

Public Engagement for Sub-20MW Wind Turbine Proposals  
**Good Practice Guidance**

May 2015

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## 1. Background

This document provides good practice guidance for local authorities, developers, landowners, community representatives and other relevant stakeholders on public engagement for sub-20MW wind turbine proposals. It arises from [Public Petition PE1469](#)<sup>1</sup> that sought the Scottish Parliament's support in urging the Scottish Government to increase the neighbour notification distance for wind turbine proposals from the present 20 metres.

The guidance first discusses considerations and matters arising from the public petition and relevant legislation and procedures for wind turbine development. Existing guidance, policies and research are then summarised, referenced and signposted to build upon learning and development in the field to date. From that suite of materials, recommendations are identified for each relevant stakeholder group.

The final section of the report details the measures considered as good practice in public engagement. This document complements other sources of advice and good practice guidance on community engagement.

1.1 [Public Petition PE1469](#)<sup>2</sup> sought the Scottish Parliament's support in asking the Scottish Government to increase the neighbour notification distance for wind turbine proposals from the present 20 metres.

1.2 The Scottish Government recognises that some communities and individuals have concerns about the siting of wind turbines. Change to statutory requirements is not proposed. Instead, this good practice guidance on public engagement on proposals involving wind turbines aims to provide practical help on engaging with the public. This position was agreed by the Local Government and Regeneration Committee on 20 August 2014, after which the public petition PE1469 was closed.

1.3 Draft good practice guidance was consulted upon between October and December 2014. Details of the consultation findings are summarised in the consultation analysis report and full responses can be accessed at:

<http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2015/01/3542>

## 2. Considerations and Matters Arising

In considering the scope for any new guidance, it is important to have a clear understanding of the issues, existing procedures and required engagement processes. The following section provides detail on the requirements for various types of application.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/GettingInvolved/Petitions/turbineneighbournotification>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/GettingInvolved/Petitions/turbineneighbournotification>

## **2.1 Existing Planning Legislation**

2.1.1 The Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 (as amended) and associated secondary legislation provide opportunities for people to get involved in the planning system.

## **2.2 Development Plans & Guidance**

2.2.1 Planning authorities are required to prepare development plans to comply with Scottish Planning Policy, the National Planning Framework and Circular 6/2013: Development Planning<sup>3</sup>. Development plans should contain planning policies and spatial frameworks to support the delivery of wind energy development and to steer wind turbine developments to appropriate locations in their respective areas. Authorities can also produce supplementary guidance to expand upon particular policy areas and to provide more detailed guidance on development management. Alternatively, this can be presented as non-statutory guidance.

2.2.2 Development plans are expected to be reviewed and updated within 5 year time cycles. This allows multiple opportunities for stakeholders with an interest in wind energy development to engage in the various stages of development plan preparation. Stakeholders are encouraged to comment on planning policies including spatial frameworks and associated supplementary guidance before plans are adopted. Authorities are also encouraged to be transparent and to provide opportunities for stakeholders to comment when preparing any non-statutory guidance.

## **2.3 Energy Consents and applications for Major / National developments**

2.3.1 Statutory pre-application consultation applies to planning applications for major development (e.g. electricity generating stations of 20 Megawatts (MW) or more) and for national development proposals<sup>4</sup>; with guidance provided in [Planning Advice Note 3/2010](#)<sup>5</sup>. Applications covered under Section 36 of the Electricity Act 1989 are also subject to pre-application consultation as a matter of good practice.

2.3.2 For major developments the application process consists of:

- consultation with community councils in whose area the proposal is situated or with neighbouring community councils;
- providing copies of the Proposal Of Application Notice (PAN) to such community councils;
- a public event where members of the public may make comments to the prospective applicant with a local newspaper notice publicising the event;
- a public notice indicating both where information on the proposals can be obtained and written comments can be sent to the prospective applicant;

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2013/12/9924>

<sup>4</sup> As identified in the [National Planning Framework 3](#)

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2011/06/01084419/0>

- whatever further consultation requirements are placed on the prospective applicant by the planning authority; and
- prepare and submit a pre-application consultation report with any subsequent application outlining the approaches taken in engagement.

2.3.3 [Good practice guidance](#)<sup>6</sup> has been produced for Energy Consent applications which includes details on public engagement and as a matter of good practice for applications for consent under section 36 of the Electricity Act 1989 (electricity generation stations of 50MW or more). The Scottish Government's Energy Consents Unit webpage also provides further information on individual applications covered under Section 36.

<http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Business-Industry/Energy/Infrastructure/Energy-Consents>

2.3.4 Given that provisions for larger-scale planning applications are already in place, this guidance focuses on good practice in engagement for proposals for wind energy developments below the 20MW generating capacity threshold i.e. those classed as local developments in the development hierarchy, but above permitted development thresholds<sup>7</sup>.

## 2.4 Environmental Impact Assessment Applications

2.4.1 The Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2011 set out the publicity requirements for those wind turbine proposals that require an environmental impact assessment (EIA). This includes specific provisions for neighbour notification and wider publicity following the submission of an Environmental Statement. On receipt of the Environmental Statement, the planning authority must advertise the statement in the local press and the Edinburgh Gazette and the applicant must pay the cost of the advertisement. The notices published must:-

a) state that a copy of the statement and of any other documents submitted with the application will be available for inspection by the public and give the address (and where available website address) where the documents can be inspected free of charge;

b) give an address in the locality where copies of the statement may be obtained; state that a copy may be obtained there while stocks last; and, state the amount of any charge to be made for supplying a copy; and

c) state the date by which any written representations about the application should be made to the planning authority. This date must be at least 4 weeks after the date on which the notice was published; and

d) note that the possible decisions relating to a planning application are to;

<sup>6</sup><http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Business-Industry/Energy/Infrastructure/Energy-Consents/Guidance/goodpracticeguidance>

<sup>7</sup> As defined in [Planning Circular 5 \(2009\) Hierarchy of Developments](#).

- Grant planning permission without conditions
- Grant planning permission with conditions
- Refuse permission

2.4.2 Additional publicity and notification requirements apply where an EIA is submitted under the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2011. Further guidance is provided on in [Circular 3/2011](#)<sup>8</sup>.

## 2.5 Publicity for Applications for Planning Permission

2.5.1 Where a planning application is for a local development (and no EIA is required) then it requires:

- neighbour notification to premises on land which, or part of which, is within 20 metres of the boundary of the land to be developed;
- a notice in a public newspaper where either the site owners have not been notified, neighbouring land has no premises to which neighbour notification can be sent, the development is of a type listed as likely to have effects on amenity (e.g. structures over 20 metres in height, the development is contrary to the development plan);
- inclusion on a weekly list of new applications sent to all community councils in the planning authority area and available in the planning office and local libraries;
- inclusion on the list of applications which is made available online and at the planning authority's principal office and public libraries (in practice, planning authorities publish their weekly lists of new applications on their web sites).

2.5.2 Communities should engage with different organisations at different points in the process. When development plans and supplementary guidance are being prepared, community engagement will be mainly with the planning authority. During pre-application consultation, the engagement will be between the community and the prospective applicant. When an application for planning permission has been submitted, the focus for engagement is between communities and the planning authority.

2.5.3 The following sections set out existing examples of consultation and recent research on engagement.

## 3. Existing Scottish Government Policies, Guidance and Advice on Consultation Practices

**A great deal of work has been carried out to ensure developments are implemented following full public engagement. Relevant excerpts from Scottish Government documents are referenced and listed below. Where relevant, these documents should be read in full and the practices followed.**

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2011/06/01084419/0>

### 3.1 Scottish Planning Policy

3.1.1 In addition to guidance in Circulars 6/2013: Development Planning<sup>9</sup>, 3/2013: Development Management Procedures<sup>10</sup> and the advice provided in [Planning Advice Note 3/2010: Community Engagement](#)<sup>11</sup>, the Scottish Government's policy on community engagement in the planning system is set out in [Scottish Planning Policy \(SPP\)](#)<sup>12</sup>. SPP paragraphs 5 – 7 state:

3.1.2 *“The primary responsibility for the operation of the planning system lies with strategic development planning authorities, and local and national park authorities. However, all those involved with the system have a responsibility to engage and work together constructively and proportionately to achieve quality places for Scotland. This includes the Scottish Government and its agencies, public bodies, statutory consultees, elected members, communities, the general public, developers, applicants, agents, interest groups and representative organisations.*

3.1.3 *Throughout the planning system, opportunities are available for everyone to engage in the development decisions which affect them. Such engagement between stakeholders should be early, meaningful and proportionate. Innovative approaches, tailored to the unique circumstances are encouraged, for example community workshop events ([charrettes](#)<sup>13</sup>) or mediation initiatives. Support or concern expressed on matters material to planning should be given careful consideration in developing plans and proposals and in determining planning applications. Effective engagement can lead to better plans, better decisions and more satisfactory outcomes and can help to avoid delays in the planning process.*

3.1.4 *Planning authorities and developers should ensure that appropriate and proportionate steps are taken to raise awareness and engage with communities during the preparation of development plans, when development proposals are being formed and when applications for planning permission are made. Individuals and community groups should ensure that they focus on planning issues and use available opportunities for engaging constructively with developers and planning authorities.”*

### 3.2 National Standards for Community Engagement

The [National Standards for Community Engagement](#)<sup>14</sup> set out best practice principles for the way that government agencies, councils, health boards,

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<sup>9</sup> <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2013/12/9924>

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2013/12/9882>

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2010/08/30094454/0>

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Built-Environment/planning/Policy>

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Built-Environment/AandP/Projects/SSCI/Mainstreaming>

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Built-Environment/regeneration/engage/HowToGuide/NationalStandardspdf>



police and other public bodies engage with communities. The community engagement planning tool [VOiCE<sup>15</sup>](#) is underpinned by the standards.

### **3.3 Good Practice Principles for Community Benefits from Onshore Renewable Energy Developments**

- 3.3.1 Scottish Government [Good Practice Principles for Community Benefits from Onshore Renewable Energy Developments<sup>16</sup>](#) is also a useful reference point. The guidance states that consultation on community benefit schemes should reach at least the same geographical area as the required consultation on the development itself.
- 3.3.2 Chapters 6 and 7 of the guidance provide valuable detail on factors to consider in identifying the appropriate geographical area for community benefits and associated consultations. They are of particular relevance to this guidance.
- 3.3.3 The guidance also identifies the stakeholders who should be included in discussions and a range of further considerations including good practice consultation principles.
- 3.3.4 Local consultation is an important component of any community benefits scheme. The creation and strengthening of mutual trust and relationships should be regarded as integral to the overall process. Done well, it can also improve the likelihood of developers and their host communities building trust and understanding locally about the renewables development more widely. The document identifies expected content and methods for consulting on wind energy proposals.

## **4. Research and Other Good Practice**

**In addition to good practice guidance, there is a wealth of research and related information available on engagement practices which may be of value to those who are seeking to develop a public engagement strategy.**

### **4.1 Dr Mhairi Aitken, Dr Claire Haggett and Dr David Rudolph - [Wind Farms Community Engagement Good Practice Review<sup>17</sup>](#)**

- 4.1.1 The University of Edinburgh and ClimateXChange has undertaken research into good practice on community engagement on wind farms, published in August 2014. Its main focus is on engagement carried out by wind farm developers with communities. The research evaluates current good practice for engaging people in decision making about on and offshore wind farms looking at a mix of methods used in European countries.

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<sup>15</sup> <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Built-Environment/regeneration/engage/voice>

<sup>16</sup> <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/0043/00438782.pdf>

<sup>17</sup> <http://www.climatexchange.org.uk/reducing-emissions/what-good-community-engagement-wind-farm-developments/>



4.1.2 The report states that there is no ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach to community consultation and identifies the importance and need for:

- Wide-ranging and innovative methods of engagement;
- Methods which facilitate dialogue (rather than just transmitting information);
- Instances where action is taken on the basis of responses gathered;
- Measures to keep engagement going through all stages including approval and construction;
- Using a wide ranging definition of an ‘affected’ public; and
- Identifying and implementing tangible benefits.

4.1.3 Better quality engagement should be carried out rather than implying any need for more community engagement. A key recommendation is that consultation methods used should be flexible in terms of timing, and provide accessible channels through which community members can respond. This should ensure that community engagement is responsive and meaningful to participants.

4.1.4 The research report raises many valid issues that should be considered further and makes useful recommendations that can be implemented by stakeholders. The research states that many developers can and already do go over and above normal engagement requirements.

4.1.5 The main focus for the research was on larger wind farm developments rather than smaller and/or single turbine developments. Whilst many of the recommendations in the report could also apply to smaller developments some may not be entirely compatible or proportionate to the situation. It also confirms that engagement must be meaningful, flexible, proportionate and tailored to suit the local situation and that there are existing good practice ways to achieve this.

## 4.2 Other Examples of Planning Consultation Guidance for Wind Energy

A combination of other discretionary good practice principles are applied to wind energy developments across the UK.

### 4.2.1 Scotland: **Community and Renewable Energy Scheme (CARES)**<sup>18</sup>

In Scotland, both community and rural business applicants to Scottish Government CARES pre-planning loans for wind energy proposals must meet consultation requirements to ensure that those residents living closest to the proposed development are made aware of these proposals. In the stage 2 application for CARES assistance there is a section as follows:-

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<sup>18</sup> <http://www.localenergyscotland.org/media/21556/cares-toolkit-planning-module-v2.pdf>

“Neighbour Notification (wind projects) – Please detail any neighbour notification that has taken place. It is a requirement of the CARES scheme that all properties within 1km of the turbine are notified in writing with details about the project. You should also feedback responses to the CARES team to allow local views to be understood. Guidance is available via your Development Officer.”

#### 4.2.2 Wales: [Technical Advice Note 8](#)<sup>19</sup> : Planning for Renewable Energy (2005)

This document states that *“Developers, in consultation with local planning authorities, should take an active role in engaging with the local community on renewable energy proposals. This should include pre-application discussion and provision of background information on the renewable energy technology that is proposed. There is no defined threshold for development scale where consultation is required for wind energy development.”*

#### 4.2.3 Wales: The [Protocol for Public Engagement with Proposed Wind Energy Developments in Wales](#)<sup>20</sup>

This was produced in 2007 by the Renewables Advisory Board and Department of Trade and Industry (DTI). This takes forward good practice principles and generic approaches to public engagement. It applies them specifically to proposed wind farm developments and also seeks wider, advance commitment to them from developers and other stakeholders, alongside the local planning authority.

In instances where multiple developments are proposed, the need for effective public engagement is considered likely to be greater; there would be value in developers and Local Planning Authorities considering opportunities for co-operation with one another in addition to the approaches outlined within the Protocol. The document sets out specific protocol that a range of stakeholders in the planning process are expected to buy-in to.

#### 4.2.3 Northern Ireland: ‘[Maximising Community Outcomes From Wind Energy Developments](#)’<sup>21</sup>

The Fermanagh Trust published this report in January 2012. It explored the opportunities for communities to engage with commercial onshore wind energy development. The report was funded and supported by Northern Ireland’s Building Change Trust and makes a series of recommendations for the consideration of the Northern Ireland Assembly on wind energy planning.

<sup>19</sup> <http://wales.gov.uk/docs/desh/publications/050701technical-advice-note-8-en.pdf>

<sup>20</sup> <http://www.cse.org.uk/pdf/pub1080.pdf>

<sup>21</sup> [http://www.fermanaghtrust.org/images/custom/uploads/127/files/Wind\\_REPORT\\_1.pdf](http://www.fermanaghtrust.org/images/custom/uploads/127/files/Wind_REPORT_1.pdf)

The report identifies the importance of effective community engagement in working with local communities. It suggests implementing a well-designed proactive programme which seeks out and responds to community issues. Community engagement should not be solely focused on the planning process but throughout the life cycle of the project.

The report argues that such engagement should be based on models of good practice and include post-construction relationships re: educational benefits etc. It involves working with all relevant stakeholders to inform, listen to and consider views in order to develop the best possible initiative and to ensure that proposed developments are successful and welcomed by the community.

#### 4.2.4 European Union: [Good Practice in reconciling Wind energy with Environmental and Community Interests](#)<sup>22</sup> (GP Wind)

This document was launched in August 2010 and ran until October 2012, and was supported by the Scottish Government. GP WIND was designed to demonstrate and disseminate good practice from EU countries to target audiences across Europe. It provides a range of tools which can be used by industry, developers, European, national and local policy makers, regulatory authorities, environmental agencies and groups and local communities to improve policy and guidance, as well as the process and practice of dealing with applications for new renewable energy projects.

The common methodology has ensured that the good practice focuses on solving practical problems and is transferable despite differences in geography and administrative systems. Specific guidance is identified on the website on [involvement with the community](#)<sup>23</sup>. This site contains further information that could be considered in relation to wind energy development.

#### 4.2.5 [WISE Power](#)<sup>24</sup>

WISE Power project aims to increase local awareness and participation in the planning and implementation of wind power projects. It aims to address social concerns about wind energy and has a strong focus on alternative measures of funding - such as community and cooperative funding of wind farms - that may have an impact on empowering the local communities and enhancing social engagement.

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<sup>22</sup> <http://project-gpwind.eu/>

<sup>23</sup> [http://project-gpwind.eu/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=36&Itemid=218&phpMyAdmin=168bb9b8283612a1d3324564202cce92](http://project-gpwind.eu/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=36&Itemid=218&phpMyAdmin=168bb9b8283612a1d3324564202cce92)

<sup>24</sup> <http://www.ewea.org/eu-funded-projects/wise-power/>

#### 4.3 PAS<sup>25</sup> - SP=EED™ Verification

4.3.1 SP=EED is PAS's free practical guide to effective engagement in planning. SP=EED is referred to in the Scottish Government's Planning Advice Note (PAN) 3/2010 as a benchmarking tool for community engagement in planning. SP=EED develops an understanding of three broad levels of engagement using eight defined criteria.

4.3.2 PAS's SP=EED Verification is a two part programme which certifies an individual's competence in using the SP=EED approach to delivering engagement in planning and demonstrates that participants have completed a written reflective learning assessment:

- give public assurance that engagement is being done to an appropriate level and to the highest standard
- allow individuals to develop a greater understanding of SP=EED and its practical application
- provide a greater understanding of the skills required for effective engagement
- encourage the use of a range of creative and effective planning and engagement tools to suit different participatory approaches
- allow individuals to have their engagement methods verified by independent planning and engagement professionals

4.3.3 There are two parts to SP=EED Verification:

- Part 1: Understanding SP=EED: A 3.5 hour interactive workshop facilitated by PAS SP=EED Verification Trainers (after which participants receive the toolkits needed to complete part 2).
- Part 2: Putting SP=EED into practice: A written reflective learning submission based on at least one engagement process that the participant has been involved in since Part 1. This will be verified by independent planning and engagement professionals and ratified by PAS.

4.3.4 On becoming SP=EED verified, individuals become part of a network and can advertise themselves as such.

Further information is available at: <http://www.pas.org.uk/speed-verification/>

#### 4.4 RECOMMENDATIONS – OVERVIEW

**Having taken into account existing practice and guidance, this section provides further advice on good practice in public engagement on wind turbines for each of the key parties who are involved in the process. Overall, it emphasises that consultation and engagement methods should be tailored to each particular location, and be responsive to local contexts and needs. No single approach would be effective in all**

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<sup>25</sup> PAS were formally known as Planning Aid Scotland

**circumstances. However there are consistent good practice methods and approaches that could provide better solutions to address the concerns raised by the petitioners that can be reflected in the good practice guidance.**

## **5. Recommendations for local authorities**

- 5.1 Public participation is essential in the planning process. Undertaking meaningful public engagement is not always straightforward and can be challenging. Planning authorities have a role to play in making the planning process accessible, to lower barriers to participation.
- 5.2 Planning officers and elected members can support members of the public in this process. The planning system should, as far as is practical, provide a forum for listening to a range of views based on a variety of sources of knowledge and experience. Local knowledge in particular should be valued and encouraged. Members of the public should be supported to articulate their views by sharing their own particular perspective, experience or knowledge.
- 5.3 Planning authorities should prepare and apply clear planning policy and guidance on wind energy developments in accordance with national and where relevant SDP policy and guidance. This should be done in consultation with stakeholders including neighbouring planning authorities. Background documents that inform to the preparation of guidance, such as landscape capacity studies, should be made transparent and consulted on where appropriate, as they are often used in the assessment of planning applications for wind energy development.
- 5.4 Draft development plans and guidance produced by planning authorities should be clear about intentions and the factors on which views are sought. The audience and objectives should be the determining factors in the type of document produced. Planning authorities should manage the expectations of consultees, by being clear about what the consultation can and cannot achieve and how far consultees can influence the final outcome.
- 5.5 Officers and elected members can help to direct members of the public to appropriate information sources and guidance or advice related to specific developments. Elected members may be asked to comment as part of pre-application discussions between the planning authority and the developer. [Guidance on the Role of Councillors in Pre-Application Procedures](#)<sup>26</sup> is available to steer parties in such instances. It provides guidance to local authorities on locally agreed and adopted procedures for such discussions. Elected members may be approached by members of public and both the guidance and the [Councillors Code of Conduct](#)<sup>27</sup> provide advice on how such approaches can be managed appropriately. Local authorities can also steer

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<sup>26</sup> <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Built-Environment/planning/Roles/Planning-Authorities/Documents>

<sup>27</sup> <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2010/12/10145144/0>

members of the public to the Planning Information Notices for Scotland (PINS) portal ([www.tellmesotland.gov.uk](http://www.tellmesotland.gov.uk)) which allows members of the public to receive updates on advertised planning applications and other notices.

#### Neighbour Notification

- 5.6 The Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (Scotland) Regulations 2013 require planning authorities to send notice of planning applications to premises situated on neighbouring land.
- 5.7 Neighbour notification of planning applications is intended to notify those with premises on land immediately next to a proposal site. Beyond that, reliance is placed on statutory requirements for newspaper notices, consultation with community councils, on-line weekly lists and lists in libraries and planning offices to get word out into the wider community.
- 5.8 In some cases planning authorities may be aware of particular parties or stakeholders who might wish to comment on a proposal; possibly based upon past experience or dialogue with groups or individuals. If approached by developers, planning authorities can assist by providing them with details of those parties that they have ready access to; applying appropriate data protection rules where required. This will allow applicants/developers to make contact with those stakeholders early on to outline the development proposals and identify how they might access information or comment on the proposals. Planning officers should be able to identify relevant contacts within their local authority, for example community council liaison officers, who may be best placed to identify potential issues and stakeholder contacts within areas where a wind energy development is proposed.
- 5.9 Planning authorities may wish to develop a protocol to ensure a consistent approach in contacting community councils on planning applications within their area. Where development might impact on a neighbouring authority, a starting point would be to consult with every community council which the application site covers, and any community council which has a direct boundary with the application site, where appropriate. Consideration could also be given to circumstances where there are likely to be prominent or expansive views of the development, and to engage with community groups within those areas; for example coastal settlements in neighbouring authorities with views across major rivers/firths/lochs and sea lochs, or where development is on a prominent hill or ridgeline.

#### Lists of applications and the display of information

- 5.10 Authorities could consider producing separate lists of wind turbine proposals which can assist in monitoring the number of applications coming forward. Where resources are available, some planning authorities have taken this further by providing interactive mapping facilities, for example those in Argyll



and Bute<sup>28</sup> Council, Fife Council<sup>29</sup> and Highland Council<sup>30</sup>. These are publicly accessible and are regularly updated.

## 6. Recommendations for developers and landowners

6.1 **Developers or landowners can assist in keeping neighbouring properties or landowners informed of their development proposals prior to the submission of a planning application. Prospective developers can facilitate appropriate public participation as early as possible when designing and planning wind energy developments. This will benefit not only the local community but also the developers. This could be viewed as a component of effective project planning and development. Any form of engagement should be proportionate, tailored to differing scales of development.**

6.2 The scale of development should help to determine the type and appropriate level of engagement that would be appropriate.

1. For **smaller developments** (generally 50m or less to tip height) it may be helpful for developers to produce a leaflet/flyer with information which can be distributed to properties or handed out to stakeholders. Alternatively posters can be used to advertise an application for example within a local post office, shop, community hall, library or other facilities well used by the community.
2. For **larger-scaled developments**, or where proposals might affect a city, town or village, it may be more suitable to engage the wider community. For example by organising a public event where a larger representation of a community can be engaged with and where people can ask questions of a particular proposal. Regardless of scale, developers should be able to provide the following details clearly to stakeholders on their development proposals:
  - i. the proposed location using a map or aerial image to provide context;
  - ii. an image providing an accurate representation of what the proposed development will look like;
  - iii. details of the proposed turbine height (to both hub and blade tip in meters) and the generating capacity of the development (in kW or MW);
  - iv. a plan that identifies the zone of theoretical visibility (ZTV) of the development;
  - v. where further information on the development can be obtained from;

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<sup>28</sup> [http://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/planning-and-environment/renewable-energy#in\\_map](http://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/planning-and-environment/renewable-energy#in_map)

<sup>29</sup> <http://www.fifedirect.org.uk/topics/index.cfm?fuseaction=page.display&p2sid=500C3CB2-D5E6-F216-50BAD63DFA0C1E8F&themeid=2B482E89-1CC4-E06A-52FBA69F838F4D24>

<sup>30</sup> [http://www.highland.gov.uk/news/article/8389/new\\_way\\_to\\_view\\_onshore\\_wind\\_activity\\_across\\_the\\_highlands](http://www.highland.gov.uk/news/article/8389/new_way_to_view_onshore_wind_activity_across_the_highlands) ...



3. In order to aid the planning authority in its assessment of the proposals, it would be helpful for a developer to identify what, if any, engagement it has carried out for the proposals.
- 6.3 Developers may wish to prepare and apply a coherent Engagement Plan in discussion with the relevant planning authorities. They should be open to allowing the public with opportunities to scrutinise and influence key aspects of the project, and be clear about how views will be taken into account. Developers could also consider whether or not it would be appropriate to offer a local financial stake in their project, as a matter of good practice and be open to this if it is desirable to the local community.<sup>31</sup>
- 6.4 Crucially, it would be helpful to be open to the possibility that public engagement could indicate that their approach or design can be modified or tailored to suit a particular local situation; to consider moving turbines; maintaining project capacity in a different location if achievable e.g. taking account of land ownership. Such discussions can potentially help to identify appropriate mitigation measures where necessary.
- 6.5 In the first instance, developers are encouraged to engage in pre-application discussions with planning authorities who will have information that could be useful in identifying local issues along with contacts for community groups and other key stakeholders. As a starting point, discussions can be held with every community council which the application site covers, and any community council which has a direct boundary with the application site, where appropriate. Consideration could also be given to circumstances where there are likely to be prominent or expansive views referred to in paragraph 5.9 of this guidance. Consideration of a development's likely Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) coverage can aid in identifying such issues. A fair and transparent process can be used to identify the appropriate groups to consult - individual groups must not be selectively involved to the exclusion of hard-to-reach groups or individuals. Developers are encouraged to engage with all relevant community groups within an area, and in particular those residents who are likely to be most affected by the development. This will ensure that a broad range of views and opinions from the wider community is obtained.

#### Identifying geographic boundaries for public engagement

- 6.6 The scale and likely impact of a development will assist in determining how to define a proportionate and appropriate geographic context for engagement. For all forms of wind energy development, a starting point could be to give consideration to notifying and engaging with community groups and residents of those properties within at least 1km of the development. Recognising the wider impacts of larger wind farm developments (generally greater than 50m to tip height and/or developments with multiple wind turbines) can have, it may be appropriate to engage with the occupants of those properties within a 2km

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<sup>31</sup> Details on this are identified in Scottish Government Good Practice Principles for Shared Ownership of Onshore Renewable Energy Developments.

distance from the development. If applied, such approaches would be more consistent with other notifications and engagement practices, including CARES, and for larger developments reflect the consideration of visual impact and purpose of the 2km community separation distance set out in Scottish Planning Policy.

6.7 Further good practice principles exist for developers to use at their discretion in engagement for wind energy proposals. These are set out in other Scottish Government documents and are summarised below:

6.8 Using the boundary of the relevant community council(s) as a foundation, the following factors may also be incorporated to identify an appropriate geographical area. This is not a comprehensive checklist to be applied to every development. The number and nature of the factors selected will be dependent on the local context and developers' company policies.<sup>32</sup> Some issues to consider include:

- Proximity to site (perimeter/boundary may be dependent on scale of project)
  - Concentric circles may give a starting point for identifying an area of benefit. It may be useful to also consider ZTV coverage of the development to identify those areas that may be visually affected. Larger developments (greater than 50m in height and/or multiple turbines) should generally have a larger circle; and it may be more appropriate to give consideration to those properties within a 2km distance from the development. However, a concentric circle may pose challenges for example when this divides community councils; administrative boundaries should be respected in conjunction with other factors.
- Geography and topography
- Characteristics of development
  - Size, scale, siting and visibility of development
- Construction
  - The communities which will be affected in either the short-term or long-term by the construction of the development, e.g. access roads.
- Immediate / adjacent / surrounding postcode areas
  - Consult a map of local postcodes to identify appropriate area boundaries.
- Demographics – population density/spread
  - Be sensitive to any significant populations which may have been overlooked, for example in rural areas or where harder to reach groups exist such as gypsy / travellers or ethnic minority groups.
  - Local authorities normally have information that can aid such assessments to tailor appropriate consultation.
  - Consider the groups that are likely to be hard to reach because they may not want to engage and those that would like to engage but can't because of when / where events are planned. In the latter instance consider whether or not additional support and accessibility is required.

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<sup>32</sup> <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/0043/00438782.pdf> (pages 15-16)

- Consider local authority policy/guidelines
  - Acknowledge local authority policies or guidelines and discuss with the community in the consultation period if relevant.

#### Case study:

Vento ludens ltd. approached three community councils in the Moray Council area that had been identified through their initial community profiling stage. The community councils suggested including three further community councils in the Aberdeenshire Council area. Vento ludens consequently included all six community councils in the consultation process. Through dialogue at public exhibitions and meetings, it was agreed by all that the initial three community councils were the most appropriate stakeholders, and discussions were progressed with these groups accordingly.

#### Identifying stakeholders and community characteristics

- 6.9 Once the developer has considered an appropriate geographical boundary for consultation, links can be explored and where possible developed with individuals and groups as listed below.<sup>33</sup>
- Local residents
  - Local businesses
  - Land managers
  - Community councils (often likely to be an important lever into the wider community)
  - Social groups, for example youth groups, sports groups or lunch clubs for the elderly
  - Local development trust
  - Housing associations
  - Other existing community groups
  - Local environmental bodies including Climate Challenge Fund projects
  - Local Chamber of Commerce or Federation of Small Businesses
  - Other key service providers, e.g. village hall committees, schools, colleges, healthcare facilities, residential facilities, care providers, community transport services, credit unions etc.
- 6.10 These stakeholders can be invited to propose any other communities of place or communities of interest which they feel should be included in the process at this stage. The VOiCE community engagement tool helps identify all the relevant people with an interest, available at: <http://www.scdc.org.uk/what/voice/>. Reference should be made to the Scottish Government's [Principles of Inclusive Communication](#) document<sup>34</sup>.
- 6.11 Some community councils in certain areas may be under pressure to commit time and resource to engagement on a number of development proposals at any given time. Other community councils may not have resources or the necessary experience to engage with the wider community. This should be

<sup>33</sup> <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/0043/00438782.pdf> (pages 16-17)

<sup>34</sup> <http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2011/09/14082209/17>

taken into account and addressed as appropriate following discussion with the relevant community council.

- 6.12 In the event there is no community council operating within an area, discussions with local authorities may help to establish any relevant community groups that may be active in a locality and could act as an alternative. Local Authority community council liaison officers will be a relevant contact in aiding this and early dialogue with them is encouraged.
- 6.13 Once appropriate contacts have been identified, these stakeholders could then be invited to form a contact group to take forward further discussions, or any other appropriate method of working together can be employed, for example community open days or events.
- 6.14 In addition to those listed above, some further factors for consideration in identifying the community include:
- Resources of communities
    - Recognise that some groups or individuals may require support to fully contribute to discussions. Reasonable efforts should be made to make consultation accessible to all e.g. consideration of providing translators if required and provide easy-read versions of documents, potentially for multiple language groups.
    - Some well-resourced communities may have established networks which can be utilised.
    - Consider the potential to set up community liaison groups (CLGs) comprising residents and representatives to act as a forum for discussions about proposals and to act as a point of contact for information within communities themselves.
    - Some developers are known to staff and attend such groups and cover administrative costs, including venue hire, provision of a secretary and/or providing logistical support. In some rural areas it may be appropriate for developers to engage with crofting/grazing communities who generally receive 50% of the rental income from wind turbines on their land along with the land owner.
  - Needs of communities
    - Existing action plans or similar which can be supported.
    - Community issues identified through other means.
  - Other relevant stakeholder areas
    - The catchment area of any local schools
    - Travel to work areas

#### Methods for engagement

- 6.15 Developers can draw on a range of engagement methods and tailor to specific developments and communities.<sup>35</sup> The following non-exhaustive list aims to suggest some starting points for designing the consultation process.

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<sup>35</sup> <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/0043/00438782.pdf> (pages 20-22)

Possible methods of facilitating dialogue include:

- Community drop-in session;
- Presence at local community event;
- Stakeholder forum/workshop;
- Telephone hotline;
- Workshops and focus groups,
- Web-based consultation;
- Meetings in homes;
- Street stalls;

Possible methods of providing information;

- Press releases;
- Community newsletters;
- Public meetings;
- Posters in public areas;
- Mail drops - Leaflet/flyer;
- Use of social media and internet;
- House visits;
- Information road show;
- Letter, email or telephone contact;
- Formal consultation documentation;
- Mobile exhibitions;
- Via community stakeholders such as community council representatives.

6.16 The process can continue after views have been gathered from the community. It is important that developers provide feedback on how and why points were or were not accepted and an on-going clear point of contact. They can also ensure that community groups are able to access relevant support within the developer's organisation and externally.

6.17 Information on development proposals should contain accurate details of the development proposal, naming key contacts for further information and identifying project timescales, including when the planning application is likely to be submitted to the local authority.

6.18 When the concept of and approach to community benefit is introduced, it should be made clear that it is independent of the planning process and is not a material consideration in deciding an application. This equally applies when developers consider it would be appropriate to offer a local financial stake in their project.

### Case Study:

Scottish Power Renewables consulted on a site which straddled three local authority areas. A range of consultation methods was undertaken to engage groups throughout the region. Information was distributed through newsletters, mail drops and house visits to raise awareness of the project. The area had few active community councils and no local venues, so a mobile exhibition was used to reach individuals. Although a time consuming process, this successfully created strong relationships between the community and Scottish Power Renewables and the mobile exhibition gave the opportunity for the community to voice concerns.

6.19 Upon submission of a planning application to the planning authority, a summary of the community consultation that took place should be provided for that authority's consideration.

## 7. Recommendations for community councils, groups and members of the public

7.1 Community Councils receive weekly lists of planning applications from local authorities. By being pro-active, community councils can assist in communicating information to local residents on development proposals that may affect their area or property. A number of community councils have online websites covering their area. Information on particular developments within or affecting the community council area can be posted onto these websites with provisions for hyperlinks to applications and information on how to go about commenting on a planning application. Alternatively community groups can assist in communicating to members of the public within their areas to the PINS portal ([www.tellmesotland.gov.uk](http://www.tellmesotland.gov.uk)) which allows people to receive updates on advertised planning applications and other notices.

7.2 Weekly lists of new applications and, in many cases, planning registers of applications can be accessed readily through planning authority websites. Some authorities also have interactive maps on their webpages identifying the locations of wind turbines in their areas. Those individuals with particularly high levels of wind energy developments in their area may want to be proactive and regularly monitor what applications have been made in their area.

7.3 As defined by the [Scottish Government's Code of Conduct for Community Councillors](#)<sup>36</sup> community councils should be clear about the interests and/or people they are representing (and on what basis). Community councils can assist in the planning process by identifying clearly and at an early stage the issues which matter most to them in relation to a proposed development. They can also raise questions to the developer, local authority or others.

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<sup>36</sup><http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Government/local-government/CommunityCouncils/CCllrCodeOfConduct>

- 7.4 Once aware of a particular proposal, Community Councils and/or groups are encouraged to enter into a constructive dialogue with all other relevant parties. This can help to examine any issues and make available evidence being used to support their positions. They could assist, if appropriate to their local role and if resources would allow, in identifying the full range of local opinion about the development of local benefits. All parties should be clear that their engagement with these processes is in no way an indication of support for any application.
- 7.5 By expressing their interest in an application, Community Councils formalise their statutory consultee status which, depending on the scheme of delegation, may necessitate a decision by a local authority's planning committee.
- 7.6 Members of the public and community groups are encouraged to enter into constructive dialogue with developers and local authorities about proposed developments in order to examine any issues and make available evidence being used to support their positions. This could be aided by discussing matters with elected representatives, i.e. local councillors, MSPs and MPs, who can help to direct members of the public to appropriate information sources or potentially mediate wider community discussions or meetings.

Further support and useful information to communities can be obtained from the following sources:

1. <http://www.localenergyscotland.org/>
2. <http://www.pas.org.uk/?gclid=CJiPmZeYm8QCFYLtAodinkA6w>
3. <http://www.communityenergyscotland.org.uk/>
4. <http://www.energysavingtrust.org.uk/scotland>
5. <http://tellmescotland.gov.uk>

## **Conclusion**

**Effective engagement with the public can lead to better plans, better decisions and more satisfactory outcomes. It can also help avoid delays in the planning process. The Scottish Government expects local authorities and developers to aspire to the highest standards in public engagement.**

**This guidance encourages meaningful public engagement in the context of wind energy development proposals.**

**No single approach would be effective in all circumstances. However, good practice can provide quality solutions to development proposals, to help ensure that those affected by development can be fully notified and involved. Any approach to engagement in planning should be tailored to each particular situation, to reflect local contexts and community needs.**



## 8. Sources for Further Information

Scottish Government Consultations -  
<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/consultations>

<http://register.scotland.gov.uk>

Public Petition PE1469 -  
<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/GettingInvolved/Petitions/turbineneighbournotification>

National Planning Framework 3 –  
<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Built-Environment/planning/NPF3-SPP-Review/NPF3>

[Scottish Planning Policy –](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Built-Environment/planning/Policy)  
<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Built-Environment/planning/Policy>

[Energy Consents Guidance-](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Business-Industry/Energy/Infrastructure/Energy-Consents/Guidance/goodpracticeguidance)  
<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Business-Industry/Energy/Infrastructure/Energy-Consents/Guidance/goodpracticeguidance>

Circular 3/2013: Development Management Procedures -  
<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2013/12/9882>

Circular 3/2011 -  
<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2011/06/01084419/0>

Planning Circular 5 (2009) Hierarchy of Developments-  
<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2009/07/03153122/0>

Circular 6/2013: Development Planning -  
<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2013/12/9924>

Planning Advice Note 3/2010: Community Engagement –  
<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2010/08/30094454/0>

National Standards for Community Engagement –  
<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Built-Environment/regeneration/engage/HowToGuide/NationalStandardspdf>

VOiCE community engagement planning tool –  
<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Built-Environment/regeneration/engage/voice>

Good Practice Principles for Community Benefits from Onshore Renewable Energy Developments – <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/0043/00438782.pdf>

Wind Farms Community Engagement Good Practice Review -  
<http://www.climateexchange.org.uk/reducing-emissions/what-good-community-engagement-wind-farm-developments/>

Community and Renewable Energy Scheme (CARES) -  
<http://www.localenergyscotland.org/media/21556/cares-toolkit-planning-module-v2.pdf>

Good Practice in reconciling Wind energy (GP Wind) –  
<http://project-gpwind.eu/>

Guidance on the Role of Councillors in Pre-Application Procedures -  
<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Built-Environment/planning/Roles/Planning-Authorities/Documents>

Councillors Code of Conduct -  
<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2010/12/10145144/0>

Community Councils Code of Conduct -  
<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Government/local-government/CommunityCouncils/CCllrCodeOfConduct>



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