

Your Ref: V1  
Our Ref: 332010018

23/04/21

**Attention of: Grantown-on-Spey and Vicinity Community Council**

Dear Linda,

**Re: Preparation of Community Development Strategy for the proposed Ourack Wind Energy Project**

As we have shared in recent correspondence, Stantec has been commissioned by Vattenfall to scope and prepare a Community Development Strategy (CDS) associated with the Ourack Wind Energy Project located approximately 9km north of Grantown on Spey. Ourack Wind Energy Project has the potential to provide a range of benefits for the local community, including the future establishment of a community benefit package or local grant scheme. The CDS itself will explore the key issues and priorities for the local area, informing a set of objectives to guide the funding generated by the operation of Ourack.

To inform the 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 wind farm. 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 and Vicinity, Finnerne and Cromdale & Advie. The CDS will take account of the key issues affecting all settlements within this area, including the needs of hamlets such as Dava.

We are writing to you today to provide an update of the development of the CDS to date and to seek your feedback on the key issues and draft objectives provided below. The development of the CDS in consultation with the local community is voluntary, but of great importance to ensure that any community benefits can be tailored to respond to the needs of the local community. We welcome and encourage your feedback on the list of key issues and draft objectives below to ensure that they reflect your most up to date priorities.

**Key Issues**

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 available;** 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;

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- **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.

### **Strategic Objectives**

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 the establishment of a connection to the public water supply for Dava.

- Maximising 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.

**Next Steps**

We welcome feedback and comments on the above points and look forward to meeting with you on the 18<sup>th</sup> May. If you have any queries or feedback before then please don't hesitate to get in touch with the details below.

Kind Regards,

**James Welsh**

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on behalf of Stantec UK Ltd

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