
Job Name: Ourack Community Development Strategy

Job No: 41867

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Note Title: Ourack CDS – Interim Report

1 Overview

- 1.1 Stantec has been commissioned by Vattenfall to scope and prepare a Community Development Strategy (CDS), associated with the proposed Ourack Wind Energy Project approximately 9km north of Grantown on Spey within The Highland Council (THC) administrative area.
- 1.2 If approved, Ourack will generate significant benefits for local communities. Vattenfall's values and ethos emphasise working closely with local people to ensure that they are developing projects that can bring lasting, sustainable benefits for the communities which host them. At Ourack, Vattenfall are supporting a flexible approach, and are keen to explore strategic community benefits with the capacity to tackle ideas which require big, upfront investment where this has the support of the local community.
- 1.3 To guide the CDS, community engagement programme is being undertaken by Stantec. The latest round of engagement began in early 2021 to understand the local priorities for community benefit funding (CBF) generated by Ourack windfarm. Stantec have engaged with Dava Residents Association, Grantown Community Council, Cromdale and Advie Community Council, Finderne Community Council, the Grantown Initiative and The Highland Council to understand the key issues across the area.
- 1.4 The Scottish Government's Good Practice Principles for Community Benefits from Onshore Renewable Energy Developments (2019) provides guidance for communities and developers considering long-term priorities and action plans to create a lasting legacy from onshore renewable energy projects such as Ourack. In structuring community benefit proposals, this guidance recognises that communities and developers may benefit from a strategic approach. At Ourack, there is potential for Vattenfall to help communities realise some of their ambitions and priorities through a bespoke package of community benefits up to the value of £5K per installed MW per annum. This may include support for the Dava community in establishing an improved water supply as well as working with other local delivery partners and agencies to address issues that will improve and enhance the wellbeing of the local community.
- 1.5 The provision of community benefits (including flexible packages) is not considered a material planning consideration by the Scottish Government, meaning that it has no bearing on the consenting and decision-making process. However, the Scottish Government recognises the key principles in the establishment of a bespoke community benefits package, as shown in **Figure 1** below.

Figure 1: Principles of Community Benefits



- 1.6 If granted planning permission, Vattenfall will generate significant benefit for local communities. Vattenfall's values and ethos emphasise working closely with local people to ensure its projects bring lasting, sustainable benefits for the communities which host them. At Ourack, Vattenfall supports a flexible approach, and is keen to explore a strategic community benefits approach: one which has the backing of local communities; which can be combined with or lever funds to maximise local impact; and with the capacity to pursue ideas which require large, upfront investment.
- 1.7 To inform the Ourack Community Development Strategy (CDS), a baseline review of Community Action Plans and associated desk-based research was undertaken to understand the issues and priorities facing local communities in proximity to the site of the proposed Ourack Windfarm. Although a wider review of issues in neighbouring Community Councils has been undertaken, the core area of impact for the CDS focuses on the three Community Councils in closest proximity: Grantown on Spey, Finnerne and Cromdale & Advie. The CDS takes account of the issues affecting all settlements within the area, including the needs of hamlets such as Dava located adjacent to the site.
- 1.8 The purpose of this paper is to set out the findings to date, gather additional feedback via the online survey running in parallel and set out the next steps in developing the CDS.

2 Key Issues

- 2.1 The baseline review highlighted local issues common to both the wider area and the three Community Councils which form the impact area for the CDS, including:
 - **Restricted economic opportunities:** There are a restricted number of local jobs and training opportunities for residents. There is a need to increase the number of existing apprenticeships and provide smaller, more flexible workspaces for businesses.
 - **Limited housing availability;** There is a lack of affordable housing for rent/low-income ownership to attract and keep residents. Further local research into housing need and options feasibility needed;
 - **Restricted community capacity:** There is a need to increase the capacity of local community organisations. Improvement of local services is constricted due to viability issues. Capacity building is needed through funding masterclasses, volunteer recruitment and the development of cross-organisational partnerships.
 - **Inadequate community infrastructure:** There is a lack of funding available to make improvement to existing key community facilities such as village halls and shortfalls in capacity and funding to establish new community hubs for rural communities.

- **Limited water supply infrastructure;** reliance for many homes on a private water supply. Need for further feasibility work and ongoing funding for delivery of water infrastructure for homes outside established towns/villages (e.g., Dava).
- **Limited internet connectivity;** Poor quality and unreliable broadband and mobile connections for communities and businesses. Feasibility studies are required to identify the potential for the improvement of digital infrastructure such as satellite installation or improvements to existing broadband infrastructure.
- **Capitalisation on tourism:** There is inadequate local tourism information available for visitors to the area, with associated lack of promotion of key local attractions (e.g., Grantown East Highland and Cultural Centre and the future Strathspey Steam Railway Extension). There is a need to provide overall improvements to the visitor experience throughout the entirety of the area to increase footfall, length of stay and visitor spend.
- **Decline of town and village centres:** There is a lack of funding available to address general decline of storefronts of vacant town and village centre properties. Aesthetic improvements within occupied buildings and signage on arrival also needed.
- **Inadequate public transport provision:** Need to improve upon existing public and community transport options for all residents such as the development of new or linkages between existing community transport schemes.
- **Limited road capacity and poor condition;** Requirements for road safety improvement measures such as local junctions and bridge infrastructure.
- **Impacts on wellbeing:** There is a need to increase access for support services to address wellbeing issues such as fuel poverty. Local energy packages have been identified as a key target for local community. Better access to mental health support has also been noted.

3 Strategic Objectives

3.1 The key issues above were then used to draft a set of strategic objectives that would guide the direction of the Community Development Strategy. These objectives will be agreed with the Community Councils and subsequently be used to guide the Community Benefit Fund and any additional shared ownership/alternative revenue model funds generated by the operation of the Ourack windfarm. The draft set of strategic objectives are as follows:

- Access to local economic opportunities for both the existing workforce and young people.
- Suitable and affordable housing to meet the needs of the local community to attract and retain residents.
- Efficient and sustainable transport and utilities infrastructure for all, including a mains water supply for Dava.
- Maximise the local tourism offering.
- Enhanced community capacity and good quality community infrastructure.
- Good quality and reliable digital infrastructure for community and business use.
- Reinvigoration of town and village centres both for shopfronts and other general aesthetic improvements.
- Protecting the wellbeing of the local community by increasing access to support services.

4 Next Steps

- 4.1 This interim report has been prepared to accompany an online survey open to the public as well as The Highland Council, participating Community Councils and other community stakeholder and interest groups. The survey findings will inform the next update to the CDS. This will also incorporate and supplement any feedback provided by Grantown on Spey & Vicinity CC, Dava Residents Association and Cromdale & Advie CC. In addition to this we will:
- Confirm proposed area of benefit/tiered approach
 - Reconsult with community groups on the issues identified so far
 - Refine actions associated with the strategic objectives
 - Undertake an economic appraisal of draft actions within the CDS
- 4.2 The purpose of this continued engagement and consultation will be to ensure that the development of the CDS responds to the needs of the community both now and in the future, seeks local buy-in therefore shaping how the CDS will guide the long-term financial benefits generated by Ourack.
- 4.3 The CDS will be prepared in time to coincide with the submission of the planning application for Ourack in the first half of 2022.