Loch Liath Wind Farm

Throughout our consultation in August and September 2022, several key issues were raised by residents and organisations. Below is our response to these. *(December 2022)*

I don't like the appearance of the wind turbines/This is not a suitable location for them

Scottish Government planning guidance indicates that the proposed site of Loch Liath Wind Farm may be acceptable for development of wind farms, if suitable measures are taken to protect the natural environment.

As part of our work towards a planning submission and as a result of previous feedback, we have reduced the number of turbines and moved some of them to reduce environmental and visual impact in the local area. 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.

Less than 10% of land in Scotland is suitable for onshore wind farms. Our Head of Development, Richard Mardon, gave a webinar in June 2021 on how Statkraft finds suitable sites for new windfarms. In it, he discusses the factors that we consider before every development, including proximity to housing, monuments and historic sites, wild land, and areas of ecological or scientific significance.

Why has the scheme been reduced? Why not include more turbines?

Our technical studies over the last year and feedback from the community have helped us to arrive at our proposal for a 13-turbine layout, which we believe gives a balance between maximising the electricity generated and minimising impacts.

While reasons for removal of individual turbines vary, they include reducing visual impact from key locations, and avoiding areas that are home to deep peat, sensitive for bird species and which might impact on nearby lochs and burns.

Why not invest in hydroelectric power, off-shore wind or tidal energy instead of on-shore wind?

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.

Will this development help reduce energy bills?

The current energy price rises in the UK are closely linked to the price of natural gas. By increasing the amount of renewable energy that the UK can generate and by strengthening the energy network with developments like our Greener Grid Parks, we are reducing the reliance on electricity generated from gas which should reduce prices over time. You can see the impact renewable energy is having on reducing our reliance on imported and expensive fossil fuels here.

What is the benefit to the local community?

There are several ways our projects can bring local benefits, and we are always open to discussing how this can be tailored to the local area.

The construction phase provides a significant opportunity for local businesses to get involved and Statkraft have a track record of working with local organisations such as the Chamber of Commerce to maximise local investment during this time. Over £1.6m was retained in the local economy during construction of our Greener Grid Park at Keith, sourced through promotion of our Local Supplier Register. On a wider level, a recent University of Strathclyde report demonstrates the breadth of economic benefits being delivered from onshore wind and the wider renewable energy industry. Scotland's renewable energy industry supported more than 27,000 full time jobs, and £5.6bn of output, with onshore wind supporting the most employment.

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, is currently estimated at £429,000 per year over the operating period of the wind farm.