

From the post on the Ardrishaig Community Council Facebook page

There was a good turn out at the exhibition on the High Brenfield Wind Farm Proposal and the subsequent Community Council meeting last Wednesday in Ardrishaig North Hall. As a follow up: For those who had questions/made comments/gave suggestions on the proposals to Low Carbon, would you mind providing feedback to the Community Council as well? For data protection reasons Low Carbon didn't share these with the Community Council so unless you let us know what they are, we can't follow up on them. You can reach us by leaving comments on this post, e-mailing us at ardrishaigcommunitycouncil@outlook.com or coming to the next meeting at 7.00pm on Wednesday 13 December in the North Hall.

The majority of those who attended the Community Council meeting on 29th had concerns about how close the proposed turbines would be to people's houses and what studies had been carried out /were proposed to address issues of noise, vibrations, flicker, impact on telecommunications etc. In addition, the general feeling was that there was very little in the scoping report prepared on behalf of Low Carbon about potential impact on the actual residents and communities of Ardrishaig and Inverneill, as opposed to the environmental impacts and that the bulk of any benefit would not necessarily be for the community but for the developers. We would like to understand how others, who maybe didn't attend the exhibition or weren't at the meeting feel about the proposals. We want our feedback to be representative of all residents. If you get the chance, please drop us a note or come to the next meeting at 7.00pm on Wednesday 13 December in the North Hall. People with particular concerns or expertise are working on providing feedback on different parts of the scoping report so that we can respond by the deadline of 12 January 2024. Do you have particular concerns about issues such as Transport/Traffic (plans are to bring up equipment from Cambeltown to the Brenfield Bay area during the 18 month construction phase), Noise (both during and after construction), Access (is the site somewhere where you currently walk, cycle, ride etc), Visual Impact (17 proposed turbines at 220 m each, much higher than any existing turbines in Argyll and Bute), Wildlife and Birds, Community Benefit (even if Low Carbon makes a contribution to the community, is another windfarm right above Ardrishaig and Inverneill what the community wants or do you think that most of the benefit will be felt elsewhere?). If you want your views heard, please get involved, if you have expertise, please get in touch. We look forward to hearing from you

Present from Ardrishaig Community Council:

Christine MacIntyre
Fiona MacFarlane, Gillian Hogarth, Ross Weir, Fiona Hoad, Lix Armstrong & Mary MacCallum Sullivan
Apologies: Susanne Hawkby-Whitwell; Blair Johnson
Councillor Jan Brown
5 Members of Low Carbon

The Community Council Meeting was open to the public and was called to gauge the feeling and start gathering feedback towards the proposed Wind Farm. The Ardrishaig Community Council had received notice that this was a project Low Carbon were confident would go through, despite Argyll and Bute Council planning rules not currently permitting a development with turbines of this size. Due to the size of the project, Low Carbon (LC) believed that their proposal which goes to the Scottish Government first, fits within Scottish Government policy and they expressed guarded confidence that it would be approved by the Scottish Government.

This is the first of 3 meetings to get feedback and provide a community response before the 12th January 2024.

Gillian Hogarth (GH) asked LC rep to give a brief outline of the project's first stage. The land under discussion is to the West of Ardrishaig. They explained this was one of many meetings with the bodies involved; The Scottish Government, SEPA, FLS and Nature Scot, the start of a long process. They accepted the Community Council was acting on behalf of the local people. The proposal is for 17 wind turbines which would each be 220 meters high. They have already done a peat survey and need to do more plus more engineering and environmental surveys.

Question 1 from audience: What is the advantage of THIS site to LC? What makes it 1st choice?

Answer: Landowner was willing to let LC explore sites outside those that had environmental constraints.

The questioner wasn't happy with this reply and asked what SPECIFICALLY made them chose that site?

Answer: They said the landowner; Gresham Forestry an investment company based in London were the owners. They had approached LC explaining it was free from environmental constraints and designations, was good for wind and close to the existing new pylons and thus would be profitable.

Another question was: Had Argyll & Bute set out their view that Argyll already had enough wind farms!

Answer: from LC yes but the Scottish Government has effectively pushed councils to reexamine it's commitment to renewable energy.

When projects are at the pre planning stage, the Council do not need to consult the public, it's at the next stage that the Community councils and public can become involved. Once a project goes to full council, everyone and the Scottish Gov, the SG make the final decision, if the SG approve, everyone can appeal.

Question from audience: Should the scoping period be pushed back?

Answer: The original deadline was Tues 28th Nov, BEFORE this actual meeting! Ardrishaig CC asked for an extension and the government unit dealing with the scoping request agreed an extension to go to the 12th of January so the

community has 6 weeks now. It was felt 6 weeks gave the community some chance to gather more facts and work towards identifying concerns to be addressed in scoping response.
The LC document was 98 pages long. GH encouraged people to go on to the LC website to see what area interests them e.g. if they were interested in turbine location or access etc. GH also suggested those interested in the project, should get knowledgeable individuals to give advice on areas of expertise.
e.g. all the turbine parts have to travel up from Campbeltown along the already stretched A83 suggesting possible congestion problems which would affect the entire peninsula.
It was also noted there was only a very short section in the entire scoping report dedicated to the impact on people rather than the environment/landscape/wildlife etc.
Some turbines would be 1km to the nearest dwelling. One member of the public said "This site is on our doorstep"
Question from another member of the audience " how do you define a settlement?"

LC said they were starting with the maximum number of turbines 17 but might go smaller if constrained to do so!

Question " How many turbines needed to make the project viable?

Answer: 17 of the large turbines, if people wanted smaller turbines, then they would have to build MORE as they would be less powerful! However LC said the site was constrained meaning designated area would possibly restrict future expansion and also that turbine manufacturers might not be building smaller turbines by the time work on the project started.

Question: Would a co located battery compound be installed?

Answer: LC were considering this

Question: An audience member has access to water rights in perpetuity - will the farm affect her access to water?

Answer: LC say they would need to engage with the member and do some monitoring of the situation.

Question: Would access be near Brentfield, is there a proposed access through Kilberry Road?

Answer: LC ascertained their civil engineer need to examine the most environmentally friendly access.

Question: Would this affect the ancient woodland?

Answer: LC said no

Question: Would there be any payment going to the Scottish Gov? i.e. does the Scottish Government stand to benefit financially if they approve the project?

Answer: LC say there would only be the normal fees associated with the planning application but no payment over and above normal fees for this type of application.

Question: Do you have any other turbines near residences?

Answer: LC say yes they have some and will put them on their own website.

They don't have any wind farms in Scotland but have a large solar one in England and wind farms in Europe, one in Orkney, Finland, Romania and Poland.

The general consensus was there was no concern on how people in the community felt having to live with these massive turbines. The desire was to get the turbine up regardless what the people think of their scale and proximity. There were concerns that proximity to large turbines can effect electronics. LC claimed they had scoped telecommunications and it was included in the scoping document and would be installing noise monitors near homes most likely to be impacted. Concern that the main noise would be from the blades.

Members of the Inverneil community felt they were worried that isolated people would not be considered as a "settlement"

The LC representatives then left the meeting and the discussion was opened up to the floor.

People did not want to see or hear the turbines. They claimed the prevailing wind will carry noise to their houses and the village of Ardrishaig.

Councillor Jan Brown suggested folks should speak to people in Kintyre already living near to wind farms to find out what their experiences have been and Jan also agreed to discuss the matter with the Councillor of the next ward

What would the community get out of this?

So far LC has only committed to offering £5,000 per MW p.a. (which would equate to 250K p.a. if all turbines were operational) as a community benefit. This is the bare minimum suggested by the Scottish Gov. It was noted that other local and national wind farm developments had received/negotiated much better packages, several of which contained some shared ownership of windfarm assets. E.g., Kintyre wind farm have some community ownership and option to buy in.

Attendees expressed that there needs to be greater discussion as to what the benefits to the community should be and who in the community would administer things. It was felt that LC were counting on the fact the Scottish Government have changed the policy on renewables. There are more towers to be designated further down Kintyre peninsula all with

application for bigger blades. If LC get the go ahead for this development, then that opens the doors to more development. Is any of this outweighed by possible community benefit?

Closeness to dwellings

This development is so close to dwellings. The Scottish Gov don't have a specific rule about what distances should be respected when siting turbines close to houses whilst England and Wales do have guidelines re this.

It was felt Gresham House was a forestry land partner and didn't care much about the community, and that it was somewhat cynical for LC to be portraying the benefit to the community as the generation of renewable power meeting carbon reduction objectives whilst the power sold would all go to England and not reduce Scottish home power bills – therefore not benefitting the communities in which the power was being produced.

Impact

This development and subsequent ones would have a heavy impact on the entire Kintyre peninsula.

It was also noted that Lochgilphead would suffer visual impact from this development. It was also noted that transporting all these turbine parts would impact the A83 which already has 36 "pinch points" on that road!

These long term detractions and 40 year lifespan need to be seriously considered and some attendees felt that by 40 years there may be better other greener sources and that Kintyre would be left behind with ageing wind turbines.

The general consensus was this was all about generating money for both Gresham House and Low Carbon.

It was decided to contact the local MSP for input. This area already has enough wind farms. The main worry was the impact on the community. These companies are lobbying experts; the next time the turbines could be 300 meters high or even higher!

Inverneil residents were going to examine the LC document in greater detail. It was also decided to speak to people in Kintyre who live very close to existing turbines.

It was decided to have the next meeting in the North Hall on 13th December 7pm to see how much further along the local community would be with their information and opinions.