

Giant's Burn Wind Farm Public Consultation Feedback Report August 2024

About Giant's Burn Wind Farm

Giant's Burn Wind Farm is a proposal for up to 9 turbines, each up to a maximum of 200m to turbine tip height. The proposed wind farm is located approximately 2.1km to the north-west of Dunoon and 1.5km south-west of Sandbank. The table below highlights some key information about the proposal.

No. of Turbines	Max Blade Tip Heights	Expected Wind Installed	Estimated Generation (homes equivalent)	Community Fund (per year)	Battery Energy Storage System Installed Capacity	Operational Life
Up to 9	Up to 200m	64.8MW	71,000 Homes per year (1)	£324,000 per year (2)	20MW	Up to 50 Years

(1) Based on 64.8MW installed Wind Capacity, site wind speed data and average Scottish domestic consumption 3.078KWh pa (DESNZ January 2024)

(2) Community Benefit Fund based on 64.8MW x £5k per MW or installed Wind Capacity. If consented, value of fund determined by actual installed Wind Capacity.

A programme of community engagement and online consultation for the proposal began in February 2024 and is ongoing.

Initial Consultation Period: Introducing the project

Community engagement and feedback is very important to us as we develop and shape Giant's Burn Wind Farm. In February 2024, when the project was first introduced to the public domain with a request for a Scoping Opinion from the Scottish Government, we launched a dedicated project website. The website provides the opportunity for interested parties to view and, importantly, comment on the proposals.

At this time we also wrote to the host, neighbouring and several community councils* further afield and local political representatives to raise awareness of the proposal and offered an opportunity to meet to provide feedback on the consultation approach and the proposal. The Energy Consent Unit (ECU) also write to the Community Councils to advise of the Scoping Request and provide the opportunity for community councils to provide an official response. It is noted that on this occasion receiving, overlapping communications from Statkraft and the ECU may have caused some confusion for several community councils.

An offer to present to each community council was made, and members of the team presented to South Cowal Community Council on 8 May 2024, and we look forward to engaging with others in due course.

Main Consultation Period

This overview presents the finding from the feedback received during the first round of consultation. This was held between 15 April and 5 May 2024 and included online and in-person consultation. Feedback was accepted until 26 May 2024. Replies to comments and queries raised were responded to, if permission was provided, in August/September 2024.

The consultation was publicised in various ways to ensure local residents were made aware of the event, including:

- Advertisements in the Dunoon Observer on 12 and 19 April 2024. This notice provided information on the project along with dates, times and locations of the events and how to provide feedback.
- Mailing to all households and businesses (over 10,000) in communities within Argyll and Bute around the proposed site with an invitation to the in-person exhibitions, online consultation and how to provide feedback.
- Physical feedback cards along with a freepost envelope were included in the mailing for those who preferred to write back rather than go online or who couldn't make the in-person events.
- Writing to community councils and local and neighbouring Ward Councillors at the start of the consultation, with copies of the adverts should they wish to highlight the events on their social media.
- Providing details of the consultation on the Giant's Burn project website.

In-Person Exhibitions 24 - 25 April 2024

The in-person events were held at:

- Wednesday 24 April:
 - Innellan Village Hall, Innellan, 11am – 3pm
 - Queens Hall, Dunoon, 5pm – 8.30pm
- Thursday 25 April:
 - Younger Hall, Kilmun, 10am – 1pm
 - Cove Burgh Hall, Cove, 4pm – 7.30pm

*Kilmun, Dunoon, Sandbank, (host Community Councils), South Cowal, Hunter's Quay, Cove & Kilcreggan (wider engagement) Helensburgh, Cardross, Gourrock and Inverkip and Wemyss Bay.

On display at each exhibition were a number of information boards, covering:

- Information about the developer;
- An overview of the proposed development, including the proposed layout;
- Details of key viewpoints;
- Zones of theoretical visibility (ZTV's), bare earth and screened versions were provided;
- Community benefit, construction/supplier register, supplier case studies and shared ownership;
- An area for children that visited the exhibition to learn more about renewables

Printed copies of the online exhibition brochure were available for members of the public to take away. Feedback forms were available at the event for members of the public to fill out or take away along with a Freepost envelope.

An interactive computer model application called TrueViewVisuals was available to view on iPads, attendees could request to view the wind farm from different locations in the local area, e.g. their home postcode, providing an understanding of what the proposal may look like from their chosen locations. The model uses Google Street View with the wireline of the wind farm layout overlaid on it.

The exhibitions had c.400 visitors over the two days. Members from the host Community Councils and other groups in Sandbank attended the event. It is estimated that there were 238 visitors across both venues on day 1 and 132 across the two venues on day 2. At points it was difficult to keep count, so it is estimated the number is nearer 400.

The attendees were very engaged with the project. There was a wide range of views and the project team responded to a number of questions and queries which reflected the questions and queries submitted on the feedback forms. A summary of the responses to the key questions can be found attached to this report.

Online exhibition 15 April – 5 May 2024

The virtual exhibition, accessed via a link from the main project website, sought to replicate the type of information and materials at the physical exhibitions. This included:

- Exhibition Brochure Online – to provide the same detailed information available at the exhibition events an online booklet for the proposal was provided as a substitute for information that was presented on the boards at the physical events;
- Viewpoint Brochure Online – provided the same viewpoints available to view at the exhibition online.
- Extensive FAQ section to inform the residents and other interested parties about the project;
- A 'ring back' service to allow members of the public to have a dedicated chat with our team at a date/time suitable to them; and
- An opportunity to leave comments through the online feedback form

We intend to hold a second set of exhibitions this Winter. It is expected we will submit an application to the Scottish Government in 2025.

Summary of Consultation Responses

Of the 10,135 households and businesses surrounding the site contacted with the invitation and freepost reply form, online responses and feedback forms completed at the exhibition events, 448 responses in total were received by the reply date of 25 May 2024. We continue to log and respond to any forms received after this date.

From the completed forms, 73% of those responded to the questions agreed that the country needs to generate more electricity from renewable sources, 19% didn't agree and the remaining 8% were unsure/didn't answer. 43% of those who responded to the question agreed that onshore wind power is a good way to help achieve this aim, 45% didn't agree and 13% were unsure/didn't answer.

Of those who responded to the question: Do you think this is an acceptable location for a wind farm? 32% agreed, 55% responded no, 13% where unsure or preferred not to answer.

41% of respondents were interested in finding out more about the potential to assist in bringing improved broadband to the area. 47% were not and 12% are unsure or did not respond. We hope to share the findings of our broadband feasibility report with the community shortly.

In terms of interest in Shared Ownership the feedback forms revealed that 29% are interested, 52% are not and 19% are unsure or did not respond. We suggest hosting a general information session with Local Energy Scotland to provide the community with more information on shared ownership during the development stage.

*Kilmun, Dunoon, Sandbank, (host Community Councils), South Cowal, Hunter's Quay, Cove & Kilcreggan (wider engagement) Helensburgh, Cardross, Gourrock and Inverkip and Wemyss Bay.

Attendees at the exhibition events also had the opportunity to provide more details on what they would like to see the community benefit used for within the local area. This feedback will be passed across to community groups involved in this, expected to be much later in the development process. It is important to note community benefit is not material in planning, and other than providing £5,000 per MW per annum, no decisions on how the fund would be split or administered have been taken.

We will keep in touch with interested parties who advised they would like to receive updates.

Key Topics from Consultation

During the consultation period, some questions and comments were frequently raised.

- Landscape and visual impact including, why here, too close to villages and too tall.
- Impact on local wildlife and the environment which included recyclability.
- Other power sources, such as offshore, hydro or offshore should be explored.
- Connectivity, in particular relation to grid connection and transport route.
- Tourism and leisure related responses including proximity to the National Park, leisure and recreation opportunities within the site.
- Local Benefits, including Community Benefit Fund, Shared Ownership and Local Energy Discount Scheme (LEDS).

When responding to feedback these questions and our responses to them were included and are appended to this report. At our next exhibition we will also have further information about landscape and visual amenity, noise, transport route and ecology where it is available. As part of the application, each of these topics will be fully examined within the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Report. The EIA report submitted as part of our application is made available to the public to view and comment upon.

Next Steps

We will continue to engage with communities and welcome the opportunity to meet with Community Councils to discuss our wind farm plans as they develop. We are aiming to host a second exhibition this Winter and it is our expectation that we will submit a Section 36 Application to the Energy Consents Unit in 2025.

Ahead of our submission the next steps for local engagement are:

- Send a copy of this report to host and neighbouring Community Councils and elected representations.
- Engage with Dunoon Grammar School following the suggestion by several local community members
- We will hold a further public exhibition event this Winter; which will include information on how feedback has been incorporated into the design.
- Continue to receive feedback and respond to queries.
- Record and store all comments made regarding suggestions for community benefit funding.
- Continue to update the project website.

We would like to thank everyone who has engaged with the project to date.

Giant's Burn Wind Farm FAQs

During the first consultation (15 April – 5 May 2024), some questions and comments were frequently raised (the deadline for comments was 25 March). Below are our responses to these. September 2024.

Why here/close to homes/previous projects refused?

The Scottish Government has a target to achieve net zero by 2045. Onshore wind is expected to play a key role in achieving this aim. Since previous projects have been refused in the local area a new planning policy, National Planning Framework 4, has been introduced. The Framework means that renewable energy schemes should be given a planning presumption in favour, as long as they deliver a range of other benefits e.g. ecological, and socio-economic.

This led us to revisit this site, with the aim to develop a project that strikes the right balance between maximising electricity output while carefully siting and designing the proposal to relate to the landscape, including local settlements. As part of our work towards the Section 36 application, we are continuing to undertake substantial analysis into the landscape and visual considerations of the proposed development. Viewpoints and wirelines from several agreed viewpoints, along with the TrueViewVisuals application, will be available at the second exhibition to show how the project has changed following feedback and further studies.

The Environmental Impact Assessment Report submitted with the application will set out the results of a range of studies including landscape and visual, ecology and socioeconomics.

The turbines are too tall

As the wind industry has developed so has turbine technology, with taller turbines becoming the norm. Considering taller turbines, 180m-200m tip height, for onshore wind farms means that fewer turbines are required to produce the equivalent amount of energy within a site boundary. For instance, going from 150m to 180m tips can mean several fewer turbines for a typical Scottish site to achieve the same energy output. In addition, fewer turbines per site also means that the infrastructure footprint may also be less, further reducing overall impact on the local environment.

Wind farms are bad for the environment i.e. wildlife, and turbine components are not recyclable

We consult with NatureScot on the scope of the surveys and we have commissioned experienced technical consultants to undertake detailed environmental surveys of the habitat, ecology and ornithology, amongst others. This information is used to establish the baseline information for habitats on site and to help inform the proposed layout of the project. We work closely with the consultants to minimise impacts as we work towards finalising our design. We commit to implementing a construction and environmental management plan (CEMP) throughout the construction phase to minimise any damage or disturbance. In addition, a habitat enhancement and management plan will be implemented for the lifetime of the project which will aim to deliver biodiversity enhancement on site, as is now required under the new National Planning Framework 4.

Nearly 80-85% of the total mass of a wind turbine can already be recycled. Blades remain more challenging but there have been advancements in this area. In 2023 Vestas announced a recycling solution for blades, a chemical process that can breakdown the epoxy resin into virgin-grade materials. The industry has called for a ban on decommissioned blades going to landfill by 2025.

Other renewable power sources should be considered i.e. offshore, hydro, nuclear.

We need a mix of all types of renewable energy generation. New-build onshore wind is presently the most cost-effective form of new electricity generation in Scotland.

Windfarms impact tourism, it's too close to the National Park. Will local people still be able to access the hill for leisure and recreation opportunities?

A study carried out by BIGGAR Economics in November 2021 analysed trends in tourism employment in the localities of 44 wind farms developed in recent years, providing a substantial evidence base. The study found no relationship between tourism employment and wind farm development, at the level of the Scottish economy, across local authority areas, or in the locality of wind farm sites.

Should the wind farm be consented, the right to roam on the hill will remain in place. Naturally during construction there may be times when some routes may require diversions to keep everyone safe and away from construction activity. Once operational, wind farm track infrastructure is often used by local people and visitors for recreational activity. We are keen to work with the local community to understand how we can improve hill access for the community.

What is the transport route to deliver components to site and how will the project connect to the grid?

At the public exhibition we presented our initial delivery route via the Rest and be Thankful. This route is still an option but we are also looking at other potential delivery routes and methods, e.g. by water, to understand the best and most viable option for the project. We hope to have more information to present on the access at our next event.

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The project will connect to the grid via the existing substation at Dunoon. The existing overhead line (OHL) infrastructure is currently being upgraded here and, should the wind farm be consented, it will be used to distribute/transmit energy from Giant's Burn onto the grid. No new grid infrastructure is required for this project.

Community Benefit Fund, Local Energy Discount Scheme (LEDS) and Shared Ownership

There are several ways our projects can bring local benefits to the area, and we are always open to discussing how this can be tailored to each area's needs and priorities.

Statkraft is committed to delivering a community benefit fund at £5,000 per MW of installed wind per year, as per Scottish Government best practice guidance. No decision regarding how the fund will be managed has been made. The provision or otherwise of a Community Benefit Fund is not a material consideration in planning.

We received a number of suggestions during the consultation regarding how the fund could be used and we will pass any ideas or feedback gathered on to the local community and groups in the future who will consider how to take the fund forward. A number of respondents asked about a Local Energy Discount for residents. Statkraft Community Benefit Funds currently do not allow for direct payments to residents for money off electricity bills. We fully support funding to be used for activities that reduce energy bills over the long term, such as energy efficiency, education and small-scale renewable schemes. We are keen for funds to meet local needs and are aware these needs change, so our funds may look different by the time the project could become operational.

There is some local interest in shared ownership and we will aim to set up a session with Local Energy Scotland to provide more details to the community about what this involves and may look like, as the project moves through the development process and should it become operational.