

Craig Watch Wind Farm

Online Consultation Feedback Report

July 2021

About Craig Watch Wind Farm

Craig Watch is a proposal for a 16-turbine wind farm. The site is approximately 8km southeast of Dufftown and straddles Moray and Aberdeenshire Local Authorities.

	No. of Turbines	Max Blade Tip Heights	Expected Installed Capacity (MW)	Estimated Generation	Community Fund (per year)
Craig Watch	Up to 16	Up to 200m	Over 50	Approximately 4,500 homes per turbine ⁽¹⁾	£250,000 per year ⁽²⁾

(1) Based on available wind speed data for the site and 2018 Scottish average household consumption of 3,910 kWh pa.

(2) Based on 50MW installed capacity and £5,000 per MW installed

A programme of community engagement and online consultation for the proposal was delivered in March 2021. The online consultation was held virtually, adhering to the advice of Scottish Government in relation to Covid-19.

Initial Consultation Period

It was important from the outset to provide communities with every opportunity to view and importantly, comment, on the proposals. To achieve this, a dedicated project website was launched when the scoping request was first submitted.

The host and neighbouring Community Councils within Moray and Aberdeenshire were directly contacted and offered an opportunity to virtually meet the development team, to find out more about the proposal and provide feedback on the consultation approach before the wider community were contacted.

Main Consultation Period

This overview presents the findings of the feedback received during the first round of consultation. This was held between 5 - 31 March 2021 and included an online consultation website and non-digital sources of feedback such as by phone and post. Responses submitted after this date will continue to be evaluated and responded to, if required, to help to shape and inform the proposals.

It is intended to submit a Section 36 application for the proposed Craig Watch Wind Farm to the Scottish Government in late 2021 / early 2022.

Summary of Consultation Responses

A newsletter and freepost feedback form was mailed to 1,353 households and businesses, covering an area of 102.55 square miles around the project location. This introduced the project and invited members of the public to provide feedback and ask questions. This area covered Dufftown and Cabrach to the south, as well as surrounding properties. Of the 1,353 properties contacted, we received 60 (4.4%) feedback forms.

From the 60 feedback forms returned, 75% agreed that the country needs to generate more electricity from renewable sources, with around 50% believing that onshore wind is a good way to achieve this.

There was a clear mix of responses to the question “Do you think that this site is an acceptable location for a wind farm?”. Of the 60 reply card responses received, around 50% were either favourable or neutral about the proposed location, with the remaining 50% responding no.

In terms of local benefits, it was clear that there is significant appetite for Statkraft to continue to explore the potential to assist in bringing improved broadband to the area. There seems to be less interest in shared ownership with just under 25% responding that this was of interest to them.

All comments made will be taken into account as the design and layout for the wind farm evolves.

Key Topics from Consultation

During the consultation period, some questions and comments were frequently raised. When responding to feedback, a summary of these questions and our responses to those were included. This is appended to this report and included on the project website FAQs. Some further information on those and other topics are also provided in more detail below.

We welcome further discussion with the community on these topics throughout the development process.

Cumulative Impact

Less than 10% of the land area in Scotland is suitable for onshore wind farms. We believe this presents a great opportunity for Aberdeenshire & Moray to be at the forefront of Scotland’s net zero ambitions. Our Head of Development recently outlined more behind this statistic on a webinar “[Location, Location](#)” which is available to watch on demand at www.FutureNetZero.com.

Visual Impact

Several responses included questions about how the proposal would look from Glass – a visual illustration from this area will be provided at the next consultation event. In addition, visual illustrations from other locations around the development will also be exhibited.

The visual impact of overhead lines to connect the wind farm was raised by several respondents. At this stage there is no certainty as to the grid connection; we are considering underground, storage and overground connection options. Whilst we hope to have more detail at the stage of planning application, there can sometimes be a lag between any wind farm planning application and a grid connection application. In addition, the grid connection application would be managed by Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks (SEN), rather than Statkraft UK Ltd. We appreciate that this is an important aspect for some residents, and we acknowledge the need to be transparent and keep the community informed about this element of the project.

Impact on Wildlife

Independent experts continue to conduct and rigorously assess detailed onsite wildlife surveys and the potential effects on birds, sensitive habitats and protected species including bats and water voles.

Biodiversity is a key consideration at the project design stage, and significant adverse impacts on wildlife and important habitats will be avoided through careful planning.

All the reports which can be made publicly available in relation to wildlife will be included with the planning application documents. Some information relating to sensitive species is confidential and can only be shared with certain statutory consultees.

Broadband

Bringing improved broadband infrastructure to the area is of interest to the majority of respondents. High-quality broadband is required to operate wind farms, including Craig Watch Wind Farm, should it be consented.

Statkraft is the only developer to commit to funding a broadband feasibility study for each of its onshore wind farm development projects. This will assess the potential for fibre and wireless line-of-sight broadband that can also benefit the local and wider community as well. If there is an opportunity for our wind farms to help improve broadband connections for residents and businesses in the area, then we would be happy to explore this with the community.

Statkraft has commissioned a feasibility study which can be used to start discussions with local residents and their elected representatives. The consultation feedback has shown that there is significant interest from local respondents in improving broadband in the area, and these discussions will be followed up.

Community Benefit Fund

If the project is approved, a Community Benefit Fund of £5,000 per MW installed per year will be established. Based on the current proposal, this would deliver a fund of approximately £250,000 per annum for the lifetime of the project. Statkraft aims to offer maximum flexibility regarding how community funds are used, as local communities best understand how funds could be utilised to meet local needs and ambitions.

Local supply chain

Statkraft is committed to working with the local supply chain, and is already working with several Aberdeenshire and Moray companies through the construction of our Keith Greener Grid Park, and the operational Berry Burn Wind Farm.

As an existing member of both the Aberdeenshire and Grampian Chamber of Commerce and Moray Chamber of Commerce, we will continue to work with them and other business groups in the area to ensure local suppliers are aware of the opportunities from our projects. Local businesses have been invited to register their details on our [Local Suppliers Register](#).

Next Steps

As the application for our planning submission is finalised, the next steps for local engagement are:

- Continue to receive feedback and respond to queries.
- Liaise and review with our technical team regarding project-specific feedback.
- Progress setting up a shared ownership (virtual) roundtable with Local Energy Scotland to provide more information to those interested in shared ownership opportunities.
- Follow up with community stakeholders regarding the potential for enhanced access to broadband by sharing the findings of the feasibility study.
- Continue to engage with elected representatives, community councils and local residents to keep them updated on progress.
- Record and store all comments made regarding suggestions for community benefit funding.
- Continue to update the project website www.craigwatch.co.uk

Craig Watch Wind Farm

During the March 2021 consultation, some questions and comments were frequently raised. Below is our response to these.

(June 2021)

There are too many wind farms in this area

Moray Council's Onshore Wind Energy Supplementary Guidance (2020) indicates that the location of the proposed Craig Watch Wind Farm may be appropriate, with some scope to accommodate large scale turbine developments. As part of our work towards the planning application for the project, we have undertaken substantial analysis into the landscape and visual considerations in the vicinity of the development. We continue to develop the project with the aim to find the right balance between maximising the electricity output and carefully siting and designing the proposal to relate to the existing landscape, including other wind developments.

Our analysis shows that less than 10% of land in Scotland is suitable for onshore wind farms. To find out more about what makes a site suitable for onshore wind, you are invited to join a webinar hosted by [Future Net Zero](#) on 29 June where our Head of Development will go through the steps in new site searching. Check [our website](#) for details.

Wind turbines should be offshore

We need a mix of all types of renewable energy generation. New-build onshore wind is presently the most cost-effective way to generate new electricity, out of all forms of electricity.

I don't like the look of onshore wind farms

We appreciate not all people like the look of wind turbines, but they are very much part of the answer to increasing our carbon-free electricity generation and decreasing the need for fossil fuels. The UK Government has surveyed attitudes towards different types of electricity generation since 2012 and the results consistently show around 75% support for onshore wind ([BEIS Attitudes Tracker](#)).

If there is concern about a specific view please let us know and we'll try to provide suitable illustrations at our next consultation event later this year.

Wind turbines are bad for the environment [construction, peat disturbance, use more carbon than they save]

All wind farm applications are required to report their "carbon payback period" in the Environmental Impact Assessment. This is determined using a Scottish Government calculator which takes into account all emissions from the manufacture of the turbines, including any peat disturbance, as well as the construction and decommissioning phases. This figure is usually in the range of 1-2 years, and part of the work we do during the development phase is to get that number as low as possible.

We were finalists in two prestigious industry awards for our efforts at Berry Burn Extension in Moray in maximising habitat improvements to deliver a biodiversity gain. For example, rewetting peat and reducing the impact of future wild fires.

What is the benefit to locals?

There are several ways our projects can bring local benefits, and we are always open to discussing how this can be tailored to each area. The construction phase provides a significant opportunity for local businesses to get involved - we had over 80 businesses complete our local suppliers register for the construction of our Keith Greener Grid project.

The operation of a wind farm brings significant local investment. Statkraft commit to delivering a community benefit fund with all new wind farms at £5,000 per MW installed per year, as per Scottish Government guidance. The exact amount will depend on the number and type of turbines installed, but as a guide, this is around £25,000 per turbine per year over the operating period of the wind farm.

What is the transport route for the turbines? Are the roads suitable for this construction and ongoing access?

We are confident a suitable access route can be proposed and this is part of our detailed planning work. A Traffic Management Plan will be agreed with Moray and Aberdeenshire councils prior to construction commencing.

For more FAQs go to www.craigwatch.co.uk