

Strategy for Community Involvement.

1.0 Introduction

1.1 This report represents a strategy for community involvement in respect of the Fullabrook Wind Farm Project, the purpose of which is to:

- Detail measures taken to engage the local community in advancing the Fullabrook Project;
- Factually report the extent of community participation;
- Analyse the responses received to the exhibited proposal;
- Identify changes to the proposal made in advance of its finalisation for application submission and the basis for such changes.

1.2 Community and stakeholder engagement in advance of the submission of an application under Section 36 Electricity Act 1989 was undertaken on the basis of a community involvement strategy (CIS) agreed with North Devon District Council, attached as Appendix 1.

The objective of the strategy is:

To enable those likely to be affected by the proposals within the local community to be properly informed and to understand the proposals in terms of both fact and opinion and to influence them.

1.3 Time and resources have been invested to ensure effective community involvement in the Fullabrook Wind Farm Project. Key elements of the consultation process have been and will be:

- to provide information in a timely and accessible way to enable informed participation;
- to encourage comment on the Project in advance of the submission of formal proposals to enable those involved to have effective input into the process; and
- to deliver feedback from the consultation process.

The outcomes from the community consultation exercise will be used to form part of the submitted wind farm application to the Department of Trade and Industry.

2.0 Consultation Arrangements

- 2.1 In advance of the commencement of the public consultation process dedicated meetings were held with; North Devon District Council, the Council Leader and the Executive Director (Regeneration and Development) and separately with relevant service managers (planning and environmental health); with senior officers of Devon County Council and representatives from the South West Regional Development Agency. The meetings were held to present the Fullabrook proposal and discuss the emerging issues, which were subsequently addressed through the public exhibitions.
- 2.2 The implementation of the CIS commenced with the provision of information through literature and exhibitions. The prepared material at the exhibition and a widely distributed information leaflet aimed to present the context, nature, impact, and benefits of the Fullabrook Wind Farm Project.
- 2.3 The focus of the consultation processes was through locally held public exhibitions. To encourage attendance at the exhibitions; households likely to be directly affected by the proposal and local representative and community groups were directly informed of the proposal and invited to participate in the pre application consultation exercise. All identifiable dwellings (approximately 800) within a 2-kilometre radius of one of any of the 20 proposed turbines received a hand delivered letter/information leaflet with the exception of the settlement of Knowle. The reasoning for non-delivery to Knowle was that it is situated on the limit of the delivery zone and its orientation is away from the site of the wind farm proposal. The standard letter and information leaflet (Appendix II), which sought to explain the proposal and address often raised concerns, was also distributed to approximately 11800 homes in the north Devon area via the North Devon Advertiser.
- 2.4 In addition to announcing the venues and times in the letter/information leaflet to ensure widespread publicity of the proposal the exhibitions were advertised in the North Devon Journal and North Devon Advertiser by means of a formal notice (Appendix III) during the week beginning 24th May 2004. A press release (Appendix IV) was also issued on 25th May 2004 to enable media comment to coincide with the programmed consultation exercise.
- 2.5 Following the announcement of the proposed application there was extensive coverage of the proposals and comment about them in the local press including the North Devon Journal, North Devon Advertiser, and Western Morning News and in the broadcast media on BBC and ITV and the local radio stations.
- 2.6 Four fully manned public exhibitions were held to allow all concerned parties to examine plans, diagrams and technical information relating to the Fullabrook Wind Farm Project.
- 2.7 The exhibitions were held in the two nearest large towns to the proposal (Ilfracombe and Barnstaple), the nearest medium sized settlement (Braunton) and the Fullabrook site itself. Accessibility by public transport was a factor in the choice of the venues for the first three exhibitions to ensure that there was no

disadvantage to those without private transport. To enable those who wished to attend to do so conveniently the exhibitions included lunchtimes, evenings and weekend sessions (detailed in Section 3). In addition to presenting and explaining the rationale of the wind farm proposal the exhibition provided an opportunity for those attending to question a team of specialist consultants (Appendix V) on all aspects of the proposal.

- 2.8 In addition to the public exhibitions a special exhibition for the local authorities was held on 7th June. In excess of 430 individuals: councillors at county, district, town and parish level and relevant officers from North Devon and Torridge District Councils and the County Council were invited to attend. The exhibition at Barnstaple was arranged in the afternoon and evening, having regard to established Council commitments to encourage maximum attendance. Invitation letters were dispatched on 21st May, providing at least 2 weeks notice of the exhibition.
- 2.9 Comment on the proposal was directly sought through a questionnaire, which formed part of the letter/information leaflet distributed widely as described above. Further copies of the questionnaire were provided at the exhibitions and visitors were invited to complete them and leave them in the box provided. The format of the questionnaire (Appendix II) sought responses to key questions while allowing for general comments to be made.

3.0 Community Consultation

- 3.1 The public exhibitions at all venues were well attended. Visitors to the exhibition were invited to sign an attendance register but by no means all did so. The register was signed in total by 439 exhibition visitors, which although significant is not an accurate reflection of the total attendance which was considered to be in the region of 570.

The registered visitors for each venue were as follows:

Ilfracombe, Landmark Centre, Wednesday 2nd June 12 noon to 2.30pm and 4.00pm to 8.00pm — 110;

Braunton, Braunton Parish Hall, Thursday 3rd June 12 noon to 2.30pm and 4.00pm to 8.00pm — 119;

Barnstaple, Barnstaple Hotel Tuesday 8th June 12 noon to 2.30pm and 4.00pm to 8.00pm — 88, and

Fullabrook Down Saturday 12th June 10.00am to 4.00pm — 122.

- 3.2 The exhibition held specifically for elected representatives and selected officials from all the local authority tiers was poorly attended. Less than 15 individuals attended the private exhibition, which was held over a four-hour period 4.00pm to 8.00pm on 7th June 2004.
- 3.3 340 questionnaire returns had been received by the end of July. All returned questionnaires which included completed address details, received a letter of acknowledgement and thanks (Appendix VI). A summary of all returned questionnaires, excluding address details, is included as Appendix VII.

Consultation responses

- 3.4 Not all the questionnaires were completed in full. Some questions were not answered and in some instances no comment was received in response to the last two sections of the questionnaire. There is consequently an element of variance between the sum totals of responses for different elements of the questionnaire.

3.5 **Question 1**

327 responses were received to the question Are you in favour of the use of wind as a clean energy source?

- 61.47% (201) of respondents indicated Yes.
- 35.17% (115) of respondents indicated No.
- 3.36% (11) of respondents did not provide standard answers, theirs included: maybe , yes and no not in the AONB depends on the location and 5 positive responses subject to provisos.

3.6 **Question 2**

285 responses were received to the question What do you think are the main benefits of using wind to generate energy? Benefits associated with wind energy generation were identified by 77.54 (221) of respondents.

3.7 The identified benefits are ranked in order of the number of references; taking account of multiple benefits expressed by single respondents. The percentages attributed to the responses relate to the sum total of the suggested benefits.

- Renewable source of energy/environmentally friendly 87(28.25%)
- Clean source of energy 83(26.95%)
- Cheap/free source of energy 48(15.58%)
- Reduction in pollution levels 40(12.99%)
- Reduce reliance on fossil fuels 28(9.1%)
- Safe source of energy 6(1.95%)
- Profits to wind farm developers 5(1.62%)
- Site restoration free from contamination 3 (0.97%)
- Efficient in comparison to alternative sources of renewable energy 3(0.97%)
- Less intrusive than power station 1(0.32%)
- Increasing diversity of power generation sources 1(0.32%)
- Low cost energy for local benefit 1(0.32%)
- Good use of farmland 1(0.32%)
- Attainment of ODPM targets 1(0.32%).

Five respondents referred to the benefits to be derived from wind energy generation but did not specify their nature.

3.8 18.25% (52) of respondents expressed the view that there were no or only negligible benefits to be derived from wind as an energy source, 96% of such respondents also responded negatively to Questions 1 and 4. Twenty respondents also expressed negative views within the benefits response section including such comments as; alternative renewable energy sources are more efficient and less obtrusive, negative impact outweigh the benefits and detrimental to the quality of life.

3.9 **Question 3**

312 responses were received to the question What do you think are the main drawbacks? 9.93%(31) of respondents expressed the view that there were no drawbacks to wind energy generation. Drawbacks associated with wind energy generation were identified by 90.07% (281) of respondents to question 3.

3.10 The identified drawbacks are ranked in order of the number of references; taking account of multiple drawbacks expressed by single respondents. The percentages attributed to the responses relate to the sum total of the suggested benefits.

- Negative impact on the countryside/ visual intrusion 195(45.24%)
- Noise pollution 101(23.43%)
- Uneconomic/inefficient energy source 33(7.66%)
- Intermittent energy generation 30(6.96%)
- Negative public opinion 15(3.48%)
- Negative impact on the local economy and tourism in North Devon 14(3.25%)
- Negative impact on the local community 10(2.32%)
- Impact on wildlife 10(2.32%)
- Property devaluation 8(1.86%)

- Environmental cost associated with necessary infrastructure 5(1.16%)
- Consequential proliferation of wind farms 3(0.7%)
- Not enough turbines to make a difference 3(0.7%)
- No benefit to the local community 1(0.23%)
- Lack of local control in the decision making process 1(0.23%)
- Construction costs 1 (0.23%)
- No contribution to the baseload capacity 1(0.23%)

Eight respondents referred to drawbacks to be derived from wind energy generation but did not specify their nature. 68.67% of the identified drawbacks related to the impact of the proposal with regard to a negative impact on the countryside/visual intrusion and noise generation.

3.11 **Question 4**

325 responses were received to the question Do you think this is a good location for a wind farm?

- 46.15% (150) of respondents indicated Yes.
- 52.61% (171) of respondents indicated No.
- 1.23% (4) respondents did not provide standard answers, theirs were; maybe , yes and no , nowhere in your back yard and not of this size .

Of the 204 yes respondents to Question 1, 74.02%(151) agreed that the proposal was in a good location, 21.02% (43) did not agree that the proposal was in a good location.

3.12 **Question 5**

275 respondents addressed the question What form should any community benefit take? Three options were presented and an other category to allow for the promotion of alternative suggestions.

3.13 The responses to the provided options are listed below; in a number of instances the respondent promoted more than community benefit. The percentages attributed to the responses relate to the sum total of the suggested community benefits.

- i) Community fund administered locally — 64(21.19%)
- ii) Grants for new energy conservation — 80 (26.5%)
- iii) Cheaper electricity for those in the immediate vicinity - 141 (46.69%)
- iv) Other — responses (5.63%) included: compensation for local property devaluation (9) a visitor center (2), local infrastructure improvements (6), social housing (1) and local wildlife and conservation initiatives (1).

A negative reaction to the suggestion of community benefit resulting from the Fullbrook Wind farm Project was received from 48 (17.1%) respondents.

4.0 Changes to the Exhibited Proposal Consequent of Consultation

4.1 An important element in advancing the wind farm proposal has been to ensure effective community involvement. Significant resources have been made available to support the consultation process to deliver constructive engagement. The consultation process has sought to ensure there is a clear understanding of the proposed development and subsequently to have regard to the outcomes of the consultation exercise in advance of final decisions being made.

4.2 The outcomes from the consultation exercise have been effective in influencing the nature of the wind farm proposal in advance of the proposals finalisation before submission to the Department of Trade and Industry.

4.3 In response to the points raised in the questionnaire returns and comments made at the exhibitions the following changes have been made to the draft wind farm proposal as presented through the public consultation exercise:

i) Reduction in environmental impact

The two northern most turbines have been relocated to an area within the body of the site. The effect of the relocation is to reduce the overall visual impact by removing the turbines, which projected into the countryside beyond the bulk of the site.

ii) Consolidation of the wind farm site

The site of the wind farm proposal has been consolidated by the introduction of additional land, which provides for the previously separated elements of the site to be joined. Achieving a single site, which avoids dispersed elements, reduces the overall impact. The turbines relocated from the sites previous northern limits and two additional turbines (increasing the proposal to 22 x 3MW turbines) are positioned within a compressed site area, which will give a single form to the proposal.

iii) Re-examine of wildlife conservation impact

Concerns have been expressed with regard to the potential impact of the proposed wind farm on wildlife. The impact of the proposal on otters and badgers will subsequently be re-examined.

iv) On site development

Concerns regarding the delivery of the turbines on to the Fullabrook site have been raised in respect of anticipated difficulties particularly with regard to the adequacy of the local road network. A trial delivery of blades for a single turbine was successfully achieved on 14th July 2004 without any detrimental impact on infrastructure or property.

v) Community Benefit.

Although not a statutory requirement the Fullabrook wind farm project will make provision to deliver benefits to the local community who will be directly affected by the proposal.

The application to the Department of Trade and Industry will not detail the nature of the community benefit; such will be a matter for local determination.

The result of the community consultation process presents a clear preference for community benefit to be delivered in the form of cheaper electricity to local residents, although a significant level of support was also received for energy conservation initiatives and for a local community fund.

The delivery of cheaper electricity and energy conservation measures could be achieved as the community benefit secured through good will funding from the Fullabrook wind farm. Limiting the scope of the community fund to achieve such benefits is considered to be unnecessarily restrictive. The supported benefits could be accommodated via an annual donation to a local community fund. This approach would enable local community control, limited developer involvement and provide the flexibility to change the basis for grant awards from the fund as local priorities change. The fund could have a specific focus, but this would be a matter for local determination.

It is proposed that the Fullabrook wind farm will deliver community benefits through a local community fund. The purpose of the fund will be to achieve public benefit to the community affected by the wind farm. The area within which projects and initiatives will be eligible to receive funding from this source will be defined.

Funding will be provided to the community fund through an annual contribution, calculated on the basis of a percentage of annual profits from the Fullabrook wind farm. It will be a matter for the locally community to determine priorities and to administer the provided funds. The only limitation relating to the scope of the funds use will relate to the avoidance of conflict with the objectives and operation of the wind farm.