

03 September 2024

Carn Fearna Wind Farm - Consultation Report

Second round of Public Exhibitions: 15th / 16th May 2024



1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 This report outlines the process and key findings of Statkraft's second round of Public Exhibitions for its Carn Fearna Wind Farm project. This engagement took place during the 15th and 16th May 2024, and followed on from the first round of Public Exhibitions that were delivered during November 2023.

1.2 Carn Fearna Wind Farm is a new wind farm, proposed for an area of land approximately 1.5km east of Garve and approximately 7km north-west of Strathpeffer within the Highlands. The project would consist of up to a maximum of nine turbines with a mixture of blade tip heights up to 180 metres or up to 200 metres. The number of turbines has been reduced by five, from a previous maximum of 14 turbines. This significant change in the number of turbines (a reduction of over 35%) follows engagement during the scoping process and receiving feedback during consultation with members of the community and key stakeholders, such as Garve & District Community Council and The Highland Council.

1.3 Our 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 We have attended Community Council meetings, updated political representatives and other stakeholders as we've continued our engagement for what is already a year in duration, building relationships and our understanding of local issues.

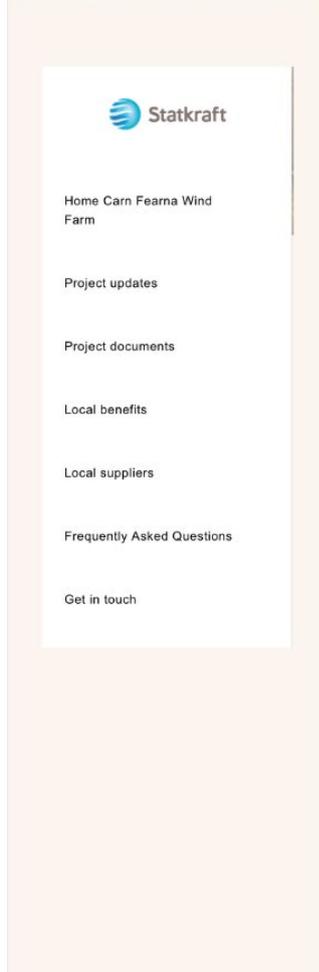
2.2 Statkraft has worked with local communications consultants to establish and continue extensive engagement and have now completed two rounds of Public and Online Exhibitions.

2.3 As well as attending Community Council meetings we have also visited residents, provided email, telephone and in-person updates, as we've sought to keep the community and those interested in the project updated.

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

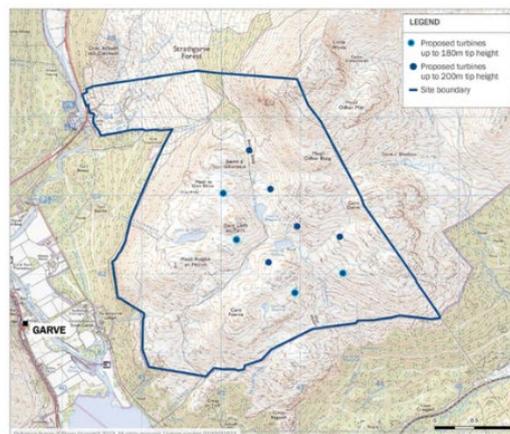
- The project website
- A mailer distributed to 1,777 properties within a 10km radius of the proposed site
- Advertisements in the Ross-shire Journal and Press & Journal
- Posters sent to a variety of public locations in the area
- Emails to host and neighbouring community councils, elected representatives and community groups

3. WEBSITE



Carn Fearna Wind Farm is a proposed wind farm to the east of Garve within The Highlands Council area. This website will provide information and updates on the project as it develops, as well as opportunities for you to ask questions and give your views

It is proposed that Carn Fearna Wind Farm would consist of a maximum of 9 turbines with a mixture of blade tip heights up to 180 meters or 200 meters. This was reduced from a maximum of 14 turbines following engagement during the scoping process and further reduced following feedback from our first round of exhibitions and engagement with stakeholders including Garve & District Community Council and The Highland Council.



3.1 Our project website www.Carn-Fearna.co.uk was created in June 2023. We have continued to keep it updated with news about the project and Statkraft. We also used it for an online exhibition for the second round of Public Exhibitions (repeating our actions for the November 2023 Public Exhibitions).

3.2. The website replicates the information that was on display at the Public Exhibitions (see example of home page above). Information continues to include 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 2nd-31st May 2024 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 ongoing feedback to be submitted. The website also provided functionality to directly contact the Carn Fearn development team to ask questions and leave comments.

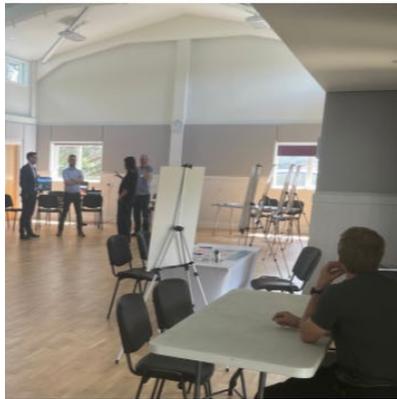
3.4 During the exhibition period, the dedicated virtual exhibition page received 150 unique visitors.

3.5 The team responded to feedback given by Garve & District CC to host an exhibition at the newly reopened Garve Public Hall and to extend the time of that event further into the evening than we have for our previous events, or by other developers.

4. IN-PERSON PUBLIC EXHIBITIONS

We invite you to join us at our next round of public exhibition to hear more about the latest proposals for Carn Fearn Wind Farm. Join us at our exhibitions in Contin, Garve or Strathpeffer to meet the team and find out more.

Contin Community Hall	10:30AM-2PM, 15 May
Garve Public Hall	3:30PM-8:30PM, 15 May
Strathpeffer Community Centre	3PM-6:30PM, 16 May



4.1 The second round of exhibitions encompassed three separate physical exhibitions over the week commencing 13th May 2024.

DATE	LOCATION	TIME SLOTS
15 th May 2024	Contin Community Hall	10:30am – 2pm
15 th May 2024	Garve Public Hall	3.30pm – 8.30pm*
16 th May 2024	Strathpeffer Community Centre	3pm – 6.30pm

* We delivered an especially extended public exhibition at Garve Public Hall in answer to a request received at a meeting with Garve & District Community Council.

4.2 The reopening of the refurbished Garve Public Hall allowed us to host a public exhibition in the heart of the community. It also enabled us to do a hand delivery of project information to a local resident who, for health issues, was unable to attend in person.

4.3 As with the first round of public exhibitions, Statkraft ensured it had the correct expertise, knowledge and staffing on hand at the May exhibitions. We had a wide range of expert professionals in a team of 11 –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;
- The core EIA management team, SLR;
- A consultant landscape architect; OPEN
- A consultant ecologist/ornithologist; Avian Ecology and
- Communications consultants to support organisation and running of the event

4.4 The exhibitions comprised of a set of banners on easels, visual 3D flythroughs of various site viewpoints and large maps.

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, 22 people attended the in-person exhibitions across the three separate events. This included the attendance of some 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
15 th May 2024	Contin Community Hall	8
15 th May 2024	Garve Public Hall	9
16 th May 2024	Strathpeffer Community Centre	5

4.7 At our November Public Exhibitions we held events in Tarvie and Dingwall. Tarvie was only as an alternative to Garve owing to the closure, at that time, of Garve Public Hall. With Dingwall, the venue was excellent, but the footfall was very low, so it was decided to concentrate resources on being closer to the project site.

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 in follow-up meetings and, if required, home visits.

5. EXHIBITION FEEDBACK

5.1 Of the 1,777 freepost reply cards posted to homes and available at consultation events, only a small number of replies were received with 74 reply cards were completed and returned, either by post, in person at the or online. These represent 4% of the potential responses.

5.2 Of those 74 individuals, 37 (50% of respondents) agreed more renewable energy was required. 27 respondents agreed that this should take the form of onshore wind (36% of respondents). Additionally, 21 respondents (28% of total respondents or just over 1% of the total potential responses) agreed that the proposed site was a suitable location for a wind farm. This represents an increase of 10% from the consultation undertaken in November 2023, despite overall support for renewable energy and support for onshore wind declining between the two consultations.

5.3 Comments were received on a wide range of issues, both relating specifically to the Carn Fearna and wider policy concerns. Relating directly to the wind farm, comment themes included:

- Support for the principle of renewable energy
- Concern about cumulative impact in relation to other nearby proposed developments and overhead pylons
- The benefits of shared ownership
- Impact on flora and fauna within the project site
- The visual impact of the wind farm on the surrounding area, including Ben Wyvis
- The benefits of a potential community benefit fund
- Potential areas which could benefit from the community benefit fund

5.4 Wider themes relating to the energy industry included:

- The levels of energy bills in the north of Scotland
- The lack of windfarms being built in the UK outside of Scotland
- The power of local representatives within the planning system
- The need for a holistic approach to energy planning
- Use of profits from energy developments

5.5 Over the lifetime of the project we have received a number of comments regarding the unrelated grid strengthening projects being developed by Scottish and Southern Network (SSEN) Transmission. Our position remains that we are unable to take such comments and feedback into consideration for our proposals but note there continue to be consultation activities in place where interested residents can contribute their feedback directly to the developer.

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

- Changes which we've made to the project, such as reducing the number of turbines and making the wind farm less visible
- 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

5.7 Feedback from both the exhibition and reply cards has previously fed into our significant project changes. We are now reviewing feedback received to see if there is anything further we might change about the project.

5.8 All feedback and comments submitted through the consultation period will be 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. We encourage anyone who is keen to get our updates to contact us by phone to ensure that we can provide them with a response.

6. KEY TAKEAWAYS

6.1 The proposed number of turbines has been reduced by over 35%, from 14 to 9.

6.2 Engagement and consultation has been valuable, with feedback and information from the community and stakeholders leading to significant changes in the design of the project.

6.3 Interest in the project appears to have declined with fewer numbers attending the Public Exhibitions in the second round of engagement.

6.4 The project team will continue to engage Garve & District Community Council; neighbouring community councils; community stakeholders; elected representatives; and local residents. It is through these efforts to date that we have arrived at the much-reduced wind farm proposal, with its improved design.

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

7. NEXT ACTIONS

7.1 We will circulate this report to Garve & District Community Council; neighbouring community councils; community stakeholders; relevant officials from The Highland Council elected representatives; and the local residents who have requested an update.

7.2 We will publish this report on our project website.

7.3 We will respond to reply cards where respondents have given permission for us to contact us and provided us with email or postal contact details.

7.3 We will inform Garve & District Community Council; neighbouring community councils; community stakeholders; elected representatives; and the local residents who have requested an update, if and when our formal planning application is submitted.