

Oliver Forest Wind Farm
Public Consultation Feedback Report
August 2024

About Oliver Forest Wind Farm

Oliver Forest Wind Farm is a proposal for up to 7 turbines, each up to a maximum of 200 m to turbine blade tip height. The proposed wind farm is located at Tweedsmuir, approximately 12.5 km south of Broughton and 19 km north of Moffat. The table below highlights some key information about the proposal.

	No. of Turbines	Max Blade Tip Heights	Expected Installed Capacity (MW)	Estimated Generation (homes equivalent)	Community Fund (per year)
Oliver Forest Wind Farm	Up to 7	Up to 200m	Over 50MW <small>(Section 36 consent application)</small>	Over 46,500 <small>Homes per year ⁽¹⁾</small>	Up to £252,000 <small>per year ⁽²⁾</small>

(1) Based on 50.4MW Installed Capacity, wind resource assessment and average Scottish domestic consumption of 3,520kWh pa (BEIS Dec. 2021). Candidate turbine still tbc'd.
(2) Community Benefit Fund based on 50.4MW x £5k per MW of installed capacity. If consented, value of fund determined by actual installed capacity. Candidate turbine still tbc'd.

The project was introduced to community representatives in December 2022, including meeting with Tweedsmuir Community Council in January 2023. We held the first public exhibition, online and in person, between 21 February and 16 March 2023. A Feedback Report for the first consultation event was circulated to Community Councils and uploaded to the project website in June 2023.

A second consultation event was held between 28 February and 22 March 2024. Ahead of the second exhibition, we met with both Tweedsmuir and Upper Tweed Community Councils in February 2024. This feedback report focuses on the feedback received during the second exhibition period.

Background

Community engagement is very important to us and we hold a series of consultation events for all our projects to highlight our proposals and receive feedback and input from nearby communities. During the second consultation period we also set out how the proposal has changed and how community, other stakeholder feedback and further studies may have helped shape the revised proposal being presented.

The key changes from the first to the second exhibition include, turbines reduced from 10 to 7, all blade tip heights reduced from 250 m to 200 m and the location of turbines amended to accommodate findings of site surveys and studies.

Second Consultation Period

The second round of consultation was held between 28 February – 22 March 2024 and was held online and in person. Feedback was accepted until 19 April 2024, extended slightly to take account of the Easter Holiday period. Replies to comments and queries raised were responded to, if permission was provided, in July 2024.

In response to feedback from our first exhibition we included more information about landscape and visual amenity, noise, ecology and land where this was available. As part of the application for the wind farm each of these topics will be fully examined within the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Report which is made available to the public to view and comment on via a formal representation to the Scottish Government Energy Consents Unit.

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

- Advertisements in the Southern Reporter (15 and 22/02/2024), Borders Telegraph (21/02/2024) and Peeblesshire News (16 and 23/03/2023), the consultation advert was also run on the Peeblesshire News digital platform as an online advert. In addition, following a meeting with the Community Council an advert

*Tweedsmuir (host), Upper Tweed, Manor, Stobo and Lyne, Ettrick and Yarrow Community Council.

was placed in the local community newspaper, Upper Tweed Community News, which is distributed within the local community. Each advert or 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 670) in communities 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 the host and neighbouring Community Councils, local and neighbouring Ward Councillors, the MSP and MP at the start of the consultation, with copies of adverts to be placed on their social media, should they wish to highlight the events.
- Providing details of the consultation on the Oliver Forest project website.

In-Person Exhibitions 5 – 6 March 2024

The In-Person Events were held:

- Tuesday 5 March, Tweedsmuir Village Hall, Tweedsmuir, 3pm – 8pm
- Wednesday 6 March, Broughton Village Hall, Broughton, 3pm – 8pm

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

- Information about the developer;
- An overview of the proposed development, including the revised proposed layout and the ways in which it had changed and why;
- Details of key viewpoints
- A zone of theoretical visibility (ZTV) of the proposed development;
- Community benefit, construction/supplier register, supplier case studies and shared ownership
- An area for children who may have 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. Finally, feedback forms were available for members of the public to fill out or take away with a freepost envelope.

An interactive computer model of the wind farm was available for attendees to request to view the wind farm from different locations in the local area, i.e. their home postcode providing an understanding of what the original and now revised proposal may look like from their chosen location.

The exhibitions had a total of 28 visitors over the two days. 15 visitors attended at Tweedsmuir and 13 visitors attended Broughton. Members from the host Community Council attended the event.

The attendees were very engaged with the project and asked the team a number of questions and queries which reflected the questions and queries submitted on the feedback forms. A summary of response to the key questions can be found attached to this report.

Online exhibition 28 February – 22 March 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;
- 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 online feedback forms.

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We will submit an application to the Scottish Government in late Summer 2024.

Summary of Consultation Responses

Of the 673 households and businesses surrounding the site contacted with the invitation and freepost feedback form and online, we received, 34 responses, a 5% response rate.

From the completed forms, 59% of those who responded to the questions agreed that that the country needs to generate more electricity from renewable sources, 35% didn't agree and the remaining 6% were unsure or did not answer. 44% of those who responded to the question agreed that onshore wind power is a good way to help achieve this aim, 47% didn't agree and 9% were unsure/didn't answer.

Of those who responded to the question: Do you think this site is an acceptable location for a wind farm? 35% agreed, 62% said no and the 3% of the remaining respondents are unsure.

In terms of interest in Shared Ownership the feedback forms revealed that 9% are interested, 71% are not, the remaining 20% are either unsure (11%) or did not respond (9%).

Attendees at the exhibition events also had the opportunity to provide more details on what they would like to see community benefit used. It is important to note community benefit is not material in planning, and other than providing £5,000 per MW per annum no decision on how the fund will be split or administered have been taken. Details of the ways respondents would like to see the community benefit used will be passed across to community groups involved in this, which is expected to be much later in the development process and should the project gain consent.

We look forward to keeping 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.

One of the key topics raised with us was the opportunity to use the site for recreational purposes. The Project Team have worked with the Landowner and we are pleased to be able to include two recreational path opportunities with information boards within the future application. Both paths will run from the site entrance, one will be a short out and back route accessible for all and one longer loop route.

A number of the other key topics raised are noted below. When responding to feedback these questions and our responses to them were included and are appended to this report.

We would like to thank everyone who has responded we have considered all the feedback and where possible reflected these in the final design and layout of the wind farm.

Next Steps

We will continue to engage with communities and welcome the opportunity to meet with Community Councils to discuss the proposal we will submit into planning this summer.

The next steps for local engagement are:

- Send a copy of this summary report to host and neighbouring community Councils and elected representatives and welcome further discussions on for the project.
- 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
- Will inform Community Councils, Ward Councillors and members of the mailing list once the application is submitted.

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Oliver Forest Wind Farm

During the second consultation (28 February – 22 March 2024), some questions and comments were frequently raised (the deadline for comments was 19 April). Below are our responses to these. August 2024.

Why here/close to homes/too many wind farms in this area?

As part of our work towards the Section 36 application, we have listened to community feedback and undertaken substantial analysis into the landscape and visual considerations of the proposed development.

The initial feasibility assessment identified that the proposed wind farm site has a number of qualities which make it a suitable location, the presence of a very good wind resource (determined by initial desk based studies and wind monitoring on site), no planning policies, which in principle, preclude wind energy development, no internationally or nationally designated sites for ecology, landscape or geology within the site boundary, compatibility with the existing commercial forestry use; suitable ground conditions with limited areas of deep peat, and a suitable access point from the adjacent A701.

The number of turbines has been reduced from 10 to 7 and the tip heights of all turbines reduced from 250m to 200m. The Viewpoint locations have been finalised with local authorities and NatureScot. Wirelines and photomontages will be available for all of the agreed viewpoints when the application is submitted. They will provide the local community the opportunity to understand what the proposed development may look like should it be consented and constructed. Our aim is to develop a project that finds the right balance between maximising electricity output while carefully siting and designing the proposal to relate to the existing landscape, including settlements and other wind developments.

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. Onshore wind is the cheapest source of renewable energy generation therefore it is an excellent way to achieve our net zero targets as part of the renewable energy mix, secure our energy security and help reduce energy bills in the long term.

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 plus, 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 up to 5 less 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, minimising overall impact on the local environment.

Grid

The grid route to connect the project from the onsite substation to the National Grid is still to be confirmed. It will be part of a separate application by the network operator in the area. We are responsible for the electrical cabling within the wind farm and confirm all cables connecting the turbines to the onsite substation will be undergrounded.

Community Benefit, local electricity discounts, and Shared Ownership queries

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 installed per year, as per Scottish Government best practice guidance for this development. 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.

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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.