



West Ancroft Wind Farm

Statement of Community Involvement

March 2009



Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) West Ancroft Wind Farm

Introduction

This Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) has been prepared to demonstrate the measures E.ON has adopted throughout the planning process to engage the local community and reach out to local stakeholders for suggestions to be fed into and to improve the design of the proposed wind farm.

The following sections provide details on the various community involvement measures and summarises the initiatives considered and adopted for the West Ancroft wind farm project.

Discussions with Berwick-upon-Tweed Council

E.ON first approached the planning department at Berwick-upon-Tweed in mid-2007 to discuss the concept of a wind farm at West Ancroft. E.ON undertook a series of technical investigations prior to submitting a formal request for a scoping opinion in November 2007

E.ON had meetings with planning officials and the local regeneration officer to discuss the site design and the influencing constraints across the site. One of the key concerns was in regards to cumulation. Detailed discussions took place to discuss the processes that would be adopted to consider cumulative impacts associated with the proposed development and three other wind farm schemes in the area, in particular Moorsyde. To that extent E.ON adopted an approach to the site design process that ensured the design of the West Ancroft scheme was harmonised to Moorsyde.

A specific request was made that any future submission should be 'robust' in form. E.ON stated that it would follow best practice wherever possible, and be particularly mindful of guidance emanating from the local planning authority.

E.ON met again with the Berwick planning authorities and continued to engage in formal consultation processes for the public exhibitions. Internal suggestions based on potential turbine heights from manufacturers had led to belief that the



site could accommodate a tip height of 126.5 m or even 130m. However, feedback from the planning authority indicated that it would be wise not to raise the scope above the 125 m already submitted

E.ON duly received Berwick-upon-Tweed Borough Council's formal scoping response. In addition to standard studies to be conducted it requested that E.ON address the potential issue surrounding tourism and a request was made for visual imagery through the use of 3D technologies that could prove useful with regard to the cumulative effects.

The scoping opinion letter went on to say: 'we commend the comprehensive manner and professional approach exhibited in your scoping submission, meetings and engagement thus far in the application process'.

Community Liaison Officer

E.ON is a large multi-national company with its UK headquarters and the wind farm development team located in the Midlands. In order to facilitate a more local dialogue with stakeholders and the community, E.ON sought the services of a Community Liaison Officer (CLO). The CLO provided the opportunity and mechanism for liaison with interested parties during the environmental impact assessment process and has a similar remit for other E.ON wind farm sites in the north east of England.

Part of the CLO's role was to liaise with the E.ON stakeholder team and identify relevant stakeholders, including councillors, county and borough planning officers, members of the local government agencies, as well as non-statutory bodies such as neighbouring residents, and community groups.

Recognising that the area surrounding the West Ancroft site is sparsely populated, the Project Developer and CLO took steps to reach out to local stakeholders. The CLO was instructed to explore the area of the wind farm site by foot if necessary and identify the many remote and secluded properties. Letters and postcards were hand delivered and mailed, providing the community with direct contact details of both the CLO and E.ON.



Stakeholder Consultation

The following section outlines the stakeholder consultations that were undertaken in order to inform the interested parties about the proposed scheme. Suggestions and initiatives that arose through these consultations are discussed in the latter part of the SCI.

E.ON consulted with various stakeholders during the development stage of the project. Stakeholders included Northumberland Wildlife Trust, RSPB and local agricultural groups. Furthermore Friends of the Earth, the local equestrian organisation, a model aircraft flying club and proprietors of a large touring and static caravan site were also consulted for their opinions regarding the proposed development.

There were a number of specific consultees who provided advice and recommendations for the scheme. Details of these discussions is provided below.

Moorsyde Action Group (MAG)

The Berwick acting planning officer indicated that there was already an active anti-wind farm organisation in the area, the Moorsyde Action Group (MAG), and it would be courteous to consult them.

The acting chair of MAG was contacted as the proposed Moorsyde Wind Farm is adjacent to West Ancroft. E.ON's Project Developer and UK Onshore Team Leader, and the lead EIA consultant met with the acting chair of MAG at his property which is adjacent to the site.

He indicated that much of the Moorsyde protest was a result of poor engagement on the part of the other developer, and that dialogue had effectively broken down. Regarding the E.ON site, he expressed concern at ten turbines being placed on the site and of potential noise impacts, especially in potential cumulation with Moorsyde and wondered why a met mast had not been installed.

The acting chair of MAG indicated that a fuel poverty or energy related initiative would be more suited to local



community needs than any potential buy-in to a locally owned turbine. He wondered whether local people could benefit from a lower tariff for their electricity. He also indicated that any tourism study should be 'fine grained' to the Ancroft area rather than focussing on a more general county level. He requested the 'scoping document' be made available and in electronic format.

Both parties agreed that dialogue was useful and would continue.

West Ancroft Community Action (WACA)

A new opposition group called West Ancroft Community Action (WACA) formed during the EIA process. This new group quickly became prominent in the local media which caused a number of concerns as correspondence between E.ON and the chair of WACA deemed to be private and confidential. The name of the landowners on which the site was proposed had been printed in a newsletter and circulated (including to the media) without consent. This approach did not lend itself to meaningful dialogue.

WACA made requests to E.ON to provide a 'table and facilities' at the public exhibition for the wind farm which was declined on the basis that it was an E.ON exhibition but WACA was reminded that they were more than welcome to attend and could expect refreshments, and answers to any of their concerns.

Residents Meetings

E.ON followed up a number of requests from residents for the Project Developer to meet them in their own homes. This provided direct opportunity for the local community to have answered any queries they may have with regard to the proposed development.

Residents neighbouring the site at Ancroft Southmoor were visited in their homes by the Project Developer and noise consultant in order to interpret noise data that were collected from instrumentation sited at the property. E.ON expressed surprise that they were objecting to the Moorsyde



development as they had purchased the property with full knowledge of what was then a fourteen turbine application.

Furthermore the consultants conducting the proposed development visual impact assessments visited the local residents who had concerns about the impact of the turbines on their homes.

Public Exhibitions

E.ON organised a public exhibition during the latter stages of the EIA process. The exhibitions were held at the Ancroft Memorial hall, which is the closest public venue to the site.

The exhibitions had to be timed so that E.ON could present sufficient and meaningful information to the public yet allow time to incorporate suggestions and revisions highlighted by visitors to the exhibitions.

E.ON arranged invitations for the various political stakeholders to a public exhibition. Invites went out to MEPs, MP's, and members of county, borough and the parish councils. Contact was made by personalised invitation augmented by e mail and the sending of a site specific postcard with the location, dates, and times, of the forthcoming exhibition.

The project developer also made available site specific information to Sir Alan Beith, MP for Berwick-upon-Tweed.

Invitations were also delivered to residents surrounding the wind farm site by the CLO. An announcement consisting of a full page colour newspaper advertisement prominently placed in the 'Berwick Advertiser', the local paper most widely read in the Ancroft area. A presence on regional radio was also organised by E.ON's stakeholder team.

The exhibition took place on 19 and 20 November 2008 and lasted six hours for each day, from 12.00 hours until 18.00 hours with a private session for key stakeholders on the opening hour of the first day. E.ON attempted to secure the venue till later in the evening, but were advised that a



community group had a reservation, and had to 'vacate by six prompt'.

The attendees representing E.ON at the public exhibition included:

- Three developers who with experience of consented schemes in the North East of England;
- The leader to the E.ON Onshore Development - UK team;
- E.ON's West Ancroft Project Developer;
- Two members of the EIA team;
- Ecologists from Baker Shepherd Gillespie who conducted the ecology and ornithology studies and who compiled the Habitat Enhancement Report;
- The regional co-ordinator for the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers (BTCV) who will be involved in implementing the Habitat Enhancement measures;
- The leader of the Landscape and Visual Assessment consultant team from ARUP;
- The noise consultant that undertook the noise assessment;
- The Community Liaison Officer; and
- The local consultant preparing the site specific tourism study.

The public exhibition provided opportunity for dialogue between E.ON and the specialist consultants and the local residents. E.ON provided detailed information about the proposed development in the form of maps, photomontages, shadow flicker charts and noise contour plans, providing opportunity for local community to comment and feed into the design.

Furthermore the attendees were given an opportunity to appreciate background noise levels using industry standard noise monitoring equipment. A computer based programme was also available for members of the community to gain tailored wireframe images of the site from any desired viewpoint.

Over the course of the two days over 200 people attended. This included the planning officer, members of MAG and WACA and a



local company director hoping to secure contracts for his construction company based in Berwick.

A caravan was installed in the car park by the opposition group and exhibition attendees were approached as they entered or departed the official event. The exhibition team commented that they had heard 'raised voices' emanating from the van on occasion. It was further noted that although permission was willingly given for pictures of the exhibition to be taken, the photographer seemed as keen to get the faces of the exhibitors, and visitors, as the materials.

Feedback from the exhibitions included the following key issues:

- The potential effect on local tourism.
- The view looking through the wind farm with the Cheviot hills behind.
- The effect on value of properties close to the wind farm.
- Possible noise intrusion from the wind farm.
- Road access to the wind farm site.
- The affects of the turbines on migratory birds, especially geese.
- Why a 'met mast' had not been installed?
- What would happen if E.ON 'went bust'?
- The claim that technical information regarding how to accurately view the photomontages was not presented.
- A strong letter of support expressing a great need for renewable energy
- An objection calling the proposal a blight and challenged the value of CO₂ savings
- An accusation that the wind farm is simply a scam to attract government subsidies for the developers.
- A request for the B6354 road that the site access road leads off to be improved.
- An ambiguous comment referring to the Community Fund being ungenerous at £1400 per installed MW.
- A comment expressing concern over the flight path of Swans into Kelso.



- A comment asking what E.ON can do to directly benefit the local area rather than the Berwick area in general.

E.ON also later received a written complement from the Ancroft memorial hall representative, praising both the professionalism of the exhibition and particularly of the presenting team.

Website / BLOG

The E.ON stakeholder team initiated and maintains a West Ancroft site specific web page with an attached 'blog'. It gives site background data, has the information sheet which was provided for the exhibition available for download and is designed to encourage dialogue, comment and debate.

Indeed, links to it quickly appeared in the local press and also on various anti-group websites; and a steady flow of questions resulted. WACA were to go on to make much of 'local opposition' to the scheme, but a poll in the Berwick Advertiser which ran in conjunction with the exhibition indicated that nearly sixty per cent of its readership believed the environs of Berwick-upon-Tweed to be a suitable location for wind turbines.

The website and BLOG provided opportunity for E.ON to respond to the queries which were raised during the public exhibition, as illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1: Local Community Public Exhibition Responses

Query	Response
Installation of an Anemometer (Met Mast)	E.ON is a major European Utility Company with 19 operational wind farms in the UK, and more consented. Mast data is primarily a mitigation against risk, usually for external investors. E.ON does not seek bank funding and funds developments 'off balance' it does not therefore require a met mast.
E.ON and Financial	As for the chance of E.ON 'going bust' as raised by a parish councillor,



Security	insurance conditions, a possible bond, or a planning condition, could be put in place to remove any abandoned equipment. The Environmental Statement will address site decommissioning, and in reality turbines and associated infrastructure such as substations are high value assets. They are maintained to rigorous standards, and health and safety is E.ON's top priority as epitomised by the company's overarching 'Rule one' philosophy.
Photomontage Display	E.ON checked the technical information accompanying the photomontage illustrations at the exhibition with ARUP and can confirm that they meet the most stringent regulations required of wind farm developments.
Health and Safety during wind farm operation	When the site is operational best practice will be used to ensure that the site is safe. Construction Design Management (2007) processes will be implemented to ensure safety.
Site Ecology Consultation	E.ON and their commissioned ecological consultants undertook a site visit with the planning officer, and representatives from the RSPB, Natural England and the Northumberland Wildlife Trust. Consultation from this visit was fed into the Habitat Enhancement Report, a document produced to provide benefit to a site which has relatively low ecological value.
Site Ecology	Swans and Geese have been assessed through an appropriate level of survey work and no significant impacts are anticipated.
Habitat Enhancement Report and the view from Allerdean	E.ON continues to refine the Habitat Enhancement Report to encompass site screening from specific properties, and with special reference to those at Allerdean Greens.



Greens	
Community Fund	E.ON advises that the community fund is £1500 per installed MW and in line with a Northumberland community involvement plan, and that this has been adopted as policy in Berwick. The fund is intended to be one of a number of measures targeted at benefiting those closest to the site.
Post Consent and Construction	The developer usually holds 'meet the buyer' events. Although governed by strict competition laws a wind farm project of 18 MW represents an investment of tens of millions of pounds, and although some components are imported, the use of local firms will be encouraged.
Availability of the Environmental Statement	Following submission the entire ES will be made available in an electronic format via the E.ON web page.

Project Initiatives

The following section outlines the initiatives that E.ON has considered for the proposed scheme.

Community Turbine

From the outset E.ON wished to do something extra for the community around the wind farm. To this end it commissioned Energy 4 All, a company specialising in enabling communities to own wind farms or turbines on them, to investigate the potential for the population of Ancroft and the surrounding area to be able to buy one of the ten turbines. Meetings were held with the participation of the Berwick council regeneration officer and other local stakeholders, with comments also incorporated from MAG.

Energy 4 All issued a report indicating that although there was local interest in pursuing the idea of a community turbine, there were insufficient numbers however to ensure



that the majority of benefit is felt in the immediate vicinity of the scheme.

As a result, this initiative was not developed further.

Cheaper Tariffs / Energy Efficiency

Discussions with the acting chair of MAG also included the possibility of the local people benefiting from a lower tariff for their electricity, however due to the regulated nature of the industry E.ON indicated that this would not be possible. By law utilities companies are not allowed to favour any customer category.

Habitat Enhancement

In Northumberland there is a requirement on developments to bring with them certain environmental upgrades. The county council request site restoration and ground improvement for wind farm projects.

E.ON and their ecological consultants arranged for the planning officer to take a site walk over alongside representatives from the RSPB, Natural England and the Northumberland Wildlife trust. The combined commentary was captured and fed into the evolving design of both the Habitat Enhancement Report and the wider wind farm development. The RSPB and Wildlife Trust welcomed the enhancement proposals and have directly contributed to the Enhancement Report with their own ideas.

In doing this E.ON has provided enhancement proposals that will benefit a site that currently has relatively low ecological value due to the affects of intensive land management.

In addition, E.ON willingly complied, and contacted the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers (BTCV) with a view to engaging them to assist with the environment upgrades, landscaping, habitat improvements, and post consent site maintenance.

Formerly known as the 'Conservation Corps', the BTCV exists to encourage volunteer groups to undertake environmental improvement programs in the countryside and close to their own



communities. BTCV organises and leads schools, colleges, community based groups, amateur environmentalists and wildlife interest groups in programs designed to repair, restore, and improve the British countryside.

Their policy is to employ local people to lead volunteer work groups from nearby schools and colleges. Equipment and materials are sourced locally, and BTCV often establish environmental and renewable energy education programs in nearby schools.

BTCV promises to utilise available external resources to match fund developer contributions.

BTCV, E.ON and Baker Shepherd and Gillespie (the ecological consultants) produced a habitat enhancement plan which is appended to the Environmental Statement.

The Habitat Enhancement plan seeks to protect the existing ecological interest of the site, where feasible. Furthermore, the proposed measures will be designed to increase the ecological value of the site without increasing the risk of an impact occurring during operation.

The proposed hedgerow reinstatement, enhancement and management provide an opportunity to create and reinforce linear habitat features within the site. Additional wetland areas, bat boxes, bird boxes and crop management are also part of the enhancement package for the proposed site. The implementation of the plan will result in the local countryside and landscaping around the proposed development repaired, restored and improved

E.ON and the BTVC have been in detailed dialogue to ensure that both organisations can work effectively to deliver the recommendations of the Habitat Enhancement Report, complying with E.ON's health and safety guidance.

Community Fund, Fuel Poverty Initiatives and Energy Saving Proposals

E.ON proposes an annual community benefit fund of £1500 per megawatt of installed capacity which could amount to £30000



per year. This falls in line with a Northumberland community involvement plan, that has been adopted as policy in Berwick. The fund is intended to be one of a number of measures targeted at benefiting those closest to the site.

E.ON will engage in dialogue with anyone interested in progressing the establishment of the proposed community fund. This dialogue proposed is to continue during the post submission phases.

The developer will also further engage with stakeholders to discuss fuel poverty initiatives and energy saving proposals that could be made available to those properties closest to the site. It is hoped that information will be provided on potential microgeneration support via the E.ON Source Fund. This fund provides financial help and has been designed to encourage communities to generate their own power, and could, theoretically at least, be used to provide lower fuel tariffs in line with the earlier MAG request.

3D Technology

Berwick specifically requested a site specific 3D analysis tool be developed to assist the planners particularly in regard to cumulation issues. E.ON commissioned a specialist company (3DWeb) to prepare a model, a copy of which has been provided to Berwick-upon-Tweed planning department.

Site Design

The site was initially assessed by E.ON to be able to accommodate turbines that could have a tip height of 130m, however initial feedback from stakeholders and Berwick-upon-Tweed County Council resulted in the request for a scoping opinion being based upon 10 turbines each with a tip height of 125m.

The EIA was progressed on a site comprising ten turbines. However following the public exhibitions and meetings attended by the developer had taken place locally and interpreted by stakeholders, including planning officials, the scheme was reduced to eight turbines, each with a tip height of up to 115m to help harmonise with the adjacent Moorsyde application.



Following the Public Exhibition there was a request from a planning officer to consider alternative locations for the proposed location of the anemometer and one of the turbines. A design review indicated that these requests were not feasible options, given turbine spacing requirements and the proximity of a radiocommunication link crossing the site.

Tourism

During dialogue with Berwick-upon-Tweed and MAG there was a request that a tourism study should be undertaken which would cover assessments for West Ancroft, as well as the wider area.

E.ON located and commissioned a tourism consultant with significant regional knowledge to inform and offer advice about potential impacts, including potential gains, resulting from the development. The consultant was instructed to 'fine grain' his study around the Ancroft area and they liaised with local stakeholders which included MAG. He later remarked that though the dialogue with them was helpful, one of the attendees [not the chair] had been 'hostile' towards him and his study.

The tourism study has been provided to Berwick-upon-Tweed.

Sustainability Statement

To ensure that the many and varied benefits brought to the proposal will prove long lasting and deliverable, E.ON voluntarily commissioned a Statement of Sustainability. This has been submitted to the local planning authority with the Environmental Statement. It outlines the commitments made by E.ON to ensure that the project meets the criteria for a sustainable development, which includes four key areas, namely: social; economic; environmental; and natural resources management. The focus of the statement is to show respect for the area's heritage and distinctiveness.

Border Green Festival

E.ON is hoping to sponsor and have a significant presence at a sustainable community festival, the 'Border Green Festival'. This event organised by Berwick Community Trust provides an opportunity for the community to learn about sustainable issues, such as energy generation and use, food production,



nature conservation and waste and recycling. E.ON will utilise this opportunity to provide information about micro-generation of energy, and the available sources of funding. This coincides with a request from the MAG group regarding how the Ancroft community can receive lower energy costs.

Meet the Buyer Event

E.ON usually holds 'meet the buyer' events for local companies to meet the development and procurement staff. Although governed by strict competition laws a wind farm project of 16-20 MW represents an investment of tens of millions of pounds, and although some components are imported (such as the turbine structures), significant opportunities exist for local companies to supply goods and services and the use of local firms will be encouraged.

Conclusion

This document outlines the commitments made by E.ON to reach out to the local stakeholders of the proposed development. This has included undertaking dialogue with the planning authority, utilising a community liaison officer and undertaking public consultation. E.ON has also used various initiatives in order to provide detailed information or bring benefits to the community as a result of the proposed scheme. Furthermore E.ON has a corporate aspirations, commitments and corporate social responsibility policies which outline their further commitments to the community involved in the proposed development.

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