

## Appendix 13.2: Loch Ness Wind Farms Business Survey Headlines



## Wind Farms and Renewable Energy in Loch Ness

Business Survey: March 2022

### MKA Economics and Visit Inverness Loch Ness (VILN)

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#### Introduction

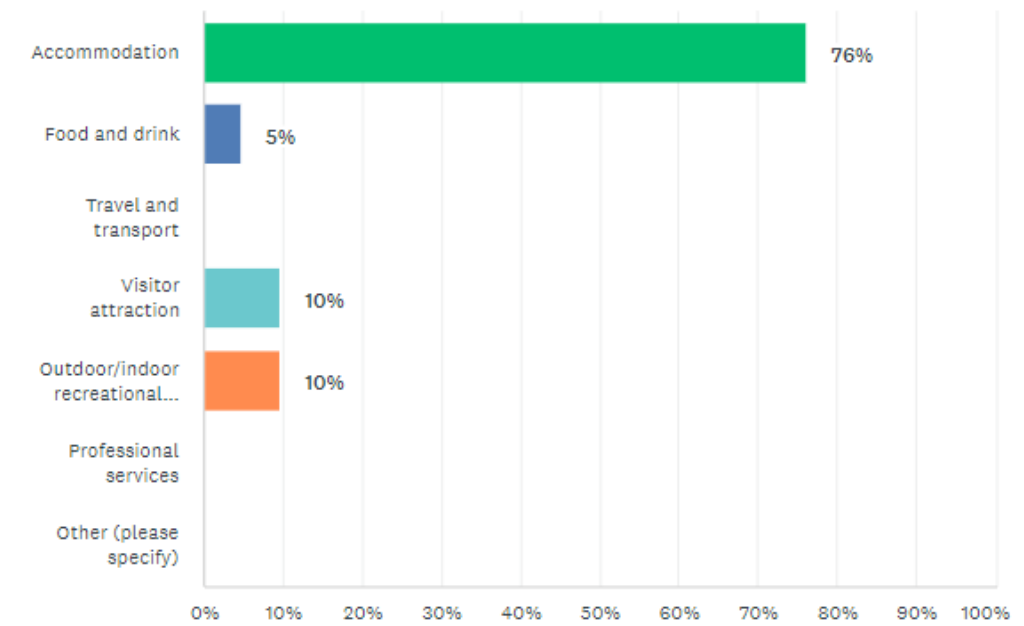
Working with VILN, MKA Economics carried out a survey of VILN members in the Loch Ness area to gain their views on wind farms in the area. MKA Economics designed the survey in relation to a number of wind farm proposals being assessed in socio-economic and tourism terms in the Loch Ness area. VILN distributed the online survey to their members in the area, in total 22 responses were completed.

This paper summarises the 'headline' findings from the survey. Comments provided are intended to be examples, with items where individual respondents could be identified omitted.

The vast majority of businesses that completed the survey were accommodation providers.

#### What is your business activity

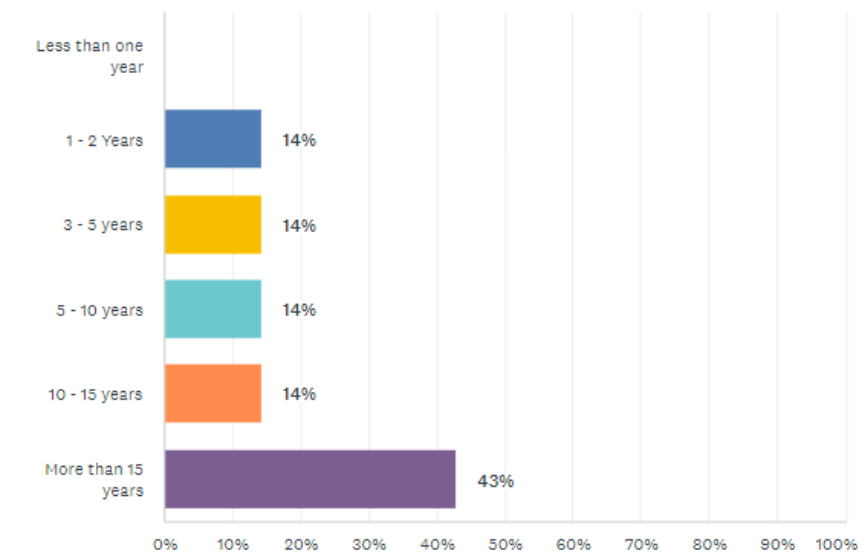
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Most businesses that completed the survey had been trading in the Loch Ness area for more than 10 years.

#### How long have you undertaken business activities in the Loch Ness area?

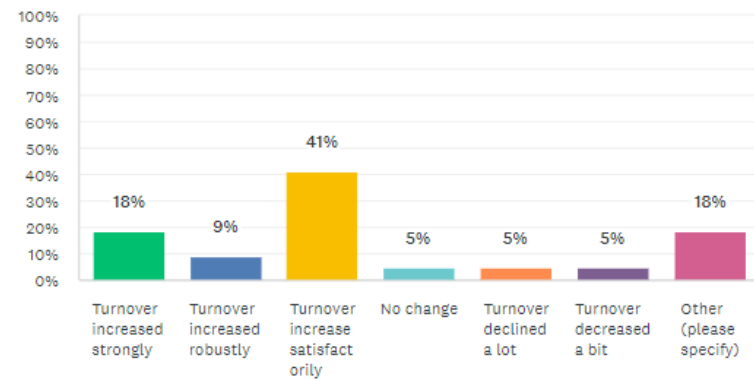
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There was a wide range of responses to the level of business activity since they established in Loch Ness, with 68% of firms noting increases in turnover.

How has your business performed over the period you have been trading in the area?

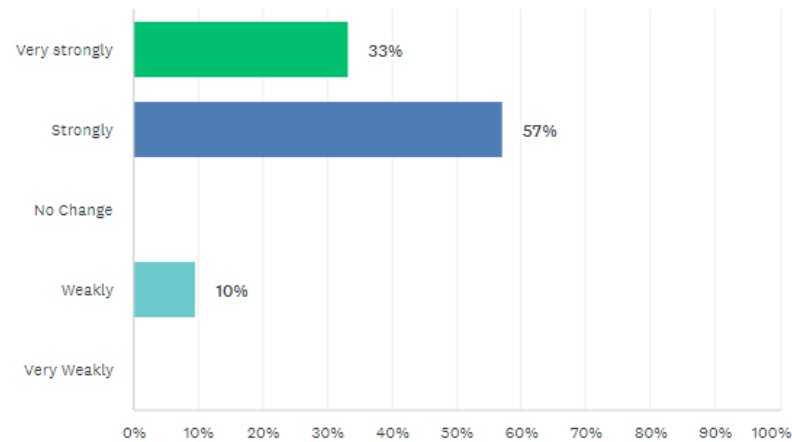
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Businesses noted that business had been 'Strong' or 'Very Strong' over the period to 2019, prior to the pandemic.

How would you say the tourism sector has performed over the period to 2019 (prior to Covid19) you have been trading?

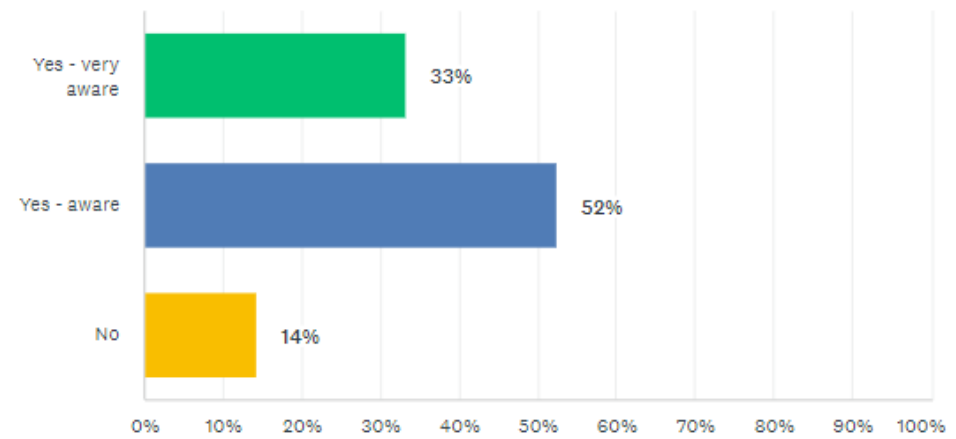
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Businesses tended to be aware of wind farms proposals in the Loch Ness area, only 14% were not aware of wind farm activity.

Are you aware of wind farm proposals in the local area?

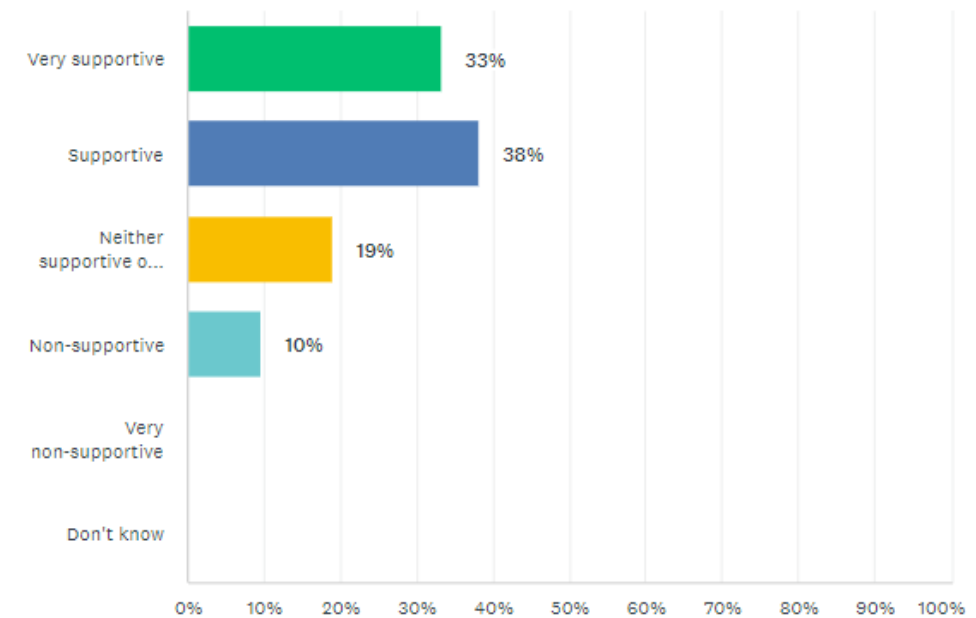
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Only 10% of respondents noted that they were not supportive of wind farms in the Loch Ness area, this is consistent with VisitScotland's own research of consumers, which stated that 90% of visitors were not dissuaded from visiting or revisiting an area which had sight of a wind farm.

How supportive are you of wind farm proposals in the local area?

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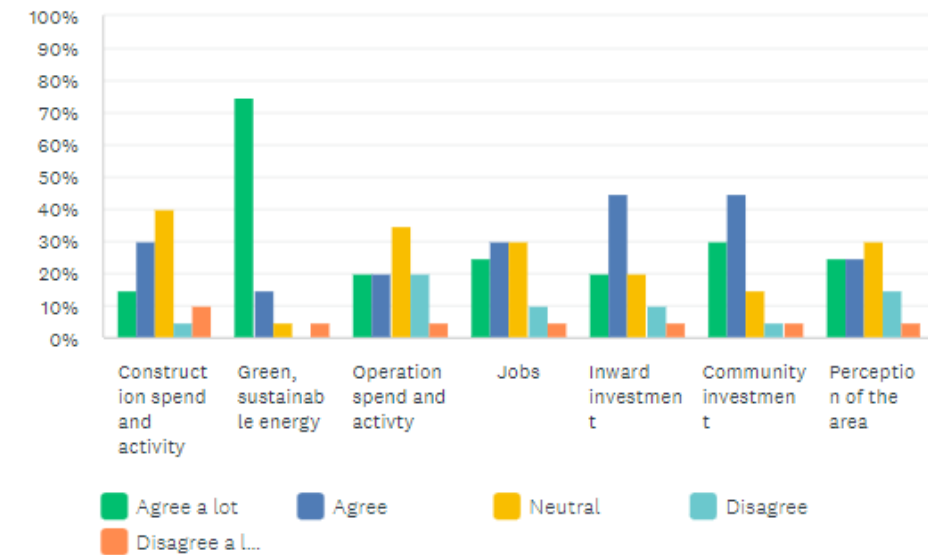
In relation to the above question, please can you explain why you have this level of support/non-support?

- Very supportive of renewable energy, reasonably concerned about the impacts of some proposals.
- Support renewables in principle but we are an iconic heritage site with broad open views. We need to balance energy needs with landscape sensitivity
- We feel it is important to the industry and well as being a natural way forward.
- I am supportive of production of renewable energy, but not at the cost of losing the pine and mixed woodlands that supports a diverse wildlife.
- Very supportive of energy renewables measures but needs to be done sympathetically in our fragile area
- Proposed wind farms will have a detrimental impact on the number of tourists visiting
- Providing electric car charging docks
- Using local products and produce
- Use of Environmental friendly products for our guests
- Eco conscious hotel
- Using wood chip boiler for our heating system
- We are eco conscious so it taps into our ethos
- Great benefits to the local community now and ongoing
- All round business
- Know it is the way forward for energy supply
- Introduction of further renewable schemes contributes to Scotland's progress on reducing emissions, creates employment in the Highlands.
- In support of sustainability but not the disruption of view points
- The Highlands are an area of outstanding natural beauty that are at severe risk from climate change. We also have tremendous natural energy resources. I believe our visitors want to see us utilising them well.
- Supportive of non-wind, unsupportive of wind
- We would like our property to have a renewable energy supply in the future
- I believe renewable energy is vital to tackling climate change and this part of the world is ideally suited to a number of them including on and off shore wind, pumped storage and run of river hydro as well as wave and tidal.
- I think the impact on the landscape is vastly overstated - on a trip last year around the NC500 we barely saw a turbine - and in any event turbines are a sign of progress and many people love them. Not one single person staying in our apartments has ever made a negative comment about wind turbines. We have had quite a few people staying who are working on renewable energy projects in the local area, which is very welcome, particularly at the quieter times of the year.
- Fossil fuels are going to run out so we will only have renewables available. Let's start renewable projects now and save the fossil fuels. Plus the greenhouse issue
- I'm in favour of the hydro schemes being undertaken however I think new windmill sites can be a bit of a blot on the landscape.
- We need clean energy in the long term even though the disruption in the short term will be bad
- No comment.
- Watch Pandora's promise, renewables will not be enough for our increasing electricity consumption. We don't want the tourism landscape that people come to see blighted and ruined by the likes of wind farms just to feed the large cities demand with landscapes covered in pylons. Wind farms are inefficient and switch off when too windy, they use vast amounts of concrete and are only there due to subsidies.
- Hydro power schemes am all for ...Windfarms NO...they are a blight on the last bastion of scenic beauty and wilderness in not just Scotland but Britain as a whole. Plus they do not give out the power required to keep this country switched on .... they will need constant back up!

The following table summarises that 'green sustainable energy' was seen as one of the main benefits of a wind farm, other popular responses included 'inward investment' and 'community investment'. 'Construction spend and activity' and 'jobs' were also popular.

### In your opinion what are the key benefits of a wind farm?

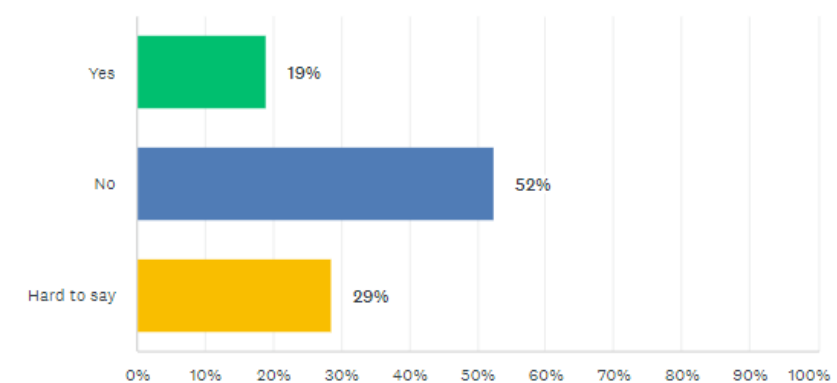
Answered: 20 Skipped: 2



Only 19% felt that visitors may be persuaded from visiting an area due to the presence of a wind farm, this is above the national VisitScotland research, but only by 10% - suggesting businesses are slightly more nervous than visitors about the impact of wind farms on local tourist trade.

### Do you think visitors are dissuaded from visiting the local area due to the presence of a wind farm?

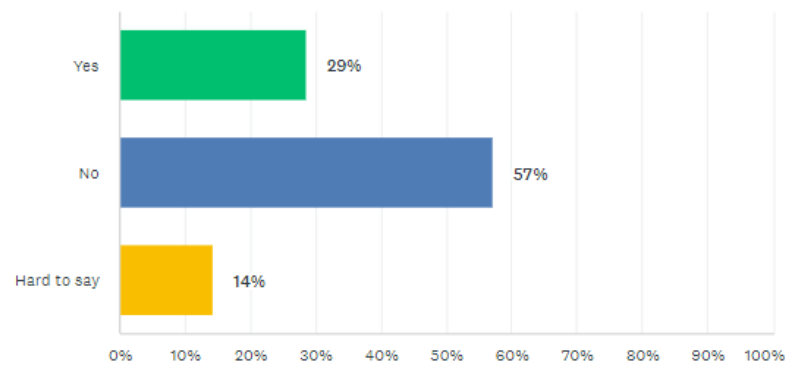
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When asked about revisiting an area, 29% of businesses felt that visitors may be dissuaded from returning.

Do you think visitors are dissuaded from REvisiting the local area due to the presence of a wind farm?

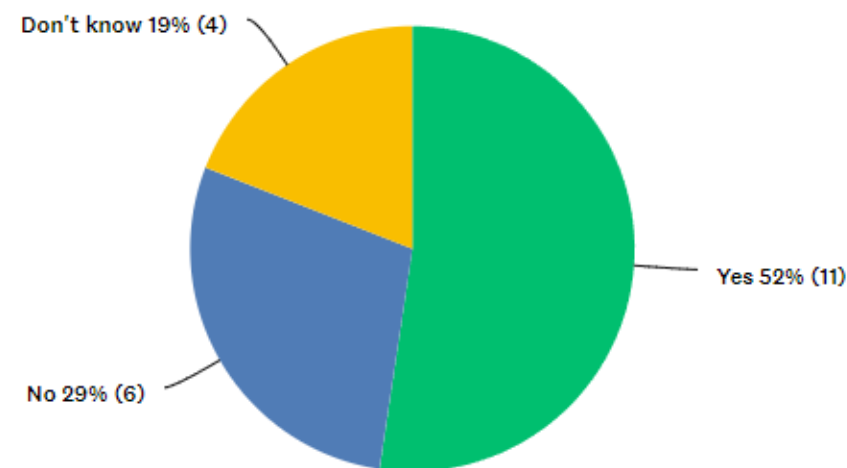
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29% also felt that wind farms brough disbenefits to an area.

Are there any disbenefits of wind farms?

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When asked what these disbenefits may be, the following responses were presented:

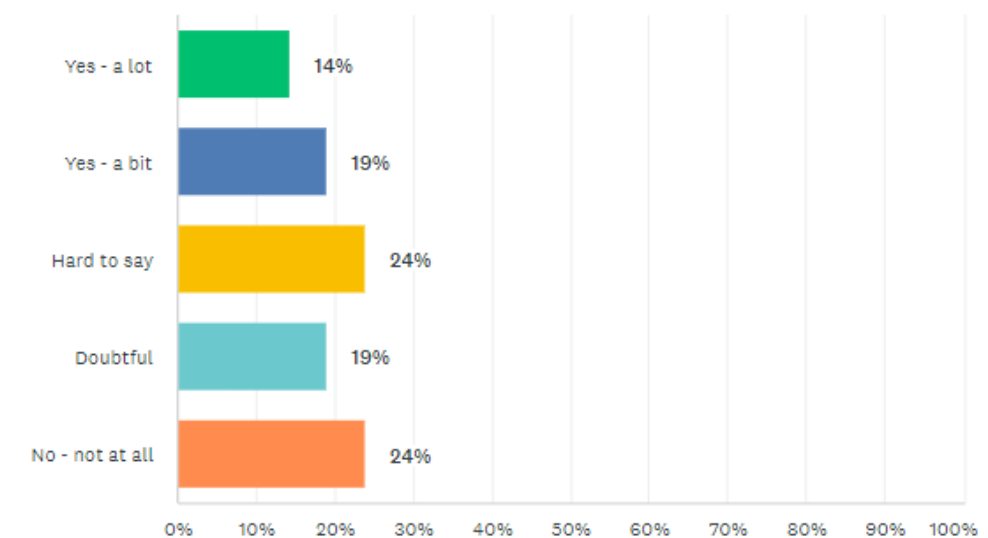
- Negative impact on scenery.
- Can sometimes have a negative impact on a landscape view.
- Some people do not find them pleasing to the eye.
- Loss of tree landscape with wind turbines and unsightly pylons stretching for miles. Hydro causes bank erosion and reduced fish in rivers.
- Landscape blight - wind turbines. No downsides to hydro.
- The impact on tourism and wildlife, also the area is used for filming because of the unspoilt nature and this could dissuade companies from coming to the area.
- Renewable Energy.
- Eco-friendly.

- CO2 reduction.
- Can cause increased traffic movements during construction and can mean some restrictions to access - but fairly minor.
- Wind farms ruin our visual landscapes which are our primary asset.
- The constant moaning from anti wind farm campaigners who have given an impression to people that the whole country is covered by wind turbines.
- Visitors come to the Inverness area and the highlands for the scenery and large windmill farms can be a real blot on the landscape. I would like to see how local people and Scotland on the whole could benefit from these windmill farms. So far our perception is that bills are going up as costs to produce electricity are going down (coal is expensive and wind is a free resource). The perception is also that the electricity is expensive as it being produced great distances away from where it is needed. People near where the electricity is being produced should get their electricity cheaper.
- Public perception that they are ugly even though they are necessary and we are lucky to have the potential for wind and hydro power.
- Nuclear is the only way and they have clean nuclear technology to meet our electricity demands.
- Yes wind farms in particular ruin what we are famous for ... "our wild rugged beauty"... the last bastion of wilderness in the UK.

One third of the businesses that felt that disbenefits may undermine their business felt that it may undermine their business. However, only 14% noted that these would damage them 'a lot'.

Are these disbenfits of a scale to undermine your business?

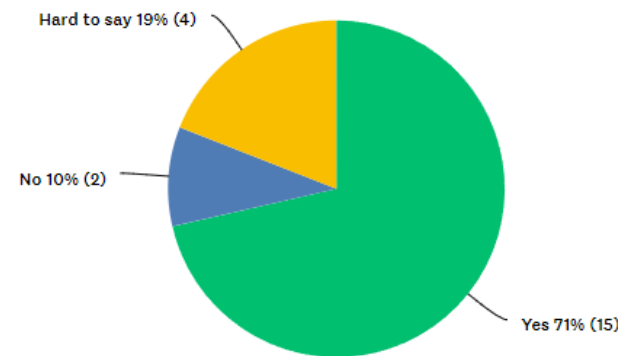
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71% of responding businesses noted that the community financial flows produced by renewable energy schemes were important to local communities.

In regards to the community financial flow that are produced from renewable schemes, do you think these are and can be important to local communities?

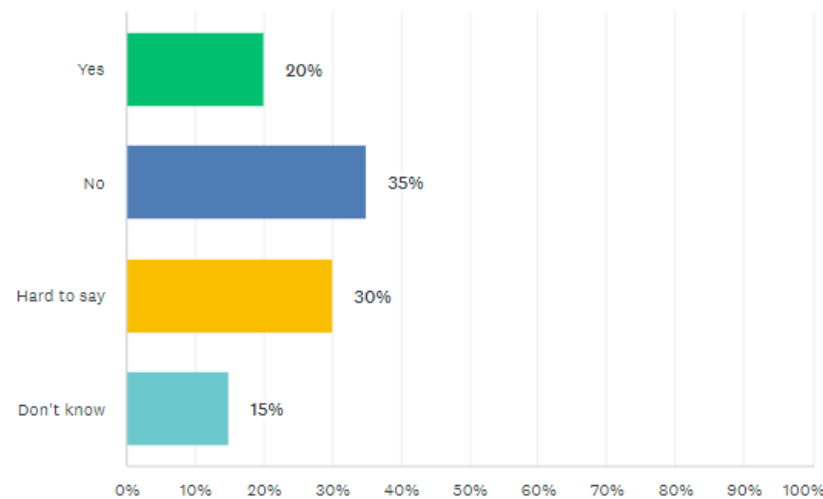
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Only 20% of responding firms noted that the community benefit process was working well for the local area.

Do you think the community benefit process is working well for the local area?

Answered: 20 Skipped: 2



When asked why this was the case the following was provided:

- Payouts will never be enough compensation for the destruction of our wild and beautiful scenic areas ... but then again money is king!
- I don't have personal experience but suspect the sums paid to the communities could be greater.
- Because I don't know of any.
- Despite having the production of energy locally the cost for energy is very high.
- It is not as generous as it previously was.
- Targeted to a minority of businesses only.
- It's win win situation for both parties.
- Community Company making real changes to the community - building affordable housing etc.
- We can see where the benefits have been.

- Continued cooperation between community and Renewable Energy Sector helping community, in finance and in growth.
- They aren't using the funds effectively - in my personal opinion.
- It is concentrated in a few areas with no strategic overview to the purposes to which it is put.
- I see them as nothing more than bribes/buying community support. Every rural economy should have viable businesses of its own to support it and not rely on subsidy support from the energy sector.
- I think the money is concentrated in a small number of areas and should be spread more widely. In our area we have the impacts of the electrical infrastructure needed to support the increase in renewable energy generation but get no community benefit at all.
- Electricity prices are still very high in these areas and going up. Older people near wind farms are struggling to afford to heat their homes.
- It seems so restricted in what can be funded so the money doesn't help many people.
- They only work due to subsidies paid to land owners, they are vastly inefficient.

When asked how the community benefit process could be improved, the following was provided:

- Things like the south end of the SLNT are great but in general access to wind farms etc is not amazing. Should be greater waymarking of tracks and making sure missing links are joined up etc.
- The sector can help the tourism sector have less impact on the environment, and mitigate against the impact of growth.
- NO.
- They should be undergrounding infrastructure to preserve the landscape and looking for ways to produce energy without removing habitat.
- Using more electric coach and vehicle in the area.
- Keep going!
- Keep improving the road infrastructure.
- as long as they are aware of the huge importance of Tourism in our area and communicate openly there should not be a problem.
- There has to be continued cooperation between the two, there is no reason why one should adversely affect the other.
- Help make Tourism more sustainable - EV charging points. Help take remote communities to net zero.
- Thinking about visitor centres, interpretation and walks to help visitors find there way around and understand renewables would be good.
- I think all except windfarms are beneficial in every way. To erect windfarms in an area where the primary asset is the landscape value is madness.
- We all need to adopt this policy for the future.
- I think they are treated like lepers by many in the tourism sector but I think we should try to have a more constructive relationship.
- I have always been impressed with the visitor centre at Ben Cruachan. More centres like that would benefit locals (providing full time jobs) and the broader tourism sector as well as being a great education tool.
- It's a double edged sword, it takes away from the natural beauty of the area especially during construction but is good for the planet so younger guests will appreciate.
- If anything do it offshore or wave technology but not onshore.
- Didn't know they had a role.

33% of respondents were happy to be contacted to discuss the research further with MKA Economics.

## Would you like to discuss this research further with us?

Answered: 21 Skipped: 1

