

# Ourack Wind Energy Project

Early Engagement Feedback Report: March 2015

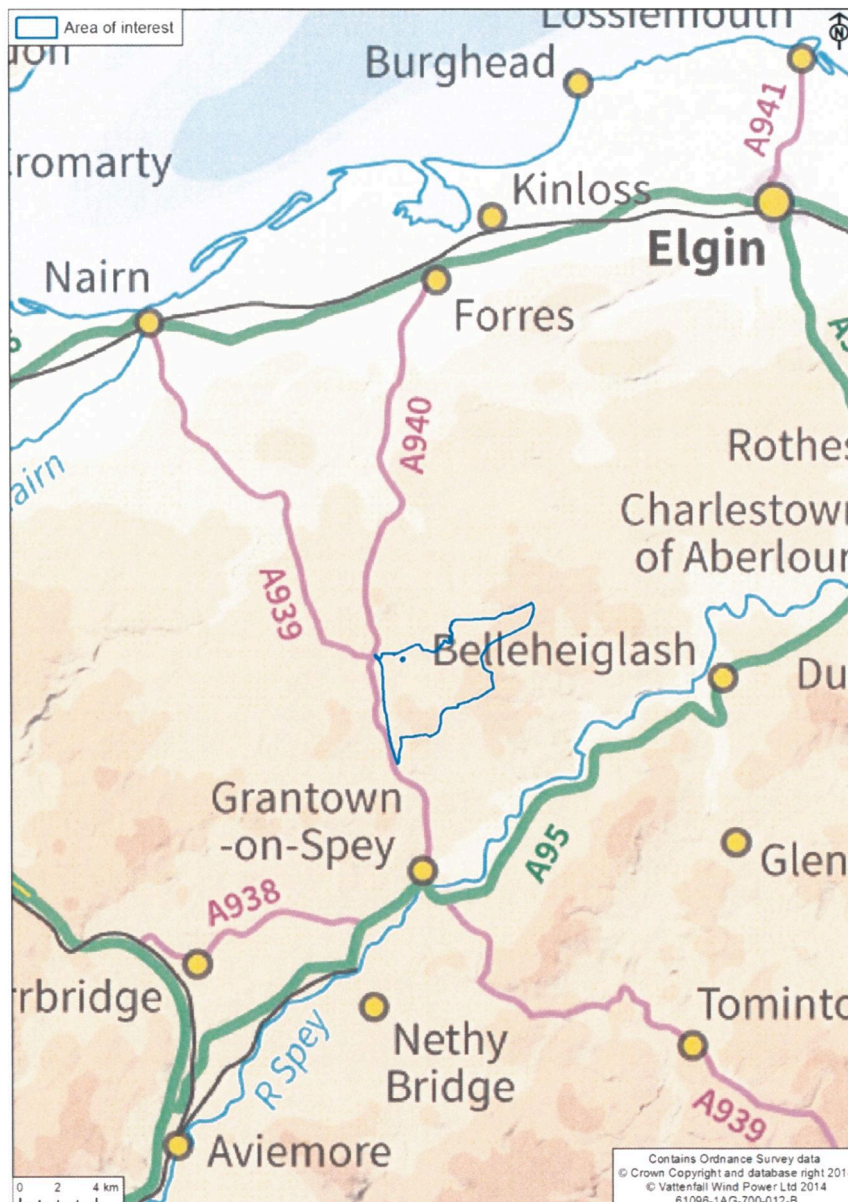
## 1.1. Introduction

In January 2015, Vattenfall began engagement in relation to its plans to explore development of Ourack Wind Farm, situated approximately 6km north of Granttown-on-Spey. An initial round of engagement activity invited the local community to get involved and provide its early ideas, issues, concerns and feedback on the potential development. This document is a record of this first phase of work.

## 1.2. Background

Vattenfall is exploring the potential of Ourack wind energy project, a project on a site approximately 6km north of Granttown-on-Spey.

Map showing the proposed site location



The project itself is being developed in partnership with the Reidhaven Estate, which owns the development area. The project is at its earliest stage, and initial engagement was undertaken before a layout or any detailed plans for the project were developed. The purpose of engaging in this early dialogue was to ensure that the community had the opportunity to influence and shape our detailed research, early assessments and design work before it commenced, so that local issues could be considered in the design and development of the wind farm plans from the very beginning.

## 1.3. Aims and Scope

The aims of Vattenfall's early engagement were to:

- Inform the local community of Vattenfall's intention to explore the opportunity for a wind farm in the area
- Give the local community the chance at an early stage to meet the project team and discuss any issues and opportunities that were important to them as the proposals develop
- Ensure that the local community had an opportunity to influence our initial research, assessment and design work.

The purpose and scope of the engagement was to engage with the local community to:

- understand their ideas, queries and concerns
- understand what information was important to them in order for them to be able to consider the detailed proposals as they emerge
- give the opportunity to influence the design of the scheme from an early stage
- begin to identify the potential opportunities the scheme could create locally.

As this engagement was at an early stage in the development process, there was limited detailed information available – notably a turbine layout was not presented, as feedback from the engagement will be used to influence the initial design.

## 1.4. Informing the local community

This section of the report sets out the tools used by Vattenfall to raise awareness of the opportunity to engage with the project at this early stage.

- **Invitation by post**

Vattenfall posted an invitation to residents and businesses within a 10km radius of the site on 7<sup>th</sup> January 2015 explaining its interest in the Ourack wind farm site.

Copies were also sent local stakeholders, including key statutory consultees, elected members and community councils.

The invitation provided the following information:

- An introduction to the proposed scheme and consultation
- A map showing the area of interest
- Information on the public drop in sessions
- Project contact details

- **Letter to Stakeholders**

In addition to the invitation, identified stakeholders were sent a letter inviting them to the public information sessions and which offered the opportunity to meet to discuss the project.

- **Website**

A dedicated project website: [www.vattenfall.co.uk/ourack](http://www.vattenfall.co.uk/ourack) was launched on 5th January 2015 to provide access to information on the proposals and consultation programme online. At this early stage, as well as providing preliminary information about the proposals, people could also register their interest and provide initial feedback through online channels.

The website was updated on in January 2015 with downloadable information from the public information sessions. This included:

- Copies of the same information as was on offer at the local information sessions
- An online feedback questionnaire.

- **Advertisements**

An advert was placed in the Strathspey and Badenoch Herald on 8<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> January 2015 a further advert was also placed in Forres Gazette on 13<sup>th</sup> January 2015.

Posters advertising the public information sessions were also displayed in the local area from Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> January 2015 at:

- Grantown-on-Spey Post Office
- Grantown-on-Spey Newsagents
- Grantown-on-Spey Leisure Centre
- Inverallan Parish Church Hall, Grantown-on-Spey

- **Media Coverage**

Vattenfall sent a press release to local and regional media. Media coverage of the public events was seen in the following newspapers:

- Strathspey and Badenoch Herald
- Press and Journal
- Forres Gazette

- **Social Media**

Before the information sessions, the @VattenfallUK twitter account shared information on how to participate and pointed people in the direction of further information. Links to the project website and information on how to contact the project team were included in these tweets.

Copies of all the materials produced can be viewed at [www.vattenfall.co.uk/ourack](http://www.vattenfall.co.uk/ourack).

## 1.5. Opportunities to engage

Vattenfall held two consecutive public information sessions on 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2015. These were attended by around 84 people.

**Table 1: Attendance at the Public Events**

Date	Time	Venue	Number of attendees
Wednesday 21 <sup>st</sup> January	2pm – 8pm	Edinkillie Hall, Dunphail	31
Thursday 22 <sup>nd</sup> January	2pm – 8pm	Inverallan Church Hall	53

Information about the project, the site, the consultation process were presented on twelve information boards which covered the following topics:

- Welcome and introduction
- Designing a wind farm
- The site
- Landscape and visual assessment
- Noise
- Ground conditions, archaeology and cultural heritage
- Ecology, wildlife and habitats
- Transport, grid and other linked developments
- Tourism and economy
- Looking to the future
- Working with you
- Exploring the benefits

All attendees were invited to sign in (to receive a report and to be notified of future events and receive information). Each participant was offered a pen and invited to use post-it notes to add comments on the information panels with any questions, concerns, or issues that they wished to raise at this early stage. A questionnaire was also produced that invited feedback from participants.

The same materials and questionnaire were also made available on the project website to enable those who were unable to attend the information sessions to submit a response.

A copy of the materials can be seen at [www.vattenfall.co.uk/ourack](http://www.vattenfall.co.uk/ourack).

## 2. Summary of feedback from participants

This section provides an overview by topic of the key issues raised by participants. They are divided into:

- comments and issues raised that require consideration

- requests for more/additional/specific information
- how this information will be used.

Some issues have been moved to the most appropriate section for ease of reading (e.g. issues raised under landscape but relate to noise appear under the noise section) and are provided in this report, as well as a full account of all the comments received.

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## Landscape and visual:

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### Comments and issues to consider

- Impacts on specific local views including from Dava Way, the A939 and vistas beyond the Moray Firth
- Impact on key views for tourists and walkers
- Detailed assessment of visual impact
- Consultation with National Park, SNH, local authorities, tourism organisations
- Good to involve communities early – keep it up
- Consideration of screening opportunities from key viewpoints e.g. Dava Way
- Assessment of cumulative impact
- Impact on National Park and views from wild land

### Information required

- Number of turbines
- Height of turbines

### How will this input be used?

- This input will be shared with our landscape and visual impact specialists who will be undertaking the assessment work. We will also use this feedback in developing an initial site layout and also a selection of the visuals that we will provide at future consultation events.

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## Noise:

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### Comments and issues to consider

- Noise and audible impact on key amenities e.g. Dava Way
- Impact on the tranquil nature of the area
- Maintain appropriate distance from housing and recreation to avoid impacts

### Information required

- Information on grid connection and infrastructure and the potential noise impacts

### How will this input be used?

We will provide an information sheet on the planned approach to noise assessment in the area, and information on how the noise impacts of the project will be assessed. This assessment will inform the initial layout design.

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## Ground conditions, heritage and archaeology

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### Comments and issues to consider

- Undertake a full range of surveys to be able to minimise the impacts
- Consultation with local archaeology companies and societies within the highlands area to gain a full understanding and access to their information on the potential features in the area
- Consideration of Lochindorb and the Loch
- Full assessment of peat resource and the impact on this resource

### Information required

- Information on the surveys completed
- Information on the size of tracks, and plans for reinstatement

### How will this input be used?

We will provide an information sheet on the planned survey and assessment work we will undertake on and around the site, as well as information on our consultation with relevant bodies. We will also provide information on the results of the surveys, how they have informed the design and information on all the infrastructure linked to the project and how a site is reinstated.

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## Ecology and wildlife

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### Comments and issues to consider

- Schedule 1 species who breed locally
- The impact on birds, wildlife and local ecosystems which support them
- Impact on local wildlife during construction
- How to ensure advice and guidance provided, particularly during construction, is independent
- Consultation and contact with local bird recorders, RSPB, local fishery organisations, and British Trust for Ornithology
- Impact of all infrastructure on local ecology
- Full eagle surveys
- Plans for reinstatement and enhancement to ensure no loss
- Monitoring and full consideration of potential impact on watercourses, water quality, fish passage
- Surveys of migration routes
- Follow approved methodologies for surveying
- Ensure appropriate research of fauna
- Consider woodland to south of the development
- Loss of wild spaces

### Information required

- Information on the construction period, how impacts on local ecology and wildlife are managed, including the breeding season of key species

### How will this input be used?

We will provide information on our approach to surveying and assessment in future consultation, and will take on board the advice with regard to consultation with local interests. This will include information on environmental protection during construction. Potential mitigation and enhancement plans can only be fully considered once the initial assessments and surveys have been completed, but we will ensure that we share and consult locally on any proposals for this project.

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## Transport, grid and other linked developments

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### Comments and issues to consider

- Consider the least intrusive and disruptive transport and grid routes
- Repairing damage from activities to any local roads
- Consider undertaking grid connection application at the same time to save time

### Information required

- Details of plans for connection to the grid and any associated impacts
- Information on how vehicles and deliveries would access the site
- Information on any upgrades to local infrastructure
- Information on the impact on traffic

### How will this input be used?

We will assess potential options for grid and transport connection and provide information on the possible options in future consultations. This will include information on the impacts on local roads, any upgrades that would be necessary and our responsibilities for maintaining the condition of local roads.

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## What should the project bring?

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### Comments and issues to consider

- Focus any benefit on the local area, Grantown
- Community ownership opportunities
- Household/community energy benefits
- Build and maintain a relationship with the local community
- Supporting economic development
- Development of environmental infrastructure
- Improving local commerce
- Focus on tourism and improve tourism infrastructure
- Potential to restore railway, and extend steam train
- Support younger generations
- Improve important local paths, develop nature trails
- New tourism facilities/assets/marketing materials on and offline
- Long term investment in communities
- Broadband
- Finance for community projects
- Native species planting and re-wilding moorland
- Reliable public transport for older persons
- Events and festivals
- Rangers for local paths
- Grantown 250 years celebrations, Grantown Green Town
- Local produce initiatives

### How will this input be used?

We will continue to consult on the potential opportunities that are important to the area. The feedback offered will be used to begin to shape and develop potential opportunities alongside the development of the project.

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## Other issues

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### Comments and issues to consider

- Consultation with land users not just statutory consultees (farmers, keepers, fishing etc.)
- Assessment of potential tourism impact
- Use of good quality local contractors with knowledge and experience of the area
- Importance of renewables - paramount importance
- Ensure impacts are minimised wherever possible
- Use of local workforce, companies, plant, manufacturing where viable
- Build understanding and relationships locally
- Advertise business opportunities and consultations widely, not just through chambers of commerce.

### How will this input be used?

We will ensure that we engage with local interests in our consultations during the development of the design of the project and during our research and assessment work. We intend to engage with local business interests and will provide information on the potential local contracting and supply chain opportunities that could be possible through the project.

We will also ensure that we maintain and seek to build our relationships locally and for the long term as the project progresses. Please contact us if you have ideas of how we could engage with local groups and organisations in your area.

All the feedback received can be viewed in a full report at [www.vattenfall.co.uk/ourack](http://www.vattenfall.co.uk/ourack).

## 3. Next Steps

The next stage in the process will see Vattenfall commence its detailed research and assessment of the site. The feedback of participants will be used in this process by Vattenfall and by the team researching the project to ensure that this work reflects and is shaped by the key local issues.

We will also begin compiling information sheets that can be provided now in response to the information requests of participants.

Over the summer 2015, we will continue our work in the area and our engagement with local stakeholders, and continue to provide further opportunities for local residents, groups and organisations to feed into the process, as well as regular opportunities to meet with key project staff as the work progresses.

All participants who registered their interest and provided contact details will be sent updates and information. Anyone interested in the project can also contact us online, by post or by phone to register their interest in the project and ensure that they are notified of opportunities to get involved.

Thank you to everyone who took the time to come along to the sessions, and/or who participated through other means.

## All Feedback from Community Drop In Sessions and Online Feedback, Jan – March 2015

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### Landscape and visual

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#### Comments to consider

- How many turbines? I think the larger local area has quite a few turbines. I would not want the landscape completely covered.
- Visual impact, no matter how many turbines are erected, will occur. The priorities would probably be best angled toward the view from A939 and Dava Way in terms of regular public exposure (eg. walkers/tourists). To have the western most turbines as far as possible from these would be key.
- Maps don't show other wind farms in planning.
- Viewpoints from A938, keep out of sight from main access roads and walks even if slightly less wind.
- Respect local feelings.
- Not enough visual and fauna impact research taken in existing sites. Note should be listened to from land users. Farmers, keepers, fishers, walkers. Not just RSPB and SNH. Consider impact on visitors, locals and especially ancestors who emigrated many years ago.
- Yes, as you have been, I suspect in contact with Cairngorm National Park Authority, Moray Council, Highland Regional Council as well as local tourism.
- Yes, I think it's great to involve the community prior to the plans being drawn up. And to keep up the involvement. I would envisage all relevant issues about visual/environmental issues will have been addressed and will be assessed at each stage to be sympathetic to the area.
- The impact on the Dava Way path screening the wind farm from walkers.
- The scheme proposed would spoil the experience of walkers on the Dava Way.
- Research and assessments are appropriate.
- Height of turbines must be low.
- Various studies have pointed to adverse impacts on tourism – modern industrialisation of the landscape – the highland asset is “unspoilt” countryside.
- The cumulative impact of wind farms must be assessed by the planning authority and its impact on tourism.
- Unwarranted visual pollution
- Impact on views from the National Park unacceptable.
- Cumulative impact concern – impact on tourism.
- The land is mostly shooting moorland and devoid of natural habitat.
- Sensitive woodland site south of the development.
- Respect our love of the amenity of Dava, unspoiled – keep out of sight of main road.
- Wind farms are akin to Vandalism – industrialisation of the beautiful, wild Highland countryside. Loss of wild spaces.
- Yet more industrialisation of unspoilt iconic Highland moor.
- Not wild land but view into and out of CNP will need to be considered.
- Agree.
- Impact on views into and out of National Park will require SNH and SNPA input.
- Specific viewpoints are: Dava Way and ALL the houses situated in the hamlet of Dava Scottish Natural Heritage identifies Dava as a 'special landscape area under the category - Local Landscape Designation (Highlands)'. Scottish Natural Heritage quote on their website: How are SLA's protected and managed -



local landscape designations are shown in local development plans, and have associated policies to safeguard their valued features'

- The document produced by Scottish National Heritage entitled Guidance on Local Landscape Designs, section 5.5 – Developing Planning Policies quotes: ..... In terms of best practice, development plan policies should recognise the positive contribution that appropriate development and other land use change can often make to the landscape character and qualities of the designated area. Nevertheless, some development and land use change will be inappropriate for such areas. Development should therefore generally only be permitted within a local landscape designation when:
- it will not have significant adverse impacts on the special character or qualities of the landscape of the area;
- the social and economic benefits of the development are considered to be more than of just local significance in the context of the local authority area.
- For development that meets these tests, the location, scale, design, materials, and landscaping should be of a high standard and, where appropriate, should seek to enhance the special qualities and character of the landscape. Considering the above information available from Scottish National Heritage, this wind farm will: 'Have significant adverse impacts on the special character or qualities of the landscape of the area' This wind farm will not: 'enhance the special qualities and character of the landscape'.

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## Noise

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### Comments and issues to consider

- Noise versus audible impact on Dava Way walkers is important.
- Background noise at Bank Cottage will be none.
- My major concern is that, within an area of great tranquillity and silence. That area to the east of Cairn Kitty is so special. We have seen a huge change through Berry Burn Wind Farm the Logie Estate one will be with us in the blink of an eye, and the Cairn Duhie application is under consideration. Is this, given its potential size the "bridge too far?"
- Not the most serious issue if well away from housing and recreation areas.
- The farms and houses on Braes and Achahannet. Where will the power collecting point be and the distribution to the grid. Both can generate more noise than turbines.
- Happy.
- Background noise will be no issue at Bank Cottage.
- None that I can think of.
- Key noise monitoring locations should be ALL the houses situated in the hamlet of Dava and those situated off the main road between Dava and Grantown on Spey

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## Ground conditions, heritage and archaeology

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### Comments and issues to consider

- Obviously the full range of surveys must be undertaken to ensure least amount of impact.
- Happy.
- There are a number of small archaeology companies within highland area and also a society which assists. [www.nosas.co.uk](http://www.nosas.co.uk). There are remains of many crofts scattered over a large area. Some are recorded in [www.her.highland.gov.uk](http://www.her.highland.gov.uk).
- Only the ones I would imagine you are already in touch with. Concern about Lochindorb and the Loch, site in and the area around it.
- SPP soils. Area of deep peat and peat rich soil.
- Tracks size, scale, location and reinstatement.
- Peat loss/peat resource.

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## Ecology and wildlife

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### Comments and issues to consider

- A large number of birds and supporting eco-system (ie. Food, both animal and plant life) occupy the area through the year, with protected schedule 1 species also having breeding locations through the whole area of the proposal.
- To assume such species would simply move to similar habitat on Dava Moor is naïve, as the species concerned are vulnerable nationally and any disturbance especially in the breeding season is punishable by law. Many of us are perhaps more concerned therefore about what happens in the building period in terms of plant traffic, destruction of habitat and food sources. Alas one can predict that an ornithological surveyor, under contract and with no independent oversight, will give your company the “right answer.” Also don’t just consult the RSPB, who spend most of their time behind a desk. Consider input from local, semi-official bird recorders (Martin Cook for Moray, Pete Gordon for Highland).
- Again my concern is that given there is nothing here (and to the best of my knowledge never has been) any development with its many kilometres of access roads and continual engineering maintenance will have a considerable impact on the ecology of the area.
- Eagles – ensure full surveys are undertaken.
- This is probably the last area where hen harriers were present. Otherwise good variety of moor wildlife.
- I hope you put back what has been removed – flora and fauna. Also you will of course have been in touch with RSPB.
- No, general wildlife for area that will be looked at as part of initial planning.
- What actions are taken to schedule construction outside of breeding season of schedule 1 bird species? What happens if you don’t meet any promise and you run into said period?
- Don’t just talk to the bodies on the standard list for consultation. British Trust for ornithology for example.
- Monitoring impact on watercourses. Ensure no decline in quality of water runoff or quantity. Ensure all bridges/culverts allow fish passage. Consider cumulative impact of numerous wind farms on water quality. Use good quality contractors with experience of the area ie. McLeod’s. Ensure appointment of good ECOW. Maintain good contact with local fishery trust, fishery boards.
- Wildlife would be heavily impacted especially key bird species and all year round.
- Not aware of any wildlife issues.
- Migration route for geese also butterflies.
- Capercaillie within Strathspey meta population area.
- Bird surveys, geese, raptors, moorland waders, see SNH website for approved methodology.

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## Transport, grid and other linked developments

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### Comments to consider

- Where and how will national grid connection take place? What impact would that cause in itself?
- Where will site traffic enter/exit?
- Whichever route you take will be close to multi habitation and noise and visual impact will be severe.
- Access a key issue.
- Choice of routes for road access and power lines must be least intrusive and disruptive.
- I hope you will minimise the damage to the routes already existing but if you have to use them you will repair all the damage you have caused.
- Several of the routes for the project will require to be upgraded as part of the project, but nothing that will be out with the planning of the project.
- How does the wind farm connect to the power grid? No pylons are nearby.
- Will the grid need to be upgraded?
- Transport routes would be a key issue.
- Wear and tear on roads. Roads too narrow for big trucks already.
- How will access be taken, weak bridges, narrow road under old railway?
- What about the infrastructure for traffic?
- Grid connection application at same time as wind farm saves time.
- Damage and over use of local roads and bridges.
- Where will the substation and connection to the grid be?
- Intrusion of access roads.
- ALL the road leading from the Moray Coast, Aberdeen, Inverness etc to the proposed site have narrow small sections crossing old bridges - the long term use of high impact and heavy vehicles will cause deterioration in the local road infrastructure and potentially leave residents, once Vattenfall have taken when they need from the local environmental and gone, with the on-going issue of using roads damaged by the construction vehicles - Highland Council should not be responsible for repairing and maintaining roads damaged by Vattenfall

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## What should the project bring?

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### Comments and issues to consider

- I think we have enough wind farms in the Dava area so I am not in favour of another one.
- If it does go ahead community benefit should be focused on closed local area and involve community ownership arrangements for local community households to benefit from electricity sales.
- Don't just 'Build and Go' if you get approval, become part of the many communities that you will affect – yes usually with cash – but don't just become a faceless corporation to us.
- Benefits for Grantown where there is a lot of people.
- The fund is very important to help local projects:
- Economic Development
- Environmental infrastructure
- Improvement of Local Commerce
- Focus on Tourism.
- Take note of local concerns. Community benefit – most pressing need is to restore railway from Broomhill to Grantown.
- I can visualise very little benefit except for the cash bribe other areas have received.
- Hopefully the project will go ahead and it will bring much needed support and help to local causes. Especially our future – the young people. Plus I hope the environmental damage is minimised. Finding as much non-nuclear and coal fired form of electricity as possible. Plus I would hope your firm will consider doing as much as you can to conceal and replace everything that your wind farm being constructed will do.
- It would be great to use the local workforce, companies, plant etc. for the project and to help support local community while the project takes place. Obviously only where this is a viable option.
- Post development relationships with local bodies are important too.
- Local community understanding and relationship is key, especially as the site will impact on several areas.
- Make sure business consultations are widely advertised, not just through chambers of commerce, etc.
- Extending the steam train to Grantown.
- Would like to see some benefits for Grantown and surrounding areas. Mainly for the younger generation.
- UK manufactured turbines.
- Improve core paths – Dava Way.
- New tourism facilities or assets.
- Will this pay for "Rail to Grantown" and beyond – Dava? A tourism benefit.
- Assisting in railway extension.
- Put money back into local community by employing local labour and expertise.
- Would this be contemplated without tax payer's subsidies.
- This project can not benefit local communities; it is another example of foreign investors taking what they can from a landscape, community and environment which has no significance to them. The grants offered to homeowners for 'green energy' are already obtainable and are not a 'new initiative'. The community ownership programme is beyond the means of most people living in this area. My partner and I are trying to establish a tourism related business on Dava and this wind farm will have a negative impact on to our future.

### Suggestions for CBF

- Long term investment in community
- Investment in the local community is vital
- Broadband for rural dwellings and industry
- Community energy efficiency programme
- Finance for community projects
- Native plantation (flora and fauna)
- Reliable local public transport for older folk
- Local economic development
- 5 day walking challenge
- Moray Walking festival
- Dava Way App
- Dava Way Companion – Book
- Nature Trails/upgrading of pathways
- Improve core paths (Dava Way) and local paths to form a network.
- Improve tourism infrastructure
- Walkers bunk house for Dunphail/Dava

- Walkers café
- Field Ranger for Dava Way/local paths
- Re-wilding shooting moorland
- Grantown 250 year celebrations June 2015

**Are you interested in ownership opportunities?**

Yes	No	Maybe
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