person exhibitions across the four separate events. This included the attendance of several community councillors. The number of attendees is based on those who signed in at the welcome desk of the exhibition (which was optional).

Date	Location	Number
21 November 2023	Contin Hall	39
21 November 2023	Tarvie Café	5
22 November 2023	Strathpeffer Community Centre	14
23 November 2023	Ross County FC, Hamilton Suite, Victoria Park, Dingwall	6

**4.7** The event in Dingwall was intended to provide an opportunity for visitors to attend the exhibition during the work day, but received poorer attendance than expected. It is not intended to repeat this event in the second consultation.

**4.8** Attendees were invited to complete a Feedback Form and to take an information brochure upon exit. Where required, visitors to the exhibitions were offered further information to be sent to them follow-up meetings and in some cases, home visits.

**4.9** Several visitors provided verbal feedback requesting a future exhibition in Garve. Where asked about this, the project team highlighted the issues around a venue in Garve and committed to a future exhibition in the village.



**Figure 1** Visitors discussing Carn Fearna at Strathpeffer Community Centre



**Figure 2** 3D modelling of wind farm fly throughs at Contin Hall



**Figure 3** Visitors and Statkraft consultants at Tarvie Cafe



Figure 4 Visitors at Contin Hall



Figure 5 Statkraft flag outside Victoria Park in Dingwall - Ross County FC's stadium



Figure 6 Statkraft flag outside Contin Hall

## 5. EXHIBITION FEEDBACK

**5.1** Of the 1,700 freepost reply cards posted to homes and available at consultation events, only 105 reply cards were completed, either by post, completed in person at the exhibitions or completed online. Of those 105 individuals, 61% (63 respondents) agreed more renewable energy was required. Only 30% (32 respondents) agreed that this should take the form of onshore wind, with 19% (20 respondents) agreeing that the proposed site was a suitable location for a wind farm.

**5.2** Comments on the reply cards dealt with a range of issues. The three most commonly identified issues were:

- The visual impact of the development on the landscape
- The number of windfarms in Scotland
- Community benefit and community ownership issues.

**5.3** Comments recognised the potential benefits of the wind farm to the local area, including tree planting on the surrounding land, the community benefit fund and generation of green energy.

**5.4** A number of comments were also received regarding unrelated grid strengthening projects being developed by Scottish and Southern Network (SSEN) Transmission. We are unable to take this feedback into consideration for our proposals but note there are consultation activities in place where interested residents can contribute their feedback directly to the developer.

**5.5** In addition to the common topics identified above from reply cards, key themes of discussion with visitors to the exhibitions included:

- The transmission route for energy from Carn Fearna
- The environmental impact of the development
- The transport route for components
- Noise and visual impact on specific properties or settlements
- The changes to the planning policy framework which make the proposal feasible.

**5.6** Feedback from both the exhibition and reply cards has fed into revisions to the design of the proposal and has also informed the locations of additional or amended visuals and surveys.

**5.7** All feedback and comments submitted through the consultation period have been acknowledged and responded to. If a member of the public has not received a response from us and was expecting one, this may have been prevented due to a GDPR requirement, or email containment issue as outlined in Section 3 above. We encourage them to contact us by phone to ensure that we can provide them with a response.

## **6. NEXT STEPS**

**6.1** A second round of public exhibitions is planned to take place in late Spring 2024. Stakeholder engagement has been ongoing since the first round of community consultation events and will continue throughout the development period. This includes continuing to accept individual feedback responses, attending meetings with elected representatives and updating the community council on key project changes and updates.

**6.2** Respond to feedback requesting a future exhibition in Garve, by including the newly reopened Garve Village Hall on our events schedule.

**6.3** The project team will incorporate feedback from the exhibition and feedback cards into the design of project. The outcome of this will be presented at the second round of exhibitions ahead of submission of the project to the Scottish Government.

**6.4** The project team will continue to engage with the host and neighbouring Community Council, community stakeholders, elected representatives and local residents and update them on progress.

**6.5** The project will remain open for feedback, questions and comments via the website, 0800 number, mail and email.