

# **Whiteneuk Wind Farm – initial feedback survey**

Consultation analysis and response  
September 2020

Confidentiality class: C1 – Public



**VATTENFALL**

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# Preface

The views of local communities, businesses, and stakeholders are critically important in the design of Vattenfall's wind farms. When Whiteneuk wind farm was launched into the public domain on 26 June 2020 we also opened an initial online feedback survey at the earliest point possible. This survey was designed to gather the views of 'non-statutory' consultees – such as members of the public, local businesses, and other interested community groups and charities.

The survey ran from the 26 June until the 31 August using an independent surveying company called Netigate. The survey was promoted through a variety of channels, including Vattenfall's project webpage; Vattenfall's Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn accounts; through a paid advertisement in the Dumfries and Galloway What's Going On website (DGWGO.com); and by emails to community representatives and other local interested stakeholders.

This document summarises the feedback we have received to date and identifies a number of themes and issues which we will explore in further detail throughout the site design process and in our subsequent communications.

Vattenfall will continue to explain our proposals for Whiteneuk wind farm to local stakeholders and seek feedback over the course of the next year. A more detailed project virtual exhibition will be launched, including the option for webinars and virtual meetings, we will produce project newsletters, and more online consultation will take place. When safe to do so, and in line with Government guidance, we will also hold more traditional face-to-face engagement, such as public exhibitions.

We would like to take the opportunity to thank everyone who took the time to fill out the survey. Your opinions and suggestions are extremely valuable to us.

We look forward to continuing the discussion with you over the coming months and years.

# 1. About the respondents

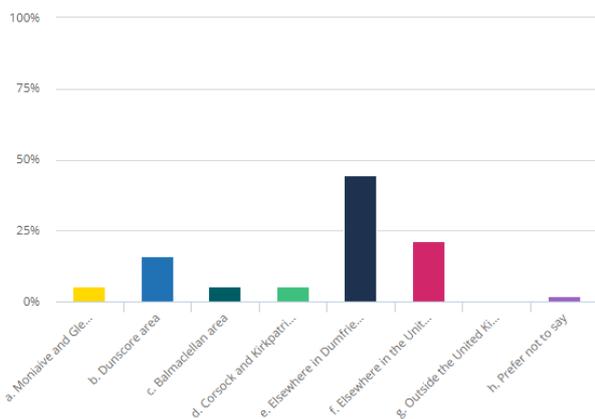
## 1.1. Introduction

We received 69 individual responses to the questionnaire, with technical steps taken to prevent multiple answers being submitted by the same respondent. Of the 69 people responding, 56 went on to complete every question.

We are pleased with this level of feedback for an initial questionnaire, which provides a good start to understand public attitudes. However, it is clearly a small sample size so in the future we hope to get more responses from a broader cross-section of society, including a more balanced age demographic, more local residents, but also more local businesses and people further afield such as potential visitors to the region.

We wanted to understand our respondents: what age they were; whether they lived locally; and in what capacity they were responding. We asked these questions to try and understand how our survey was being picked up and whether certain types of respondent were over- or under-represented and what that might mean for how we approach future surveys.

## 1.2. Where did respondents live?

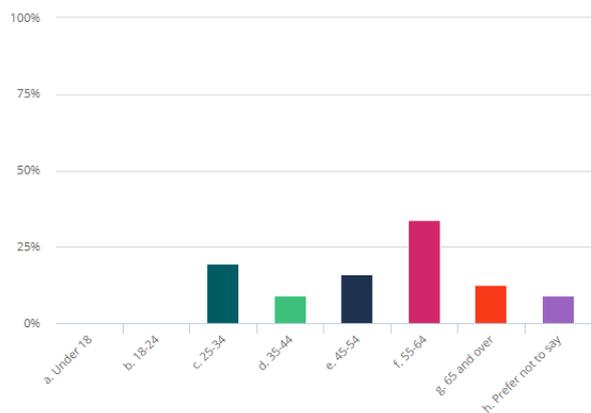


77% of respondents told us they lived in Dumfries and Galloway. This includes 32% of total respondents who lived in the immediate vicinity of the wind farm in or around the villages of Moniaive, Dunscore, Balmaclellan, and Corssock and Kirkpatrick Durham. 21% of respondents were from elsewhere in the UK, 2%

preferred not to say, and there were no respondents from abroad.

We are pleased the survey reached people locally and in the broader region. We want to continue to receive even more views from people living near to the proposed wind farm but would also like to increase participation from those elsewhere in the country, for example people who might visit as tourists, have an interest in the area's culture and heritage, or business representatives who might provide services for the wind farm.

## 1.3. Age demographics



The majority of respondents to our survey were older, with 63% telling us they were over the age of 45. The largest responding part of the spectrum was 55-64 and 13% were over 65. We are encouraged to see this as we had received concerns from local residents that virtual engagement, which will be particularly important in an age of Covid-19 related social distancing, may shut out older residents who might be less comfortable with online activities.

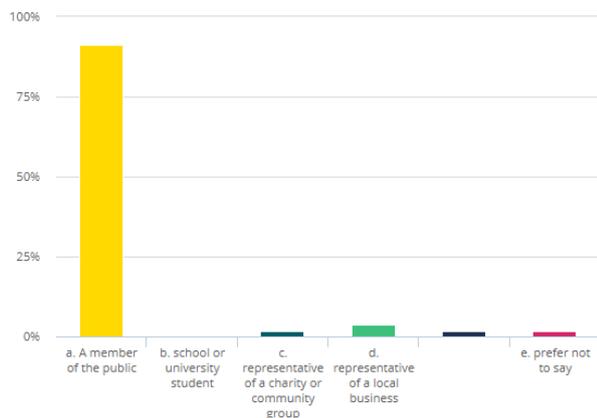
At first glance this does not appear to be the case, but we want to continue to make sure older people are aware of the scheme and providing their views as well as finding ways to reach out to those who may feel less comfortable with virtual engagement.

We are disappointed that younger age groups did not engage with our survey. Particularly concerning was the fact that no respondents under the age of 24 took part in the survey and only 29% of respondents were in the 25-44 age brackets.

We will endeavour to do more in the future to engage with younger members of the community and have a programme for engaging with schools underway, as well

an alternative platform for digital engagement which is designed to reach younger individuals who may engage less with more traditional forms of social media. This is particularly important given it is younger generations who will be most exposed to the positive and negative aspects of a wind farm development and the long-term impacts of climate change, so have an important voice in the debate which needs to be heard.

## 1.4. Type of respondent



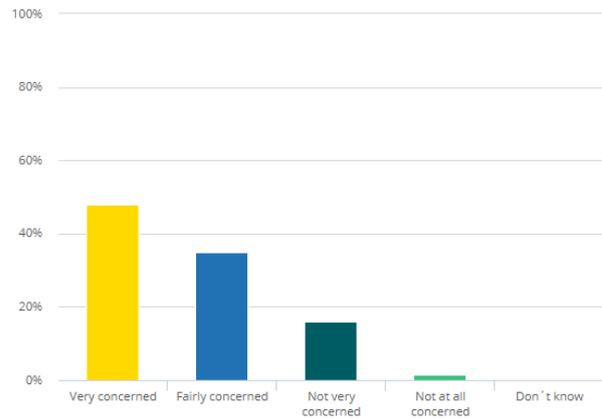
Most respondents to our survey, over 90%, identified as members of the public. Whilst this is welcomed, as the area is rural with most immediate neighbours to the scheme being private individuals, we need to find other ways to engage with groups, such as charities and businesses, and, as mentioned before, schools and younger people.

## 2. Views on energy and climate change

Before we asked questions about wind farms in the region, we wanted to understand general attitudes to climate change and energy to see if there was a difference between general positions as opposed to more localised issues.

### 2.1. Concern about climate change

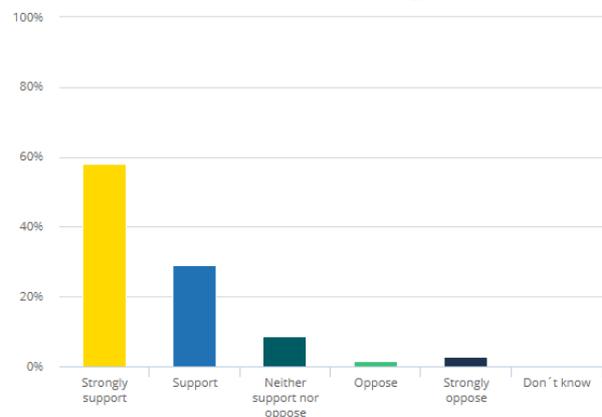
*We asked: how concerned are you about climate change, sometimes referred to as 'global warming'?*



Our respondents were generally concerned about climate change – 83% of people felt they were 'very' or 'fairly concerned'. This is very much in line with other studies with larger datasets. For example, the UK Government's Department for Business, Energy, and Industrial Strategy regular Public Attitudes Tracker reported in its most recently survey that 81% of their survey sample were concerned (either 'very' or 'fairly') by climate change.<sup>1</sup>

### 2.2. Attitudes towards renewables

*We asked: leaving aside the Whiteneuk wind farm project for a moment, generally do you support or oppose the transition towards renewable energy?*

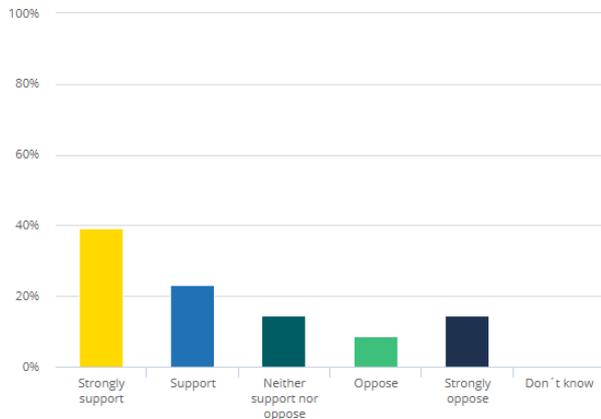


Specifically leaving aside Whiteneuk, most people (96%) were either supportive or unconcerned about the use of renewable energy in general, with the largest cohort being strongly supportive (58%). Respondents to our survey were notably more supportive of renewables than the general population, which is currently at 80% support.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> BEIS, Public Attitudes Tracker (June 2020, Wave 34, UK)

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

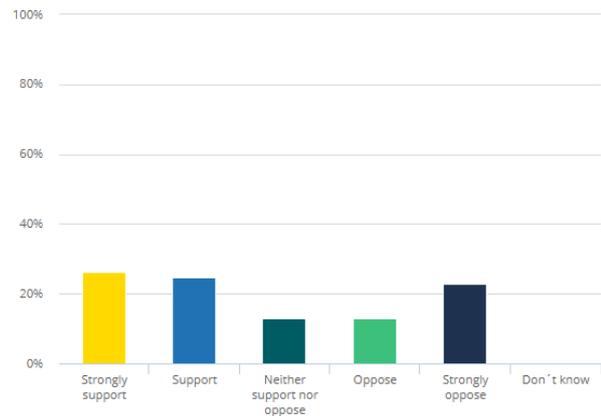
*We also asked: leaving aside the Whiteneuk wind farm project for a moment, generally do you support or oppose the transition towards renewable energy?*



We are aware that onshore wind can be a divisive issue and people can often have ‘favourite’ renewable technologies (e.g. onshore wind, offshore wind, solar, and hydro). Whilst this does appear to be the case for our respondents, we note that there are high levels of support for onshore wind generally with 77% either supporting onshore wind or stating indifference, with the largest single cohort being those who ‘strongly support’ its development (39%). There is an interesting discrepancy here between our survey and other public attitudes questionnaires, with the Government survey reporting 93% support for onshore wind.<sup>3</sup>

Although we did not ask whether respondents supported the Whiteneuk wind farm specifically, as we felt there was not yet enough information in the public domain on which people could base an informed opinion, we did want to understand whether there was general support or opposition to more wind farms in the region.

*We asked: do you support or oppose the development of wind farms in the region?*



<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

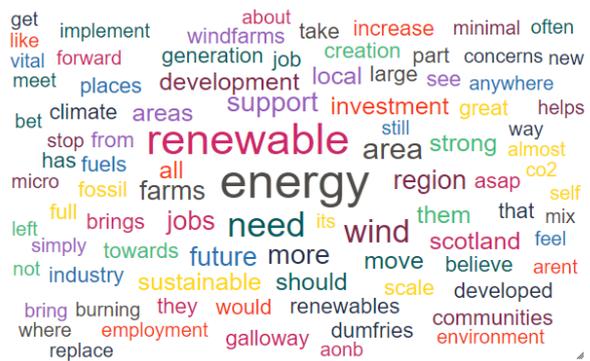
It is clear that as some people move from thinking about general global or country-wide trends to more specific local issues, some support falls away. That said, 64% supported more wind farm development in the region with the largest single cohort strongly supporting more development (26%). The third largest cohort, however, were strongly opposed (23%).

We note that this is a little different from the only other local polling on onshore wind of which we are aware which has been carried out recently. In 2019, the Conservative Environment Network found that 71% of people living in the Dumfries and Galloway Westminster Parliamentary constituency supported onshore wind.<sup>4</sup> This particular survey is not representative of the area as it targeted voting age people who reported as having voted for the Conservative party in the 2017 general election. Nevertheless, we believe it is an interesting point of departure for discussing regional views as the Conservative party has traditionally been more sceptical of onshore wind than, for instance, the SNP or Labour party.

### 2.3. Why do people support wind farms in the region?

*We asked: if you support the development of wind farms in the region, please tell us why.*

The word cloud below summarises the 30 individual responses we had to this question which, we hope with our analysis and a number of anonymous responses presented in full below, will help readers to understand typical views expressed.



Although there was a wide range of reasons presented, common themes were that:

- Wind farms are needed to combat climate change;
- They bring benefits, with respondents generally pointing to the economic and jobs benefits;

<sup>4</sup> Conservative Environment Network, *Support for Electricity Sources by Constituency* (Published June 2019).





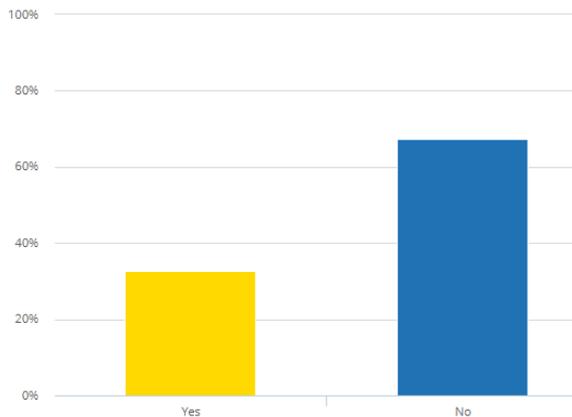
specifically on a community investment package over the course of the next year.

### 3.2. Shared ownership

*We asked: would you or the local community group you represent be interested in investing in shared ownership of the wind farm?*

Vattenfall is prepared to offer some form of shared ownership in the development of Whiteneuk wind farm. This could involve capital-at-risk investment by local individuals, organisations, or businesses in the wind farm’s construction as well as sharing the risks and rewards of the wind farm’s performance.

Although there is some appetite for shared ownership at this early stage, we note that this is limited and only 33% of respondents expressed interest.



We will continue to discuss this with the community and keep in mind whether there is sufficient appetite for Vattenfall to take this forward into more detailed design and discussion.

## 4. Conclusions and next steps

We found this survey exercise to be extremely useful and informative. Although we are only at an early stage in the scheme’s design, we have been encouraged to continue development of Whiteneuk due to the level of concern about climate change and support for renewables, onshore wind, and further onshore wind development in the region.

We acknowledge that the sample size was small and not demographically representative. We will work hard to

increase stakeholder participation in consultation and responses to develop a fully rounded picture.

We also recognise that there are those who feel strongly against the development. In some cases, we will not be able to win people round as views can be entrenched and strongly held, particularly on the subject of landscape impact. These views, whilst entirely legitimate, are often subjective and contrasting, with people expressing both approval of what wind farms stand for and look like in the landscape whilst others find them distasteful.

There are a range of valid and legitimate concerns around, for instance, local wildlife, noise, and construction impacts. We believe most of these can be acceptably mitigated through the considered and sensitive site design in which we take pride. We will, of course, take all concerns raised into account in the wind farm’s design and will report back and try to provide comfort where we can in both a Frequently Asked Questions document and in the detailed Environmental Impact Assessment Report which will accompany our application to Scottish Ministers to construction the wind farm.

We will continue to work with the communities concerned and other interested stakeholders over the course of the next year until we submit our planning application, which we anticipate will be in the last quarter of 2021.

There will be a raft of public engagement coming this autumn and winter, including:

- a. A virtual public exhibition space;
- b. Webinars with the team;
- c. Meetings with community councils and other groups;
- d. Project newsletters;
- e. Further surveys and questionnaires; and
- f. Subject to Covid restrictions, face-to-face engagement and at least one public exhibition.

In the meantime, Matthew Bacon (Senior Project Manager) and Carol Kane (Regional Liaison Officer) welcome the opportunity to speak to you. They can be reached at [Whiteneuk.windfarm@vattenfall.com](mailto:Whiteneuk.windfarm@vattenfall.com)

