



WEST OF ORKNEY WINDFARM

Pre-Application Consultation (PAC) Report

July 2023

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Approved by S. Kerr

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Pre-Application Consultation Report Form

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SCHEDULE

Regulation 8

Form

PRE-APPLICATION CONSULTATION REPORT

Marine (Scotland) Act 2010: Section 24

1. Proposed Licensable Marine Activity

Please describe below or, where there is insufficient space, in a document attached to this form the proposed licensable marine activity, including its location

See Section 1.2 of the attached Pre-Application Consultation (PAC) Report

2. Applicant Details

Title Initials Surname

Jack		Farnham
------	--	---------

Trading Title
(if appropriate)

Offshore Wind Power Limited

Address

32 Charlotte Square
Edinburgh
EH2 4ET

Name of contact
(if different)

Position within Company
(if appropriate)

Development Manager

Telephone No.
(inc. dialing code)

<Redacted>

Fax No.
(inc. dialing code)

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Company Registration No. Email
 <Redacted>

Is this prospective applicant the proposed licensee?

YES NO

If NO, please complete Section 3 below.

3. Proposed Licensee Details

Title	Initials	Surname
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

Trading Title
(if appropriate)

Address

Name of contact
(if different)

Position within Company
(if appropriate)

Telephone No. (inc. dialing code)	Fax No. (inc. dialing code)
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

Company Registration No.	Email
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

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4. Pre-application Consultation Event

Please describe below or, where there is insufficient space, in a document attached to this form the pre-application consultation event

See Section 3.12 of the attached Pre-Application Consultation (PAC) Report

5. Information provided by the Prospective Applicant at the Pre-application Consultation Event

Please provide below or, where there is insufficient space, in a document attached to this form details of any information provided by the prospective applicant for a marine licence at the pre-application consultation event

See Sections 4-8 of the attached Pre-Application Consultation (PAC) Report

6. Information received by the Prospective Applicant at the Pre-application Consultation Event

Please provide below or, where there is insufficient space, in a document attached to this form details of any comments and objections received by the prospective applicant for a marine licence at the pre-application consultation event

See Sections 4-8 of the attached Pre-Application Consultation (PAC) Report

7. Amendments made, or to be made, to the Application for a Marine Licence by the Prospective Applicant following their Consideration of Comments and/or Objections received at the Pre-application Consultation Event

Where any amendments are made, or are to be made, by the prospective applicant for a marine licence to the marine licence application as a direct result of their consideration of comments and/or objections received at the pre-application consultation event, please provide below or, where there is insufficient space, in a document attached to this form details of such amendments

See Section 4-8 of the attached Pre-Application Consultation (PAC) Report

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8. Explanation of Approach taken by the Prospective Applicant where, following Relevant Comments and/or Objections being received by the Prospective Applicant at the Pre-application Consultation Event, no Relevant Amendment is made to the Application for a Marine Licence

Where, following comments and/or objections having been received by the prospective applicant for a marine licence at the pre-application consultation event, no relevant amendment is made to the application for a marine licence by the prospective applicant, then please provide below or, where there is insufficient space, in a document attached to this form an explanation for the approach taken

N/A

CERTIFICATION	
Insert name	Jack Farnham
Insert Address	32 Charlotte Square
Town	Edinburgh
County	
Postcode	EH2 4ET
I certify that I have complied with the legislative requirements relating to pre-application consultation and that the pre-application consultation has been undertaken in accordance with the statutory requirements.	
Signature _____	<Redacted> Date 14/09/2023

Executive Summary

This Pre-Application Consultation (PAC) Report summarises the work carried out by Offshore Wind Power Limited (OWPL) for the offshore and onshore elements of the proposed West of Orkney Windfarm. This PAC report accompanies the offshore and onshore consent applications, including the offshore and onshore Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Reports and associated documents submitted to Scottish Ministers in accordance with the requirements for Marine licences pursuant to the Marine (Scotland) Act 2010 and the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 and consent under Section 36 of the Electricity Act 1989 and planning permission for the Onshore Transmission Works (OnTW) under the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 (as amended).

The public consultation has been undertaken across five key rounds. The first round of consultation was conducted in March 2022, shortly after the ScotWind bid award announcement. It introduced the Project to the local community and sought people’s views on our Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) methodology and our ideas for engagement. At the time, Covid restrictions precluded against face-to-face engagement and so we launched our virtual exhibition and held live question and answer sessions online. We also launched our Community Panels to inform the community consultation process and maximise the reach and effectiveness of our engagement.

The second round of consultation took place during the summer of 2022 and involved attendance at local public events across Caithness, Sutherland and Orkney. This round allowed us to introduce the Project to a wider cross section of the local community and obtain early feedback around the principle of our proposals and our engagement approach.

The third round of consultation involved a series of formal public events at seven venues across Caithness, Sutherland and Orkney in November 2022. It explained our processes for refining the cable corridor route, presented summary results from our EIA surveys and community consultation, and provided the first visualisations of what the Project might look like. This round allowed the Project team to better understand key local concerns, helping shape future consultation events.

A Proposal of Application Notice in respect of the onshore infrastructure was submitted to The Highland Council and formally registered on 7th March 2023 (22/05500/PAN).

In May 2023, the fourth round of consultation constituted the ‘formal’ Pre-Application Consultation (PAC) event for the offshore proposal and the first of two PAC events for the onshore proposal, under the Marine Licensing (Pre-Application Consultation) (Scotland) Regulations 2013 and the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997, respectively. This round involved public events in seven venues across the consultation area. Responses to stakeholder feedback and mitigation measures were presented and a number of the issues that attendees and consultees previously raised were successfully resolved.

The final round of pre-application consultation took place in June 2023 and focused on the proposed onshore infrastructure only. It included a series of public events across two venues in Caithness, constituting the second required PAC event for the onshore planning application. This round presented our responses to the feedback received during the first PAC event, including an update on our proposals for the new substation.

All feedback received was reviewed following each round of consultation to ensure that key points of interest and concern were addressed during subsequent engagement activities. Views raised during each consultation round have been considered throughout the development of the Project itself, and issues have been resolved wherever possible. We also responded directly to feedback, where appropriate, by email or telephone.

In addition to the community consultation outlined above, we have continued consultation and dialogue with statutory and non-statutory consultees throughout the development of the Project. As part of our commitment to ongoing engagement and relationship building with community stakeholders, we also returned to Sutherland, Caithness and Orkney during the summer of 2023 to attend local public events. A summary timeline of the key consultation and engagement activities undertaken since site award in January 2022 is provided in Table 1.



33
public events



2,488
attendees



61,864
leaflets delivered



579
questionnaires
completed

Month/ year	Event/ Meeting topic	Topic	Attendees
February 2022	Commercial fisheries	Project overview and update Fisheries baseline Next steps for planning and EIA	Various members of fishing organisations
	Strategic stakeholder meeting	Project overview and update Next steps for planning and EIA	Space Hub Sutherland
March 2022	ROUND 1: virtual public events, including live Question & Answer sessions	Public consultation Introduction to Project Opportunity for stakeholders to ask Project team questions	Members of the public
April 2022	Strategic stakeholder meeting	Project update Scoping Report discussion	HIE Space Hub Sutherland
	Strategic stakeholder meeting	Community consultation approach Community benefit	HIE
	Freshwater ecology	Project overview and update Survey strategy	Marine Scotland Licensing Operations Team (MS-LOT) Marine Scotland Science (MSS) Caithness District Salmon Fisheries Board (CDSFB) / Northern District Salmon Fisheries Board (NDSFB) NatureScot
	Onshore ecology	Project update Survey strategy	NatureScot
May 2022	Commercial fisheries working group	Developer update Survey update Scoping Report	Various members of fishing organisations
	Strategic stakeholder meetings	Project overview and update Community consultation approach Community benefit	Caithness & North Sutherland Regeneration Partnership (CNSRP) Caithness Chamber of Commerce HIE OIC
June 2022	Seascape, Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (SLVIA) & Landscape and Visual (L&V)	Project introduction Scoping feedback Methodology and approach Viewpoints Cultural heritage Setting impact assessment	The Highland Council (THC) NatureScot
	Socio-economic working group	Project update Sharing of data Impact assessment approach Engagement approach Community consultation	Caithness and North Sutherland Regeneration Partnership (CNSRP) Orkney Islands Council (OIC) Visit Scotland HIE Caithness Chamber of Commerce
	Marine mammals and megafauna	Project overview and update Baseline characteristics Spatial units for assessment Scoping feedback	NatureScot
	Physical and coastal processes, water and sediment quality, benthic subtidal and intertidal ecology,	Project overview and update Overview of survey work Scoping clarifications	NatureScot OIC

Month/ year	Event/ Meeting topic	Topic	Attendees
	and fish and shellfish ecology		
	Shipping and navigation	Project update Vessel traffic methodology	Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA)
	Community panels x 3 (Sutherland, Caithness, Orkney)	Public consultation Introduction to Project Community engagement approach	Community Councils Development Trusts HIE
July 2022	Archaeology and cultural heritage (offshore and onshore)	Approach to consultation and baseline characterisation Approach to survey methodology	THC OIC University of the Highlands & Islands (UHI) Historic Environment Scotland (HES)
	Offshore ornithology	Project overview and update Bird surveys Key year 1 breeding season findings Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA) screening Scoping feedback	Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) NatureScot
	Traffic and access	Project update Onshore infrastructure design	THC
	ROUND 2a: Caithness and Sutherland summer shows: Durness Highland Gathering and Halkirk Highland Games	Public consultation Introduction to Project Capturing initial views	Local residents Visitors to the area Other local stakeholders
August 2022	ROUND 2b: Orkney summer shows: Dounby Show and County Show	Public consultation Introduction to Project Capturing initial views	Local residents Visitors to the area Other local stakeholders
	Geology and hydrology	Project update Onshore infrastructure design Baseline data Approach to scope of Flood Risk Assessment & Drainage Assessment Groundwater-dependent terrestrial ecosystems	Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA)
	Freshwater fisheries	Project update Community engagement Potential impacts from onshore activities Onshore impact assessment and mitigation Onshore scoping feedback Potential impacts from offshore activities Offshore impact assessment and mitigation Offshore scoping feedback	Fisheries Management Scotland (FMS) CDSFB NDSFB
	Quarterly update	Project update and lookahead	NatureScot MS-LOT
September 2022	ROUND 2c: Stromness Climate Café	Public consultation Introduction to Project Capturing initial views	Local residents Other local stakeholders
	Traffic and access	Counter points discussion EIA chapter	THC

Month/ year	Event/ Meeting topic	Topic	Attendees
	SLVIA and L&V	Survey update Preliminary survey findings Updated viewpoint list	NatureScot THC
	Shipping and navigation	Project overview and update Summer survey update Hazard identification (HAZID)	MCA Northern Lighthouse Board (NLB)
	Fish and shellfish ecology	Survey and HRA screening update Mitigation and monitoring	NatureScot OIC
	Commercial fisheries working group	Scoping responses Initial design freeze Request for fishing data	Various members of fishing organisations
October 2022	Marine mammals and megafauna	Survey update Baseline update Underwater noise modelling and assessment approach	NatureScot
	Socio-economic working group	Project update Marine Scotland guidance Community questionnaire Socio-economic Impact Assessment update Community benefit	Dounreay Site Restoration Limited (DSRL) Caithness Chamber of Commerce OIC HIE
	Shipping and navigation (HAZID review workshop)	Project introduction Risk assessment methodology Baseline features Navigational Hazards associated with commercial vessels, fishing vessels, and recreational vessels	Various members of fishing, and shipping and navigation organisations
	Physical and coastal processes, water and sediment quality, and benthic subtidal and intertidal ecology	Project update Survey update Marine physical and coastal processes Numerical modelling Assessment approach HRA screening Project design freeze	NatureScot OIC THC
November 2022	ROUND 3: public consultation events x 7 (Sutherland, Caithness, Orkney)	Public consultation Project update EIA approach Visualisations 3D model Report on early engagement Capturing further feedback	Local residents Other local stakeholders
	Onshore ecology	Project update Onshore Project Design Envelope (PDE) Survey update Survey results Key sensitivities and mitigation Approach to Impact Assessment	NatureScot
	Freshwater ecology	Project overview Onshore PDE 2022 fish habitat survey results Assessment approach Mitigation and monitoring	NatureScot CDSFB
	Quarterly update	Project update and lookahead	NatureScot MS-LOT
December 2022	Military and aviation	Discussion on project interaction	Space Hub Sutherland

Month/ year	Event/ Meeting topic	Topic	Attendees
January 2023	Commercial fisheries working group	Project update Offshore PDE summary Project Design Envelope Commercial fisheries Impact Assessment Restricted access to fishing grounds Displacement of fishing effort Potential interference with fishing activity Mitigation and research	Various members of fishing organisations
	Socio-economic working group	Project update Community consultation update Socio-economic Impact Assessment Supply chain and skills development	HIE OIC Visit Scotland Focus North Caithness Chamber of Commerce
	Community panels x 3 (Sutherland, Caithness, Orkney)	Public consultation Project update Community engagement approach	Community Councils Development Trusts HIE
	Onshore archaeology	Project update PDE Consultation Review of surveys Potential impacts upon designated assets and mitigation	THC HES
February 2023	One-to-one socio-economic stakeholder interviews	Exploration of issues raised during community consultation Impact of Project on socio-economic factors including housing, jobs, quality of life	Community Councils Development Trusts Local businesses Industry member bodies Visit Scotland
	Benthic ecology	Project update Benthic survey sampling strategy Survey results Habitat assessment summary Habitats within the Project area Intertidal survey Preliminary results	NatureScot
	Offshore ornithology	Project update Ornithology baseline EIA assessment outputs HRA update	NatureScot
	SLVIA	Present final layouts and worst-case scenarios Viewpoint photography Discussion on impact significance	NatureScot THC
	Shipping and navigation	Project update Winter survey update Discussion on Navigational Risk Assessment (NRA) NRA consultation summary Baseline- key navigational features Indicative turbine layout Main route deviations Vessel encounters	Chamber of Shipping (CoS) MCA NLB
	Traffic & access	Traffic surveys Routes and access points Construction programme / traffic generation	THC

Month/ year	Event/ Meeting topic	Topic	Attendees
	Offshore archaeology and cultural heritage	Project update Setting assessment – worst case scenario Long-term changes to the setting of onshore historic environment assets that reduces their value	THC OIC HES
	Onshore ornithology	Project update Survey update Key sensitivities and mitigation Approach to Impact Assessment	RSPB
March 2023	Quarterly update	Project update and lookahead	NatureScot MS-LOT
	Marine mammals and megafauna	Present final noise assessment Present initial EIA findings	NatureScot
	Socio-economic Working Group	Project update Impact assessment results	HIE OIC DSRL Focus North THC Visit Scotland
	Shipping and navigation	Project update NRA summary Survey summary	The Royal Yachting Association (RYA) Scotland
April 2023	SLVIA	Worst-case scenario and consideration of mitigation Visualisations	NatureScot
	Traffic and access	Traffic surveys Routes and access points Construction programme / traffic generation	Transport Scotland
	Offshore ornithology	Report to Inform Appropriate Assessment (RIAA) EIA assessment outputs HRA assessment outputs Derogation strategy	NatureScot MD-LOT
May 2023	ROUND 4: 1st round of Pre-Application Consultation (PAC) events x 7 (onshore/ offshore) (Sutherland, Caithness, Orkney)	Public consultation Project update EIA survey results Visualisations 3D model Cable corridor refinement Response to earlier feedback Onshore infrastructure proposal Obtain feedback on onshore infrastructure	Local residents Other local stakeholders
	SLVIA meeting with The Highland Council	Visualisation and enhancement approach National scenic areas and wild land areas	THC
	SLVIA	Visualisation and enhancement approach National scenic areas and wild land areas	NatureScot
	LVIA	Project update Fieldwork results Final viewpoint list and ZTV Landscape mitigation proposals Visualisations	THC

Month/ year	Event/ Meeting topic	Topic	Attendees
	LVIA	Follow up discussion from previous May meeting regarding the planting and screening methods for the onshore substation	THC
	Offshore ornithology meeting	RIAA draft results Approach to the established list of potential compensation measures Potential locations for predator control Actions ahead of application Biodiversity net gain opportunities	NatureScot MD-LOT
	Fish and shellfish ecology	Fish and shellfish ecology baseline Benthic, subtidal, and intertidal ecology Mitigation and monitoring HRA approach Summary of assessment	NatureScot
	Onshore archaeology meeting	Project update Landscape mitigation proposals List of viewpoints Visualisations Setting assessment fieldwork and outcomes	THC HES
	Meeting with Highlands and Islands Airport Limited (HIAL)	Project update Discussion on ports and harbours Discussion on turbine parts transport	HIAL
June 2023	Offshore ornithology	Displacement assessment Colony compensation Feedback from OIC	NatureScot MD-LOT
	ROUND 5: 2nd round of Pre-Application Consultation (PAC) events x 7 (onshore only) (Caithness)	Public consultation Project update Visualisations 3D model Onshore cable route refinement Substation update Response to earlier feedback	Local residents Other local stakeholders
	Quarterly update	Project update and lookahead	NatureScot MD-LOT
July 2023	Caithness and Sutherland summer shows: Durness Highland Gathering and Halkirk Highland Games	Public consultation Project update Community benefit Relationship building	Local residents Visitors to the area Other local stakeholders
August 2023	Orkney summer shows: Dounby Show and County Show	Public consultation Project update Community benefit Relationship building	Local residents Visitors to the area Other local stakeholders

Table 1: Summary timeline of consultation activities

1. Introduction

1.1 Introduction to Offshore Wind Power Limited

The West of Orkney Windfarm is being developed by Offshore Wind Power Limited (OWPL) which is a joint venture by three companies: Corio Generation, TotalEnergies and RIDG.

Global offshore wind developer Corio Generation has more than 30GW of projects in development across Europe, Asia-Pacific and the Americas. Its portfolio spans established and emerging markets, as well as floating and traditional fixed-foundation technologies. Corio is a Green Investment Group (GIG) portfolio company, operating on a standalone basis. GIG is a specialist green investor within Macquarie Asset Management, part of Macquarie Group.

TotalEnergies is a global multi-energy company that produces and markets energies: oil and biofuels, natural gas and green gases, renewables and electricity. Our more than 100,000 employees are committed to energy that is ever more affordable, cleaner, more reliable and accessible to as many people as possible. Active in nearly 130 countries, TotalEnergies puts sustainable development in all its dimensions at the heart of its projects and operations to contribute to the well-being of people.

RIDG (Renewable Infrastructure Development Group) was established as an independent, specialised offshore wind project development company with the knowledge and experience to identify, design and deliver high quality consented assets for strategic partners to build and operate. RIDG presents a simpler, leaner and more flexible approach to project development, one that draws upon the strengths of both established and emerging suppliers to deliver projects safely, efficiently and cost effectively.

1.2 The Project

The West of Orkney Windfarm aims to deliver around 2GW of electricity by constructing wind turbines approximately 30km off the west coast of Orkney and 25km from the north Sutherland coast, as illustrated in Figure 1. A grid connection agreement with National Grid will see electricity generated by the windfarm being exported to a new substation at Spittal, while the option to provide power to the proposed Flotta Hydrogen Hub is also being explored and shall be the subject of a future application.

With first power scheduled for 2029, the West of Orkney Windfarm is essential to meeting Scotland's offshore wind targets by 2030 and will play a key role in delivering Net Zero by 2045, benefitting our environment, people and the economy. The Project will be capable of powering the equivalent of more than two million homes and will help to decarbonise the UK's electricity system, saving around four million tonnes of carbon dioxide each year.

The Chapter 5 of the EIA Report provides the full Project Description.

1.3 Purpose of PAC Report

The purpose of this Pre-Application Consultation (PAC) Report is to provide an overview of the public consultation and stakeholder engagement activities undertaken by OWPL in relation to the proposed West of Orkney Windfarm. It includes a brief outline of the legislative context, a detailed description of the approach employed, and a summary of feedback received from stakeholders. Copies of materials used during the consultation are also appended. The PAC Report concludes with an explanation of OWPL's responses to how the feedback has been taken into account in the application.

Although the PAC Report focuses on the public consultation, it includes a summary of engagement and consultation with other stakeholders. Details of consultation undertaken with other stakeholders in the preparation of the consent applications are provide in the relevant Environmental Impact Assessment Reports and submitted alongside the applications

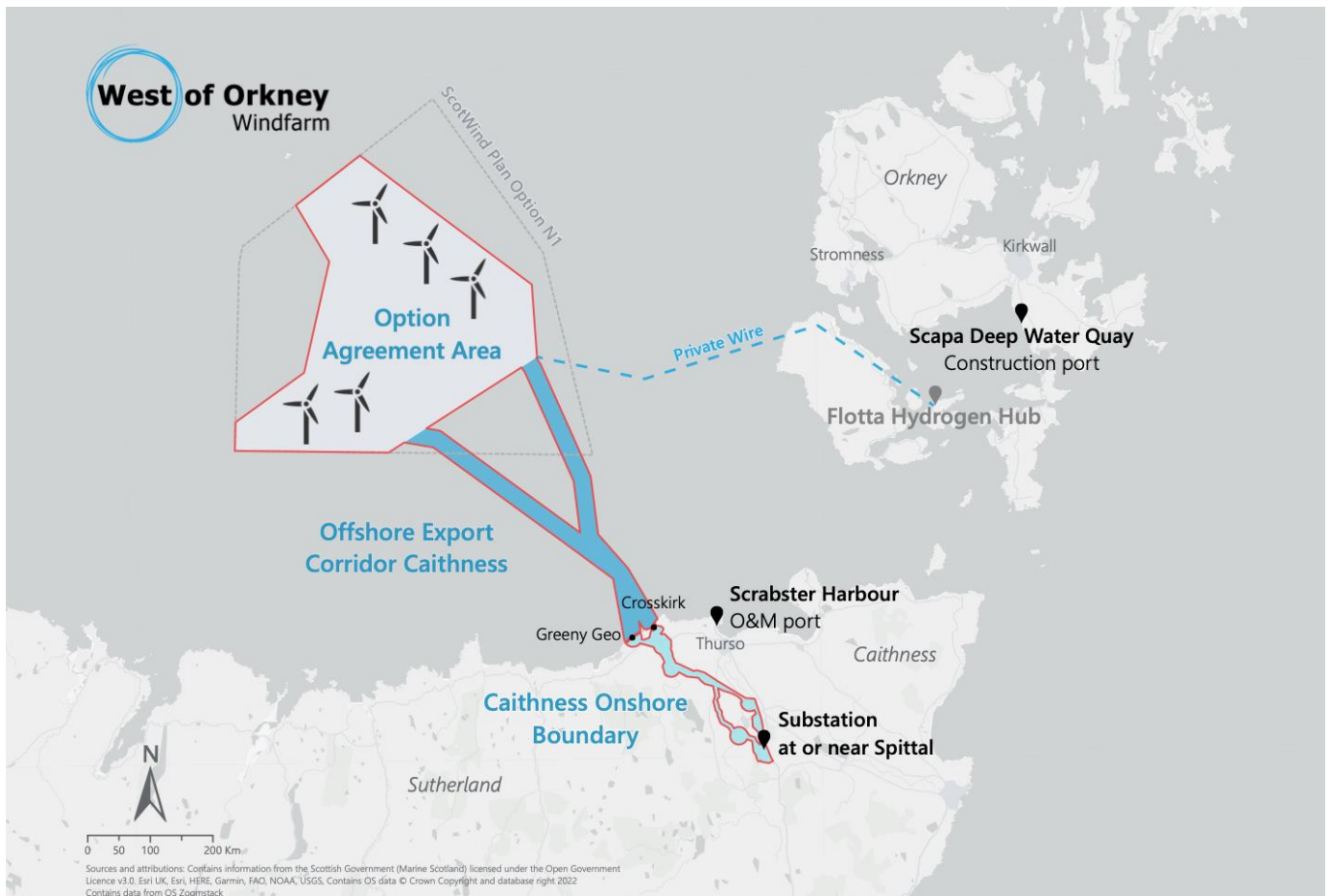


Figure 1: Location of the West of Orkney Windfarm

2. Regulatory framework

2.1 Our commitment to engagement

Public consultation and stakeholder engagement are important aspects of the Scottish planning and marine consenting system. Legislation and Scottish Government guidance aim to ensure that statutory and non-statutory consultees have opportunities to have their views considered throughout the development process. This section outlines this regulatory framework with brief reference to the wider consenting procedures and engagement best practice. Table 2 summarises our compliance with the relevant pre-application legislation and provides direction to associated evidence.

OWPL is fully committed to fulfilling and exceeding the requirements of this legislation and guidance in relation to community and wider stakeholder engagement and aims to deliver inclusive, meaningful engagement with consultees throughout all stages of the Project. We are keen to engage with a wide range of stakeholders with a view to addressing the effect that our projects may have on the environment and local communities by proactively responding to their needs, interests and concerns. As such, we began the engagement process at an early stage in the Project's development, and we will continue engaging throughout the construction stage should consent be granted.

2.2 Offshore consenting

The offshore elements of the West of Orkney Windfarm require consents under the Marine (Scotland) Act 2010, the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 and Section 36 of the Electricity Act 1989.

The application for the West of Orkney Windfarm requires an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) to identify and assess the potential environmental and socio-economic effects of the development. The EIA informs the design of the Project from an environmental perspective and identifies mitigation measures to minimise and manage the impacts of the Project on the surrounding environment. The output of the EIA is presented in an EIA Report which accompanies the licence application.

Sections 22 to 24 of the Marine (Scotland) Act 2010 requires pre-application consultation (PAC) to be undertaken for developments in Scottish territorial waters that are of a certain scale or involve particular works, in accordance with the Marine Licensing (Pre-application Consultation) (Scotland) Regulations 2013. Section 7 of the Regulations requires that at least one PAC event is carried out to allow statutory stakeholders and members of the public to provide comments to the applicant on the proposed licensable marine activity. Applicants must publish in a local newspaper a notice (PAC Notice) containing a description of the activity, details of where further information may be obtained, the date and place of the event and how and when comments should be submitted to the applicant.

Pre-application consultation is not considered to be a direct representation to the Scottish Ministers, but rather provides a mechanism for the public to provide feedback that can be addressed in the licence application and supporting EIA Report.

Pre-application consultation is not a requirement of the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009.

2.3 Onshore consenting

The onshore infrastructure requires planning permission from The Highland Council under the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 (as amended). The onshore planning application must also be supported by an EIA to consider the onshore environmental and socio-economic impact of the proposals. As the onshore infrastructure constitutes 'national development' under the provisions of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (Scotland) Regulations 2013, formal pre-application consultation is also required.

In a similar vein to offshore consenting, applicants must provide opportunities for stakeholders to comment on the proposals. However, the onshore Regulations require that the applicant holds at least TWO public events, with the second event no less than 14 days after the first event. Both events must be advertised through a PAC Notice published in a local newspaper at least 7 days prior to each event. The final event must provide feedback to the public on comments received.

As with offshore consenting, the pre-application consultation process is not considered to be a direct representation to the local authority, but allows the public to provide feedback that can be addressed in the planning application and supporting EIA Report.

2.4 Best practice guidance

OWPL is committed to significantly exceeding its statutory obligations as it seeks to build effective and long-term working relationships with the Project's stakeholders, including local communities. The Scottish Government's Consultation Good Practice Guide (2019) and Planning Advice Note PAN3/2010 Community Engagement provide advice to applicants on ways to

effectively engage with communities. The latter links directly to the Scottish Government's National Standards for Community Engagement and endorses the PAS SP=EED Framework (Successful Planning Equals Effective Engagement and Delivery)¹.

The SP=EED Framework provides a practical guide to undertaking effective engagement and is the primary model for this engagement strategy. Developed by Planning Aid for Scotland (now PAS), it is based around eight criteria for effective engagement (see Figure 2) which have underpinned our engagement.

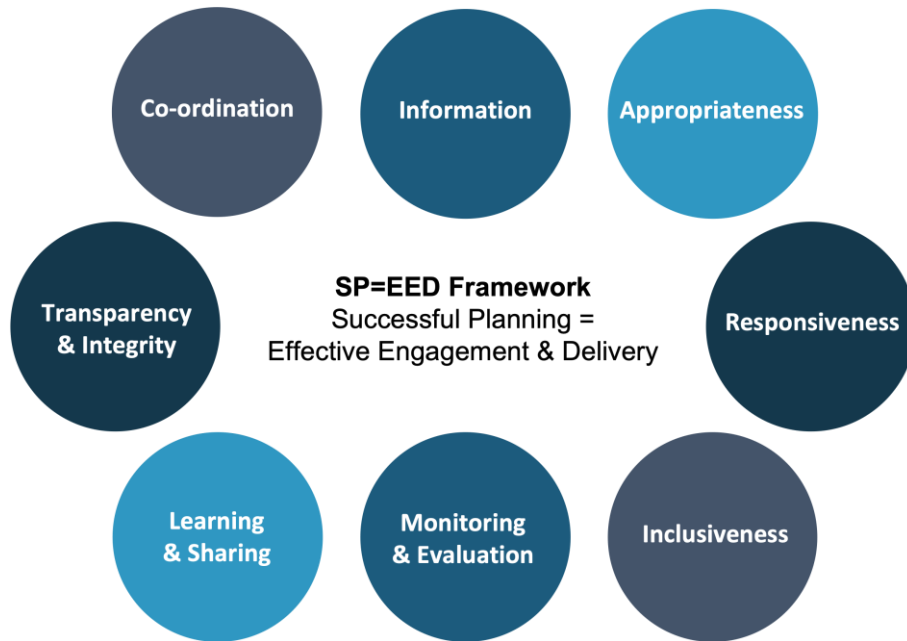


Figure 2: SP=EED engagement principles

The Scottish Government's Scottish Community Development Centre has recently produced updated guidance on how to engage with communities during and after the Covid-19 pandemic. It highlights issues which may be affecting communities that might make it more difficult for people to take part in engagement activity. The guide, called National Standards for Community Engagement: Engaging with our communities to support recovery and renewal directs users to online tools and resources to help address these issues and these sources have been consulted in devising the Community Engagement Plan.

2.5 Pre-application consultation compliance

Our pre-application consultation work is described in this PAC Report and submitted with the Marine Licence and planning applications to Scottish Ministers and The Highland Council, respectively. It provides an overview of our consultation work, demonstrating how we have fulfilled the statutory requirements for pre-application consultation and adhered to best practice principles. It articulates how we have given local communities opportunities to engage with us and how views raised during the process have influenced the development of the Project.

¹ <https://www.pas.org.uk/what-we-do/speed/>

Pre-Application Consultation (PAC) Report

Ref	Requirement	Compliance	PAC Report Reference
Marine (Scotland) Act 2010			
Section 23 (1)	A prospective applicant must give notice that an application for a marine licence is to be submitted	Pre-application Consultation (PAC) Notice - This notice was submitted to Marine Scotland on 16 th March 2023	Appendix 1
Section 23 (2)	A period of at least 12 weeks must elapse between giving the notice and the submission of the application	Notice submitted: 16 th March 2023 – a minimum of 12 weeks has therefore elapsed between the submission of the notice and the licence application in September 2023.	Appendix 1
Section 23 (3) (a) – (d)	The notice must contain: a) A description in general terms of the activity to be carried out b) A plan or chart showing the outline of the location at which the activity is to be carried out, which is sufficient to identify the location c) Details as to how the prospective applicant is to be contacted d) Such other information as may be prescribed by Scottish Ministers	All elements covered within PAC Notice (as summarised below) including a description of the proposed development and a map showing its location. Details of the consultation events and applicant contact details are clearly included in the notice. a) Description of general terms of activity: ‘...to construct an offshore windfarm and associated transmission infrastructure for the West of Orkney Windfarm. The proposed windfarm will have the potential to generate around 2GW of renewable energy and is located around 30km west of Orkney and 25km from the north coast of Scotland. The key offshore components of the Project are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Up to 125 x wind turbine generators with fixed foundations, a maximum tip height of 370m and a rotor diameter of between 236m and 330m • Minimum turbine spacing 944m to 1,320m (depending on rotor diameter) • Up to 5 x offshore substations • Inter-array cables buried at a maximum depth of 5m linking the wind turbines • Up to 5 x export cables to landfall sites at Greeny Geo and Crosskirk in Caithness’ b) Plan or chart of activity: See PAC Notice in Appendix 1 c) Details of how applicant is to be contacted: ‘To make comments or request further information, please contact: Email: info@westoforkney.com Postal address: Freepost FCHANGE Phone: 01786 820111 Further information can also be obtained by visiting the project website: https://www.westoforkney.com ’ d) Such other information as may be prescribed by Scottish Ministers: No further information was requested by Scottish Ministers	Appendix 1
Section 24 (1) and (2)	A pre-application consultation report must be prepared prior to submitting the application, and be in the prescribed format.	Five rounds of consultation were held during the pre-application stage/phase of the Project. In May 2023, we held our fourth round of consultation which was conducted in the statutorily prescribed format of Pre-Application Consultation (PAC). This included public events in 7 x locations. Further details can be found in section 7 of this report.	Section 7

Pre-Application Consultation (PAC) Report

Ref	Requirement	Compliance	PAC Report Reference
Marine Licensing (Pre-Application Consultation) (Scotland) Regulations 2013			
Regulation 6 (2)	The prospective applicant for a marine licence must give notification that an application for a marine licence is to be submitted to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) The Commissioners of Northern Lighthouses b) The Maritime and Coastguard Agency c) The Scottish Environment Protection Agency d) Scottish Natural Heritage e) Any delegate for a marine region (where the activity is wholly or partly to be carried out) 	Please see Appendix 2A for a list of those stakeholders notified.	Appendix 2 Appendix 2A
Regulation 7 (1) (a)	The prospective applicant for a marine licence must hold at least one pre- application consultation event at which persons identified in regulation 6(2) and members of the public may provide comments to the prospective applicant as regards the licensable marine activity to which the application for a marine licence is to relate	A series of formal PAC events was held in 7 x venues across Caithness, Sutherland and Orkney from 16 th to 25 th May 2023. All parties listed in Regulation 6 were invited to these events via e-mail. A leaflet advertising the events was also posted to 25,301 local residents and businesses in the consultation area. A written questionnaire was used to capture comments from stakeholders. This was augmented by note taking by members of the project team. All feedback was recorded on our stakeholder management system and actioned accordingly. The report includes a review of the comments received.	Appendix 2 Appendix 3
Regulation 7 (1)(b) – ECC amend	The prospective applicant must publish in a local newspaper a notice containing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. A description, including the location, of the licensable marine activity for which the marine licence is to be sought ii. Details as to where further information may be obtained iii. The date and place of the pre-application consultation event iv. A statement that comments made to the prospective applicant are not representations to the Scottish Ministers and that there will be an opportunity for representations to be made to the Scottish Ministers 	PAC Notice published in the <i>Caithness Courier</i> (15 th March 2023), <i>The Orcadian</i> (16 th March 2023) and the <i>John O’Groats Journal</i> (17 th March 2023) including a description of the proposed development and a map showing its location. Details of the consultation events and applicant contact details are clearly included in the Notice, as summarised below. i) Description of licensable marine activity: ‘...to construct an offshore windfarm and associated transmission infrastructure for the West of Orkney Windfarm. The proposed windfarm will have the potential to generate around 2GW of renewable energy and is located around 30km west of Orkney and 25km from the north coast of Scotland. The key offshore components of the Project are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Up to 125 x wind turbine generators with fixed foundations, a maximum tip height of 370m and a rotor diameter of between 236m and 330m • Minimum turbine spacing 944m to 1,320m (depending on rotor diameter) • Up to 5 x offshore substations • Inter-array cables buried at a maximum depth of 5m linking the wind turbines • Up to 5 x export cables to landfall sites at Greeny Geo and Crosskirk in Caithness’ 	Appendix 4

Pre-Application Consultation (PAC) Report

Ref	Requirement	Compliance	PAC Report Reference
		<p>ii) Details where further information can be obtained: 'To make comments or request further information, please contact: Email: info@westoforkney.com Postal address: Freepost FCHANGE Phone: 01786 820111 Further information can also be obtained by visiting the project website: https://www.westoforkney.com'</p> <p>iii) Date and place of PAC event: 'Offshore Wind Power Limited is holding a series of pre-application consultation events which will provide an opportunity for stakeholders, including local residents, to hear more about the project and make comments on the proposals.' (See Appendix 1 for full PAC Notice featuring table of dates and times of events)</p> <p>iv) Statement regarding representation to Scottish Ministers: 'As marine licence applications have not yet been submitted, written comments should be made to Offshore Wind Power Limited by 30th June 2023. Please note that comments made to Offshore Wind Power Limited are not representations to Scottish Ministers. Representations to Marine Scotland can be made when formal marine licence applications are made.'</p>	
Regulation 7 (2)	<p>A pre-application consultation event must be held no earlier than six weeks after the later of:</p> <p>a) The date on which the notification of the event is given; and</p> <p>b) The date of notification that an application for a marine licence is to be submitted</p>	<p>Pre-application events began 16th May 2023.</p> <p>a) Notification of the events was advertised on 15th/16th/17th March 2023.</p> <p>b) Notification that a marine licence application is to be submitted was issued on 16th March</p> <p>Time elapsed between beginning of PAC events and notifications was therefore more than six weeks.</p>	Appendix 1 Appendix 2 Appendix 4
Regulation 8	<p>A Pre-Application Report must be in the form prescribed as in Schedule 1.</p>	<p>The document constitutes the Pre-Application Consultation (PAC) Report. The form prescribed in Schedule 1 has been completed and is included at the beginning of this document.</p>	This document

Pre-Application Consultation (PAC) Report

Ref	Requirement	Compliance	PAC Report Reference
Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 (as amended)			
Section 35A (1)	Prior to submitting an application, an applicant must comply with Section 35B	Complied with as set out below under Section 35B. A request was not made to the local authority (The Highland Council) to confirm whether a PAN was a requirement as we were already aware that a PAN was required.	Appendix 5
Section 35B (2)	The prospective applicant must give notice (a proposal of application notice (PAN)) to the relevant planning authority that an application is to be submitted	The PAN was originally submitted to The Highland Council (THC) on 14 th November 2022. However, THC did not register the PAN and instead requested more detailed information about the proposed development. The PAN was subsequently re-submitted to THC on 20 th February 2023 and formally registered on 7 th March 2023.	Appendix 5 Appendix 5a
Section 35B (3)	A period of at least 12 weeks, but no more than 18 months must elapse between the giving of the notice and submitting the application	The onshore application is anticipated to be submitted in October 2023, which is more than 12 weeks but less than 18 months since the submission of the PAN to THC.	N/A
Section 35B (4) (a) – (d)	A PAN must contain the following information: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A general description of the development to be carried out; • The provision of a postal address for the site (if one applies); • A plan showing the outline of the site at which the development is to be carried out and sufficient to identify the site (if one applies); • Contact details for the prospective applicant 	The PAN included in Appendix 5 features: <p>(a) A description of the onshore infrastructure:</p> <p>‘Provision of onshore transmission infrastructure for an offshore windfarm, located approximately 28km off the Caithness coast and approximately 23km off the coast of Sutherland. The onshore proposal includes approximately 22km of underground cabling, a substation and associated infrastructure.</p> <p>As set out in the Scoping Report submitted to MS-LOT 2nd March 2022 the Caithness onshore infrastructure for the West of Orkney Windfarm will comprise of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cable landfalls - at Greeny Geo and/or Crosskirk, Caithness • One cable transition joint bay at each landfall • Up to 5 underground onshore cables, buried to a depth of 1m, subject to ground conditions. The underground cables shall extend for a distance of approximately 22km. During construction, a corridor up to 100m wide may be required, which includes haul roads, topsoil and turf storage. Soil and turf shall be reinstated after construction. • A new onshore substation, at or near the existing Spittal substation. This location was deemed suitable by National Grid and Scottish Hydro Electric Transmission Limited. The exact location and size will depend on ground conditions, landowner agreement and grid requirements. • Temporary construction compounds for the onshore substation and cable landfalls. • Potential new access tracks for the onshore export cables, landfalls and onshore substations. The exact location and number will depend on landowner agreement and shall be subject to approval from The Highland Council. 	Appendix 5

Pre-Application Consultation (PAC) Report

Ref	Requirement	Compliance	PAC Report Reference
		<p>The onshore substation will include the electrical equipment to connect the West of Orkney Windfarm to the grid. This may include switchgear, transformers, harmonic filters, reactive compensation devices, protection equipment, batteries and other auxiliary equipment.</p> <p>The entire footprint of the substation site to the edge of the fence line is likely to be an area of 24 hectares. The exact area of the substation building is yet to be determined. A temporary work compound is likely to require a further area of 15 hectares within the onshore substation area of search.</p> <p>Additional areas may be required for screening, drainage, biodiversity net gain etc. Any additional areas shall be within the infrastructure area and clearly marked in the application.'</p> <p>(b) The PAN form included postal addresses for the two cable landfall locations at Greeny Geo and Crosskirk and the substation location at Halkirk, near Spittal.</p> <p>(c) A plan showing the outline of the site was attached to the PAN. The plan used a red outline to show the extent of the proposed site.</p> <p>(d) Contact details for the applicant, Offshore Wind Power Limited, were included on the PAN form.</p>	
Section 35B (7) (a) and (b)	<p>The planning authority may [...] notify the prospective applicant that:</p> <p>a) The PAN is to be given to additional persons; and</p> <p>b) Additional consultation is required.</p>	<p>The Highland Council did not request additional notification/ consultation other than that set out in the PAN.</p>	N/A
Section 35C (1)	<p>A pre-application consultation report is required</p>	<p>This document constitutes a pre-application consultation report for the purposes of s35C (1)</p>	<p>This document</p>
Section 35C (2)	<p>The pre-application consultation report must be in the required format</p>	<p>This document constitutes a pre-application consultation report in the required format for the purposes of s35C (2) and Regulation 7(B) of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (Scotland) Regulations 2013.</p>	<p>This document</p>

Pre-Application Consultation (PAC) Report

Ref	Requirement	Compliance	PAC Report Reference
Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (Scotland) Regulations 2013			
Regulation 6	The PAN must contain an account of the consultation the applicant intends to undertake (in addition to those matters prescribed pursuant to Section 35B (4) of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 (as described above).	The PAN contained an account of the planned consultation as well as those consultation activities already undertaken. The subsequent letter (Appendix 5a) submitted to The Highland Council advised of a revision to the dates of the planned PAC events.	Appendix 5 Appendix 5a
Regulation 7 (1)	The prospective applicant is to consult every community council any part of whose area is within or adjoins the land where the proposed development is situated and provide a copy of the PAN.	The following community councils received a copy of the PAN and were also invited to join a Community Panel, set-up to facilitate consultation with local communities. Full details are provided in this report. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Caithness West • Halkirk • Watten • Bower • Castletown • Melvich • Strathy and Armadale • Bettyhill, Strathnaver and Altnaharra • Tongue • Durness • Dunnet and Canisbay • Kinlochbervie • Scourie 	Appendix 5 Appendix 6 Section 4
Regulation 7 (2) (a)	The prospective applicant must hold at least two public events where members of the public can make comments.	Five rounds of public consultation have been held, as follows: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 1st round – virtual public exhibition introducing the West of Orkney Windfarm launched 21st March 2022 with 2 x live question and answer webinars on 29th March 2022. The virtual exhibition remained live throughout the pre-application consultation period and was regularly updated with new content, as appropriate. 2. 2nd round – mobile exhibition at summer events in Durness (28th July 2022), Halkirk (29th July 2022), Dounby (11th August 2022), Kirkwall (13th August 2022) and Stromness (3rd September 2022) 3. 3rd round – public consultation exhibition events at 7 x venues in Caithness, Sutherland and Orkney (22nd to 30th November 2022) 4. 4th round – formal PAC events at 7 x venues in Caithness, Sutherland and Orkney (16th to 25th May 2023) 5. 5th round – formal PAC events (onshore proposal only) at 2 x venues in Caithness (20th to 21st June 2023) 	This report
Regulation 7 (2) (b)	The prospective applicant is to publish a notice in a local newspaper including: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) a description of, and the location of, the proposed development, 	A notice publicising the first PAC events was published in the <i>Caithness Courier</i> on 12 th March and the <i>John O' Groats Journal</i> on 14 th March 2023. A notice publicising the second PAC events was published in the <i>Caithness Courier</i> on 7 th June and the <i>John O' Groats Journal</i> on 9 th June 2023. These notices included:	Appendix 9 Appendix 10

Pre-Application Consultation (PAC) Report

Ref	Requirement	Compliance	PAC Report Reference
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> b) details as to how (including by what electronic means) further information may be obtained concerning the proposed development, c) the date and place of the public event, d) a statement explaining how, and by when, persons wishing to make comments to the prospective applicant relating to the proposal may do so, and e) a statement that comments made to the prospective applicant are not representations to the planning authority and if the prospective applicant submits an application there will be an opportunity to make representations on that application to the planning authority. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) 'The proposed transmission infrastructure will be brought onshore at two locations on the Caithness coast at Greeny Geo and Crosskirk. The proposal includes approximately 22km of underground cabling and a new substation and associated infrastructure at or near Spittal.' b) To make comments or request further information, please contact: 'Email: info@westoforkney.com Postal address: Freepost FCHANGE Phone: 01786 820 111 Further information can also be obtained by visiting the project website: https://www.westoforkney.com/' c) See details in Appendices 10 & 11 for details d) 'As a planning application has not yet been submitted for the proposed onshore infrastructure and new substation, written comments on the proposals should be made to Offshore Wind Power Limited by 30th June 2023. (Contact details provided, as above.)' e) 'Please note that comments made to Offshore Wind Power Limited are not representations to The Highland Council. Representations to The Highland Council can be made when a formal planning application is made.' 	
Regulation 7 (3)	Each public event must not be held earlier than 7 days after notification of the date and place of the public event and the final public event must be held at least 14 days after the first public event	<p>The first public PAC events were held 16th to 25th May 2023. The PAC Notice advertising these was published on 12th and 14th March 2023.</p> <p>The second public PAC events were held 20th and 21st June 2023. The PAC Notice advertising these was published on 7th and 9th June, 2023.</p>	Appendix 9 Appendix 10
Regulation 7 (4)	The prospective applicant must at the final public event provide feedback to members of the public in respect of comments received by the prospective applicant as regards the proposed development.	Exhibition boards featuring feedback to members of the public in respect of comments received by West of Orkney Windfarm were displayed at the final event. These were replicated on the virtual exhibition which was available via the Project website.	Appendix 11
Regulation 7B	<p>The applicant must submit a pre-application consultation report containing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) the dates on which, and places where, public events were held b) a description of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) any additional consultation or notification required by the planning authority ii) any additional steps taken by the prospective applicant to consult with members of the public as regards the proposed development 	<p>This document constitutes a pre-application consultation report, addressing all relevant points including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Dates and places of public events b) No additional consultation was requested by The Highland Council, however the Project team voluntarily carried out extensive additional consultation, as described in this report. c) A full list of stakeholders consulted can be found in Appendix 2a 	This report Appendix 2a

Pre-Application Consultation (PAC) Report

Ref	Requirement	Compliance	PAC Report Reference
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> c) a list of bodies, groups and organisations who were consulted by the prospective applicant d) evidence as to how the prospective applicant carried out the activities described e) copies of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) any materials sent to consultees ii) any materials provided to those attending a public event, and iii) any visual presentation shown or displayed at a public event f) photographs of any display boards or models at public events g) confirmation as to whether consultees and attendees at public events were informed that pre-application consultation does not remove the right or the potential need to comment on the final application once it is made to the planning authority i) a summary of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) the written responses to consultations, and ii) views raised at public events including an indication of the number of written responses received and the number of persons who attended the public events j) an explanation of how the prospective applicant took account of views raised during the pre-application consultation process, and k) an explanation of how members of the public were given feedback on consideration of the views raised during the pre-application consultation process. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> d) Evidence detailing how consultation was carried out is provided in Section xx of the report e) Copies of materials sent to consultees, provided to those attending public events and displayed at face-to-face and virtual events are appended to this report f) PDFs of display boards presented at each event have been hosted on the bespoke virtual exhibition at https://www.westoforkney.com/virtualexhibition. Materials used at public events are also provided in the Document Library on the Project website (https://www.westoforkney.com/document-library) and can be found appended to this report. Photographs of the events are included in this report. g) A statement was displayed at the event and featured on the community questionnaire advising attendees that their comments would be received by West of Orkney Windfarm only and that they would have an opportunity to make representations to The Highland Council following submission of a planning application. i) A summary and number of written responses received, views raised, and attendees at the events is provided in Sections 4-8 of this report. j) Further information on how we took account of views raised can be found in Sections 4-8 of this report. k) Further information on how members of the public were given feedback on the prospective applicant's consideration of the views raised during the pre-application consultation process can be found in Sections 4-8 of this report. 	

Table 2: Compliance with legislation

3. Pre-Application Consultation strategy

3.1 Commitment to engagement

OWPL is fully committed to achieving the highest standards of stakeholder engagement and has taken proactive steps to ensure success in this regard including the appointment of specialist facilitation and engagement consultants, Facilitating Change (UK) Limited. Facilitating Change has an extensive track record of delivering successful stakeholder engagement activities in relation to offshore wind in Scotland, including programmes for Neart na Gaoithe and Inch Cape offshore windfarms. It has supported OWPL in applying best practice engagement principles and delivering an effective programme of consultation on the West of Orkney Windfarm.

3.2 Engagement objectives

The West of Orkney Windfarm stakeholder engagement strategy sought to deliver the following objectives:

- To establish positive long-term relationships with all stakeholders
- To remove or reduce delays in consenting
- To deliver the best project possible based on a fully informed design process which accesses local knowledge and specialist input from those stakeholders ideally placed to add value to the proposals
- To meet and potentially exceed the requirements of the legislative framework.

3.3 Stakeholder Engagement Strategy

We fully recognise that early engagement is critical to ensuring that stakeholders have a realistic opportunity to shape proposals in a meaningful way. We therefore developed our Stakeholder Engagement Strategy (SES) during the process of preparing our ScotWind bid which allowed us to initiate engagement at the earliest possible stage in the Project. The SES was an internal document which was then used to guide our best practice engagement activities across all stakeholder groups.

Our delivery strategy for the engagement was based on the premise of consulting on proposals at key stages of the development process so that members of the public and other key stakeholders were given a chance to raise their views on the proposals before the final design stage. This facilitated meaningful and informed feedback which has genuinely influenced the development of the Project, allowing our team to take account of a number of locally important issues and concerns.

To best achieve our aims, we devised an engagement strategy to consult as many people as possible, focusing on getting views from a diverse range of groups. To achieve this, we endeavoured to be inclusive by design; supplementing traditional stakeholder engagement activities, such as public exhibitions in town halls, with dynamic outreach events and online methods. Rather than only making the consultation materials and associated community questionnaire available to participants who attended public consultation events, we took an iterative approach to sharing this information. For example, attending existing community events in the summer allowed us to access a much broader demographic including younger people and those in full-time education or employment as well as minority groups.

In a similar vein, by delivering leaflets to all local residents in the lead up to our more formal consultation events, we were able to share information about the project, direct people to online sources (including the virtual exhibition) and invite people to complete the survey remotely. We also provided other routes to provide feedback, including a Freepost address, a dedicated email and a telephone helpline.

The Community Panels offered further scope to enhance our inclusivity as we consulted them at every stage of our engagement to ascertain what would work best in their local communities and to understand what their specific communication needs might be. Through their support, we were able to select appropriate venues and timings for our events and advertise our consultation through posters and third-party social media. We specifically scheduled our consultation events to incorporate periods of the day that would allow working and non-working people to attend.

3.4 Community Engagement Plan

The West of Orkney Windfarm Community Engagement Plan (CEP) (Appendix 13) was initially devised during the ScotWind bid preparation process and it was refined following bid award before being released and widely shared in June 2022. The CEP has been a working document used to guide the community engagement process. It was also subject to consultation with community stakeholders to enhance its effectiveness and ensure that the proposed approach was appropriate to the engagement and communication needs of local stakeholders. The draft CEP was published on the West of Orkney Windfarm website, distributed to relevant Community Councils and Development Trusts, and shared with regulatory and strategic stakeholders.

3.5 eBase

eBase is a digital platform which can be used to streamline environmental assessments and has key functionalities such as EIA management, stakeholder database and management, and report creation. Using eBase, OWPL have created a stakeholder library of over 300 stakeholders ranging from members of the public to government bodies. To date, there are over 700 communications logged in to the system, including meetings, emails, and phone calls. Meeting minutes were captured during the stakeholder meetings and consultee feedback and take away actions were recorded and input in to eBase. The meeting minutes were finalised after being reviewed internally and then by consultees. eBase was checked regularly to ensure that communications were up to date and actions were being closed out.

3.6 Consultation programme

The public consultation and engagement programme was primarily delivered across five active rounds, and these are outlined below. The rounds were augmented with ongoing consultation activities including meetings with specific individuals and stakeholder groups, a permanently live virtual exhibition featuring the most up-to-date available information about the Project, and an online version of the Community and Visitor Questionnaire. Our dedicated email address, phone line, and Freepost address were all open to enquiries for the duration of the consultation. We also took account of feedback about the consultation process itself during and after each round of the consultation and used this information to inform subsequent rounds and activities.

We are continuing to engage with the local community as well as a wide variety of other stakeholders as the Project progresses.

3.6.1 Round 1 – Launch of West of Orkney Windfarm

Round 1 of the consultation was held in March 2022, shortly after OWPL were awarded the site, and was aimed at introducing the West of Orkney Windfarm to all stakeholder groups. COVID restrictions and concerns at the time meant that this round took the form of a virtual ‘town hall’ exhibition augmented by live online question and answer webinars. The consultation was advertised in local newspapers, promoted through press releases and radio interviews, and announced via letters and emails to known stakeholders.

Round 1 also saw the establishment of three Community Panels in Orkney, Caithness and Sutherland where 26 Community Councils and 6 Development Trusts were invited to join their local Panel. The first meeting of the Community Panels was held to share early information about the West of Orkney Windfarm and to introduce community leaders to key members of the Project team. The Community Panels were consulted on our engagement approach and provided us with feedback on our Community Engagement Plan.

3.6.2 Round 2 – Introduction to wider stakeholders

The second round of the consultation focused on a community roadshow to introduce the proposed West of Orkney Windfarm to a wider audience with a broader demographic. This involved taking a mobile exhibition to a series of local summer events including Highland games and agricultural shows across Sutherland, Caithness and Orkney in July, August and September 2022. The exhibition featured indicative information about our proposals as well as children’s activities to raise awareness and engage all ages.

3.6.3 Round 3 – Project update/ Identification of issues

Round 3 of the consultation was held in November 2022 and primarily took the form of a public exhibition held in seven venues in Sutherland, Caithness and Orkney. The exhibition featured an update on our proposals, preliminary findings from survey work associated with our environmental assessments, and visualisations of what the Project might look like from different viewpoints. Attendees were also able to view an interactive, computer-generated 3D model of the West of Orkney Windfarm and associated onshore infrastructure to see how it might look from their own chosen locations.

A key component of Round 3 was to identify and understand local questions and concerns ahead of formal PAC events. We therefore presented the initial results from previous community consultation activities including our Community Visitor Questionnaire which had been running since Project launch in March 2022. This allowed us to further explore the issues raised through discussions with attendees.

Following the events, we subsequently held a series of individual one-to-one interviews with community representatives and members of the local business community to investigate some of the key themes in more detail. These interviews were invaluable in informing the wide socio-economic assessment, our approach to developing the community benefit fund, and the content of our PAC event materials.

3.6.4 Round 4 – First round of PAC events

The fourth round of the consultation constituted our first formal Pre-Application Consultation (PAC) events, in accordance with the Marine (Scotland) Act 2010, the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 (as amended) and their associated Regulations. We took our updated public exhibition to seven venues across Caithness, Sutherland and Orkney where we presented our finalised proposals and outlined our proposed mitigation measures in response to the Environmental Impact

Assessments and feedback from stakeholders. Again, we brought the interactive 3D model which featured our refined designs for people to view.

Feedback from attendees continued to be captured through our Community and Visitor Questionnaire as well as feedback forms for staff to complete following conversations with visitors. Round 4 also saw the launch of two further community questionnaires: one focusing on the onshore infrastructure associated with the Project and a second seeking ideas around the proposed West of Orkney Windfarm community benefit fund.

3.6.5 Round 5 – Second round of PAC events

The final formal round of consultation comprised the second PAC events required by the town and country planning legislation and therefore focused on the onshore infrastructure. These events were held in two locations in Caithness in June 2023. Although the focus was on the onshore aspects of the Project, the exhibition also included display materials presented at the first PAC events in May in order to provide context for attendees.

The primary purpose of Round 5 was to provide feedback to stakeholders in relation to comments received about the proposed development. The exhibition materials therefore concentrated on responding to comments and answering questions raised about the proposed onshore infrastructure including ideas for screening and environmental mitigations.

3.7 Aims of consultation

The five rounds of consultation were designed to engage with key stakeholder groups, including local communities, landowners and individual residents; inviting their feedback on the proposals. Our strategy for these rounds was aimed at fulfilling the statutory obligations outlined in section 2 of this report and was designed to ensure that the public and other key stakeholders:

- Were able to engage directly with members of the Project team, virtually and in person
- Had access to information in a timely manner as well as opportunities to ask questions
- Could discuss the proposals and put forward their views on them
- Remained confident that the issues they raised would be considered
- Played an active role in developing and influencing the proposals
- Received timely responses to specific queries and were informed about our consideration of the views they raised, including any changes to our proposals

The consultation also provided an opportunity for Scottish companies and local businesses to register their interest in providing goods or services to the West of Orkney Windfarm through our online Supply Chain Registration Form which was made available via a QR code at all of our events.

3.8 Broader engagement

In addition to engaging with communities, we have also engaged with a range of other stakeholders who may have an influence over the proposals or be impacted by them. This engagement is primarily documented in the relevant chapters of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Report.

3.9 Who we consulted

During our consultation and engagement programme, we invited responses from a range of stakeholders including the local community, landowners, regulators, statutory and non-statutory bodies, and environmental organisations. We invited them to our virtual and in-person events via mail drops, advertisements and articles in local newspapers, social media posts, emails and posters in local venues and other locations. A full list of stakeholders that we invited to engage is provided in Appendix 2a and examples of invitations are included in Appendices 3, 4, and 9.

Figure 3 illustrates the key stakeholder groups engaged. It is worth noting that there is considerable overlap between the groups. We also discovered during the consultation process that some individual stakeholders fulfil more than one role within their local community and economy. This had the positive impact of facilitating the exploration of shared agendas and identifying synergies which will support the delivery of key benefits should the West of Orkney Windfarm be consented.

The focus of the engagement varied during the evolution of the Project, with greater emphasis on some stakeholder groups at certain stages in the process. This is expected to endure as we continue our consultation and engagement throughout the progression of the Project.

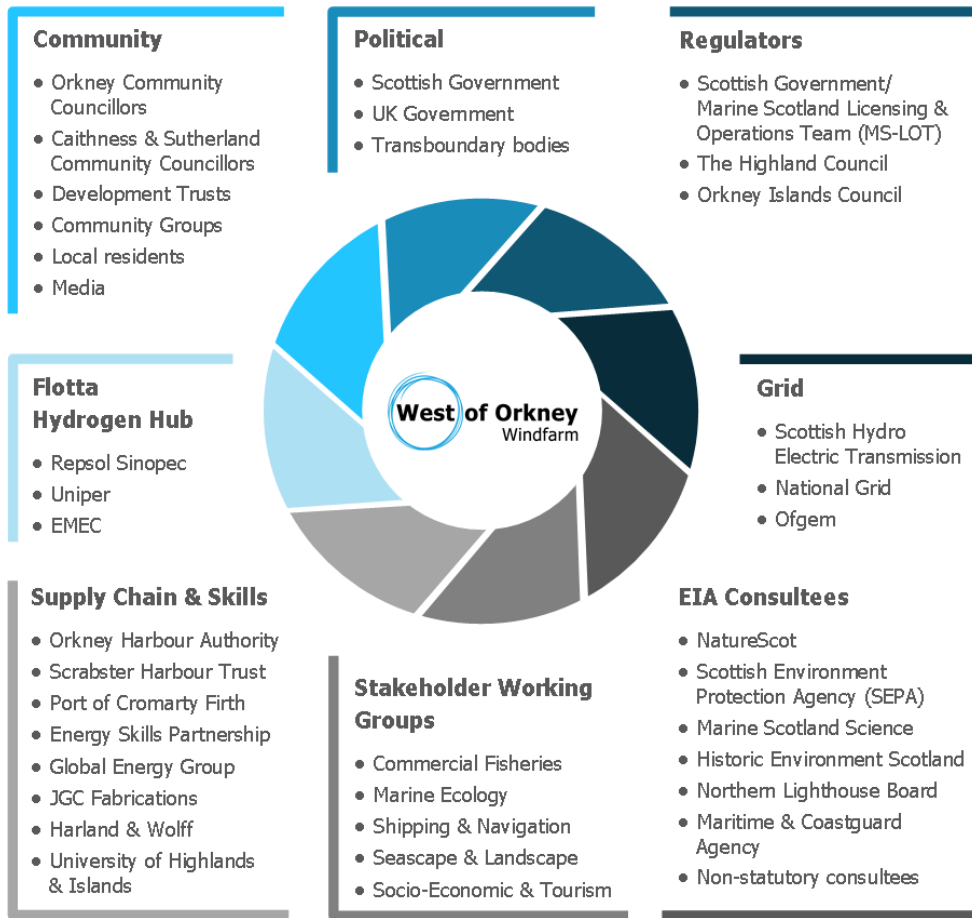


Figure 3: Key stakeholder groups

3.10 Ongoing community and stakeholder engagement

As indicated above, we have engaged with statutory and non-statutory consultees from an early stage in the Project’s evolution. We have continued to consult these stakeholders through a wide variety of traditional and innovative stakeholder activities, including virtual exhibitions, live webinars, mobile exhibitions, village hall events, an information session at a festival, presentations at conferences and supply chain seminars.

The West of Orkney Windfarm is committed to engaging with stakeholders across the education sector, to help develop the young workforce across Caithness, Sutherland and Orkney. To this end, we have worked closely with the University of Highlands and Islands (UHI) and three other ScotWind developers to fund a significant expansion to UHI’s science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) outreach programme. The investment will allow the employment of eight part-time and two full-time STEM coordinators working in early years settings and primary schools to support teachers in delivering STEM topics in an engaging way.

Engaging with the local supply chain is also a key aspect of maximising the long-term economic and social benefits the Project will bring. We have organised and participated in various supply chain events and workshops, including Meet the Developer activities and delivering presentations at the All Energy and Scottish Renewables conferences. The West of Orkney Windfarm has also joined the Deepwind Cluster, the Caithness Chamber of Commerce and the Orkney Renewable Energy Forum (OREF) to engage further with the local supply chain across the north of Scotland to maximise the opportunities for local businesses during both construction and the longer-term operations of the Project. In addition, engagement with the Orkney Harbour Authority led to them hosting a static exhibition about the West of Orkney Windfarm in their Kiln Corner office in Kirkwall which is open to the public.

Community Councils and local Development Trusts play a key part in ensuring the effectiveness of the engagement programme and identifying opportunities for enhancing the benefits the Project can deliver. They will also be critical in developing a robust and meaningful community benefit fund which can achieve genuine and lasting benefits for local communities. We have invested significant time and energy in setting up and maintaining our three Community Panels in Sutherland, Caithness and

Orkney through emails, virtual panel meetings and one-to-one discussions. This engagement has proved invaluable in shaping our consultation activities and planning future approaches to the Project’s community benefit fund.

As we seek to build long-term and effective working relationships with all of our stakeholders, we fully recognise the need for openness and transparency during our engagement. At all of our public events where we have engaged with local communities, we have informed participants that pre-application consultation does not remove the right or the potential need to comment on the final offshore Marine Licence applications or the onshore planning applications once they are submitted to Scottish Ministers and The Highland Council, respectively. We have also let attendees know that they can register for Project updates by completing the Community and Visitor Questionnaire and that, once the applications are submitted, they can be viewed and commented upon on the relevant consenting authority’s website. If consultees are registered for updates, they will be notified when this opportunity arises and copies of key documents will be available on the Project website.

Notice of the applications will also be provided as required by the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 (as amended), the Marine (Scotland) Act 2010, and the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 and publicised in accordance with the relevant EIA Regulations in local and national publications.

The tools we have used for the ongoing community and stakeholder engagement are illustrated in Figure 4:



Figure 4: Ongoing engagement tools

3.11 Consultation zone

We sought to engage all residents and stakeholders that might be impacted by the West of Orkney Windfarm by establishing a wide consultation zone based on proximity to both the offshore and onshore infrastructure. The consultation zone was aligned with local Community Council boundaries as illustrated in Figure 5.

3.12 Consultation period

The West of Orkney Windfarm Project team recognises the importance of early engagement which is why we launched our public consultation process as soon after site award as was reasonably practicable. Since our first event in March 2022, we have held a total of 29 events, spanning a 16-month period.

The dates of our key public consultation activities were as follows:

21 st March 2022	Launch of virtual consultation exhibition
29 th March 2022	Online question & answer webinars
28 th – 29 th July 2022	Mobile exhibition at Highland Games - Sutherland & Caithness
11 th – 13 th August 2022	Mobile exhibition at agricultural shows - Orkney
3 rd September 2022	Mobile exhibition at Climate Festival - Orkney
22 nd – 30 th November 2022	Public exhibitions at 7 x venues - Caithness, Sutherland, Orkney
16 th – 25 th May 2023	Formal PAC events (offshore and onshore) at 7 x venues - Caithness, Sutherland, Orkney

20th – 21st June 2023 Formal PAC events (onshore) at 2 x venues – Caithness
 28th – 29th July 2023 Mobile exhibition at Highland Games - Sutherland & Caithness
 10th – 12th August 2023 Mobile exhibition at agricultural shows - Orkney

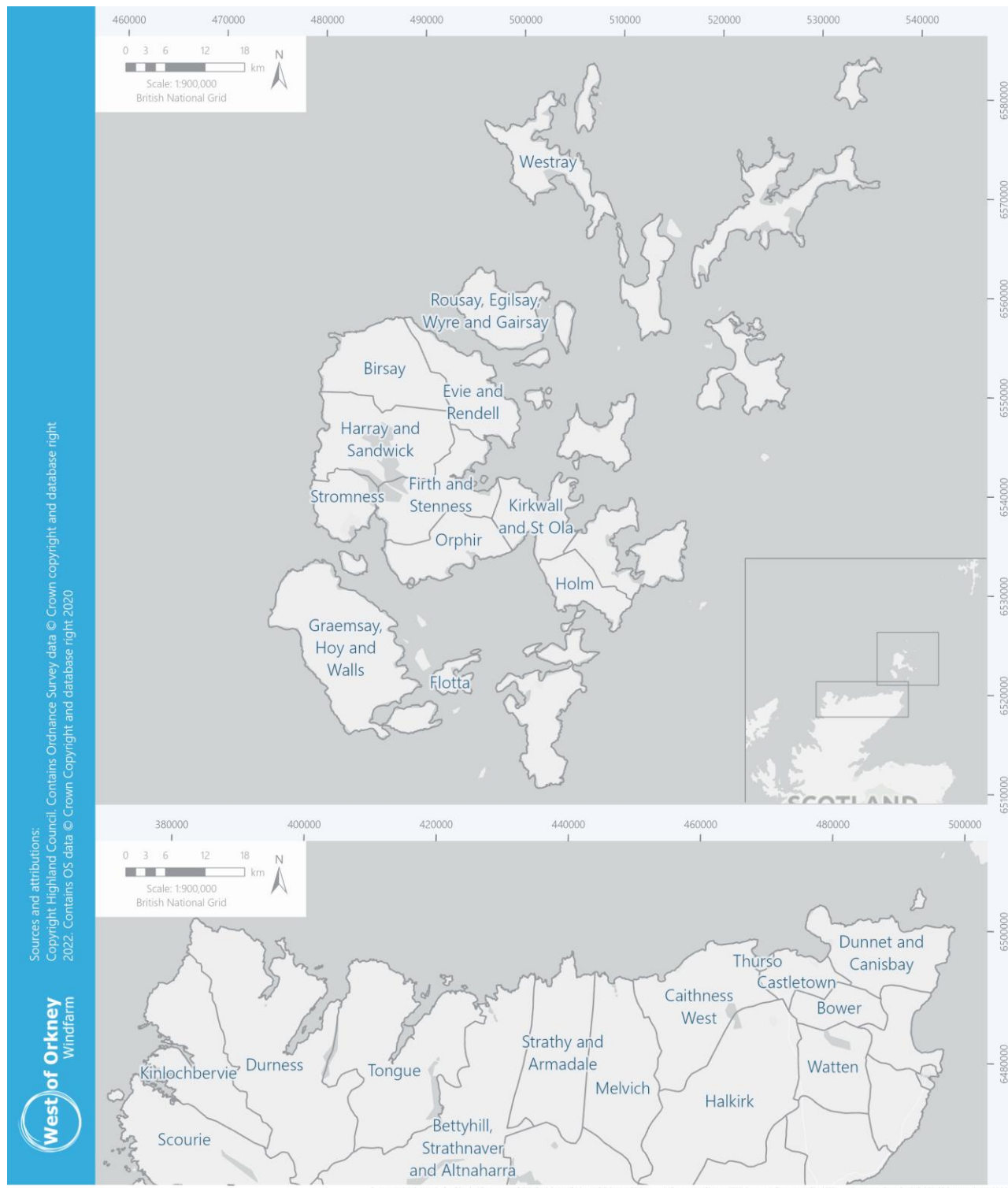











Figure 5: Consultation zone

3.13 Availability of information

Prior to the first round of consultation, we submitted a Scoping Report to Scottish Ministers, The Highland Council and Orkney Islands Council covering both the offshore and onshore elements of the proposals. The Scoping Report was also made available on our website for the duration of the consultation period. The purpose of the Scoping Report was to:

- Support a request for a formal Scoping Opinion from Scottish Ministers, anticipating that this would take account of consultees’ views on the Scoping Report
- Explain the background to the Project, including the consenting process
- Provide stakeholders with information on the proposals, enabling engagement on the key topics addressed in the Scoping Report
- Detail the baseline data sources and assessment methodologies that informed the report
- Outline the approach to scoping and methodology used to appraise potential options
- Clarify the next steps for the proposals.

Local people were notified of the location of information availability and consultation activities via a range of routes as illustrated below. Following analysis of the feedback received during each round of consultation, brief consultation reports were prepared summarising key points of interest and concern and highlighting any emerging themes. Individual queries were discussed by the stakeholder engagement team to identify queries that may be of interest to a wider audience and then responded to directly. This iterative review process allowed the Project team to ensure that future activities addressed common themes, concerns and interests, where possible.

 <p>Posters promoting events and directing people to key information sources were displayed at key local venues including shops and businesses</p>	 <p>Community Panels provided liaison points and helped to share information with local communities</p>	 <p>Local newspapers Adverts promoting events were placed in: The Orcadian Caithness Courier John O’Groats Journal</p>
 <p>Mail drop Leaflets advertising our events and sharing contacts details for feedback were sent to all addresses within the consultation zone</p>	 <p>Project website hosted updates, a document library, and links to other information was set up at the start of the consultation period</p>	 <p>Virtual exhibition replicated face-to-face events and was updated regularly during the consultation</p>
 <p>Press releases to relevant media outlets promoted consultation activities and provide Project updates</p>	 <p>Social media posts were issued and shared via the Project partners, Community Panels and other stakeholder groups</p>	 <p>Emails sent inviting numerous stakeholder organisations and individuals to attend all consultation events</p>

3.14 Materials and resources

Our team used a variety of materials and resources to engage with consultees. We deployed these across various platforms, including online, traditional media, and direct marketing. We endeavoured to maintain consistency in our branding and messaging to make the West of Orkney Windfarm easily recognisable and to avoid confusion with other initiatives. We also sought to use plain English and avoid jargons and unexplained acronyms, where possible.

A sample of the materials used is provided in Figure 6. All of the materials and resources that we used are provided in the appendices to this report.

Online invitation to webinars displayed on virtual exhibition



Front cover of mail drop leaflet delivered to local residents



Advert in Halkirk Highland Games programme



Posters displayed in public buildings and local shops



Figure 6: Examples of materials used

3.15 How to get in touch

We provided a dedicated contact point for the West of Orkney Windfarm before the first round of consultation in March 2022, enabling stakeholders to easily contact our team via the following channels:

- Phone: 01786 820 111
- Email: info@westoforkney.com
- Post: FREEPOST FChange

The West of Orkney Windfarm Stakeholder Assistant monitored the dedicated email inbox and shared any emails received with the Stakeholder Manager and Development Manager who discussed and agreed how best to respond accordingly.

In addition to the above, the Community and Visitor Questionnaire and later Community Questionnaire – Onshore Infrastructure were available in hard copy at events and online via our website and dedicated QR code. During the events, staff completed a proforma Feedback Form following discussions with attendees.

3.16 Processing responses and correspondence

We logged and recorded all consultation responses for analysis. Our team individually assessed all feedback and correspondence to determine how best to respond. Where requested, feedback was followed up directly with specific stakeholders and further information provided, as appropriate.

The paper and online questionnaires included a statement informing respondents that the survey was anonymous and that all results would be collated and treated confidentially. It was explained that contact details would only be retained for the purpose of providing project updates and would be deleted thereafter. A data protection statement was included which advised respondents that any personal data they provided would be processed and stored in line with the General Data Protection Regulations. If respondents provided contact details, then these were added to the secure stakeholder database so that they could receive Project updates.

Feedback and written comments were processed, as follows:

- Verbal (face-to-face) and telephone feedback was recorded on paper forms, which we used to identify key themes for our consultation reports so that they could be addressed and actioned accordingly.
- Email submissions also informed these themes and were recorded in our bespoke stakeholder database, eBase. The content of these submissions was discussed by the stakeholder engagement team and a decision was made regarding how best to respond. Individual responses typically were made by the Development Manager, Stakeholder Manager, or Stakeholder Assistant. In instances where additional input was required from elsewhere in the Project team, this was coordinated and followed up by the Stakeholder Assistant who was also responsible for maintaining eBase.
- All formal meetings, including the Community Panels, in-depth interviews, live webinars, and individual meetings with key community representatives were minuted and these minutes were saved to eBase. The content of these discussions was also used to identify and further explore recurring themes as well as to shape our engagement approach.

- Online and hard copy questionnaires were reviewed by the Stakeholder Manager before being discussed by the stakeholder engagement team to determine whether follow-up actions were required. Feedback and comments provided in the questionnaires were used to inform our understanding of the key themes and to guide subsequent engagement activities.

3.17 Approach to analysis

Our approach was to analyse and report response data in a way that allowed the views raised to be easily understood. We considered all comments, queries and concerns, allocating them to existing issues or identifying them as a new issue. Our approach enabled the quick identification of stakeholders' main issues, which we classified by theme.

3.18 Quality assurance

Ensuring the effectiveness of the engagement involved regularly reviewing processes and outputs to highlight particularly successful approaches and identify any gaps in the engagement plan. This allowed us to verify that the stakeholder engagement strategy continued to comply with the principles of the SP=EED framework. Tests for inclusivity and representativeness included reviewing the demographic profile of community stakeholders who participated in the engagement against the profile of the target populations as a whole. By adopting this process of continuous improvement, alterations were made to the engagement strategy to address any deficiencies.

In addition to the above, we carried out a number of quality assurance procedures at the collation and analysis stage. In each round of consultation, we consulted with community representatives to ascertain whether our approach was appropriate and our Stakeholder Manager oversaw the analysis to ensure the consistent application of our methodology.

4. First round of consultation

4.1 Launching the West of Orkney Windfarm

In March 2022, we launched our public consultation on the Project with a virtual exhibition and two live question and answer webinars. The proposals included the following offshore and onshore elements:

4.1.1 Offshore array

- Up to 125 wind turbine generators occupying approximately 50% of the Option Agreement Area and with a maximum tip height of 370 metres
- Turbine foundations/ supporting structures – fixed or floating
- Up to five offshore substation platforms
- Inter-array cables linking the wind turbines and offshore substation platforms

4.1.2 Offshore export infrastructure

- Up to five export cables to Caithness
- Up to five export cables to Flotta, Orkney. These will cross both the offshore area west of Orkney and Scapa Flow and include onshore elements across the island of Hoy and potentially Fara

4.1.3 Caithness onshore infrastructure

- Onshore substation located at or near to the existing Scottish Hydro Electric Transmission (SHE Transmission) Spittal substation
- Up to five underground cables

4.1.4 Orkney onshore infrastructure

- Onshore substation located near to the existing Flotta Oil Terminal and proposed Flotta Hydrogen Hub
- Up to five underground cables to Flotta, across the islands of Hoy and potentially Fara

4.2 Consultation format

The purpose of the consultation was to introduce the West of Orkney Windfarm to all stakeholder groups, particularly local communities, and to seek people's views on the proposals, giving the public the chance to influence the development of the Project and enabling the team to identify important local issues or areas of concern.

Prior to the first round of consultation, we produced a Scoping Report which explained the need for the Project, how the site had been selected, how options had been considered, and the approach to identifying the most appropriate landfall site(s), substation location, and cable corridor route. The Scoping Report was submitted to Marine Scotland, Orkney Islands Council and The Highland Council and was also published on the dedicated West of Orkney Windfarm website.

Covid restrictions and concerns at the time meant that this round of consultation took the form of a virtual 'town hall' exhibition, launched on 21st March 2022, and augmented by two live online question and answer webinars on 29th March 2022 (12noon – 2pm and 6pm – 8pm). The consultation was advertised in local newspapers (The Orcadian, John O'Groats Journal and Caithness Courier), promoted through press releases and radio interviews, and announced via emails and letters to known stakeholders including 26 Community Councils and 104 strategic stakeholders.

The online virtual 'town hall' was free to access and no registration or sign-up was required. Visitors were invited to provide feedback via the Community and Visitor Questionnaire or by emailing the dedicated inbox, telephoning the Project information line or writing to the Freepost address. There was also an option to register with the West of Orkney Windfarm supply chain database to be kept up-to-date on employment and supply chain opportunities associated with the Project.

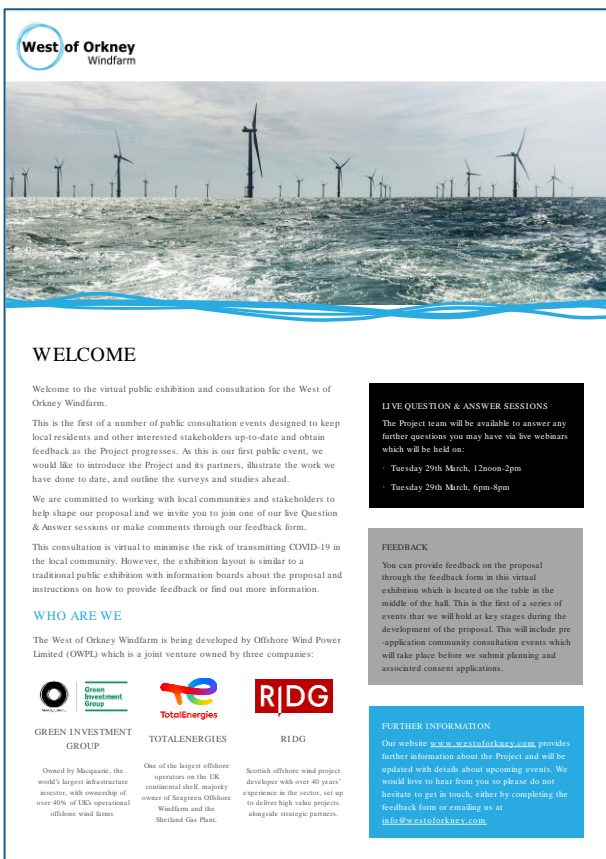
Round 1 also saw the establishment of the Community Panels in Orkney, Caithness and Sutherland and 26 Community Councils and 6 Development Trusts have now been invited to join a Panel. (These numbers have risen in response to stakeholder suggestions to expand our original list). The first meeting of the Community Panels was held in June 2022 to share early information about the West of Orkney Windfarm and to introduce community leaders to key members of the Project team. The Community Panels provided us with feedback on our engagement approach and Community Engagement Plan.

The West of Orkney Windfarm Project team also held additional meetings with statutory and non-statutory consultees throughout this consultation period including Orkney Islands Council (OIC), Marine Scotland, NatureScot, Highlands and Islands Enterprise, Sutherland Space Hub, and the Caithness and Northern Sutherland Regeneration Partnership.

4.3 Consultation materials

The first consultation round featured the materials described below, examples of which are provide in Figure 7. Additional materials are appended to this report.

	Letters & emails sent to community councils, statutory consultees, and strategic stakeholders		Press releases to relevant media outlets announced the Project and the launch of the virtual exhibition		Adverts publicising events were placed in: The Orcadian Caithness Courier John O’Groats Journal
	Welcome video by the Project Director introducing the Project at the virtual exhibition		Exhibition boards typically found at traditional village hall exhibitions		Invitation to Q & A webinars displayed on virtual exhibition
	Supply chain registration form		Community & visitor questionnaire		Email address, phone number & Freepost address
	Project slide presentation delivered at webinars		Project team key members introduced at webinars		Project website launched at the start of the consultation period



Information board from virtual exhibition



Welcome video from virtual exhibition



Cover slide from presentation used at Q & A webinars

Figure 7: Examples of Round 1 materials

4.4 Feedback – offshore & onshore

The live question and answer webinars were attended by 16 people. This included local residents as well as individuals from development trusts, community councils, press outlets, energy charities, Historic Environment Scotland, Marine Scotland, EMEC and ASPIRE Orkney.

The first meetings of the community panels were attended by a total of 13 people representing community councils, development trusts and Highlands and Islands Enterprise.

As this round of consultation was primarily focused on introducing the West of Orkney Windfarm and the Project team, much of the feedback centred around clarification questions and suggestions for factors to consider going forward, including discussions around community benefit priorities. A number of specific questions were raised as detailed below:

4.4.1 Offshore questions

Question	Our response
Have we chosen specific floating foundations?	No. Floating and fixed foundations are both currently being considered.
Have we factored in marine archaeology in the surveys?	Yes. The Orkney Research Centre for Archaeology (ORCA) is undertaking an archaeological assessment as part of the EIA. Details of their approach can be found in the Scoping Report.
What security measures will we put in place to protect the infrastructure?	We are working with Crown Estate Scotland to ensure that all partners are free from sanctions and do not have links with Russia/ Belarus. Offshore infrastructure will be locked to prevent access to turbines/ platforms plus 50m safety zone.
Will all energy go to the proposed Flotta Hydrogen Hub (FHH) or will it be shared with grid?	Plan to connect to grid at Spittal in first phase. We are working with FHH to understand future capacity for phases 2 and 3. Discussions with OFGEM as regulations do not allow us to connect from FHH to the grid. Considering how FHH can maintain steady flow if solely reliant on the windfarm.
Will emissions be monitored?	Greenhouse Gas (GHG) assessment is required so we are in the process of scoping it. Green Investment Group (Corio Generation's parent company) do not invest in projects that do not make a return on the environment. Lifecycle assessments and GHG emissions are now requirements for all projects.
Development trust/ community ownership?	Given the scale of the Project, any investment by the community would be relatively modest and there are risks in investing in a singular project but we are happy to explore this option further through the community panels.

4.4.2 Onshore questions

Question	Our response
What security measures will we put in place to protect the infrastructure?	Cables underground, security fence, CCTV to patrol.
Do we plan to use Scrabster for our Operations & Maintenance (O & M) base?	Yes. We have a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Scrabster Trust and are working with them to see how we fit in with their plan.
Have we considered using the existing 'dead' power line for cable route through Dounreay (to avoid rail and river crossings)?	Spittal was allocated by National Grid so we need to work out the best way to get there bearing in mind a range of constraints. We are working with land agents to identify best options.
Do we envisage a role for Scapa Deep Water Quay (SDWQ)?	SDWQ is expected to host lay down facilities for a number of ScotWind projects, including West of Orkney Windfarm.

4.4.3 Consultation process feedback

We received some excellent and constructive feedback on our proposed consultation approach and associated Community Engagement Plan, including requests to extend our consultation to include additional community councils and development trusts as well as suggestions on how to increase our reach and the uptake of our community questionnaire.

4.5 How we took account of views raised

We reviewed and considered all feedback received by the public, consultee bodies and local interest groups, using this to develop numerous elements of the proposals and, in particular, our Community Engagement Plan. Our early engagement approach allowed us to refine our proposals for consulting with communities to reflect the needs and preferences of local people.

In response to the feedback received, we made the following decisions:

<p>We expanded our list of target community councils from 16 to 27 and added 2 development trusts to our list of 4</p>	<p>We added numerous strategic, local interest, and community stakeholders to our consultee database and followed up suggested channels for engagement</p>	<p>We included information on community benefit and investment in the local economy on future exhibitions</p>	<p>We initiated research on community ownership and best practice models for community benefit</p>
<p>We committed to attend summer events in Halkirk, Durness, Dounby and Kirkwall in 2022 and 2023</p>	<p>We revised our list of venues for future consultation events</p>	<p>We put posters up in local venues inviting people to fill in our questionnaire</p>	<p>We used the questions asked to inform the content of subsequent exhibition materials</p>

5. Second round of consultation

5.1 Summer events

In the summer 2022, we attended five community events across Caithness, Sutherland Orkney where we introduced the West of Orkney Windfarm to a wide audience of local residents and visitors to the area. The proposed offshore and onshore developments presented at this round of consultation events included the following elements:

5.1.1 Offshore array

- Up to 125 wind turbine generators with a maximum tip height of 370 metres
- Fixed or floating turbine foundations
- Up to five offshore substation platforms
- Inter-array cables linking the wind turbines and offshore substation platforms
- Up to five export cables to Caithness
- Up to five export cables to Flotta

5.1.2 Onshore infrastructure

- New substation at or near to existing substation at Spittal
- Up to five underground cable circuits from landfall point to substation at Spittal
- New substation near existing Flotta Oil Terminal/ proposed Flotta Hydrogen Hub
- Up to five underground cables to Flotta substation

5.2 Consultation format

The purpose of the consultation was to seek people's views on our proposals and to start to identify ways to avoid or minimise any potential adverse effects the Project may have while maximising possible benefits and opportunities. The consultation was primarily designed to: introduce the Project; gain an understanding of local feeling and sentiment across communities in Caithness, Sutherland and Orkney; and inform future consultation activities to ensure that they covered topics which were of interest to local communities

The consultation involved a mobile exhibition at locations where people would naturally gather, rather than expecting them to come to us. We purchased a branded gazebo and giant deckchair to make us easy to find and we displayed key Project information including the following:

- An overview of the Project and an introduction to the key partner organisations
- Maps illustrating the proposed locations of key components of the onshore and offshore elements and explaining the jurisdictions of the various consenting regimes relevant to the Project
- An introduction to the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) process, highlighting the key areas of investigation
- An overview of our stakeholder engagement strategy, providing an indicative list of key stakeholder groups
- Details of how we are investing in Scotland to drive local economic benefits
- A high-level timeline to show key milestones and anticipated dates

We provided hard copies of our community questionnaire, a QR code to our supply chain registration form, and treats and activities for children to educate them on renewable energy and keep them entertained whilst their parents or carers engaged with the Project team. Our competition to win a Lego set was particularly popular and we received over 200 entries from children aged 2-14 years.

Engagement with local stakeholders at the launch events and subsequent community panel and one-to-one meetings led to the West of Orkney Windfarm being invited to co-locate with a group of organisations as part of an 'Energy Village' at the events we were attending in Orkney. These organisations included: THAW Orkney, ReFLEX Orkney, Warmworks, Community Energy Scotland, ASPIRE Orkney, North Highland & Islands Climate Hub and the European Marine Energy Centre (EMEC). We also received an invitation to attend the Orkney Climate Festival Community Café where we took a pared down version of the mobile exhibition as it was held indoors

Following input from local stakeholders during the first round of consultation, we attended the following events:

Date	Event
Friday 28 th July 2022	Durness Highland Gathering, Sutherland
Saturday 29 th July 2022	Halkirk Highland Games, Caithness
Thursday 11 th August 2022	West Mainland Agricultural (Dounby) Show, Orkney
Saturday 13 th August 2022	Orkney Agricultural Society (County) Show, Orkney
Saturday 3 rd September 2022	Orkney Climate Festival Community Café, Orkney

5.3 Consultation materials

The second consultation round utilised the materials described below while Figure 8 features photographs from our visits to the summer shows. Copies of materials used are appended to this report.

	Branded gazebo & giant deckchair to make us easy to find at public events		Exhibition boards displaying Project information (appendix 16)		Kids activities and treats to engage, educate, and entertain
	Project team available to discuss the Project and answer questions		Adverts publicising our attendance placed in show programmes		Social media used to promote events and invite visitors
	Supply chain registration form		Community & visitor questionnaire		Communication channels email address, phone number & Freepost address

West of Orkney branded gazebo with display boards, deckchair and kids' competition



Project team at Durness with celebrity piper 'Spud' who we also sponsored



Project team chatting to visitors at Halkirk



Figure 8: Photographs of summer shows

5.4 Feedback – offshore & onshore

A total of 1,132 people visited our exhibition at the summer shows and climate café and 222 questionnaires were submitted. This number continued to rise over subsequent weeks as more people completed the questionnaire online. By October 2022, we had received 244 responses. In addition, the Project team gathered extensive feedback through in-person discussions and the content of these conversations was also used to inform our understanding of areas of interest and concern.

A useful aspect of attending the summer events was the opportunity to capture the views of tourists in relation to the proposed windfarm. We therefore collected postcode data to develop a picture of whether respondents were local to the area or visiting

from elsewhere. To ensure that we were reaching a representative cross-section of the local community, we also collected demographic data which was used to measure whether respondents reflected the population as a whole. In addition, we asked questions relating to current levels of knowledge in relation to the Project and experiences of our engagement.

From the feedback we received, we learned that support for action on climate change and offshore wind projects in general is very high in the local area, as illustrated in Figure 9:

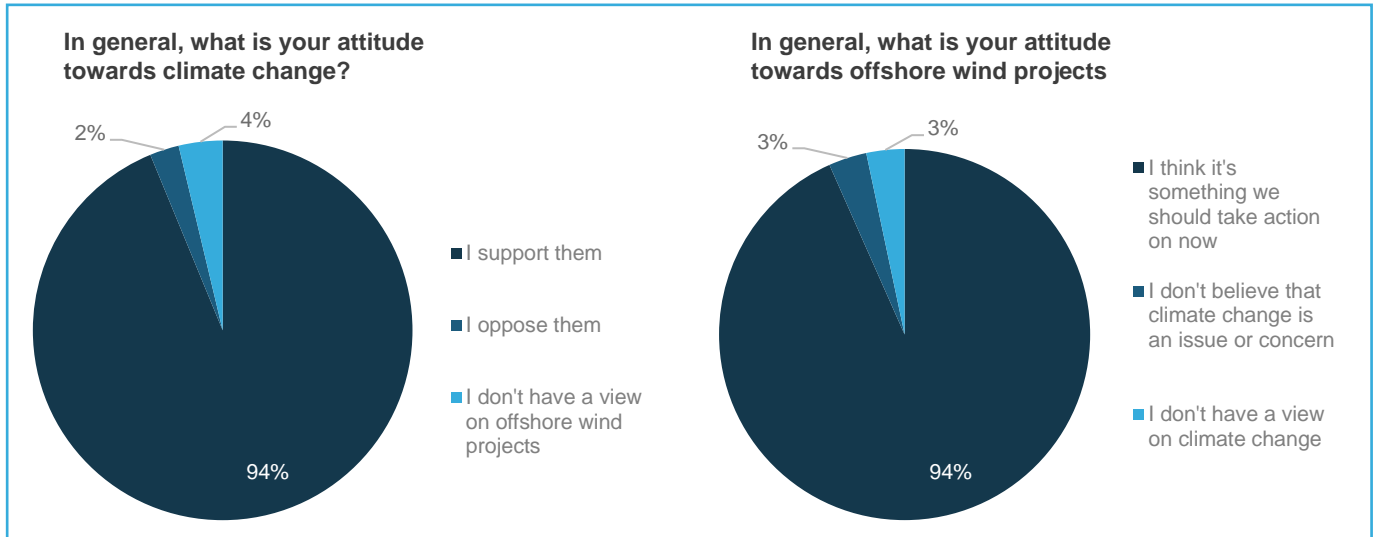


Figure 9: Respondent attitudes (Oct 2022)

In addition, the majority of respondents felt that the West of Orkney Windfarm would have a positive effect on CO₂ reduction and jobs and the local economy. A significant proportion of respondents (almost 40%) also felt that the Project would positively impact upon demand for local services and their own quality of life. The impact on other socio-economic factors, such as crime and anti-social behaviour, property values and tourism in the area, was broadly perceived to be neutral.

5.4.1 Offshore feedback

A relatively small percentage (17%) of respondents believed that the effect of the Project on the visual amenity of the seascape would be negative while the majority (72%) perceived the impact to be neutral or positive. Areas where respondents were less sure of the impact of the Project or felt that the effect would be negative included:

- Fishing
- Other marine users
- Marine mammals
- Birds

Common themes that emerged included questions around environmental impact in general and an interest in how the Project might benefit local people. We provided verbal responses to these questions at the events; explaining our approach to Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), outlining our supply chain development plans, and expressing our commitment to investing in a Community Benefit Fund. In addition, we made plans to provide further information about our surveys, assessments and intentions in relation to these topics in our next rounds of consultation.

A summary of specific questions raised during this round of consultation and our responses are outlined below:

Question	Our response
How will it benefit local people?	The Project will require construction, operations and maintenance jobs which, it is hoped, will be filled by local people as far as possible. We are working closely with Highlands and Islands Enterprise and local training and education providers to support relevant skills development in the area. We will also set up a Community Benefit Fund to benefit communities in Sutherland, Caithness and Orkney.

Question	Our response
Will it bring down fuel bills?	Projects like the West of Orkney Windfarm will bring down fuel bills in the long run as it is significantly cheaper to generate electricity from offshore wind than from fossil fuels. It will also reduce our carbon footprint and our dependence on fossil fuels. However, it is worth noting that fuel prices are not set by the developer and are based on the wholesale price of energy which is currently driven by the cost of gas.
What will the impact be on seabirds, cetaceans and other marine life?	The impact on marine life is being extensively considered through our EIA in accordance with our Scoping Report and in agreement with Marine Scotland, NatureScot and other statutory and strategic stakeholders. Summaries of the output from these assessments will be presented at future consultation events and comprehensive reporting will be provided with our consent applications.
What consultation has been carried out with local fishermen?	We have appointed a Fisheries Liaison Officer and established a commercial fisheries working group to consult with local fishermen.
What will it look like?	The wind turbines will be a maximum of 370m tall. We are currently creating a 3D model as well as photomontages showing what the Project will look like from various locations. The selected viewpoints are being agreed with NatureScot, Historic Environment Scotland, Orkney Islands Council and The Highland Council. We will present the output of these visualisation tools at later consultation events.
Will there be any energy storage?	The West of Orkney Windfarm has an exclusivity agreement to provide electricity to the proposed Flotta Hydrogen Hub. This will be used to create green hydrogen which can be stored or transported.
Does the grid have capacity for this Project?	Grid capacity is the responsibility of the Distribution Network Operator (DNO), not the electricity generator. The DNO has offered us a grid connection at or near Spittal commencing in 2029. It is the DNO's duty to ensure that the grid has the capacity to accept this connection and associated power.

5.4.2 Onshore feedback

Only 12% of respondents believed that the effect of the Project on the visual amenity of the onshore landscape would be negative while the majority perceived the impact to be neutral or positive (81%). Respondents did not identify any significant negative effects in relation to the onshore proposals at this stage although a number of questions were asked, as summarised below:

Question	Our response
Where exactly will the cables come ashore?	We are currently exploring various landfall options and considering the constraints and opportunities presented by each with a view to avoiding sensitive areas and minimising any adverse impacts. We will continue to provide updates as this work continues to refine our cable route.
Will HDD (horizontal directional drilling) be used?	To minimise disruption to road networks and river ecosystems, we will use HDD to bring the cables under significant watercourses and roads.
What additional onshore infrastructure will there be?	The onshore cable will be buried underground. There will be a new substation to connect to the National Grid at or near Spittal.
Where will the onshore substation be?	Although we know that the new substation will be at or near Spittal, the exact location has not yet been decided. Details of our preferred site will be shared as and when they are available.
Will materials be delivered by road or ship?	We appreciate the desire to limit traffic on local roads and are currently exploring options to deliver materials by sea, as far as possible.

5.4.3 Consultation process feedback

With a view to planning future engagement activities, we asked people to indicate their preferred method of consultation and discovered that over half of respondents (56%) preferred face-to-face events while only 18% preferred online engagement. In terms of receiving Project updates, respondents indicated a range of preferences including receiving notifications by post, media coverage, social media posts, website updates and direct emails. We used this information to devise our communication strategy for the next round of events.

5.5 How we took account of views raised

We reviewed and considered all feedback received from the public and other stakeholders in parallel with additional technical studies and fieldwork. This information was used to develop our proposals and prepare for our next round of consultation.

A recurring theme during this phase of the consultation was the desire for further, more detailed information. In particular, future presentations should focus on how the Project will affect:

OFFSHORE			
Birds	Marine mammals	Environmental impact	Visual impact
Jobs and the local economy	Community benefit	Fishing	Other marine users
ONSHORE			
Landfall location(s)	Cable route	Substation location	Traffic/ roads impact

6. Third round of consultation

6.1 Project update events

In November 2022, we held seven public events across Caithness, Sutherland Orkney where we provided local communities and other stakeholders with a Project update which included the following elements:

6.1.1 Offshore array

- Up to 125 wind turbine generators with a maximum tip height of 370 metres
- Fixed turbine foundations
- Up to five offshore substation platforms
- Inter-array cables linking the wind turbines and offshore substation platforms
- Up to five export cables to Caithness
- Up to five export cables to Flotta (future separate application)

6.1.2 Onshore infrastructure

- New substation at or near Spittal
- Up to five underground cable circuits from landfall point to substation
- Orkney infrastructure subject to future separate application
- New substation near existing Flotta Oil Terminal/ proposed Flotta Hydrogen Hub
- Up to five underground cables to Flotta substation

6.2 Consultation format

The purpose of the consultation was to provide local communities with a detailed update on the Project and to obtain their feedback on our proposals with a view to mitigating any negative impacts and maximising benefits to local people.

The consultation involved public drop-in events at accessible venues across Sutherland, Caithness and Orkney where people could learn more about the Project and discuss any questions or concerns with members of the Project team. The events were held over an afternoon and evening to allow people with a range of working schedules and other commitments to attend at a time that suited them. We replicated the information provided at the events on our online virtual exhibition so that people who were unable to or did not want to attend could access the same content.

The exhibition featured a series of pop-up banners displaying updated Project information including the following:

- A description of the Project with key facts and figures
- Maps illustrating key components of the Project including refined offshore and onshore cable corridors
- Explanations of how the offshore and onshore cable corridors have been refined
- A more detailed explanation of the onshore infrastructure and the construction process
- Offshore survey results covering shipping and navigation, seabed conditions, ornithology, and marine mammals
- An explanation of the EIA process in relation to the onshore infrastructure including surveys associated with: land use, agriculture and soils; visual amenity and landscape; freshwater ecology; terrestrial and non-avian ecology; terrestrial ornithology; traffic and access; archaeology and cultural heritage; and noise and vibration
- Maps showing the potential visibility of the Project and an overview of how the visual impact on the seascape and landscape is assessed as well as photomontages illustrating what the Project might look like from key viewpoints
- Details of how we are investing in Scotland to drive local economic benefits
- An overview of the working groups and consultee meetings that have been held
- An explanation of the role of the Community Panels and our plans for a community benefit fund
- Summary output from the community questionnaire
- An updated high-level timeline to show key Project milestones and anticipated delivery dates

In addition to the pop-up banners, we took a computerised 3D-model which allowed people to see what the Project might look like from different locations. A representative from web consultancy, 3DW, who created this visualisation tool for the West of Orkney Windfarm, was on hand to help attendees to access the model at the events.

On arrival, attendees were asked to indicate where they were from by placing a sticky dot on a large format map of the area. This served as a useful ice-breaker and allowed us to see whether or not we were holding events in appropriate locations vis-à-vis interested stakeholders. To capture written feedback, we continued to use the community questionnaire that we created at the start of the consultation in March 2022 and we also offered the people the option to complete this online or take hard copies away and return them by freepost.

The times and venues of the events were as follows:










Date	Time	Event
Tuesday 22 nd November 2022	10am – 2pm	Orkney Harbour Authority, Kiln Corner, Kirkwall, Orkney
Tuesday 22 nd November 2022	4pm – 8pm	Stromness Community Centre, Stromness, Orkney
Wednesday 23 rd November 2022	4pm – 8pm	North Wall Community School, Hoy, Orkney
Thursday 23 rd November 2022	3pm – 7.30pm	Pickaquoy Centre, Kirkwall, Orkney
Monday 28 th November 2022	4pm – 8pm	Spittal Village Hall, Spittal, Caithness
Tuesday 29 th November 2022	3pm – 7.30pm	Bettyhill Village Hall, Bettyhill, Sutherland
Wednesday 30 th November 2022	3pm – 7.30pm	North Coast Visitor Centre, Thurso, Caithness

6.3 Publicising the consultation

To publicise the events, we advertised in the local press and sent out invitation leaflets to around 25,235 local addresses across the north of Scotland. We also sent email invitations to the three Community Panels and other stakeholders, asking them to share information about the events across their networks. We provided local community groups and other stakeholders with posters which they displayed in their own venues and we created posts on LinkedIn which were shared by the Project partners across their networks.

6.4 Consultation materials

The third consultation round utilised the following materials:

 <p>Exhibition boards displaying Project information</p>	 <p>3D-model computer generated fly-through showing visualisation of what Project will look like</p>	 <p>Photomontages showing what Project will look like from selected viewpoints</p>
 <p>Project team available to discuss the Project and answer questions</p>	 <p>Adverts inviting people to attend events placed in local newspapers</p>	 <p>Leaflets inviting people to attend delivered to 25,235 local addresses</p>
 <p>Supply chain registration form</p>	 <p>Community & visitor questionnaire</p>	 <p>Communication channels email address, phone number & Freepost address</p>

The images in Figure 10 illustrate the events and examples of the materials we used. Copies of all materials used are appended to this report.

From top: selection of display boards at Hoy, visitors at the North Coast Visitor Centre, 'Where do you live?' map at Bettyhill



From top: Advert in situ in John O'Groats Journal, sample pages from leaflet sent to local residents



Example of pop-up exhibition board displayed at events

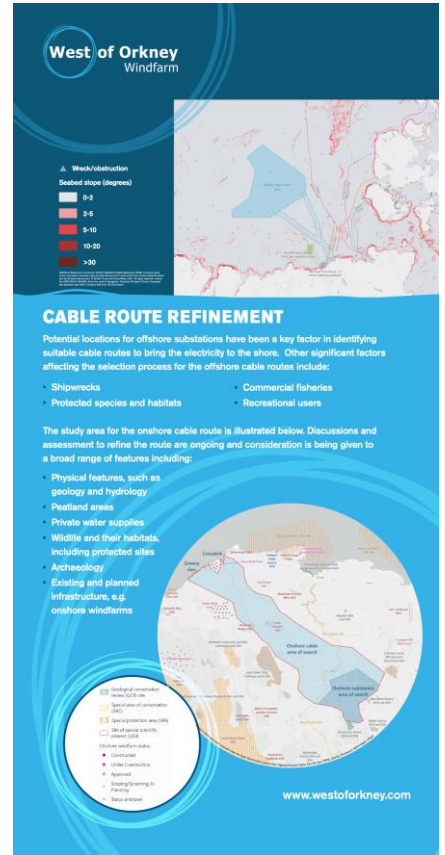


Figure 10: Examples of Round 3 materials

6.5 Feedback – offshore & onshore

A total of 286 people attended the public events in November and a further 84 community questionnaires were completed at the events. Combined with online completions and submissions via email and post, this took the total questionnaires received to 430 by the end of the third round of consultation. We also received 39 emails to the dedicated inbox and 3 calls to the Project phone number. Levels of support for the West of Orkney Windfarm fell slightly since the summer events but remained high at 76%, as illustrated in Figure 11.

Knowledge levels amongst respondents increased across the board since the data was last analysed following the first round of consultation, with a larger percentage of respondents indicating higher levels of knowledge and relatively fewer respondents stating that they knew 'very little' or 'nothing at all' as shown in Figure 12.

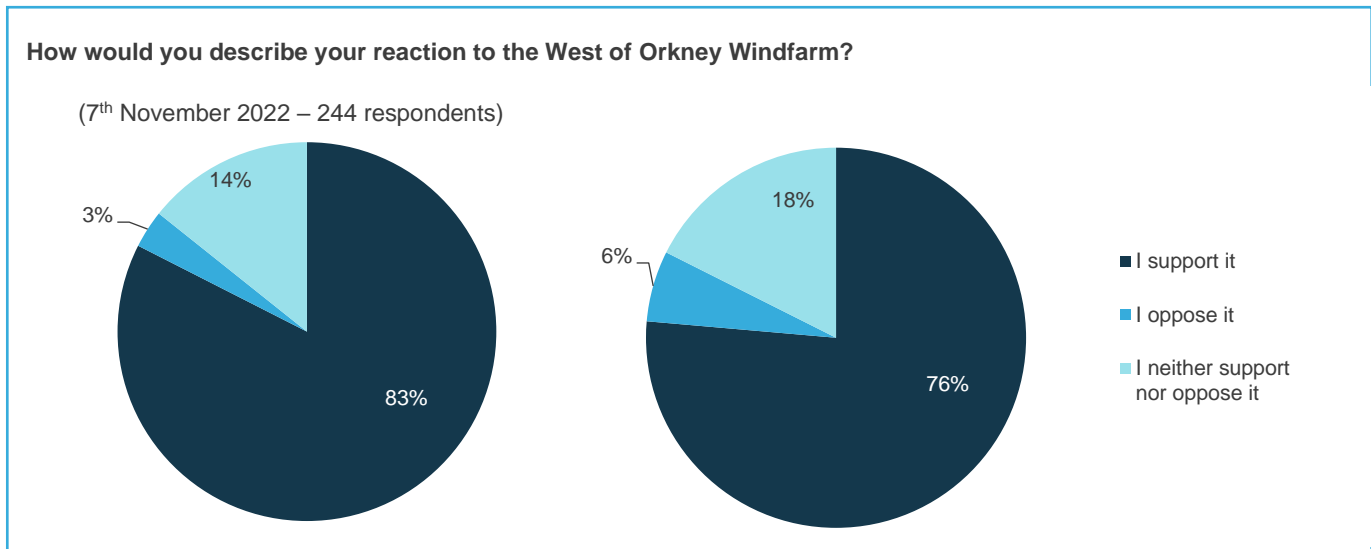


Figure 11: Reactions to the West of Orkney Windfarm

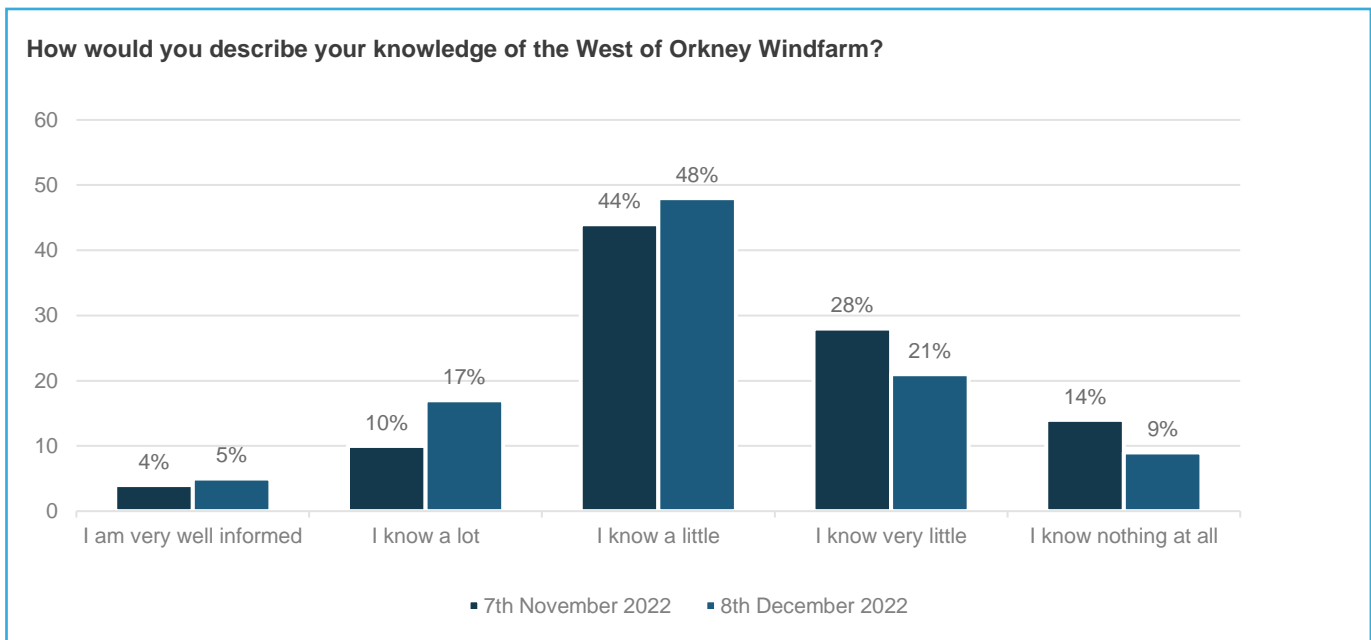


Figure 12: Respondent knowledge levels

Questions around how the West of Orkney Windfarm will directly benefit local people in Sutherland, Caithness and Orkney continued to dominate the feedback during the third round of consultation. These focused on training and employment opportunities as well as wider community benefits. Another strong theme was the impact that the Project will have on fuel prices for local residents and businesses. A desire for a commitment to the Flotta Hydrogen Hub was expressed and one respondent indicated a preference to see investment in alternative projects such as an abattoir at Orkney Auction Mart or a new anaerobic digester for Orkney instead of the windfarm.

Both written and verbal feedback indicated relatively high levels of opposition to onshore wind in Sutherland and, to a lesser extent, Caithness. Respondents spoke of the proliferation of onshore projects and described a feeling of being 'hemmed in' by wind turbines. There is a clear perception that the area is host to a large number of windfarms with few visible benefits, particularly in relation to cheaper fuel costs at a local level. Negative opinion regarding the proposed Pentland Floating Offshore Windfarm was also expressed by a number of attendees who felt that it was too close to the coastline.

Many attendees stated that they found the 3D visualisation tool particularly helpful in understanding the visual impact of the Project, both in terms of the offshore windfarm and the onshore infrastructure.

6.5.1 Offshore feedback

Specific questions and comments regarding the offshore elements of the West of Orkney Windfarm and our responses to these are detailed below:

Question/ comment	Our response
<p>Concerns about wildlife/ marine life/ wider environmental impacts</p>	<p>We let stakeholders know that protecting the environment remains a key consideration, as articulated in our Scoping Report. Ongoing environmental impact assessments will inform our final designs and will be reported alongside our consent and planning applications. These assessments have featured extensive environmental surveys to look at ornithology, marine mammals and other marine life and their habitats. Sensitive areas and species will be protected through agreed mitigation measures and protocols which we are discussing at regular meetings with MS-LOT, the RSPB and NatureScot.</p>
<p>Why is it called West of Orkney Windfarm when it is closer to the geographical regions of Sule Skery, Caithness and Sutherland?</p>	<p>We articulated to stakeholders that our ambition is to develop a world-class offshore windfarm that will demonstrate best practice across the industry. It was therefore important that we selected a name that would have resonance and be geographically identifiable on the world stage.</p>
<p>Concerns that we host a lot of windfarms and gain very little. Will this bring our fuel bills down in Caithness/ Sutherland/ Orkney? Why are our bills so high when we have so many windfarms in the area?</p>	<p>We explained that, as an electricity generator, West of Orkney Windfarm does not get to decide where the electricity it produces goes. Instead, it must apply to the Distribution Network Operator (DNO) for a connection to the national grid. The DNO (in this case SSEN) then allocates a grid connection location for the generated electricity. The DNO owns and operates the electricity distribution network and, in turn, charges the energy suppliers for the electricity. The energy suppliers then set the prices that they charge their customers.</p> <p>Under the UK's current energy market, the wholesale price of electricity is determined by the most expensive generator, which is usually fossil fuels. This is because some gas plants need to run almost constantly, which they won't do unless the electricity price is high enough to cover their operating costs. The cost of producing electricity from renewable sources is now cheaper than producing it from fossil fuels in most applications and costs are continuing to come down. Reducing our reliance on fossil fuels will play a key role in supporting and justifying the UK government's forthcoming Review of Electricity Market Arrangement (REMA) which aims to decarbonise the electricity sector and "ensure cost benefits of cheaper energy trickle down to consumers in the long term".</p> <p>When it comes to regional variations, energy suppliers such as British Gas, SSE, OVO, etc use the distribution networks to provide customers with electricity. Each network will set prices as they wish for each region. There are regulations in place by Ofgem to prevent DNOs abusing their monopoly power and charging suppliers too much, which would in turn force consumers to pay more for their energy. However, the charges for energy suppliers to use these regional networks still impacts customers' bills. Each region's local distributor will have their own charges set for suppliers. The gas and electricity suppliers pass these additional costs onto customers through their energy bills.</p> <p>Generally speaking, most products are also cheaper when you buy them in bulk, and the same goes for energy. Suppliers will spend more in the wholesale markets if they have the customers to sell to which means less populated areas can experience higher bills. Essentially, every energy supplier has their own reasons for setting the prices the way they are. Ofgem does not regulate prices, only the market, to try to encourage suppliers to compete with each other and offer customers the best possible service and a wide selection of options to meet different demands.</p>

Question/ comment	Our response
Will local people (in Caithness, Sutherland and Orkney) benefit?	We shared details of our proposed Community Benefit Fund which will be available when the windfarm starts to generate power. We also shared our Supply Chain Development Statement (SCDS) which articulates our commitment to invest in Scotland and drive economic benefits to the local area. We highlighted a number of early employment and investment decisions already taken by the Project, including appointing: Orkney based environmental consultants, Xodus and Highland based land agents, Land Consultancy Services Ltd.
Will there be employment opportunities for local people? Will you provide local skills development and training including technological capability transfer from sub-contractors to build Scottish future skills?	<p>We reiterated our commitment to working with the supply chain across the north of Scotland to ensure that skills development and employment opportunities will benefit local people. We provided details of our £105 million Project-level supply chain investment programme (enhanced to £140 million through match funding from third parties) and our early supplier collaboration, local port investments, and skills development to boost the competitiveness and capacity investment confidence of Scottish companies.</p> <p>We also told people about our Socio-Economic Working Group which was established to ensure that socio-economic activities within the region are represented and considered. The Group has worked collaboratively to share knowledge, exchange data sources and discuss ways in which the Project's potential benefits can be maximised.</p> <p>People interested in receiving updates on job and contracting opportunities were directed to our supply chain registration form.</p>
Recyclability/ circularity/ reusability of turbines. Will service vessels use less polluting fuels? Sustainability of raw materials	We confirmed that the design requirements for the wind turbine suppliers are set by us, as the Project developer. Suppliers to the West of Orkney Windfarm are expected to meet our standards when it comes to reusable parts, recyclable materials and traceability of materials. We also pointed out that as a key Project partner, Corio Generation's parent company, Macquarie's Green Investment Group individually rates all the projects it invests in against its Green Investment Criteria.
Concerns about impacts on physical oceanography of the sea/ seabed	<p>An overview of the EIA process and associated survey work was provided at the events and on the virtual exhibition. This included reference to the benthic survey to understand the composition of the seabed and identify any potential habitats that could be damaged during construction. Findings from this survey were shared as well as an explanation that these will be used alongside geophysical data to characterise and map the habitats and species that may need to be protected/ avoided.</p> <p>We also shared information about the physical processes model which we used to predict potential outcomes of different physical elements, such as currents and waves, in response to different turbine layouts. We confirmed to respondents that the model concluded that the Project would not have a significant impact on the physical conditions of the area.</p>
Concerns about transmission losses	We advised that transmission losses to the shore are typically in low single figures 3-5% for offshore wind generally. Measures to reduce transmission losses are considered prior to finalising the design specification and layout of the array and offshore transmission infrastructure.
Will the turbines contain poisonous gas, such as sulphur hexafluoride (SF6)?	We advised respondents know that sulphur hexafluoride (SF6) is a greenhouse gas, which has been used for insulation in turbine switchgears and in substations. However, the renewables and transmission industries are moving away from SF6 and switching to another gas called G3 (Green Gas for Grid), which is an insulating gas that is non-flammable, non-toxic, and offers 99% reduction in Global Warming Potential (GWP). Over the last few years, there has been an

Question/ comment	Our response
	increase in agreements between manufacturers and developers to use an alternative insulator gas. It is envisaged that by the time West of Orkney Windfarm is in the procurement phase, the insulation offerings that are commercially available will be enhanced significantly.
Why not use Lyness as construction port?	We let respondents know that we have considered a number of options to serve as our main construction port and that Scapa presents the best physical characteristics to serve the Project. In particular, Lyness is considerably constrained in terms of laydown space, water depth, competing uses, and navigational obstructions. Notwithstanding, given the scale of the Project, we do expect that there may be a requirement to use smaller ports for associated services.
Concerns about impact on fishing	We informed stakeholders that we are working closely with the local fishing industry through our dedicated Commercial Fisheries Manager and Commercial Fisheries Working Group. Local associations, federations and Independent Fisheries Groups representing local fishermen have been attending the Working Group and liaising with the Project team. Topics discussed have included the cable corridor route, potential options for landfalls and mitigation measures, and the sharing of up-to-date relevant data.
What will the acoustic/ noise impacts be?	We explained that operational noise was scoped out of the Scoping Report as evidence suggests that it is substantially lower than that produced during construction and extends short distances from the turbines. No disturbance impacts, including displacement and/or barrier effects are considered to affect marine mammals. Nevertheless, the EIA will acknowledge the operational noise from turbines and the potential impacts on marine mammals. As well as several desk-based studies, underwater noise modelling has been undertaken on the potential impact of operational noise using a range of different turbine factors. The results of the modelling will be used to inform the findings and recommendations included in the EIA.
Accommodation for workforce?	We acknowledged concerns about uneven housing provision in the area and the potential displacement of tourism beds by construction workers. We committed to exploring how this could be addressed through discussions with OIC, THC, Chambers of Commerce and local accommodation providers. We highlighted best practices from similar projects where workers have been housed in tourist accommodation during the low season and moved into temporary modular housing during the high season and said that we would be looking at these options.
How will this affect the waves for surfers?	We explained that wind turbines are designed to absorb the energy from the wind as opposed to wave energy as this would make them less efficient and be subject to more physical damage, significantly increasing the capital costs of the Project. To this end, the impact on the physical elements from the turbines has been assessed as part of the EIA. A physical processes model was used to predict potential outcomes of different physical elements, such as currents and waves, in response to a range of turbine layouts. The results of the model concluded that the fetch and swell of the sea shall not be significantly affected by the Project.
How will this affect the ferry times?	We confirmed that we do not anticipate that ferry times will be affected by the construction or operation of the West of Orkney Windfarm.

6.5.2 Onshore feedback

A number of questions and comments that specifically related to the onshore infrastructure were also received and these are summarised along with our responses below:

Question/ comment	Our response
You should use existing industrial facilities such as Dounreay	<p>We explained that the West of Orkney Windfarm does not get to choose the grid connection location or decide where the electricity it produces goes. Instead, it must apply to the Distribution Network Operator (DNO) for a connection to the national grid. In August 2019, the DNO (in this case SSEN) indicated that the West of Orkney Windfarm would connect to the electricity network at either Dounreay or Spittal. In November 2020, SSEN then confirmed that the grid connection would be ‘at or near Spittal’.</p> <p>We also shared information regarding the constraints mapping exercise that we undertook to identify an appropriate cable landfall location and subsequent cable corridor route. This included reference to the Dounreay Food and Environment Protection Act (FEPA) 1985 order zone which precludes activity around the radioactive plume.</p>
Concerns about impact on roads	<p>We let respondents know that we will be publishing a Traffic Management Plan for the construction of the onshore infrastructure and that is our intention to create dedicated ‘haul’ roads to take construction traffic off public roads, where possible. We also made plans to provide further information about how we will mitigate any road impacts in later rounds of the consultation.</p>
Concerns about wildlife	<p>Attendees were provided with information about our EIA approach and the extensive programme of surveys that we have undertaken or are ongoing in line with our Scoping Report. We explained that these will inform impact assessment studies which will be conducted in order to identify potential impacts, assess their significance, and amend our proposals accordingly. We shared early findings from the survey work and outlined our cable route refinement approach which has included, amongst other things, consideration of protected wildlife species and their habitats.</p> <p>We made plans to communicate the results of the surveys and studies in subsequent consultation meetings and events. Impacts will be assessed for all phases of the Project from construction, operations and maintenance, through to decommissioning.</p>
Onshore cables should be underground	<p>We confirmed that all onshore cables will be buried underground.</p>

6.5.3 Consultation process feedback

To gain insight into the effectiveness of the consultation events, we asked respondents to indicate to what extent they agreed or disagreed with a series of statements about the consultation and to express their preference regarding future activities. The feedback was largely positive with the majority of people agreeing that the events enhanced their knowledge, gave them a good opportunity to participate in the planning process, and provided a level of information that was appropriate to their needs. The responses continued to show a strong preference for face-to-face events although around a third of respondents indicated a preference for online virtual consultation events as illustrated in the heat chart in Figure 13.

When asked for comments and suggestions on how we engage with communities, many respondents were very complimentary about our approach to date stating that staff at events were knowledgeable, friendly, and informative and that the exhibition successfully answered all of their questions. A number of people made suggestions that we were already doing, such as mail drops, liaising with community councils and development trusts, and holding events in more than one venue across times that suited working people. We also received specific requests to visit the West Mainland of Orkney and the Strathy/ Melvich/ Portskerra area in Sutherland. This was supported by the ‘sticky dots’ map which showed that there were a small number of people attending from these areas.

Our second meeting of the Community Panels reinforced the message that the engagement was broadly appreciated by the public. We also used this meeting to discuss future plans, identify alternative venues for events, and explore the idea of conducting more detailed interviews with selected representative stakeholders.

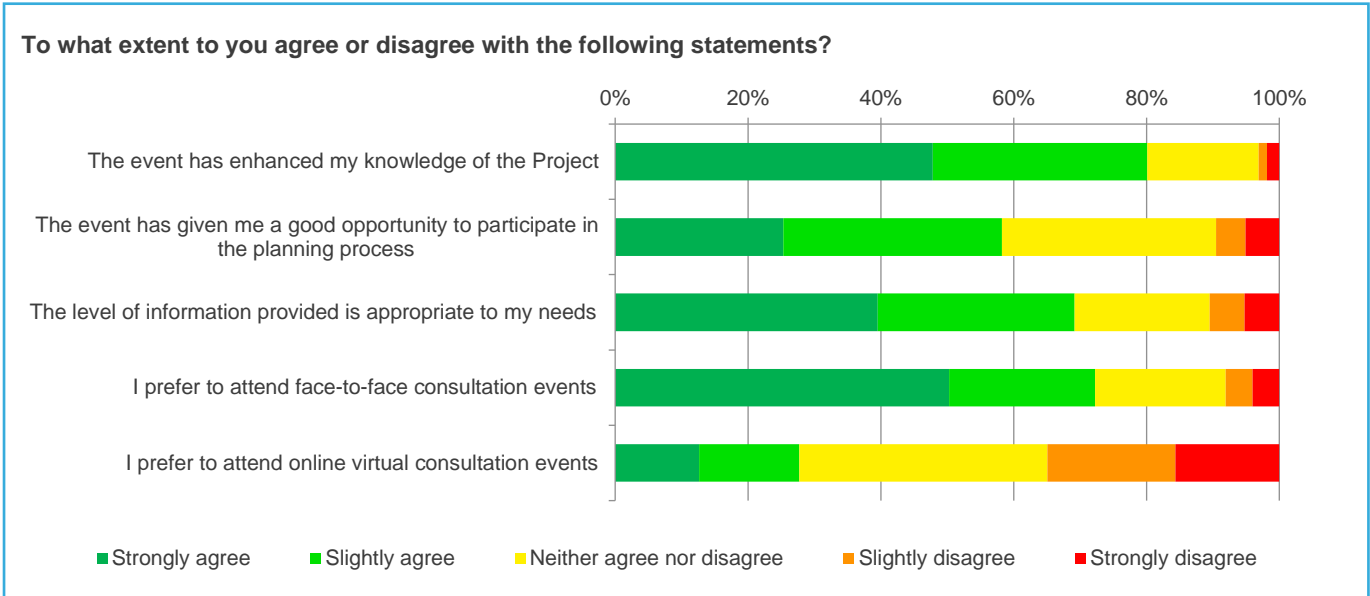


Figure 13: Feedback on consultation

6.6 How we took account of views raised

We continued our review and consideration of all feedback received from community stakeholders alongside technical input and survey work to refine our proposals and inform our next round of consultation activities. We also decided that certain key issues raised required further exploration.

In response to feedback we received during the third round of consultation, we took the following actions:

OFFSHORE & ONSHORE		
<p>We made plans to undertake in-depth structured interviews with representative individuals including members of community councils, development trusts, economic development agencies and local businesses</p> <p>The topics to be discussed included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impacts on the local economy including the tourism fishing and construction sectors • Effects on local housing market including affordable housing and the rental market • Comparisons between the potential effects during construction and development versus operation 	<p>We made plans to provide more detailed information about our environmental impact assessment at future consultation events including details of our proposed mitigation measures in relation to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marine life/ the wider environment • Onshore species and habitats • Noise • Roads/ traffic 	<p>We initiated discussions with relevant stakeholders to explore ways in which we can work with accommodation providers and other partners to ensure that West of Orkney Windfarm workers do not displace tourist beds or adversely affect the housing market during development, construction, operations or maintenance</p>
	<p>We arranged a meeting of the Community Panels to provide an update on the consultation and get input on the proposed structured interview process</p>	<p>We liaised with our supply chain team to share the feedback we have received to date and to advise them on engagement approaches for future supply chain development</p>
	<p>We decided to update and use the 3D visualisation model at future events for both the offshore and onshore proposals</p>	<p>We added Strathy/ Melvich/ Portskerra and West Mainland to potential locations for future consultation events</p>

7. Fourth round of consultation

7.1 Pre-application consultation (PAC) events

The fourth round of consultation focussed our first formal pre-application consultation (PAC) 'event', in accordance with marine licensing and planning consent legislation. This round included proposals for the following offshore and onshore infrastructure:

7.1.1 Offshore array

- Up to 125 wind turbine generators with a maximum tip height of 370 metres
- Fixed turbine foundations
- Up to five offshore substation platforms
- Inter-array cables linking the wind turbines and offshore substation platforms
- Up to five export cables to Caithness
- Up to five export cables to Flotta (future separate application)

7.1.2 Caithness onshore infrastructure

- New substation at or near Spittal
- Up to five underground cable circuits from landfall point to substation
- Orkney infrastructure subject to future separate application
- New substation near existing Flotta Oil Terminal/ proposed Flotta Hydrogen Hub
- Up to five underground cables to Flotta substation

7.2 Consultation format

The purpose of the consultation was to: build on the information presented during the third round, allow community members to ask further questions, confirm the onshore infrastructure we plan to submit for planning consent, and fulfil statutory pre-application obligations. Specifically, we sought people's views on our proposals and ways to avoid or minimise and adverse impacts.

The consultation involved public drop-in events at accessible venues across Sutherland, Caithness and Orkney where people could learn more about the Project and discuss any questions or concerns with members of the Project team. The events were held over an afternoon and evening to allow people with a range of working schedules and other commitments to attend at a time that suited them. We replicated the information provided at the events on our online virtual exhibition so that people who were unable to or did not want to attend could access the same content.

The exhibition featured a series of pop-up banners displaying updated Project information including the following:

- A description of the Project with key facts and figures
- Map illustrating the proposed locations of key components of the onshore and offshore elements of the Project including refined offshore and onshore cable corridors
- Maps highlighting the constraints and other factors affecting the offshore and onshore cable route refinement process
- A detailed map illustrating the onshore proposal divided into three distinct 'development zones' covering the landfall, cable route and substation with an explanation of the function of each zone
- A QR code to access more information about SSEN Transmission's separate consultation on its planned investments in the transmission network across the north of Scotland
- A summary of measures proposed to mitigate the impacts of the Project in relation to the offshore windfarm with particular reference to: marine mammals, birds, fish/ shellfish, commercial fisheries/ other boat users, aviators, visual impacts and marine archaeology
- A summary of measures proposed to mitigate the impacts of the Project in relation to the onshore infrastructure with particular reference to: traffic and access, geology/ hydrogeology, freshwater ecology, onshore ecology, and landscape and visual impacts
- Maps showing the potential visibility of the Project and proposed screening methods for the onshore substation

- Photomontages illustrating what the offshore windfarm might look like from key viewpoints
- A summary of the specialist meetings and consultation events that we have undertaken since site award in January 2022
- Charts showing people’s reactions to the Project by geographical area
- A summary of the community consultation process with key questions asked and our actions in response to date
- An update on the community benefit fund (CBF) with a list of suggested priorities and an invitation to make further suggestions by completing our CBF questionnaire
- Details of how we are investing in Scotland to drive local economic benefits
- An updated high-level timeline to show key Project milestones and timeframes for supplying feedback

In addition to the pop-up banners, we also brought back the computerised 3D-model which allowed people to see what the Project might look like from different locations. A representative from web consultancy, 3DW, was on hand to help attendees to access the model at the events.

On arrival, attendees were asked to indicate where they were from by placing a sticky dot on a large format map of the area. This served as a useful ice-breaker and allowed us to see whether or not we were holding events in appropriate locations vis-à-vis interested stakeholders. To capture written feedback, we continued to use the community questionnaire that we created at the start of the consultation in March 2022 and we also launched two new questionnaires; one relating specifically to the onshore infrastructure and another inviting suggestions for the CBF. As at previous events, we offered the people the option to complete the questionnaires in person, online, or take hard copies away and return them by freepost.

The times and venues of the events were selected following feedback during the previous consultation events and subsequently discussed with the Community Panels. They were as follows:

Date	Time	Event
Tuesday 16th May 2023	3.30pm – 7.30pm	The Pentland Hotel, Thurso, Caithness
Wednesday 17th May 2023	3.30pm – 7.30pm	Strathy Village Hall, Strathy, Sutherland
Thursday 23rd May 2022	3.30pm – 7.30pm	The Ross Institute, Halkirk, Caithness
Tuesday 23rd May 2023	10am – 2pm	Orkney Harbour Authority, Kiln Corner, Kirkwall, Orkney
Tuesday 23rd May 2023	4pm – 8pm	Sandwick Community Hall, West Mainland, Orkney
Wednesday 24th May 2023	3.30pm – 7.30pm	Pickaquoy Centre, Kirkwall, Orkney
Thursday 25th May 2023	3.30pm – 7.30pm	Robert Rendall Building, ICIT, Stromness, Orkney

In addition to the formal public events, we also held further meetings of the three Community Panels and conducted seven in-depth interviews with community and local business representatives.

7.3 Publicising the consultation

As these events were a legislative requirement of the consenting process, they were publicised via formal Pre-Application Consultation (PAC) Notices in relevant local newspapers. Separate offshore and onshore PAC Notices were published and copies sent to statutory consultees, in accordance with the legislation (see Appendices 2a & 10).

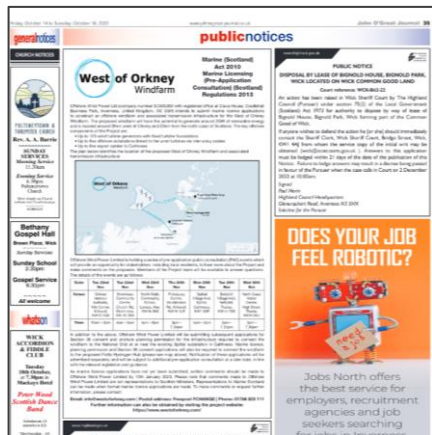
Given that the offshore PAC Notice must be published a minimum of 6-weeks prior to the events, we decided to publish a reminder advert in the local press closer to the events themselves. We also sent out invitation leaflets to 25,301 local addresses across the north of Scotland and email invitations to the three Community Panels and other stakeholders, asking them to share information about the events across their networks. We provided local community groups and other stakeholders with posters which they displayed in their own venues and we created posts on LinkedIn which were shared by the Project partners across their networks.

7.4 Consultation materials

The fourth consultation round utilised a range of materials, as illustrated below. Figure 14 provides examples of the materials used as well as photographs of some of our events.

	<p>Exhibition boards displaying Project information (also replicated on virtual exhibition)</p>		<p>3D-model computer generated fly-through showing visualisation of what Project will look like</p>		<p>Photomontages showing what Project will look like from selected viewpoints</p>
	<p>Project team available to discuss the Project and answer questions</p>		<p>Adverts inviting people to attend events placed in local newspapers</p>		<p>Leaflets inviting people to attend delivered to 25,301 local addresses</p>
	<p>Onshore infrastructure questionnaire</p>		<p>Community & visitor questionnaire</p>		<p>Community Benefit Fund questionnaire</p>
	<p>Supply chain registration form</p>		<p>PAC Notice and formal notification of statutory consultees published in line with legislation</p>		<p>Communication channels email address, phone number & Freepost address</p>

From top: PAC Notice in situ in *John O’Groats Journal*; invitation reminder advert in *The Orcadian*



From top: visitors, photomontages and leaflets at Thurso event; banners and ‘Where do you live?’ map at Strathly event



From top: visitors chatting with the Project team at Halkirk event; screenshot of onshore infrastructure community questionnaire

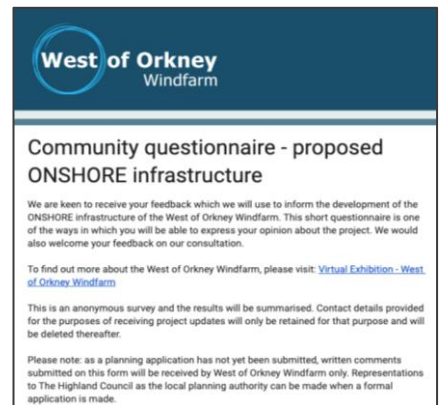


Figure 14: Examples of Round 4 materials

7.5 Feedback – offshore & onshore

A total of 113 people attended the PAC events in May and a further 33 community questionnaires were completed at the events. Combined with online completions and submissions via email and post, this took the total community questionnaires received to 498 by the end of the consultation. The dedicated email inbox received 25 emails and 3 phone calls were made to the Project phone number during round four. In addition to the original community questionnaire, we also received 28 responses to the new onshore questionnaire and 11 responses to the community benefit fund questionnaire.

7.5.1 Offshore feedback

Overall levels of support for the West of Orkney Windfarm fell slightly since the previous round of events but remained high at 72% while levels of opposition remained low at only 6%. Geographical variations persisted with levels of support higher in Orkney (76%) and Caithness (63%) than in Sutherland (50%). Knowledge levels amongst respondents increased slightly with a larger percentage of respondents indicating higher levels of knowledge and relatively fewer respondents stating that they knew 'very little' or 'nothing at all'.

Figure 15 illustrates that an overwhelming majority of respondents felt that the Project would have a positive effect on CO² reduction (84%) and jobs and the local economy (76%) while around a third felt that it would positively impact their own quality of life. Many people also felt that the impact of the Project would be neutral or positive in relation to the visual amenity of the seascape (67%), the onshore landscape (75%), tourism (77%), crime/ anti-social behaviour (83%), demand for local services, and property values (73%). Significant numbers of people believed that the Project would negatively affect birds (47%), fishing (29%), and marine mammals (27%).

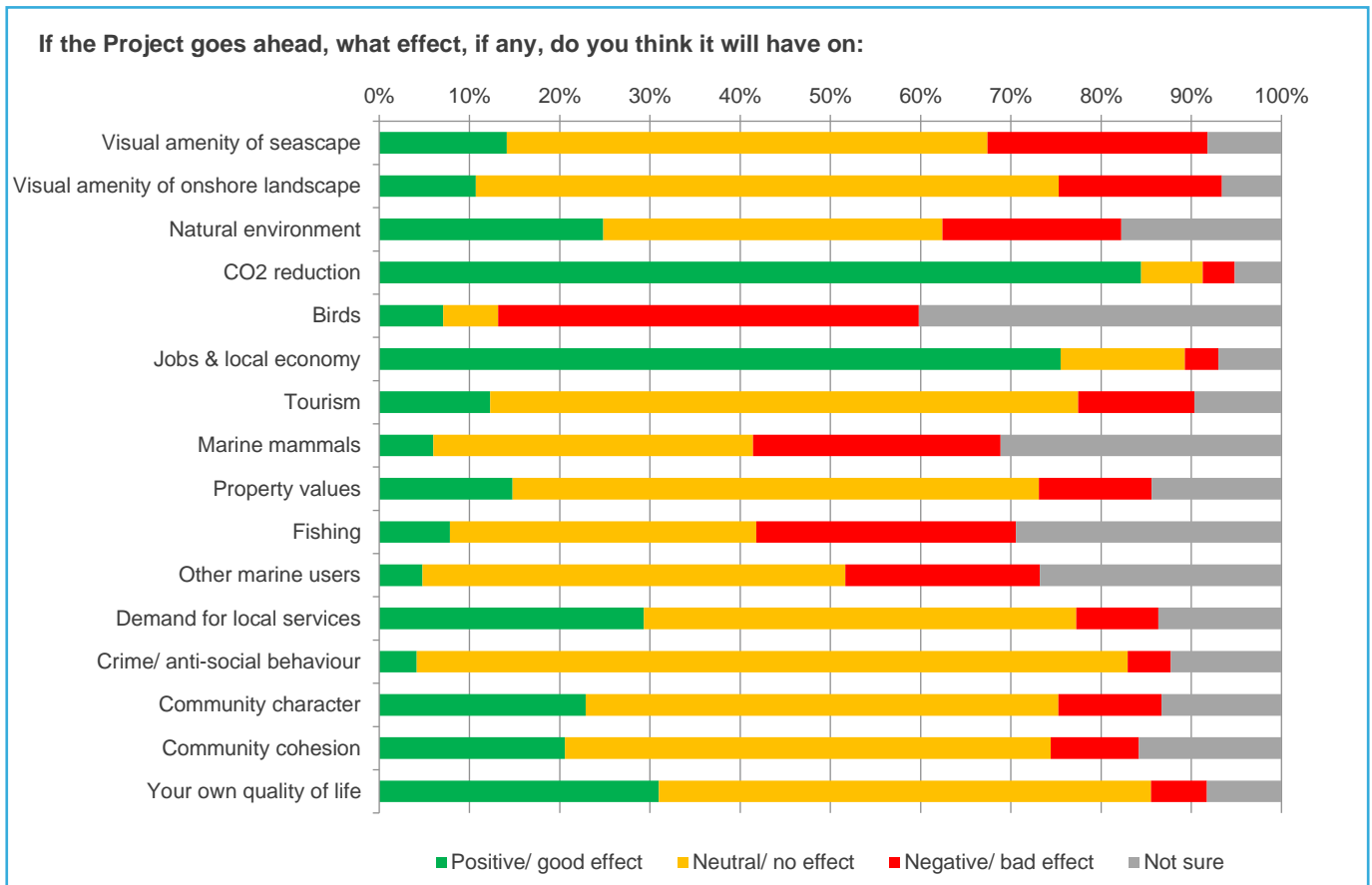


Figure 15: Perceived effects of Project

Respondents provided 28 written comments on the West of Orkney Windfarm. The majority of these related to how Orkney and, to a lesser extent, Caithness and Sutherland will benefit from the Project. A degree of scepticism was expressed that local people would actually see the benefits, while others called for long term community funding delivered through existing organisations. Concerns about fuel poverty and questions around why fuel prices would not be reduced as a direct result of the West of Orkney Windfarm continued to be raised.

A small number of respondents reiterated the need for ongoing environmental monitoring and one person questioned who would be responsible for the costs associated with any particle finds and recovery. One respondent asked why we are getting

involved in hydrogen production in the absence of local demand and another observed that previous projects like Dounreay and Flotta have benefitted the community with well-paid jobs for local people and good apprenticeship schemes.

Specific questions and comments regarding the offshore elements of the West of Orkney Windfarm and our responses to these are detailed below:

Question/ comments	Our response
Concerns about impact of noise on marine mammals during construction	We informed attendees that we will employ Marine Mammal Observers (MMOs) during construction to monitor the presence of any marine mammals. We will also employ 'soft-start' piling processes to reduce the impact of underwater noise when pile-driving during construction.
Concerns about birds colliding with turbines	We told attendees that we propose to use larger and more widely spaced turbines to decrease the risk of collision. The turbines will also have a blade clearance of at least 24.7metres above sea level which will substantially reduce the collision risk.
Will fishermen be allowed to continue fishing?	We advised respondents that vessels will not be excluded from the windfarm area following construction. During construction, we will distribute Notices to Mariners for effective communication about Project works being undertaken. We will apply construction safety zones where vessel movements will be temporary restricted but we will construct in sections to avoid blanket exclusions. We also shared our survey data which illustrated that very few vessels actually pass through the proposed windfarm site.
What about our dark skies?	We explained to people that the turbines will be located at least 25km from the coast and so any lighting is likely to have minimal impact. We will also avoid excessive lighting and minimise lighting wherever feasible, whilst maintaining appropriate health and safety provision.
Concerns about impact on sea 'graves' and marine archaeology	We informed respondents that we have undertaken a detailed assessment of the marine archaeology in the area and that we will avoid identified seabed heritage assets by a minimum of 30metres.
Concerns about Electro-Magnetic Field (EMF)	We advised respondents that we will bury or cover all sub-sea cables to reduce the potential impact of EMF on fish and shellfish.

7.5.2 Onshore feedback

Feedback received through the questionnaires in relation to the onshore infrastructure was predominantly negative with only 21% of respondents supporting the proposals and 50% opposing them. This was reflected in discussions with attendees at the events, although there were a significant number of attendees who were very supportive.

People expressed concern about the size and scale of the proposed substation and what they see as a proliferation of developments in the area, including SSEN's planning infrastructure upgrades which many people oppose. Several respondents simply said "don't build it", one commented that generation should be situated where it is needed, while another stated that the "placement of it absolutely destroys the view from my house and as such the value and saleability of the property". Concerns were also raised about the impacts on: local roads, rivers and freshwater ecology, heritage features at Crosskirk, and sensitive habitats and landscapes.

Notwithstanding the above, several participants expressed relief that the proposed transmission cables will be underground, one said it was a "great idea" and another stated that we should employ local people to deliver the required infrastructure.

Respondents were also asked for their suggestions on screening proposals for the onshore substation and 17 responses were received. Although 6 people responded by saying that we should not build the substation or find an alternative location and one expressed the view that there is "no mitigation sufficient to screen the scale of the proposed substation", a number of planting suggestions were submitted. Several people expressed a preference for native species, insect and bird friendly flora, and the retention and development of natural forestry.

A summary of the questions and comments received and our responses to these is outlined below:

Question/ comments	Our response
Concerns about impact on roads	We informed participants that we will implement a detailed Traffic Management Plan which will be designed to mitigate the impact of construction traffic on local roads. This is expected to include the use of dedicated haul roads to avoid adding pressure to local roads. We will also commit to undertaking road repairs, as required.
How will you protect rivers, freshwater fish and other sensitive habitats?	We advised attendees that we will avoid sensitive areas and designated sites and adhere to a bespoke Species and Habitat Protection Plan (SHPP). We will also ensure that a qualified Ecological Clerk or Works (ECOW) is present at sensitive locations. To protect rivers and major watercourse, we will use Horizontal Directional Drilling (HDD) which will allow us to install the onshore cables underneath the rivers without the need for diversions or crossings.
Concerns about St Mary’s Kirkyard at proposed landfall site at Crosskirk	We let people know that the installation of the export cable from the windfarm at Crosskirk would not affect St Mary’s Kirk.
How will you reduce the visual impact of the onshore infrastructure?	We explained to participants that we plan to bury all of the onshore transmission cables underground and that we will screen the substation with mounding and planting. We also committed to using sensor-controlled lighting and avoiding unnecessary artificial lighting wherever possible.

7.5.3 Consultation process feedback

The feedback on the consultation experience itself was broadly positive with a few constructive suggestions for future engagement as well as a number of recommendations to do things that we are already doing like attending local “fun” days (such as the county shows and Highland Games) and postal leaflet drops. One respondent proposed that we use alternative terminology as like “consultation” and “planning” are off-putting. A small number of participants expressed the view that they felt their input was “pointless” as their experience indicated that projects like this were a “done deal” and that the consultation was a “paper exercise”. We sought to reassure disenfranchised individuals by encouraging them to formally record and submit written feedback and explaining to them the part their comments will play in the planning and consenting processes.

7.6 How we took account of views raised

We reviewed and considered all feedback received from the public and other stakeholders in parallel with additional technical studies and fieldwork. This information was used to develop our proposals and prepare our final round of onshore consultation. Specific actions in response to the feedback received are detailed below:

OFFSHORE			
Ensure PAC Report fully and accurately documents feedback received	Share final EIA and PAC Reports with communities through a range of channels	Use feedback on fuel poverty and community benefits to inform CBF	Share feedback on jobs and skills development with Project supply chain team
ONSHORE			
Provide more detailed information on the proposed cable corridor at next events	Provide more information on the design for the onshore substation at next events	Suggestions on planting and screening options to be incorporated into revised proposals	Traffic Management Plan to reflect concerns regarding potential damage and the need for repairs

7.7 Statement of compliance

This round of consultation followed the registration of the Proposal of Application Notice on 7th March 2023. It fulfilled the requirement that we undertake pre-application consultation in respect of the Project’s offshore and onshore elements, as per the Marine (Scotland) Act 2010, Marine Licensing (Pre-Application Consultation) Scotland Regulations 2013, the Electricity Act 1989, the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997, and the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (Scotland) Regulations 2013. A full Statement of Compliance can be found in section 2.5 of this PAC Report.

8. Fifth round of consultation

8.1 Pre-application consultation (PAC) events

The fifth round of consultation focussed our second formal pre-application consultation (PAC) event for the onshore infrastructure, in accordance with planning consent legislation. This round included proposals for the following onshore infrastructure:

8.1.1 Caithness onshore infrastructure

- New substation at or near Spittal
- Up to five underground cable circuits from landfall point to substation

8.1.2 Offshore infrastructure

Although the focus of this round of consultation was the onshore infrastructure at Caithness, we also displayed information about the offshore proposals to provide attendees with relevant context.

8.2 Consultation format

The purpose of the consultation was to provide community stakeholders with a summary of the responses submitted and the views raised at public events along with an explanation of how we have taken account of the feedback received during the pre-application consultation process.

The consultation involved public drop-in events at accessible venues close to the proposed onshore infrastructure in Caithness where people could receive an update on the proposals and discuss any further questions or concerns with members of the Project team. The events were held over an afternoon and evening to allow people with a range of working schedules and other commitments to attend at a time that suited them. We replicated the information provided at the events on our online virtual exhibition so that people who were unable to or did not want to attend could access the same content.

The exhibition featured a series of pop-up banners displaying updated Project information including the following:

- A description of the West of Orkney Windfarm with key facts and figures
- Map illustrating the proposed locations of key components of the onshore (and offshore) elements of the Project including refined onshore cable corridors
- A detailed map explaining the constraints and other factors affecting the onshore cable route refinement process
- A detailed map illustrating the onshore proposal divided into three distinct 'development zones' covering the landfall, cable route and substation with an explanation of the function of each zone
- A QR code to access more information about SSEN Transmission's separate consultation on its planned investments in the transmission network across the north of Scotland
- A summary of measures proposed to mitigate the impacts of the Project in relation to the onshore infrastructure with particular reference to: traffic and access, geology/ hydrogeology, freshwater ecology, onshore ecology, and landscape and visual impacts
- A map showing the potential visibility of the onshore substation and proposed screening methods
- An explanation of the engineering considerations involved in the substation design
- Photomontages illustrating what the proposed substation might look like from key viewpoints
- A summary of the specialist meetings and consultation events that we have undertaken since site award in January 2022
- Charts showing people's reactions to the West of Orkney Windfarm by geographical area
- A summary of the community consultation process with key questions asked and our actions in response
- An update on the community benefit fund (CBF) with a list of suggested priorities and an invitation to make further suggestions by completing our CBF questionnaire
- Details of how we are investing in Scotland to drive local economic benefits
- An updated high-level timeline to show key Project milestones and timeframes for supplying feedback

In addition to the pop-up banners, we also brought back the computerised 3D-model which allowed people to see what the onshore substation might look like from different locations. A representative from web consultancy, 3DW, was on hand to help attendees to access the model at the events.

On arrival, attendees were asked to indicate where they were from by placing a sticky dot on a large format map of the area. This served as a useful ice-breaker and allowed us to see whether or not we were holding events in appropriate locations vis-à-vis interested stakeholders. To capture written feedback, we provided the new community questionnaire that we created to specifically capture comments on the onshore infrastructure. We also made the original community questionnaire available along with one inviting suggestions for the CBF. As at previous events, we offered the people the option to complete the questionnaires in person, online, or to take hard copies away and return them by freepost.

The times and venues of the events were selected following feedback during the previous consultation events. They were as follows:

Date	Time	Event
Tuesday 20 th June 2023	3.30pm – 7.30pm	The Pentland Hotel, Thurso, Caithness
Wednesday 21 st June 2022	3.30pm – 7.30pm	The Ross Institute, Halkirk, Caithness

8.3 Publicising the consultation

As these events were a legislative requirement of the consenting process, they were publicised via a formal Pre-Application Consultation (PAC) Notice in relevant local newspapers, in accordance with the legislation (see Appendix 10).

We also sent out invitation leaflets to 11,328 local addresses in the local area and email invitations to the relevant Community Panels and other stakeholders, asking them to share information about the events across their networks. We created posts on LinkedIn which were shared by the Project partners across their networks.

8.4 Consultation materials


The fifth consultation round utilised a range of materials, as illustrated below. Figure 16 provides examples of the materials used as well as photographs of some of our events.

 <p>Exhibition boards displaying Project information (also replicated on virtual exhibition)</p>	 <p>3D-model computer generated fly-through showing visualisation of what the onshore substation will look like</p>	 <p>Photomontages showing what the onshore substation will look like from selected viewpoints</p>
 <p>Project team available to discuss the proposals and answer questions</p>	 <p>Adverts inviting people to attend events placed in local newspapers</p>	 <p>Leaflets inviting people to attend delivered to 11,328 local addresses</p>
 <p>Onshore infrastructure questionnaire</p>	 <p>Community & visitor questionnaire</p>	 <p>Community Benefit Fund questionnaire</p>
 <p>Supply chain registration form</p>	 <p>PAC Notice and formal notification of statutory consultees published in line with legislation</p>	 <p>Communication channels email address, phone number & Freepost address</p>

PAC Notice published in *John O’Groats Journal* and *Caitness Courier*


From top: visitors indicating where they live on map at Halkirk event; onshore questionnaire, mail drop leaflet

Example of exhibition board with information about visual impact of onshore substation



Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 (as amended)
Town and Country Planning (Hierarchy of Developments) (Scotland) Regulations 2009
Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (Scotland) Regulations 2013 (as amended)

Offshore Wind Power Ltd (company number SC605260 with registered office at Clava House, Cradlehall Business Park, Inverness, United Kingdom, IV2 5GH) intends to submit a planning application to The Highland Council for the construction of onshore infrastructure for the proposed offshore West of Orkney Windfarm. The proposed transmission infrastructure will be brought onshore at two locations on the Caithness coast at Greeny Geo and Crosskirk. The proposal includes approximately 22km of underground cabling and a new substation and associated infrastructure at or near Spittal. This will constitute a 'major' development under the Town and Country Planning (Hierarchy of Developments) (Scotland) Regulations 2009. The plan below identifies the location of the proposed onshore infrastructure and new substation:




Offshore Wind Power Limited is holding a series of pre-application public consultation (PAC) events which will provide an opportunity for stakeholders, including local residents, to hear more about the West of Orkney Windfarm Project, including the proposed onshore infrastructure and new substation, and to make comments on the proposals. Members of the Project team will be available to answer questions. The details of the events are as follows:

Date:	Tuesday 20th June	Wednesday 21st June
Venue:	The Pentland Hotel, Princes Street, Thurso, KW14 7AA	The Ross Institute, Halkirk, Caithness, KW12 6XZ
Time:	3.30pm-7.30pm	3.30pm-7.30pm

In addition to the above, Offshore Wind Power Limited will be submitting applications for the proposed West of Orkney Windfarm and its associated offshore infrastructure. These applications have been advertised separately in line with the relevant legislation and guidance.

As a planning application has not yet been submitted for the proposed onshore infrastructure and new substation, written comments on the proposals should be made to Offshore Wind Power Limited by 30th June 2023. Please note that comments made to Offshore Wind Power Limited are not representations to The Highland Council. Representations to The Highland Council can be made when a formal planning application is made. To make comments or request further information, please contact:

Email: info@westoforkney.com Postal address: **Freeport FCHANCE**
 Phone: 01786 820 111 Further information can also be obtained by visiting the project website: <https://www.westoforkney.com/>

ONSHORE SUBSTATION VISUAL IMPACT


VISUAL IMPACT

The map above illustrates the likely maximum extent of the visibility of the proposed new substation based on a worst-case scenario in terms of size and scale of the substation.

SUBSTATION DESIGN

Electricity substations require to be insulated using either gas or air. Gas insulated switchgear (GIS) substations are constructed inside a building and the switch gear is insulated by gas, which allows transformers to be positioned closer together, reducing the overall size of the substation. As air insulated switchgear (AIS) substations are open to the elements, the transformers have to be positioned further apart so the substation takes up a larger footprint for the same capacity. Both options are currently being considered for the West of Orkney Windfarm.

The substation will be screened behind bunding (small embankments) and planting. In response to feedback received at the Pre-application (PAC) events in May 2023, planting will be based on native species of trees, shrubs and pollinator-friendly flora suitable for local birds, insects and other wildlife. As we are applying for Planning Permission in Principle, further details regarding the design of the substation and associated mitigation measures will require to be submitted for approval.



www.westoforkney.com

Figure 16: Examples of Round 5 materials

8.5 Feedback – offshore & onshore

A total of 60 people attended the second onshore PAC events in June and a further 26 onshore community questionnaires were completed at the events. Combined with online completions and submissions via email and post, this took the total onshore community questionnaires received to 54 by the end of the consultation. The dedicated email inbox received an additional 11 emails and 1 phone call was made to the Project phone number during the fifth round of consultation. An additional 6 responses to the community benefit fund questionnaire were also submitted.

8.5.1 Onshore feedback

Feedback received through the questionnaires in relation to the onshore infrastructure was significantly more positive during round five of the consultation, with 65% supporting the proposals and only 8% opposing them. This was reflected in discussions with attendees at the events. Combined with the responses received during round four, this means that overall levels of support were 43% versus opposition at 30% with 22% indicating that they neither support nor oppose the proposals.

Many of the respondents expressed support for the revised planting proposals and bunding to screen the substation, welcoming the use of native species and flora to provide habitats for local wildlife. One respondent indicated that they did not see the need for screening and another stated that they would prefer to see a “normal” looking farm building instead. A significant number of participants told us that they were pleased to see that the onshore transmission cables would be buried underground although one respondent questioned whether we should actually be installing overhead lines instead in order to reduce transmission losses.

A small number of concerns were raised about the size of the building and one respondent declared that the Project was “not needed nor is there a ‘climate emergency’”. Several participants called for local employment and supply chain opportunities whilst one person suggested that we include “spare pipes” whilst undertaking significant trenching to create capacity for future projects. Specific comments related to creating biodiversity action plans and ensuring that sensitive heritage features and ecological locations at Crosskirk be protected during construction.

8.5.2 Consultation process feedback

The feedback on the consultation process itself was also generally positive and several people commented that they have attended both PAC events and found them to be useful and informative, particularly the 3D visualisation tool. One respondent stated that they appreciated seeing familiar faces and another specifically said that they preferred face-to-face communication. A number of suggestions were made for ongoing updates, one respondent requested that we attend Tongue, while another asked that we make personal contact with landowners and neighbours.

8.6 How we took account of views raised

We reviewed and considered all feedback received from the public and other stakeholders in parallel with additional technical studies and fieldwork. This information was used to develop our proposals and prepare our final pre-application consultation (PAC) report to be submitted with our planning application to The Highland Council. Specific actions in response to the feedback received are detailed below:

ONSHORE			
Ensure PAC Report fully and accurately documents feedback received	Share final EIA and PAC Reports with communities through a range of channels	Share details on updated proposals in relation to onshore infrastructure when available	Share feedback on jobs and skills development with Project supply chain team

8.7 Statement of compliance

This round of consultation followed the registration of the Proposal of Application Notice on 7th March 2023. It fulfilled the requirement that we undertake pre-application consultation in respect of the Project’s onshore infrastructure, as per the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 and the Town and Country Planning Development Management Procedure (Scotland) Regulations 2013. A full Statement of Compliance can be found in section 2.5 of this PAC Report.

9. Additional engagement

9.1 Political stakeholders

The West of Orkney Windfarm project team has gone above and beyond the legal requirements in relation to community consultation and stakeholder engagement, as detailed in this PAC report. In addition, we have sought to engage with political stakeholders, both informally at community events and formally through emails/ letters and targeted meetings. Highlights of our political engagement include the following activities:

Date	Stakeholder	Purpose
August 2022	Alistair Carmichael MP	Informal meeting at Dounby Show, Orkney, to introduce the project and meet members of the team
October 2022	Liam McArthur MSP Rhoda Grant MSP	Meeting at West of Orkney Windfarm office opening to hear more about the Project and meet the team
November 2022	Colin Smith MSP Liam McArthur MSP	Supply chain dinner to discuss potential of West of Orkney Windfarm and wider ScotWind projects to offer jobs and economic opportunities to business and communities in the north of Scotland
June 2023	Local MSPs/MP/ Regional MSPs	Letter update to highlight Project progress/ timeline and offer meetings
	The Highland Council councillors Crown Estate Scotland Members of the supply chain	Dinner to discuss project progress and supply chain opportunities
	Alistair Carmichael MP	Meeting to discuss Project progress, grid connection and supply chain
	Roy Bremner, Leader of The Highland Council	Green Energy Conference & Dinner in Inverness

9.2 Future consultation & engagement

The West of Orkney Windfarm team is fully committed to continuing to engage with communities across Sutherland, Caithness and Orkney as well as strategic stakeholders and statutory consultees. During the summer of 2023, we returned to the 2023 Durness Gathering, Halkirk Highland Games, West Mainland Agricultural (Dounby) Show and Orkney County Show to continue our conversations and relationship-building with local communities. We are also making plans for face-to-face supply chain events to support the development of skills, employment and contracting opportunities. Engagement activities to discuss and inform the community benefit fund (CBF) with local communities and other interested stakeholders will also continue in the lead up to first power in 2029.

10. Audit of consultation

10.1 Overview

SP=EED (Scottish Planning = Effective Engagement and Delivery) is a framework created by Planning Aid for Scotland (now PAS). PAS is an independent voluntary organisation comprising qualified and respected planning experts which aims to provide advice, training and research to continue to provide best practice on community engagement. The SP=EED framework is endorsed by the Scottish Government in PAN 3/2010 Community Engagement and is a:

“...practical guide to community engagement for all those involved in the Scottish planning system. It is designed to speed up the process of public involvement in planning, while also enhancing the quality of that process.”²

SP=EED is widely recognised as an accumulation of best practice. Specifically, it encourages a front-loaded engagement process whereby effective stakeholder engagement commences as early as possible before too much has been invested and/or irreversible decisions have been made. This is in keeping with the intention of the associated planning legislation, guidance and policy.

This audit seeks to identify to what extent the public and stakeholder consultation plan has effectively been implemented and whether or not further engagement activities are required. The audit has allowed the West of Orkney Windfarm project team to establish whether or not the consultation process has been ‘meaningful and appropriate’ in line with the relevant consenting frameworks. In this regard, Facilitating Change has adopted Planning Aid for Scotland’s SP=EED framework to assess whether or not the consultation undertaken satisfies the consultation requirements agreed by the relevant planning authorities.

10.2 Audit output

The audit indicates the consultation process has been successful in engaging affected communities and canvassing representative local opinion. The West of Orkney Windfarm has attained Level 2 of the SP=EED framework in relation to seven of the eight consultation criteria and has plan in place to also achieve Level 1 for ‘learning and sharing’. Furthermore, the Project has achieved Level 3 in relation to ‘responsiveness’, as illustrated in Figure 17.

Facilitating Change is of the professional opinion that, for applications of this nature, consultation activities should meet Level 2 for the first seven criteria, as has been demonstrated in this project. While achieving Level 2 for the eighth criteria of ‘learning and sharing’ is desirable, this is not always achievable. It is further contended that achieving Partnership (Level 3) across all criteria would not be appropriate for major infrastructure developments such as the West of Orkney Windfarm.

	Level 0: Legal requirement	Level 1: Giving information	Level 2: Consulting & listening	Level 3: Partnership
1. Transparency and Integrity	N/A	ACHIEVED	ACHIEVED	INCOMPLETE
2. Co-ordination	ACHIEVED	ACHIEVED	ACHIEVED	INCOMPLETE
3. Information	ACHIEVED	ACHIEVED	ACHIEVED	INCOMPLETE
4. Appropriateness	ACHIEVED	ACHIEVED	ACHIEVED	INCOMPLETE
5. Responsiveness	ACHIEVED	ACHIEVED	ACHIEVED	ACHIEVED
6. Inclusiveness	N/A	ACHIEVED	ACHIEVED	INCOMPLETE
7. Monitoring and Evaluation	N/A	ACHIEVED	ACHIEVED	INCOMPLETE
8. Learning and Sharing	N/A	PLANNED	INCOMPLETE	INCOMPLETE

Figure 17: SP=EED audit output scores

² ‘A Practical Guide to Better Engagement in Planning in Scotland’, published by Planning Aid for Scotland in October 2008

11. Conclusions

We have carried out five rounds of pre-application consultation on the proposed West of Orkney Windfarm and maintained ongoing stakeholder engagement over an 18-month period since site award in January 2022 leading up to submission of licensing and consent applications to the Scottish Government and The Highland Council.

We considered views raised during each round of consultation throughout the development of the Project and addressed issues wherever possible. We reviewed, discussed and directly responded to feedback to ensure subsequent rounds of consultation addressed key points of interest and concern.

We have been able to demonstrate how views raised during the pre-application consultation process have influenced the development of the Project. We believe that the consultation described in this report satisfies the requirements associated with the relevant consent applications that we are submitting.

The Project team has worked hard to establish effective working relationships with all stakeholders and looks forward to building on these foundations to create a truly world-class windfarm that delivers tangible benefits and positive legacies for local people.

Appendix: Acronyms

Acronym	Definition
CCTV	Closed Circuit Television
CDSFB	Caithness District Salmon Fishery Board
CEP	Community Engagement Plan
CES	Crown Estate Scotland
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
EIAR	Environmental Impact Assessment Report
EMEC	European Marine Energy Centre
EU	European Union
FEPA	Food and Environment Protection Act 1985
FHH	Flotta Hydrogen Hub
FMS	Fisheries Management Scotland
GW	Gigawatt
HAZID	Hazard Identification
HAL	Highlands and Islands Airport Limited
HIE	Highlands and Islands Enterprise
HES	Historic Environment Scotland
HRA	Habitats Regulations Appraisal
MCA	Marine Coastguard Agency
MD-LOT	Marine Directorate - Licensing Operations Team (formerly MS-LOT)
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MS-LOT	Marine Scotland - Licensing Operations Team
NRA	Negotiated Rate Agreement
NDSFB	Northern District Salmon Fishery Board
NLB	Northern Lighthouse Board
OAA	Option Agreement Area
Ofgem	Office of Gas and Electricity Markets
OHA	Orkney Harbour Authority
OIC	Orkney Islands Council
OLA	Option to Lease Agreement
O & M	Operations and Maintenance

Acronym	Definition
ORCA	Orkney Research Centre for Archaeology
OREF	Orkney Renewable Energy Forum
OWPL	Offshore Wind Power Limited
PAC	Pre-Application Consultation
PAN	Proposal of Application Notice
PDE	Project Design Envelope
PO	Plan Option
RIAA	Report to Inform Appropriate Assessment
RSPB	The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
RYA	Royal Yachting Association
SDWQ	Scapa Deep Water Quay
SEPA	Scottish Environment Protection Agency
SHE	Scottish Hydro Electric
SES	Stakeholder Engagement Strategy
SP=EED	Successful Planning Equals Effective Engagement and Delivery
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths
THC	The Highland Council
UHI	University of Highlands and Islands
UK	United Kingdom

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