



ORKNEY

ISLANDS COUNCIL

Orkney's Community Wind Farm Project

Faray Pre Application Consultation

Guide to consultation boards

Introduction

This document accompanies the consultation material for the Pre-Application Consultation (PAC) for Orkney's Community Wind Farm Project – Faray. You should have it to hand whilst you are looking through the consultation material.

Both documents are part of the revised arrangements that have been put in place by Orkney Islands Council for consulting with the public on proposed plans for the development.

As the development is classed as a 'major development' there is a requirement to submit a Proposal of Application Notice (PAN) to the planning authority and carry out a Pre-Application Consultation (PAC) – which usually would include a public event or exhibition.

However, we are unable to do this due to the ongoing coronavirus pandemic.

With the Scottish Government having recently passed legislation to allow developers to carry out pre-application consultation without the need for a face to face public event, alternative plans have been put in place following government guidance – which will still allow members of the public to talk directly to the project team about the plans and raise any questions or concerns they may have – before a planning application is submitted.

The project is part of 'Orkney's Community Wind Farm Project' which also includes proposed wind farm developments at Quanterness and at Wee Fea in Hoy.

The objective of the PAC is for communities to be better informed about major and national development proposals and to have an opportunity to contribute their views before a formal planning application is submitted to the planning authority.

It should be noted that comments made to OIC through this PAC process are not representations to the planning authority. If a planning application is subsequently submitted, neighbour notification and publicity will be undertaken, and individuals and communities will have an opportunity to make representations on that application to the planning authority at that time.

All consultation material, including options for discussing the project with the project team and for submitting comments is available at www.orkney.gov.uk/FarayPAC. For further enquiries please contact Kirsty Groundwater, Project Officer, Orkney Islands Council by email on kirsty.groundwater@orkney.gov.uk or by phone on 07818508323.

The deadline for submitting comments to the Project Team will be Monday 30 November 2020 at 12.00.

Why are we consulting online and not face to face?

This consultation is part of the pre application consultation process in advance of submission of a planning application for Orkney's Community Wind Farm Project – Faray.

As the development is classed as a 'major development' there is a requirement to submit a Proposal of Application Notice (PAN) to the planning authority and carry out a Pre-Application Consultation (PAC) – which usually would include a public event or exhibition.

However, we are unable to do this due to the ongoing coronavirus pandemic.

We are hugely disappointed that we can't come out and talk to folk face to face to the community about the latest plans, but given the current situation we hope you can understand why it wouldn't be possible or sensible to do so.

The Scottish Government recently introduced legislation which allows pre application consultation to take place without a physical public event, recognising the economic need to keep the planning system functioning, and also the uncertainty around when restrictions might be lifted.

That is particularly important for this project given the tight deadline we have been given if we want to meet the Needs Case conditions set out by OFGEM to secure a new electricity interconnector for Orkney. If we don't keep moving towards a planning application now, we significantly risk wasting the resources that have been put into this project to date.

As an alternative, we have put considerable effort into designing a consultation which we hope can reach as many people as possible and give everyone the opportunity to understand the proposals and to make your opinions heard.

What we are doing includes:

- Making project information and feedback sheets available online at www.orkney.gov.uk/FarayPAC, by email or by post, answering questions, and taking comments via those channels as well
- Offering one to one discussions on the phone or via Skype where we can talk through the proposals and any questions you might have, and take feedback.
- Holding a live and interactive web based event where people can hear from the project team and ask questions.

All of the details for this have been published in the local press, on social media and is available on the project pre application consultation webpage www.orkney.gov.uk/FarayPAC

‘What is ‘Orkney’s Community Wind Farm Project’?

The first page of the consultation material is titled 'What is Orkney's Community Wind Farm Project' and includes a map showing the locations of wind farms under investigation in Orkney.

Whilst the purpose of this consultation is to discuss the Faray project, it is important to consider the big picture of where this project fits within the wider proposals in Orkney.

‘Orkney’s Community Wind Farm Project’ includes three potential wind farm sites - one on Faray in the North Isles, another in Hoy in the area around Wee Fea, and at Quanterness in St Ola.

You can see where each of these projects is located on the map, highlighted with a red mark.

You will notice that the map also displays several other potential wind farm sites that are being investigated by private developers and the Finstown substation where it is likely any new project will have to connect back to.

In terms of the Council projects - at this stage of the design each site has the potential capacity for six turbines at approximately 150m and a generating capacity of 28MW on each site.

The notable thing here is the size of the turbines which are larger than any in Orkney.

There are several goals we look to achieve by developing the project, with the aim of:

- generating income from publicly owned wind farm projects to support services in the local community and deliver community benefit.
- together with the other developers, supporting the needs case for a new interconnector for Orkney which would open up wider economic benefits via further opportunities within Orkney’s energy industry
- making sure that, if we have a new cable, that as much of the benefits as possible stick within Orkney. The best way of doing that is to have local ownership which benefits everybody, not just the shareholders.

What are the benefits for Orkney? (Part 1).

The second page of the consultation material is titled 'What are the benefits for Orkney?' and there is a subheading of 'Income and Community Benefits'.

One of the key aims of the project is to generate additional income and to essentially use that money to deliver community benefit in various ways.

As a Council we have significant issues around continually reducing budgets and increasing demand for public services and additional income from Orkney's Community Wind Farm project could make a big difference to that and to people's lives in Orkney.

This project is being developed for the benefit of Orkney and if the proposed sites are found through the planning process to be appropriate and the project goes forward, there are multiple community benefits to be gained from a council owned wind farm project.

- Significant income could be generated by the project, helping us to not only tackle the challenge of budget cuts but the increasing demand for public services.
- All profits would remain in Orkney helping preserve and enhance key services, like social care, education and transport.
- Job creation throughout the lifespan of the project.

The issue of community benefit has been raised frequently with the project team at previous public events. Since then, in September last year, the Council has agreed on some guiding principles for community benefit from the project which will help to clarify the aims;

- The key purpose of Orkney's Community Wind Farm Project is to generate profit to be used for the benefit of the people of Orkney.
- This will be done via a 'Community Fund' to be used in the interests of Orkney and its inhabitants.
- The project will be financed in such a way that we can achieve profit which can be used for community benefit as soon as reasonably practicable.
- It won't be possible for private individuals to take a shareholding in any project.
- As the communities located closest to projects will be impacted most by developments these communities will get a 'location-specific community benefit payment'.

The exact way in which 'location-specific community benefit payment' will be delivered has not been decided and we would like your views on how you think this should be done. We'll be running a public consultation exercise early next year.

What are the benefits for Orkney? (Part 2)

The third page of the consultation material is titled 'What are the benefits for Orkney' and there are two subheadings 'Securing a new cable' and 'Creating a carbon neutral future'.

On top of the direct financial benefits to the community, the project will enable the Council to join other local developers in meeting the requirements for securing a new interconnector for Orkney.

As you may be aware the grid in Orkney is completely full now and it is very difficult for any new energy projects to be developed. We think that a new cable will bring significant economic benefit to Orkney and will substantially support the vital renewable energy industry in Orkney.

OFGEM has now conditionally approved proposals from SSEN to build a 220MW interconnector linking Orkney with the Scottish mainland. Approval is dependent on at least 135 MW of new wind farm projects in Orkney either being awarded a Contract for Difference (CfD) or being judged 'likely to be developed' by December 2021.

'Likely to be developed' means that the project should:

- be financially viable
- have signed a relevant grid connection agreement
- have planning permission

The wider economic development value of a new cable to Orkney could be highly significant, but what is critical in maximizing that benefit, is making sure that we have a substantial proportion of local ownership of projects connecting to the cable – that is something which is critical in helping jobs and income remain in the county and is a key driver behind 'Orkney's Community Wind Farm Project'.

Climate change and the imperative to reduce carbon emissions is another important driver for the project, which could go a long way in helping to create a carbon neutral future for our islands.

As you may or may not be aware Orkney has produced more than 100% of its electricity needs from renewable energy since 2014, but we still produce a lot of carbon, particularly in transport and heating, and there is still a lot more we can and need to do to decarbonise.

To give some context on this issue the Office of National Statistics estimates Orkney's carbon emissions at 192,000 tonnes of CO₂ equivalent per year, and we think each of our projects, if built, could offset around 40,000 tonnes of CO₂ each a year. For three projects that's 120,000 tonnes per year, so they really could make a big difference.

We also have national targets to contribute to - net-zero greenhouse gas emissions in Scotland by 2045 and in the UK by 2050 - and to meet these targets, emissions from homes, transport, farming and industry will all have to be addressed.

Why have we chosen these particular sites?

The fourth page of the consultation material is titled 'Why have we chosen these particular sites'. It includes a map of Orkney showing where our sites are and some of the constraints on site choice.

At public events on the project, we regularly get asked about why we have selected the three sites we have and indeed why we haven't selected other potential sites.

This section of the consultation material demonstrates that we have been through a rigorous process in selecting sites that we feel offer sufficient scale to be economically viable and have a reasonable chance of gaining consent.

On the map of Orkney we've drawn a pink 700m buffer around all residential properties as these are areas that are likely to be unsuitable for development. We have also in the hatched areas superimposed all the internationally designated areas in Orkney, where it would also be highly unlikely that consent could be achieved.

That leaves a number of white patches to investigate further and we have essentially looked at any white patch of sufficient scale for a project and ruled it in or out for any number of reasons. We have then whittled our list down to what we see as our three best options – Faray, Hoy, and Quanterness.

Faray has no residential properties on the island and came into Council ownership in early 2019.

The site on Hoy is the largest of the three sites, where initially there was potential to accommodate up to 30 turbines. Having performed various site assessments and undertaken two years of bird studies it was found that the site could realistically host up to six turbines.

The Quanterness site has several practical advantages being in an agricultural landscape outwith ecological or landscape designations, having good access and being a reasonable distance from residential properties. Due to it being relatively close to Kirkwall it also allows us the opportunity to potentially explore a separate project in which the Council could directly supply electricity to its own buildings as a means to reduce costs.

What else will be included on the site?

Having given you an overview of 'Orkney's Community Wind Farm project, the rest of the consultation material offers more specifics around the site on Faray- beginning with what to expect on the site.

The fifth page of the consultation material is titled 'What else will be included on the site?' and includes a map of the potential site on Faray. It shows a full layout of the Faray site and explains the various components including wind farm components, construction components and grid connections.

On the map, we have plotted the six turbine locations (labelled T1-T6), the roads between each turbine and the other permanent and temporary infrastructure.

The permanent components that will be on site for the lifespan of the project are the six turbines, a hardstanding at the base of each turbine for the construction and maintenance of the turbines, an onsite substation which the turbines will be connected to by underground cables and a permanent met mast which will be used to optimise turbine performance.

During the construction of the project there will be some temporary infrastructure onsite that will be removed once construction has been completed. This will include a compound for materials and machinery, and a blade laydown area at the base of each turbine.

The turbines will be connected to the onsite substation by underground cables. From this point it is likely that we will then connect to the Finstown grid supply point. The route and method for this connection are yet to be determined and will depend on several factors.

It is too early in the design process to have clarity on what options may be available and the grid connection element of this project will be subject to a separate planning application.

How could turbines be delivered to Faray?

The sixth page of the consultation material is titled 'How could turbines be delivered to Faray?' and includes details on our current proposal for a two stage pier development on Faray.

Due to the relative remoteness of the site and the lack of an adequate existing pier structure, considerable time and effort has gone into developing a practical solution for the delivery of personnel and components to Faray.

After going through several design iterations, a two-stage delivery method has been found to be the most viable.

Stage 1 is the refurbishment of the existing slip. Due to its current dilapidated state it isn't fit for purpose and therefore we propose to remove the current structure and replace it with a new extended slip which could accommodate the type of vessels currently used in Orkney.

All initial construction equipment for Stage 1 will arrive by landing craft and a temporary construction compound will be sited just north of the slip.

For delivering the turbines, due to the dimensions of the turbine blades and the vessels required for delivery of components, an additional solution was required.

For Stage 2 we've determined that a blunt end pier just north of the slip refurbishment is the best method to enable the unloading of turbine blades in a safe and straight forward manner.

Our current plan is to use materials sourced on Faray and mainland Orkney for the construction of both the pier and slip and we'll look to batch concrete on site.

Further details of the design process will be made available at a later date as discussions between our engineers, turbine manufactures, and Marine Scotland are ongoing.

What are the key design considerations?

The seventh page of the consultation material is titled 'What are the key design considerations?' and includes a guide to the site with the key constraints of the site mapped out.

There is quite a lot to consider when analysing the potential impact on the local area from a wind farm development. These design considerations are listed in the key on the left-hand side of this page.

In optimizing the design of the site and producing the environmental impact assessment report we take all these aspects into consideration – which has led to some changes to the initial design we presented last year.

On the map we've marked with red triangles where we originally planned to put turbines and then the new turbine locations are marked as black circles.

As you will see there has been a reduction from eight turbines to six and that they have shifted slightly towards the centre of the island, moving away from the cairn to the North and away from the boundary of the natural heritage sites surrounding the island.

The reduction in turbines has also enabled us to optimise the turbine spacing and reduce the proximity of turbines to the local seal and bird population.

What are the key design considerations?

The eighth and ninth pages of the consultation material, also titled 'What are the key design considerations?' explore our design considerations in more detail across five broad headings – landscape and visual, ecology and ornithology, archaeology and cultural heritage, noise, and transport and traffic (and other site specific issues).

Landscape and visual

An important element to any development is ascertaining what the likely visual impact of these large turbines will be on our landscape. As part of the assessment we have undertaken a landscape visual impact analysis which has fed into the siting of turbines.

Ecology and ornithology

As wind farm developments can affect wildlife and birds both during construction and operation the potential impacts have been a key component of the design process.

Surveys carried out as part of our analysis have influenced the turbine locations and to reduce the potential impacts, turbines have been moved further away from the natural heritage sites.

The construction program will also be designed to be sympathetic to ecology and ornithology. With this in mind, we are proposing that no construction takes place from mid September to mid November, during grey seal pupping season.

Archaeology and cultural heritage

Site surveys have identified heritage assets on and around Faray, this has been fed into the design process and all of the potential impacts will be addressed within the EIA.

Noise

At previous consultations we had been asked about the potential noise impact of turbines this size on the homes closest to Faray. Initial analysis has indicated that due to the distance that the closest home is to the site, the potential noise levels that could be experienced are unlikely to breach any regulatory thresholds, and we will of course commit to taking action should those thresholds be breached in practice. Further background noise level studies are ongoing and will be reported in the EIA.

During the construction period a construction environmental management plan will be produced which will help minimize noise and set out agreed working hours.

Transport and traffic (and other site specific issues)

Other aspects that we have been considered include:

- Potential impacts to traffic - these are likely to be minimal due to Faray being uninhabited and components potentially being delivered direct to site

- Turbines interfering with communication links - to avoid this we have been consulting with telecommunication operators to ensure that the turbine locations do not impact these links.
- Shadow flicker - shadow flicker is the flickering effect that can occur when rotating wind turbine blades periodically cast shadows through windows of neighbouring properties. Due to the distance and location of the nearest home to the site, it is unlikely that any significant impact will occur but this will be assessed fully within the EIA.

'Where are we at in the process and how can you make your views known?'

The tenth page of the consultation material is titled 'Where are we at in the process and how can you make your views known?'. It shows a timeline of where the project is currently at and the opportunities for you to contribute your views.

As you can see from the timeline here we have selected our site and provided a scoping report to the local planning authority in 2019.

Following feedback from the planning authority and multiple consultee, we proceeded to the next stage of this timeline, the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA).

The EIA is an in-depth analysis of all the potential impacts that our project may have on the local area. This process helps us to determine the best design for all parties involved and takes into site surveys, desk top studies and multiple expert consultations.

As part of this process, we are also carrying out the pre-application consultation process which these documents are a key part of.

The objective of the PAC is for communities to be better informed about major and national development proposals and to have an opportunity to contribute their views before a formal planning application is submitted to the planning authority.

It should be noted that comments made to OIC through this PAC process are not representations to the planning authority. If a planning application is subsequently submitted, neighbour notification and publicity will be undertaken, and individuals and communities will have an opportunity to make representations on that application to the planning authority at that time.

All consultation material, including options for discussing the project with the project team and for submitting comments is available at www.orkney.gov.uk/FarayPAC. For further enquiries please contact Kirsty Groundwater, Project Officer, Orkney Islands Council by email on kirsty.groundwater@orkney.gov.uk or by phone on 07818508323.

The deadline for submitting comments to the Project Team will be Monday 30 November 2020 at 12

The next stage of the process is the submission of the planning application which for the Faray site is likely to be at the beginning of next year. Once the local planning authority has validated the application all relevant documentation will be made available to the public and it is at this point that you can submit your letters of support or objections to OIC Development Management or to the Scottish Government if they decide to handle the application.

The local planning authority or Scottish Ministers will then determine if the project is to be approved.

Viewpoint Visualisations

In order to assess the potential visual effects of the proposed wind farm on Faray we have selected a number of viewpoints to represent the views of residents, road users, walkers and ferry passengers both in the local and wider area

Six of the viewpoints are presented in the consultation document – and a seventh has been added on the request of Eday Community Council, who requested that a viewpoint from close to Cusbay be included in the pre-application consultation material. Each slide comprises a photomontage to represent how the view will be changed by the proposed development.

Vinquoy Hill, Eday

This first viewpoint is taken from the chambered cairn to the south of Vinquoy Hill on Eday. It has been selected to represent the views of locals and visitors walking on the island's Heritage Trail. From this footpath, views extend in all directions and the surrounding islands of Westray to the north-west, Rousay to the south-west and Sanday to the east are clearly visible. The view looks south-west towards the small island of Faray, which is one of the closest islands in the view. Faray is where the wind farm would be located. The closest turbine would be just under 3km from this viewpoint. The photomontage shows that all six turbines would be seen, set along the landform of the island, and separated from Eday by the Sound of Faray.

Sand of Mussetter, Eday

The second viewpoint is located at Mussetter Sands on Eday. This is a broad sandy beach backed by high dunes and enclosed by rocky headlands. The beach is orientated north-west, such that it affords open views across Fersness Bay to the island of Faray, with Westray visible in the distance beyond. This is a popular location for locals and visitors to walk, and owing to the lack of development, retains a sense of peace and tranquillity. The photomontage shows that all six turbines would be clearly visible seen set on the island of Faray. The closest turbine would be just over 3 km from this viewpoint and the turbines would form a new focus in views from the beach.

Cusbay Road

The third viewpoint is located on the west coast of Eday, to the north of Guith and the south of Cusbay. It is representative of the views of residents on this western coastal edge of the island, as well as road-users on the minor coastal road, which connects Millbounds with Linkataing. The view looks west across the Sound of Faray to the island of Faray, where all six turbines will be seen at their full heights. The distance between the viewpoint and the closest turbine is approximately 1.9 km such that the proposed turbines will be seen as large scale structure, with the movement of the turbine blades forming a dynamic feature to the view. While the proposed turbines will become the main focus of the view, they will be seen in the context of the much wider view across Eday, and north-west to Westray and south-east to Rousay.

Westray Ferry

The fourth viewpoint is located on the ferry between Kirkwall and Westray at a point approximately 2 km south-west of Faray. It has been selected to represent the views of ferry passengers travelling between Mainland Orkney and the northern isles. Views from the ferry are open and expansive, extending across Westray Firth to take in the surrounding islands, including Rousay to the west, Eday to the east, Westray to the north-west and Faray to the north. The photomontage shows that all six turbines would be clearly visible, seen set on the small island of Faray. With the closest turbine approximately 2 km from the viewpoint, the proposed turbines would form a focal feature in views from passing ferries.

Westray Ferry Terminal

The fifth viewpoint is located at Rapness on Westray, on the southern coastal edge near the ferry pier. This coastline is enclosed by rocky headlands to the west and east, such that views are channelled south-east across Rapness Sound to the island of Faray, with the island of Eday seen behind. While this coastline is rural in character, the presence and activity of the ferry terminal, presents also a more developed character. The photomontage shows that all six turbines would be visible, seen set on the small island of Faray, separated from Westray by the Rapness Sound. The closest turbine would be approximately 3.6 km from this viewpoint and the turbines would form a new focus in views from this coastal edge.

Ness of Tuquoy

The sixth viewpoint is located on the coastal edge at Ness of Tuquoy on the south side of Westray. The Ness of Tuquoy forms the rocky headland on the southern side of the Bay of Tuquoy. This is a rural landscape with farmland extending up to the coastal edge and small-scale development in the hinterland. Three operational turbines are set in the landscape to the north. The viewpoint is representative of the views of local residents and walkers. The view looks south-east over Westray Firth. The photomontage shows that all six of the turbines would be visible, seen set behind the south-west peninsula of Westray and with Eday in the background. The closest turbine is approximately 9 km from the viewpoint and despite the distance, they would appear as tall vertical structures.

Kierfea Hill, Rousay

The seventh viewpoint is located on Kierfea Hill, in the north-east corner of Rousay. At 235 m this is the highest hill on Rousay and from the top, expansive views open up in all directions. Views extend over the moorland interior of the island, but also north to Westray, east to Egilsay and Eday and north-east to Faray. The viewpoint has been selected to represent the views of walkers on Kierfea Hill, but also residents and road-users in this north-eastern part of the island. The closest turbine would be just over 11 km from this viewpoint and the turbines would form a new focus in views from the hill. The photomontage shows that all six turbines would be seen set along the low-lying island of Faray, with the five Spurness Wind Farm turbines visible on Sanday in the background.

