

## PROPOSED GLENDYE WINDFARM DEVELOPMENT

### INTRODUCTORY INFORMATION PACK

FWCC - January 2018 FINAL REVISED

The following information has been compiled by the Feughdee West Community Council (FWCC) to help inform the Community about the proposed Glendye Windfarm development. FWCC has formed a Working Group, with membership from Community Council representatives and local residents, to look at possible impacts from the windfarm – both positive and negative. They are also liaising directly with the Developer through a Community Liaison Group (CLG) to follow progress and to try and influence for community benefit.

This Information Pack has been compiled as part of our ongoing communications with the Community. It has been independently verified to ensure information is as accurate as possible and it is hoped that this Pack will be used by local residents to help them make an informed decision about the windfarm and for their local area.

Please read all the Glendye Windfarm information presented to you on the FWCC website. If there are further questions or concerns which you would specifically like to be addressed by the community council, please speak to your local councilor and come along to the meetings which are held on the last Thursday of every month.

#### • ***What is being proposed -***

A new windfarm development is being proposed on the Glendye Estate, Aberdeenshire. A scoping report for the proposed development was submitted to the Scottish Government in January 2016 and the first round of public exhibitions were held in June 2016<sup>1</sup>.

The proposed windfarm could consist of up to 26 turbines, each up to 150 metres tall (base to blade tip). Located west of the B974 road between Bridge of Dye and Clatterin' Brig over the Cairn 'O' Mount in Aberdeenshire, just beyond Charr Bothy. The wind farm development site boundary is contained within the water catchment of the upper Water of Dye.

#### • ***Timelines -***

This is currently at the proposal stage and the application is expected to be submitted to the Scottish Government in July 2018. It is important to note that two applications will be presented, one by the windfarm developer for the actual turbines themselves and the second application for the connection to the grid, which will be submitted by Scottish and Southern



<sup>1</sup> The Exhibition Boards from the community engagement events can be found by visiting the Glendye Wind Farm Website: <http://www.glendyewindfarm.co.uk/links.aspx>

Electricity (SSE). We have spoken with SSE and have been told that connection to the grid for this proposed development has, at present, only been considered from a desk top sketch. The connection will most likely be from Fetteresso and will run overground carried on composite poles.

The first application, for the turbines, will be prepared and submitted by the developer, Coriolis, and the second application for the grid connection will be prepared and submitted by SSE. Coriolis can provide SSE with suggestions regarding the grid connection but this will ultimately be the Utility Company's decision. If planning permission is granted the developer expects the construction phase to start in 2023. The current proposed operational lifespan of the development will be approximately 25 years – after which time it will either be decommissioned or the life extended, although at this stage there is no further application to extend the operational life being sought.

- ***Who is involved -***

1. Scottish Government Energy Consents Unit (ECU)– Windfarm application will be submitted and second application also presented regarding connection of the turbines to the grid.
2. Coriolis Energy Ltd – The Developer
3. Glendye Wind Farm Limited – A new company set up by the utility company (ESB) and the developer (Coriolis) to manage this process.
4. ESB – Irish Utility Company who will be constructing and operating the windfarm once/if planning consent is granted.
5. SSE – Utilities company who will manage the grid connection element of the windfarm. A separate application will be submitted to the Scottish Government and it will detail the final situation regarding cabling and how the windfarm will be connected to the grid.

- ***Planning Application Process -***

An application will need to be submitted to the Planning Authority within the Scottish Government's Energy Consents Unit who will then contact Aberdeenshire Council who are a Statutory Consultee in this process. At this stage it is expected to be submitted in July 2018 although this could change, please check with FWCC for latest information. The application will be subject to planning laws which aim to protect both residents and the environment and require a period of consultation. Each windfarm development is different and an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) will be required to accompany the application and will form part of this consultation process. This EIA will present information on the area where the turbines will be located and looks at a variety of factors, such as site stability, visual impact (up to 40km from the proposed development), drainage and run off assessments and impact on wildlife.

There will be a period of consultation where consultees, including FWCC, will have an opportunity to comment on the proposal. Individual residents are also provided with an opportunity to comment on this development. Please note that formal comments to Aberdeenshire Council and the ECU will only be accepted following submission of the planning application.

Further information is provided within this Pack which details the process of how Aberdeenshire Council will consider and then formally respond to the ECU on the application. Additional information also covers the environmental considerations for this development, as well as the Community Benefit and Community Ownership opportunity that will form part of the wind farm proposal. Please remember that some details are changing and evolving as this proposed windfarm application progresses and FWCC will keep you informed via our website.

- ***Why do we need windfarms -***

The Climate Change Act sets in statute the Scottish Governments Economic Strategy target to reduce Scotland's emissions of greenhouse gases by 80% by 2050, with an interim target of 42 % by 2020. Renewable energy, such as wind and solar power, are an integral part of that strategy.

The proposed Glendye windfarm is designed to have a generating capacity of up to 104 MW, with individual turbine generating capacity of approx 4 Megawatts (MW). The Scottish Government also has a target for 100% of its electricity requirement to come from renewables by 2020. It will be important to consider the whole

lifecycle of this development and to recognise the visual impact this development will have; possible increased local flooding risk and possible reductions in local water quality.

- ***How does Aberdeenshire Council assess windfarm developments -***

The application, under a Section 36 of the Electricity Act (1989), will be submitted to the Scottish Government's Energy Consents Unit. The Scottish Government then has a responsibility to invite comments from consultees and interested parties. There are a number of statutory consultees in this process, one of whom is Aberdeenshire Council. Aberdeenshire Council will in turn then consult Community Councils to inform their view of the proposal. It is important to note that timing will be tight as the Consultation period is well defined and we will have approx. 8 weeks to respond to the application. Although Aberdeenshire Council will have 4 months to respond, they will need time to process Community Council responses and take those recommendations to a planning committee hence the timescale for our response is very narrow. Aberdeenshire Council will also be guided by the Local Area Development Plan which was developed after a wide ranging consultation which involved the input from all the Marr area communities – it was an opportunity to express their views and agree the priorities for the local area. Local Development Plans are currently updated every 5 years.

The adopted Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan 2017 (ALDP) sets out policies that will be used for assessing planning or windfarm applications and identifies any possible development opportunities, whilst equally ensuring the protection of the natural heritage and landscape. The full ALDP can be downloaded at the following website pages -

<https://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/planning/plans-and-policies/aberdeenshire-local-development-plan-2017/>

It should be noted that whilst Aberdeenshire Council will assess the merits of the proposal against the ALDP, the National Policy context also has a crucial role to play in the decision making process for Government officials. This also includes looking at the third National Planning Framework (NPF3) and Scottish Planning Policy 2014 (SPP) to shape any decision.

In summary, the current ALDP 2017 makes the following comments relating to the area of the windfarm development and surrounding area :

- Clachnaben and Forest of Birse is recognized as a Special Landscape Area. As such emphasis should be on retaining their largely undeveloped and remote character. This means ensuring that any developments are located and designed to limit their wider visibility and protect open skylines and rugged summits: “we will refuse development that causes unacceptable effects through scale, location or design on key natural landscape elements or quality of landscape character” (P.25)
- In relation to wind turbines the LDP states : ‘there is no real opportunity for wind turbines in Marr’ (P.25) and the supporting map on P.26 shows the Mounth keyed as an area of no underlying capacity for more wind turbines.
- Development involving hill tracks should be undertaken in line with best practice guidance and should take account of landscape character and qualifying features of the SLA.
- Avoidance of development which erodes or interrupts the seamless relationship of this area to the Cairngorms.
- The proposal's public benefits must clearly outweigh the nature conservation value of the site.

- ***Windfarm Community Benefit Funding - \*This is currently a key part of ongoing FWCC discussion with Coriolis and Local Energy Scotland.***

It has been agreed by Coriolis and ESB that this development will provide a community benefit fund to the local communities impacted by the siting of the turbines. Community benefit funding is a valuable source of annual income for many communities that are located near windfarm developments. It can only be spent on defined priorities (see section below) and it would be managed by an independent group and require an agreed application process to be set up. We now need to clarify the detail and FWCC, along with surrounding Community Councils, are working closely with the Developer to fully understand what this will mean for our community. There will also be an opportunity to re-invest some of the funds into the windfarm for a longer term investment approach, in a shared ownership option.

Whilst the final details of the planned wind farm are not confirmed, the level of Community Benefit has been agreed in principle by Coriolis and ESB. They have committed to the Scottish Governments recommended level

of benefit of £5000 per installed Megawatt per year. The Glendye wind farm is currently planned at a possible maximum of 26 turbines, each with a generating capacity of approx. 4MW. The fund would be shared between Feughdee West and Mearns Community Councils on a basis yet to be fully agreed, but indicatively this would likely result in up to £286,000 per year coming to Feughdee West for Community Projects.

There will also be a Community Ownership opportunity with this wind farm. This would be via a "Shared Revenue Scheme" whereby local communities can invest in the wind farm and thus share in the profits of the project over the whole of its operational lifetime. Further information on a "Shared Revenue Scheme" can be found in the Scottish Government's Shared Ownership Good Practice Principles document. Please see page 16 (option 2) of the below document: <http://www.localenergyscotland.org/media/79714/Shared-Ownership-GoodPractice-Principles.pdf>

- ***How can we spend this money -***

There are various Guidance documents and examples available out there on how communities have used their Community Benefit Funding. For example, the booklet on 'Community and Renewable Energy Scotland Shared Ownership Good Practice Principles' is a useful reference to understand the possible available options – see link above.

It is important that the community has a Plan in place to define (identify local priorities) how this money will be used and spent and is able to show how it will benefit the local area. Application criteria will be defined by the windfarm company and this means that the funding cannot be used to fill potholes in the road or other such works that would be covered by the Council but should be used for 'community benefit'. Joint projects which are community centered, eco friendly and sustainable will be preferred. The local communities need to have a clear strategic vision for how this money could be spent to achieve the best benefits for each community involved.

A Community Action Plan will be required and this is where we need the involvement and support of the local community. It is for the community itself (you) to decide how the money would best benefit the residents of FWCC, but here are some examples of what others have done, and what might be possible:

- Provide grants to allow residents to move to renewable heating systems such as ground and air source, woodchip boilers and solar panels,
- Setup community businesses to generate employment and income such as a car scheme, a community farm and camp site, a community fishing beat, help fund apprenticeships, setup a community shop/cafe.
- Money could also be used to help fund local community events and festivals, community groups, sports clubs and community facilities.

- ***What Environmental factors need to be considered -***

The Developer must produce an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and this document will be submitted with the application. The EIA is an important document which looks at the proposed development site and assesses the environmental impacts and how these can be mitigated. It will look at a range of factors, such as, soil type, slope, stability, ease of access, and visual impact but we will not see the final EIA document until it is submitted with the application. Meantime the Scoping Report, which was published in January 2016, helps to provide an indication of the topics that will be covered. We still have many questions that require answers to help give us the confidence that this windfarm development will provide a positive and not a negative impact to our local area. FWCC is liaising with the Developer through a Community Liaison Group (CLG) in order to understand the full impact of a windfarm development in this location. We obviously want to reduce any negative environmental impacts where possible.

The following points highlight some of the topics that will be covered in the EIA and also suggests some of the questions that still need to be answered:

- **Peat** - The proposed location of the Glendye windfarm is predominantly on an area of blanket bog. This is a type of peatland and Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) have classified this area as Class 1. Peatlands are important for carbon storage, water regulation and biodiversity, supporting a range of plant and animal life. Blanket bogs are essentially wetlands as they retain and filter the rainfall in that area. It is important that the EIA report addresses the effect of peat

removal within the windfarm site and for the accompanying access roads and that clear mitigation options are presented.

- **Bird Populations** – The science for bird deaths through collision with the turbines is not clear and quite contentious. Golden eagles are known to nest in the local area and eagles have been recorded flying over the wind farm site. The impact on these birds will be assessed as part of the EIA and the information submitted as part of the application.
- **Carbon Balance** – It will be important to balance the positives (reducing our reliance on fossil fuels) vs the negatives (loss of peat/ bogs; construction of turbines). We would need to see and understand the parameters used in any carbon balance calculations.
- **Local river systems** - The waters of the River Dee catchment qualify as a special area of conservation due to their internationally important populations of Atlantic salmon, freshwater pearl mussels and European otter –Dee Catchment Management Plan Summary, Cooksley SL (2007). It is important to maintain good water quality in this area.
- **Area Drainage and Runoff** – in relation to the river systems we also need to understand if there is the potential for an increased runoff (drainage) into neighboring river systems as a result of the windfarm. We do not want to potentially increase flood risk in our local area. Coriolis will conduct a flood risk assessment and this will be presented at the time of application and considered by statutory consultees including the Scottish Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA).
- **Access Roads** - The impact assessment also looks at access to the site which will be needed for construction. The road access has not been finalised but currently will be from Fettercairn up and over the hills to the site. A new reinforced track will have to be constructed and will be approx. 5km long to the boundary and then approx. 12 km of track within the boundary. We need to be certain that the new and reinforced access road will also not impact on drainage patterns in the area.
- **Visual impact** of the wind farm on the surrounding area is the main concern of many and there are maps available on the Glendye Windfarm Consultation web site which are starting to show which areas the windfarm will be visible from. It will be seen from parts of Strachan but is also visible from a wide area outwith the FWCC boundary. It will be visible in the view looking south from Clachnaben and parts of it will be clearly visible from sections of the Cairn'o'Mount road.

Other questions have also arisen from the community which will not be covered in the EIA document but nonetheless have been included here. For example - *Will the location of this windfarm reduce house prices in the area* -

There seems to be little scientific evidence that house prices in Scotland are affected by the location of a windfarm. Although one key point of note is that most of the slightly negative impacts on property prices are seen to the north of the Firth of Forth and most of the positive impacts are seen to the south of it. It has been suggested that this is caused by the use of community benefit fund money to improve housing and living standards in the more deprived areas in the south of Scotland. (<http://www.climatexchange.org.uk/reducing-emissions/impact-wind-farms-property-prices/>).

### ***Where can you find more information and how to express your views –***

- *Check the Feughdee West Community Council / Glendye Windfarm Consultation/ Scottish Government (energy consents unit) websites for more information;*
- *Speak to your Community Council. Let them know your thoughts so that they can represent you during this consultation process;*
- *Contact your local Councilors and let them know your thoughts;*
- *Write directly to the Scottish Government Energy Consents Unit;*
- *SaveClachnaben facebook page.*