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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. The project

- 1.1.1. Renewable Energy Systems (RES), herein referred to as the 'Applicant', has submitted a planning application under the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997, as amended [Planning etc. Scotland Act (2006)], to The Highland Council for a wind farm proposal in Caithness.
- 1.1.2. Cairnmore Hill Wind Farm, herein referred to as the 'Proposed Development', is located approximately 4.5km west of the town of Thurso.
- 1.1.3. If consented the Proposed Development would comprise five turbines with a maximum tip height of up to 138.5m, in addition to a network of site tracks, electrical connection works, substation compound containing a control and substation buildings with battery energy storage, associated temporary construction infrastructure, and associated ancillary and engineering works.
- 1.1.4. The Proposed Development is an optimised redesign of an earlier scheme submitted into planning in October 2020 but refused by The Highland Council in March 2021.

1.2. This report

- 1.2.1. The Proposed Development would have an installed capacity greater than 20MW and is therefore classed as a 'major development' under the Schedule of Regulation 2(1)(a) of the Town and Planning (Hierarchy of Development) (Scotland) Regulations 2009. As such, this requires the Applicant to undertake Pre-Application Consultation (PAC) with the local community and submit a PAC Report with the planning application.
- 1.2.2. This PAC Report details and reports on the consultation process undertaken by the Applicant with the local community, general public, and key stakeholders prior to submission of its planning application to The Highland Council for the Proposed Development. This Report does not cover the consultation with Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) stakeholders (this is captured separately in the EIA Report which accompanies the planning application).
- 1.2.3. The Applicant has served this document to the following parties:
 - The Highland Council;
 - Caithness West Community Council (the 'host' Community Council); and
 - Thurso Community Council (the 'neighbouring' Community Council).
- 1.2.4. An electronic version of this PAC Report is available to view or download from the project website at www.cairnmorehill-windfarm.co.uk along with the full planning application and associated planning documents.
- 1.2.5. Hard copies of the planning documents have also been made available for the public to view at the following locations:
 - Wick Service Point, Caithness House, Market Square, Wick, KW1 4AB
 - The Highland Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness, IV3 5NX
- 1.2.6. The project website will be updated with the planning application reference number once the application has been validated, as well as a link to The Highland Council's planning portal where the planning documents can be viewed and formal consultation comments submitted.

1.3. Approach to consultation

- 1.3.1. The Applicant has considerable experience in onshore wind development and believes in the importance of public and community consultation to identify issues and concerns, as well as benefits and opportunities, which can be considered when developing and designing a project.
- 1.3.2. The Applicant believes that meaningful and productive consultation requires a more detailed approach and in undertaking the pre-application consultation for the Proposed Development the Applicant has gone above and beyond the minimum statutory requirements.
- 1.3.3. As set out in Regulations, the minimum consultation activity states that an applicant must consult with Community Councils and hold 'at least one' public event. However, the Applicant decided to hold two sets of public events: one was a virtual exhibition ([Section 3.4](#) provides more detail) to consult with the local community early on in the design process (which was held online due to Covid concerns); and, the other comprised two public exhibition events in the local area ([Section 4.6](#) provides more detail) to update the community and consult them on the final design.
- 1.3.4. In addition, the Applicant wanted to raise a good level of awareness in the local area of the Proposed Development and consultation events in order to maximise engagement and feedback from the local community. As such, an advert was placed in two of the local newspapers ([Section 3.2](#) and [Section 4.2](#) provide more detail) rather than the minimum of one advert and newsletters were sent out to over 1,300 local households ([Section 3.3](#) and [Section 4.4](#) provide more detail) to make people aware of the Proposed Development and opportunity to provide feedback to the Applicant at the consultation events.
- 1.3.5. At all stages of the consultation process the Applicant has set out clearly the purpose of consultation and emphasised that any comments made to the Applicant are not representations to the determining authority and that there would be an opportunity for representations to be made to the determining authority once a planning application was submitted.

2. SCOPING (January 2022)

2.1. Preparation - stakeholder mapping

- 2.1.1. The Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (Scotland) Regulations 2013 state, in Regulation 7, part 2 (1), that *“The prospective applicant is to consult as respects a proposed application every community council any part of whose area is within or adjoins the land where the proposed development is situated and in doing so is to give a copy of the proposal of application notice to such community council.”* This requirement was not altered by the Covid Regulations.
- 2.1.2. The Proposed Development sits within the **Caithness West Community Council** boundary area and neighbours **Thurso Community Council** boundary area to the east. As such, both of these key stakeholders were served a copy of the Proposal of Application Notice (PAN) by the Applicant in January 2022 - which initiated the Pre-Application Consultation (PAC) process - and were kept updated throughout the pre-application phase of the Proposed Development.
- 2.1.3. In addition to the local Community Councils mentioned above, the applicant identified the following locally elected representatives as key stakeholders:
- Local Ward Councillors (Thurso and Northwest Caithness - Ward 2);
 - Constituency MSP (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross); and
 - Constituency MP (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross).
- 2.1.4. Furthermore, the Applicant also identified the following wider key stakeholders:
- Thurso Community Development Trust; and
 - Caithness Chamber of Commerce.

2.2. Introducing the project - Scoping

- 2.2.1. Prior to undertaking formal public consultation, the Applicant wrote to key stakeholders on 20th January 2022 [[Appendix 1](#)] to inform them that they were redesigning their Cairnmore Hill Wind Farm proposal, located approximately 4.5km west of Thurso, in Caithness.
- 2.2.2. The two-page letter confirmed that the Applicant had been exploring an optimised design, which reduced their previous 8-turbine proposal to a more optimised 5-turbine scheme, and that a Scoping Report had been submitted to The Highland Council and other key consultees seeking feedback on the proposed scope of environmental survey work for the Proposed Development. A link was provided to an electronic copy of the Scoping Report on the Cairnmore Hill project website at www.cairnmorehill-windfarm.co.uk.
- 2.2.3. The letter explained that the Applicant wished to engage early with the local community and key stakeholders and was holding an online exhibition and consultation on **Wednesday 2nd February 2022** on the project website to inform the community about the Proposed Development, highlight opportunities for the local supply chain to get involved in the project, and to gather feedback.
- 2.2.4. The letter explained how the event would be advertised and provided further details on the exhibition materials that would be available, including how and when they could be accessed and the fact that hard copies of all materials would be made available to people upon request.

- 2.2.5. Details were also provided regarding how to interact live with the Applicant on the day and discuss the Proposed Development through phone and video call appointments (which could be booked in advance) between 12 noon and 8pm on Wednesday 2nd February 2022.
- 2.2.6. The letter also explained how to comment on the Proposed Development (including the closing date for comments) and confirmed that any representations submitted to the Applicant were not representations to the determining authority (The Highland Council) and there would be an opportunity to submit representations to the determining authority should an application be made.
- 2.2.7. The Applicant also updated its existing project website in January 2022, at the time the Scoping Report was submitted and introductory letters to key stakeholders issued, to provide details about the Proposed Development. The website has been kept regularly up to date since then and includes details of consultation, local benefits, the Applicant, as well as the ability to view and download key documents and information.

3. ONLINE EXHIBITION and CONSULTATION (February 2022)

3.1. Pre-application consultation and Covid considerations

- 3.1.1. The Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (Scotland) Regulations 2013 state in Regulation 7, part 2 (2) that *“The prospective applicant is to hold at least one public event where members of the public may make comments to the prospective applicant as regards the proposed development;”*
- 3.1.2. In addition, Regulation 7, part 2 (2b) states that *“The prospective applicant is to publish in a local newspaper circulating in the locality in which the proposed development is situated a notice containing:*
- (i) a description of, and the location of, the proposed development;*
 - (ii) details as to where further information may be obtained concerning the proposed development;*
 - (iii) the date and place of the public event;*
 - (iv) a statement explaining how, and by when, persons wishing to make comments to the prospective applicant relating to the proposal may do so; and*
 - (v) a statement that comments made to the prospective applicant are not representations to the planning authority and if the prospective applicant submits an application there will be an opportunity to make representations on that application to the planning authority.*
- 3.1.3. Originally, the Applicant had planned to hold in-person exhibition and consultation events in the Thurso and Forss area, with appropriate Covid safeguarding measures in place. However, as event preparation began the Omicron variant became more prevalent and the Applicant decided to move to an online exhibition event in the interests of public health and safety. As such, the Covid Regulations referenced below regarding alternative consultation measures using web-based approaches were used to guide the planning of the online consultation event.
- 3.1.4. In April 2020, Scottish Government guidance “Coronavirus (COVID-19): planning guidance on pre-application consultations for public events” came into force, in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, temporarily suspending the requirement for a public event. Two sets of associated (temporary) Regulations also came into force on 24 April 2020:
- The Town and Country Planning (Miscellaneous Temporary Modifications) (Scotland) Regulations 2022 (The Coronavirus Regulations 2022); and
 - The Electricity Works (Miscellaneous Temporary Modifications) (Coronavirus) (Scotland) Regulations 2020.
- 3.1.5. Since April 2020 there have been further extensions to the Covid Regulations in Scotland, with the most recent coming into force in March 2022, suspending the requirement for an in-person public event as part of pre-application consultation until 30 September 2022:
- The Town and Country Planning (Miscellaneous Temporary Modifications) (Coronavirus) (Scotland) Regulations 2020; and
 - The Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 (Commencement No.6 and Transitional Provision) Amendment Regulations 2022 (The Commencement Regs).
- 3.1.6. The Covid Regulations clarify that the minimum temporary substitute for a face-to-face public event is as follows:
- *Information hosted on a central, free, publicly accessible web location (referenced in the newspaper advert) which must:*

- *set out the pre-application consultation steps being undertaken; the location of information, how to engage and time limits;*
 - *identify the location of the development site;*
 - *present the proposal for the site; and*
 - *be as user friendly as possible.*
 - *Live and interactive web-based consultation and opportunities for a two-way exchange; for example, this could be at least one event of 2-3 hours duration with a live question and answer session and link to other opportunities for the public to make comment, ask questions and receive responses (in case they prefer not to comment during live events). It is expected that any such time-limited online sessions would need to be scheduled to facilitate public participation.*
- 3.1.7. The Covid Regulations also require that *“in addition to this [the advert], and instead of the details of the [in person] public event, this notice needs to give an indication of the alternative consultation arrangements and how and when they would operate, and how to find out more information in that regard, including online.”*
- 3.1.8. The Covid Regulations note that:
- *It is expected that any online consultation undertaken by prospective applicants would comply with current Data Protection obligations.*
 - *A member of the public must be able to access the information and engage in this minimum level consultation through one route, i.e. while different platforms and online tools could be used to raise awareness of the consultation, different elements of the information should not be scattered across platforms.*
 - *Ideally, members of the public should not be effectively required to join or sign-up to a particular website/forum to access the information (for example, a social media platform).*
 - *The information should be able to be read at whatever pace the person accessing it requires, downloaded and printed.*
 - *The public should be allowed a period of not less than seven days to submit questions or views electronically.*
 - *The prospective applicant must respond to questions or requests for clarification and allow for any further reply in that regard. This can either be during the consultation period mentioned in the previous bullet, or the prospective applicant should indicate a later date when such response will be made and a period thereafter (being not less than 48 hours) for any final comment.*
- 3.1.9. The Covid Regulations make the following suggestions regarding additional forms of consultation:
- *Have an online video presentation or hosted slideshow to help explain the proposals and support basic online content;*
 - *Provide FAQ's and answers in addition to any individual responses;*
 - *Have additional telephone access opportunities for Q&A, particularly with those who do not have internet access in mind. Any such contact numbers and timing should be indicated in the newspaper notice and other awareness raising measures. Calls should ideally be free but not more than local rate calls.*
 - *Where these parties are able and willing to assist in raising awareness of the consultation, send links to the online material to planning authorities and community councils and other community groups.*
- 3.1.10. The Applicant took all of the above requirements and guidance into account when planning the pre-application consultation for the Proposed Development.

3.2. Newspaper advert

- 3.2.1. The Applicant decided to place more copies of their advert [[Appendix 2](#)] with local newspapers than the statutory requirement (of one newspaper notice) to help raise greater awareness of the online exhibition. Adverts were placed in the John O’Groat Journal on Friday 21st January and Caithness Courier on Wednesday 26th January in the fortnight leading up to the online exhibition which was held on Wednesday 2nd February 2022.
- 3.2.2. The advert described the Proposed Development and location and explained that further information could be found by visiting the project website at www.cairnmorehill-windfarm.co.uk or by contacting the Project Manager (contact details provided in the advert).
- 3.2.3. Details of the online exhibition and date were confirmed on the central, free, publicly accessible web location (project website) where the exhibition was hosted.
- 3.2.4. A statement was also made in the advert explaining that comments on the Proposed Development should be provided in writing to the Applicant by the closing date of Wednesday 2nd March 2022 (details of how to do this were provided in the advert) and that these comments were not representations to the determining authority but that there would be an opportunity to submit representations to the determining authority should an application be made.
- 3.2.5. A contact number was also provided for people to make phone and video call appointments (which could be booked in advance) to discuss the Proposed Development with the Applicant between 12 noon and 8pm on Wednesday 2nd February 2022.
- 3.2.6. The advert also confirmed that hard copies of all materials, including the comments form, would be made available by the Applicant to people upon request.

3.3. Information flyer to local households

- 3.3.1. The Applicant also went beyond the statutory pre-application consultation requirements in relation to advertising the event by distributing a two-page A5 information flyer [[Appendix 3](#)] towards the end of January 2022 (roughly a week ahead of the launch of the online exhibition).
- 3.3.2. The information flyer was mailed out to over 1,300 local households to help raise awareness of the Proposed Development as well as the online exhibition which was being held on the project website at www.cairnmorehill-windfarm.co.uk on Wednesday 2nd February.
- 3.3.3. A summary of the Proposed Development was provided together with details of the online exhibition and where to find further information - including the fact that hard copies of all materials would be made available to people by the Applicant upon request.
- 3.3.4. The information flyer also explained that people could discuss the Proposed Development with the Applicant through phone and video calls (which could be booked in advance) between 12 noon and 8pm on Wednesday 2nd February 2022 and a contact number was provided.
- 3.3.5. In addition, information was provided confirming that comments on the Proposed Development should be provided in writing to the Applicant by the closing date of Wednesday 2nd March 2022 (details of how to do this were provided in the information flyer) and that these comments were not representations to the determining authority but that there would be an opportunity to submit representations to the determining authority should an application be made.

3.4. Online exhibition - Wednesday 2nd February 2022

- 3.4.1. The Applicant held an online exhibition on Wednesday 2nd February 2022 on the Cairnmore Hill project website at www.cairnmorehill-windfarm.co.uk, a 'central, free and publicly accessible web location' as required by the Covid-19 pre-application consultation guidance.
- 3.4.2. The online exhibition was hosted on the 'CONSULTATION' page of the website, and the landing (home) page directed people to the 'CONSULTATION' page if they wanted to visit the exhibition and associated information. RES also took steps to ensure that, in line with Covid-19 pre-application consultation guidance, materials were as accessible as possible for people online by:
- Presenting materials in a straightforward and logical manner;
 - Creating an online presentation 'welcome' video to explain the purpose of the online exhibition and information available;
 - Presenting the information in a way that it could be read at whatever pace the person accessing it required; and
 - Reducing the number of clicks away from the central location as much as possible.
- 3.4.3. A range of information [[Appendix 4](#)] was presented on the 'CONSULTATION' page of the website which included details about the following:
- **Project background** - including a larger version of the site location map
 - **Redesign** - including a larger version of the proposed turbine layout map
 - **Traffic and Transport**
 - **Environmental considerations**
 - **What the wind farm would look like** - including a Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) map to help show where the Proposed Development could be visible from - as well as the following indicative visualisations to help give an impression of what the Proposed Development could look like from different viewpoints in the area based on the 'scoping' layout:
 - Viewpoint from A836 by Motocross Track
 - Viewpoint from A836, Thurso
 - Viewpoint from St Mary's Chapel, Crosskirk
 - Viewpoint from A9, South of Thurso
 - **Supply chain opportunities** - including links to other RES project examples
 - **Other local benefits** - including a link to the online comments form for people's feedback
 - **Why wind**
 - **Commenting on the proposal** - including links to the online comments form for people's feedback as well as a word version of the comments form.
- 3.4.4. On the day of the online exhibition (Wednesday 2nd February 2022) the 'CONSULTATION' page also explained (in addition to the information provided in advance in the newspaper advert and local flyer) that RES was offering phone and video call appointments from 12 noon until 8pm in order to discuss the Proposed Development and answer any questions that people may have. A link to the contact details page of the website was also provided for people to get in touch if they wished to book one of these appointments.
- 3.4.5. A link to some FAQs was also provided with further information on the Proposed Development.
- 3.4.6. The 'CONSULTATION' page also explained that comments on the Proposed Development required to be submitted in writing by filling out a comments form. A link was provided to an online comments form as well as a Word version for people to download and fill in (or print out

and post back to RES). It was also made clear that hard copies of the comments form would be made available upon request (in order to make the form as accessible as possible for people).

- 3.4.7. It was made clear that any comments on the Proposed Development needed to be submitted by the closing date of Wednesday 2nd March 2022 - with comments still being accepted after this date but not being considered in relation to the development of the design. The page also clarified that any comments submitted to the Applicant were not representations to the determining authority (The Highland Council) and that there would be an opportunity to submit representations to the determining authority should an application be made.

3.5. Comments forms

- 3.5.1. An online comments form [[Appendix 5](#)], was provided on the 'CONSULTATION' page of the project website to encourage people to submit their comments in writing to the Applicant on the Proposed Development (a Word version was also made available on the project website for people to download and fill in - or print out and post back to RES). Hard copies of the comments form were also posted out to people upon request.
- 3.5.2. The comments form included a mix of questions and comments sections focused on the following topics:
- The online exhibition and Proposed Development;
 - Climate change and renewables;
 - Local benefit; and
 - People's details.
- 3.5.3. The comments form explained that the online exhibition formed an important part of the Applicant's pre-application consultation and that the Applicant was grateful to people for taking the time to fill out a comments form with their feedback.
- 3.5.4. The form confirmed that the closing date for comments was Wednesday 2nd March 2022 and clarified that any comments submitted were not representations to the determining authority (The Highland Council) but that there would be an opportunity to submit representations to the determining authority should an application be made.

3.6. Consultation period (2nd February to 2nd March 2022)

- 3.6.1. There were over 140 'unique visits' to the online exhibition ('CONSULTATION' page) during the consultation period between Wednesday 2nd February 2022 and Wednesday 2nd March 2022.
- 3.6.2. The consultation period ensured that people had 28 calendar days (more than the minimum seven days required under the pre-application consultation Covid regulations) to submit questions or comments to the Applicant.
- 3.6.3. In addition, the Applicant spoke to a number of individual local residents, members of the wider community, and local businesses on the phone and on video calls (through pre-booked phone appointments) - amounting to a total of almost 4 hours of engagement - to enable a two-way exchange as required by the pre-application consultation Covid regulations.
- 3.6.4. These calls were free and enabled people to ask questions and discuss the project further with the Applicant before submitting comments on the Proposed Development. The Applicant made

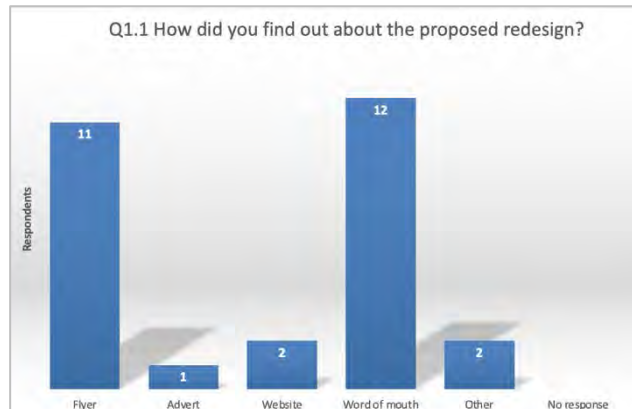
it clear to all people who took part in a phone and video call that they were required to submit any comments in writing - ideally on a comments form - following the calls.

- 3.6.5. Some of these calls raised questions which the Applicant responded to in writing after the call or requests for links to electronic copies of the exhibition information which were duly emailed out to people by the Applicant.
- 3.6.6. Furthermore, some people who wished to speak to the Applicant couldn't make the original advertised date of Wednesday 2nd February 2022, so the Applicant re-scheduled appointments accordingly on a date and at a time which suited people better.
- 3.6.7. In organising these phone and video call discussions the Applicant followed data protection guidelines.
- 3.6.8. All of the online exhibition information remained on the Cairnmore Hill project website at www.cairnmorehill-windfarm.co.uk for people to access after the online exhibition, including both versions of the comments form, so that people could still view the information and submit comments to the Applicant on the Proposed Development up until the comments closing date of Wednesday 2nd March 2022.
- 3.6.9. A total of 28 comments forms were submitted to the Applicant on the Proposed Development during the four-week consultation period (Wednesday 2nd February 2022 to Wednesday 2nd March 2022). One of these comments forms was also preceded by an email, with other comments, which was also logged by the Applicant as part of the consultation feedback received.
- 3.6.10. In addition, two emails were received providing written 'comments' to the Applicant on the Proposed Development during the consultation period - both of which were logged by the Applicant as part of the consultation feedback received.
- 3.6.11. The Applicant also received a small number of questions and comments on the proposal (outwith or in addition to the comments forms) as well as requests for hard copy information during the consultation period and the Applicant responded to all of these in a timely manner.
- 3.6.12. The graphs in the pages that follow show the breakdown of answers from the 28 comments forms received by the Applicant during the consultation period to the closed questions raised on the comments forms.
- 3.6.13. Other written 'comments' received by the Applicant during the consultation period (either by email or in response to the open questions on the comments form) are captured in [Section 5](#) of this report.

3.7. Feedback to closed questions on comments forms

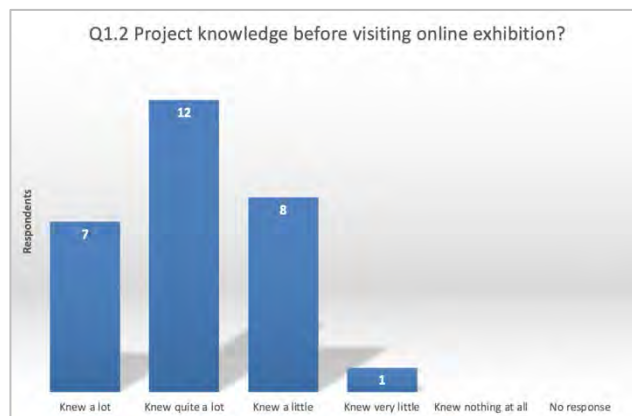
3.7.1. The majority of people found out about the proposed redesign and online exhibition from either 'Word of mouth' (43%) or from the information 'Flyer' (39%) which was mailed out to over 1,300 local households.

Figure 1.



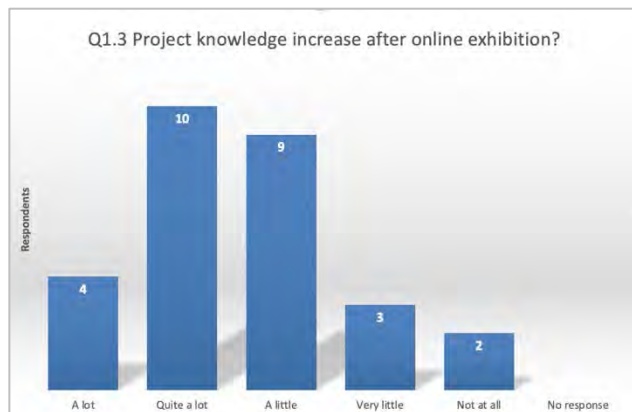
3.7.2. Before visiting the online exhibition people's knowledge about the proposal was varied, with the majority of people saying that they either 'Knew quite a lot' (43%), 'Knew a little' (29%), or 'Knew a lot' (25%).

Figure 2.



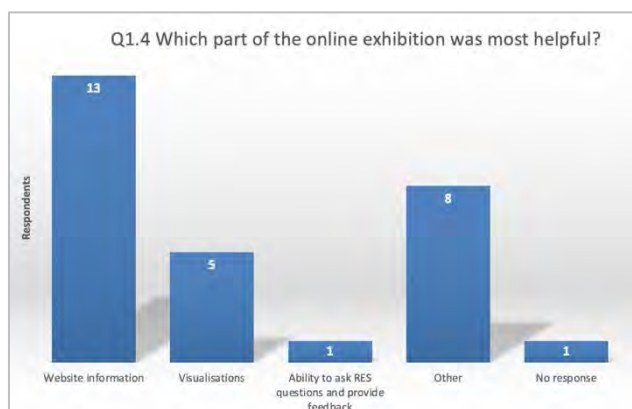
3.7.3. After visiting the online exhibition people's knowledge about the proposal increased by varying degrees, with the majority of people saying that they felt they 'Knew quite a lot' (36%) or 'Knew a little' (32%).

Figure 3.



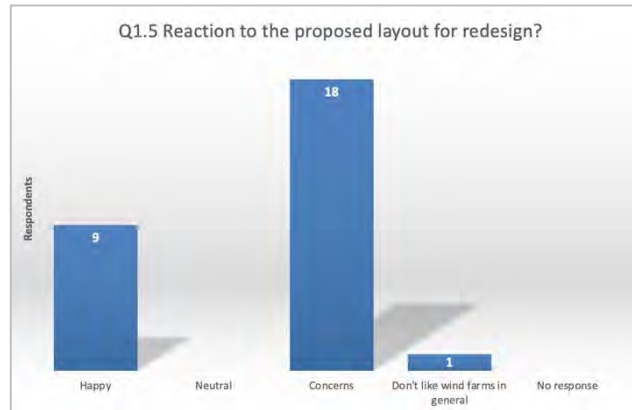
3.7.4. The parts of the online exhibition which people found most useful were the 'Website information' (46%) and 'Visualisations' (18%). In addition, 'Other' was also selected (29%) - with people's comments ranging from there being 'nothing new' or 'not helpful' to the exhibition being 'very helpful'.

Figure 4.



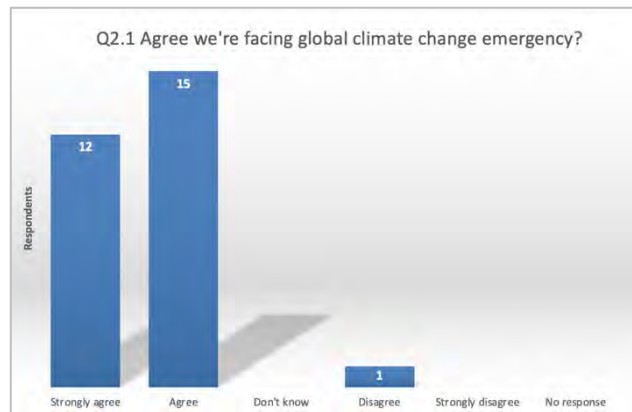
3.7.5. **People’s reaction to the proposed redesigned layout** was that the majority of people had ‘concerns’ (64%), with the remainder confirming that they were ‘happy’ (32%) with the layout.

Figure 5.



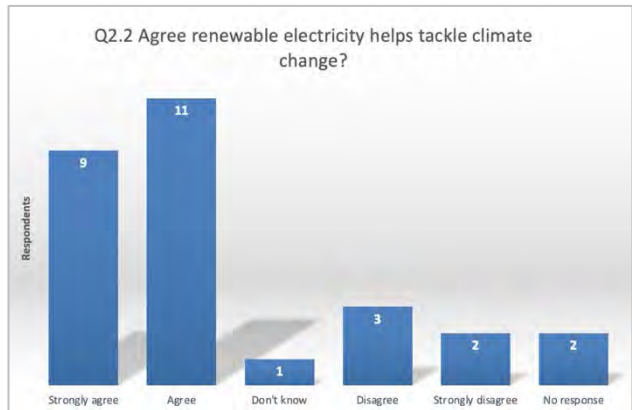
3.7.6. **In terms of whether we are facing a global climate change emergency** most people said that they ‘Agree’ (54%) or ‘Strongly agree’ (43%).

Figure 6.



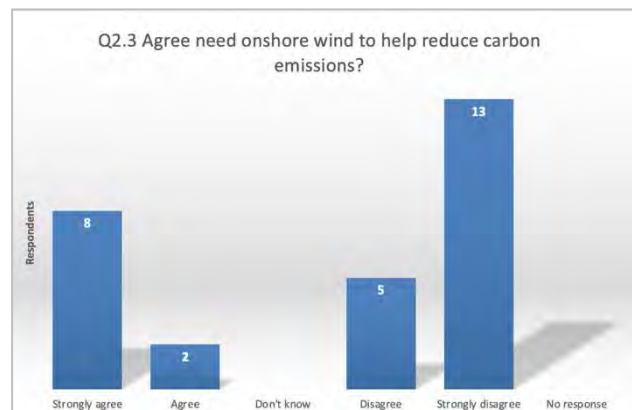
3.7.7. **In terms of whether generating electricity from renewable sources, and reducing our reliance on fossil fuels, can help towards tackling the issue of climate change** most people said that they ‘Agree’ (39%) or ‘Strongly agree’ (32%).

Figure 7.



3.7.8. **In terms of whether we need to continue developing new onshore wind sites to help reduce carbon emissions** there were a variety of responses with the majority of people saying that they ‘Strongly disagree’ (46%) or ‘Disagree’ (18%), with the remainder saying that they ‘Strongly agree’ (29%).

Figure 8.



3.7.9. In terms of whether people agreed with the ideas for making the site more attractive and accessible for visitors the majority said that they 'Strongly disagree' (43%) or 'Disagree' (25%), with the remainder saying that they 'Strongly agree' (32%).

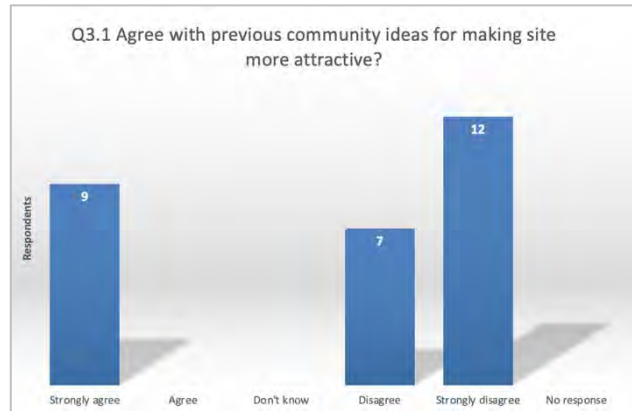


Figure 9.

3.7.10. The Community Council areas which represented people who provided comments were Caithness West (54%), Thurso (43%), and 'Other' (4%) - which was Lybster.

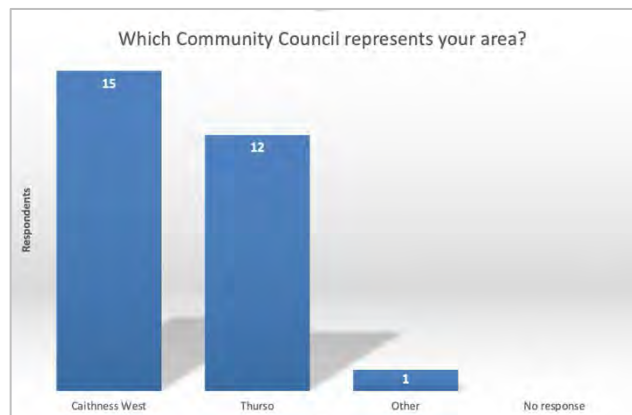


Figure 10.

3.7.11. The other feedback on the Proposed Development, which was received by the Applicant either on the comments forms (in response to the open questions) or via other written forms (such as email), covered a range of different topics and is described in [Section 5](#) of this report.

3.7.12. In addition to feedback on the 'closed' questions on the comments forms, people also provided feedback to the 'open' questions and this feedback together with other written comments received via other means (such as email) covered a range of topics. A summary of these topical comments is provided in [Section 5](#) of this report.

4. LOCAL EXHIBITIONS and CONSULTATION (May 2022)

4.1. Pre-application consultation and Covid considerations

- 4.1.1. By the time the Applicant began organising their second set of exhibitions, to present the final design for the Proposed Development to the community and gather feedback, the concerns about the Omicron variant had lessened and the Applicant felt that it was more appropriate to return to holding exhibition events within the local area.
- 4.1.2. As such, the Applicant followed the usual Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (Scotland) Regulations 2013 - Regulation 7, part 2 which states that *“The prospective applicant is to publish in a local newspaper circulating in the locality in which the proposed development is situated a notice containing:*
- (vi) a description of, and the location of, the proposed development;*
 - (vii) details as to where further information may be obtained concerning the proposed development;*
 - (viii) the date and place of the public event;*
 - (ix) a statement explaining how, and by when, persons wishing to make comments to the prospective applicant relating to the proposal may do so; and*
 - (x) a statement that comments made to the prospective applicant are not representations to the planning authority and if the prospective applicant submits an application there will be an opportunity to make representations on that application to the planning authority.*
- 4.1.3. The Applicant again took the above requirements into account when planning the second set of public exhibitions for the Proposed Development.

4.2. Newspaper advert

- 4.2.1. Once again, the Applicant made the decision to place more than one advert (the minimum statutory requirement) in local newspapers for the May exhibition events [[Appendix 6](#)].
- 4.2.2. Adverts were placed in the John O’Groat Journal on Friday 13th May and Caithness Courier on Wednesday 18th May in the fortnight leading up to the local exhibition events - which were held on Wednesday 25th May 2022 - to help raise better awareness within the local area.
- 4.2.3. The advert explained that the Applicant had finalised the redesign of the Proposed Development and was seeking further feedback from the community and local supply chain ahead of submitting a planning application. The advert described the location of the 5-turbine Proposed Development and confirmed that further information could be found by visiting the project website at www.cairnmorehill-windfarm.co.uk or by contacting the Project Manager (contact details provided in the advert).
- 4.2.4. The advert also confirmed that comments on the final design for the Proposed Development could be provided in writing to the Applicant by the closing date of Wednesday 25 May 2022 (details of how to do this were provided in the advert). The advert clarified that any comments submitted to the Applicant were not representations to the determining authority but that there would be an opportunity to submit representations to the determining authority should an application be made.

4.3. Update letters to key stakeholders

- 4.3.1. The Applicant also wrote out to the following key stakeholders on Thursday 19th May, the week before the local exhibition events, to confirm details of the upcoming local exhibition events:
- Caithness West Community Council;
 - Thurso Community Council;
 - Local Ward Councillors (Thurso and Northwest Caithness - Ward 2);
 - Constituency MSP (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross); and
 - Constituency MP (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross).
 - Thurso Community Development Trust; and
 - Caithness Chamber of Commerce.
- 4.3.2. Update letters were also sent to a number of local supply chain businesses which the Applicant had been engaging with in order to explore the growing skills and capabilities within Caithness and maximise the inward investment opportunities should the project receive consent.
- 4.3.3. The one-page letter [[Appendix 7](#)] provided some high-level statistics in relation to the previous (online) exhibition in February 2022 and explained that the Applicant had now finalised the design and was planning to hold public exhibitions in the local area on Wednesday 25th May to update the community on the Proposed Development. The letter confirmed that in addition to adverts being placed in the local newspapers, an information flyer was also being distributed to over 1,300 households in the local area to help raise further awareness of the events.
- 4.3.4. Details were provided of the project website at www.cairnmorehill-windfarm.co.uk where copies of the information that would be presented at the local public exhibition events could be found from Wednesday 25th May.
- 4.3.5. The letter explained how people could comment on the Proposed Development (including the closing date for comments) and confirmed that any representations submitted to the Applicant were not representations to the determining authority (The Highland Council) and there would be an opportunity to submit representations to the determining authority should an application be made.

4.4. Information flyer to local households

- 4.4.1. The Applicant also decided to go above the minimum statutory pre-application consultation requirements in relation to advertising the event by again mailing out a two-page A5 information flyer [[Appendix 8](#)] in mid-May 2022 (roughly a week ahead of the exhibition events).
- 4.4.2. The information flyer was mailed out to over 1,300 local households, in addition to people who had asked to be kept up to date with the proposal on their comments forms or emails (following the online exhibition in February 2022), to help raise awareness of the second set of public exhibitions in May which would present the final design for the Proposed Development and gather feedback.
- 4.4.3. A summary of the Proposed Development was provided together with details of the local exhibition events - including the fact that photomontages would be available, to help give an impression of what the site could look like from different viewpoints in the area, and that RES staff would be on hand to discuss the Proposed Development and answer any questions that people may have.

- 4.4.4. The flyer also confirmed that copies of the information presented at the local exhibition events would be available to view online on the project website at www.cairnmorehill-windfarm.co.uk from Wednesday 25th May (the date that the local public exhibition events were launched).
- 4.4.5. In addition, the flyer explained that comments on the Proposed Development should be provided in writing to the Applicant by the closing date of Wednesday 1st June 2022 (details of how to do this were provided) and that these comments were not representations to the determining authority but that there would be an opportunity to submit representations to the determining authority should an application be made.

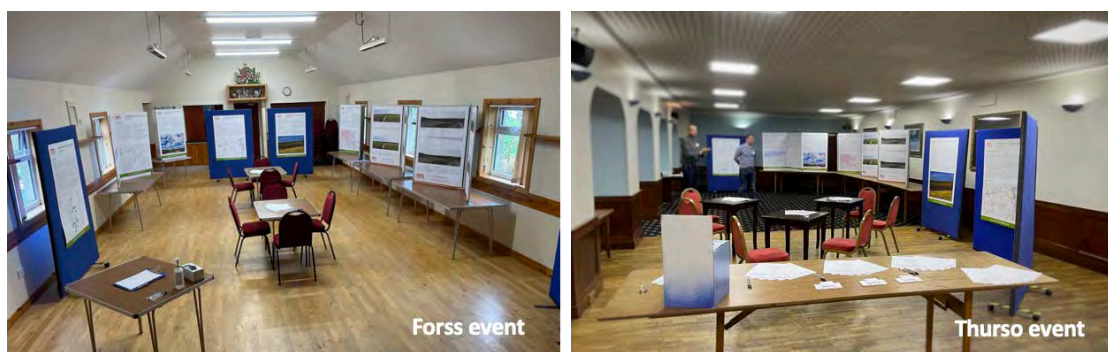
4.5. Project website

- 4.5.1. The project website for the Proposed Development at www.cairnmorehill-windfarm.co.uk was also updated by the Applicant on Friday 13th May to provide details of the upcoming public exhibition events and then again on Wednesday 25th May (the date that local public exhibition events were held) with copies of the information that was presented at the exhibition events.
- 4.5.2. An online version of the comments form [[Appendix 9](#)] was also provided on the website from Wednesday 25th May together with an explanation that comments on the Proposed Development should be provided in writing to the Applicant by the closing date of Wednesday 1st June 2022 (details of how to do this were provided) and that these comments were not representations to the determining authority but that there would be an opportunity to submit representations to the determining authority should an application be made.

4.6. Public exhibition events - Wednesday 25th May 2022

- 4.6.1. The Applicant held public exhibition events in Forss and Thurso on Wednesday 22nd May 2022 in order to update the community and local supply chain on the Proposed Development and gather feedback on the final design. The events were held as follows:
- Wednesday 25th May at Forss Village Hall from 11am until 2pm
 - Wednesday 25th May at Pentland Hotel, Thurso, from 5pm until 8pm
- 4.6.2. A total of 13 people attended the Forss exhibition compared to 23 people who attended the Thurso exhibition.
- 4.6.3. Both exhibition events were held in venues that were easily accessible to people (and which included disabled access) and provided a suitable space within which to present and discuss the final design for the Proposed Development - as shown in Figure 11 below.

Figure 11.



- 4.6.4. A range of information was presented at the event, including exhibition boards [[Appendix 10](#)] which provided information about the following:
- **About RES** - an introduction to RES and their projects across Scotland
 - **The need for onshore wind** - information about low-cost electricity, energy security and the need to tackle climate change
 - **About the project** - background information on the project and site selection
 - **Redesigned scheme** - explanation of the design evolution since scoping and final layout
 - **Environmental considerations** - information about the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) process and engagement with statutory and non-statutory EIA consultees
 - **Landscape and visual considerations** - information about the design principles, ZTV, and the visualisations presented (separately) at the public exhibitions
 - **Traffic and turbine deliveries** - information regarding construction traffic, turbine deliveries and turbine transport route
 - **Maximising the local benefits** - information about working with the local supply chain
 - **Your feedback** - explanation of how to comment on the proposal and submit feedback on community ideas, aims, and priority projects which project may be able to support
- 4.6.5. A number of visualisation boards [[Appendix 11](#)] were also provided to help give an impression of how the project may look in the area from the following local viewpoints:
- Viewpoint from A836 (near Brims)
 - Viewpoint from NCR1, Thurso to Reay Road
 - Viewpoint from A836, Thurso
 - Viewpoint from A9, South of Thurso
 - Viewpoint from Janetstown
- 4.6.6. The project team, including the project Landscape Architect, endeavoured to speak to as many people as possible, and everyone who attended the exhibitions was encouraged to complete a comments form to help gather comments and views on the final design for the Proposed Development. These comments forms could either be handed in at the public exhibition events, posted to the Applicant (address details were provided on the form), or filled in online on the project website at www.cairnmorehill-windfarm.co.uk.
- 4.6.7. An information sheet providing answers to Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) was also available.

4.7. Comments forms

- 4.7.1. The comments form explained that the Applicant had now finalised the redesign of the Proposed Development and that comments on the final design should be submitted to the Applicant via a comments form by Wednesday 1st June 2022.
- 4.7.2. The comments form for the May exhibitions focused on the following topics:
- Public exhibition;
 - Redesigned proposal;
 - Local benefit; and
 - People's details.
- 4.7.3. The form also clarified that any comments submitted to the Applicant were not representations to the determining authority but that there would be an opportunity to submit representations to the determining authority should an application be made.

4.8. Consultation period (25th May to 1st June 2022)

- 4.8.1. A total of 19 comments forms were submitted to the Applicant during the one-week consultation period (Wednesday 25th May to Wednesday 1st June 2022). One of these comments forms was also accompanied by an email with further comments, which was logged by the Applicant as part of the consultation feedback received.
- 4.8.2. The graphs in the pages that follow show the breakdown of answers from the 19 comments forms received by the Applicant during the consultation period to the closed questions raised on the comments form.
- 4.8.3. Other written comments received by the Applicant during the consultation period (either by email or in response to the 'open' questions on the comments form) are captured in [Section 5](#) of this report.

4.9. Feedback to closed questions on comments forms

- 4.9.1. The majority of people found out about the public exhibition events from either 'Word of mouth' (37%), the information 'Flyer' (37%) which was mailed out to over 1,300 local households, or the 'Advert' (21%).

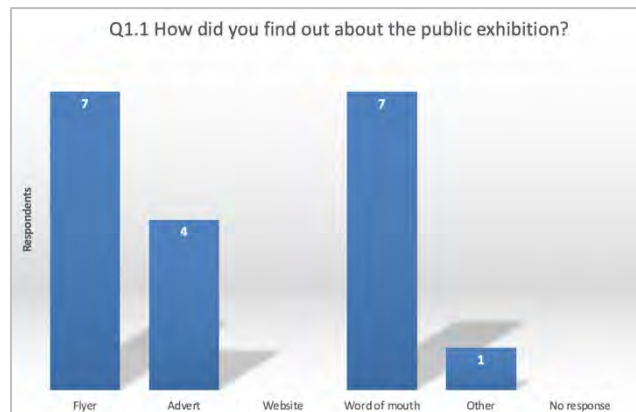


Figure 12.

- 4.9.2. Of the 19 people that filled in comment forms, the exhibition events that they attended were 'Thurso' (68%), 'Forss' (21%), or 'Neither - looked at exhibition information online' (11%).

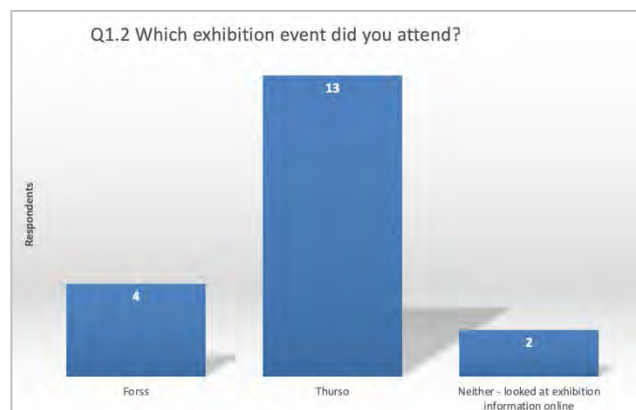
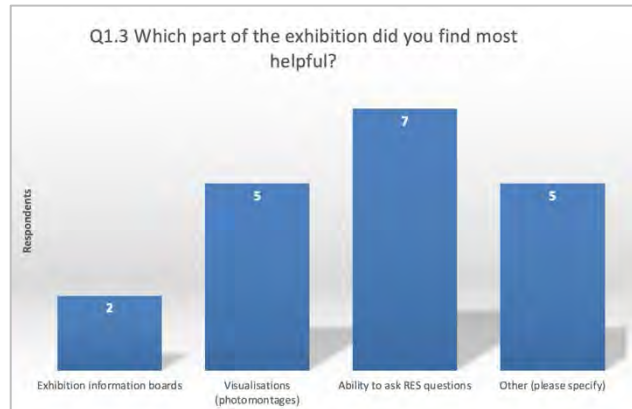


Figure 13.

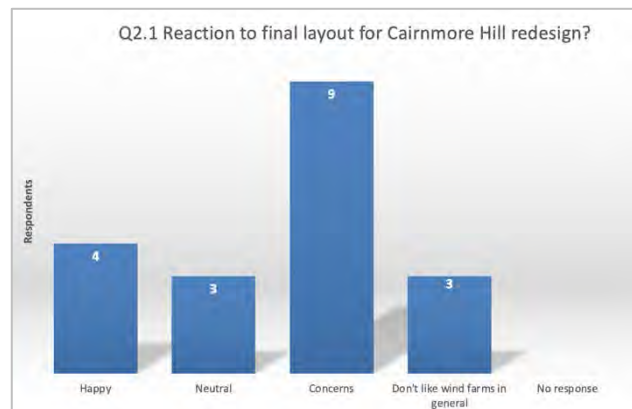
4.9.3. The parts of the exhibition events which people found most useful were 'the ability to ask RES questions' (37%) and 'visualisations (photomontages)' (26%).

Figure 14.



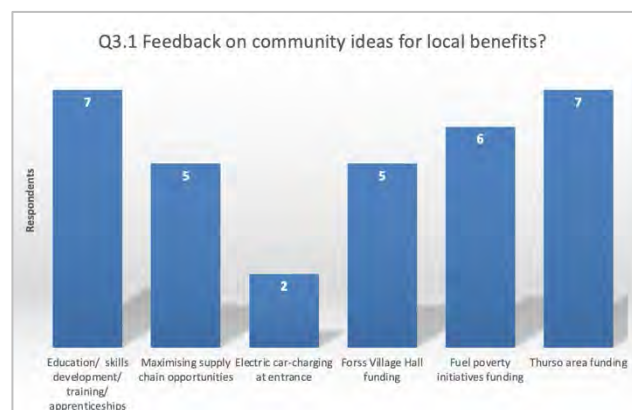
4.9.4. People's reaction to the proposed final design was that the majority of people had 'concerns' (47%) whilst the remainder were either 'happy' (21%), neutral (16%), or 'don't like wind farms in general' (16%).

Figure 15.



4.9.5. The feedback on the list of community ideas for local benefits demonstrated that most interest was in funding for 'Education/ training/ apprenticeships' / skills development (18%) and the Thurso area (18%), with 'fuel poverty' coming next (15%), followed by 'Forss Village Hall' (13%) and 'maximising supply chain opportunities' (13%). The 'cycle tracks around the site' (10%), 'viewpoint, car-parking and notice-boards at site' (10%), and 'electric car-charging at entrance' came last (5%).

Figure 16.



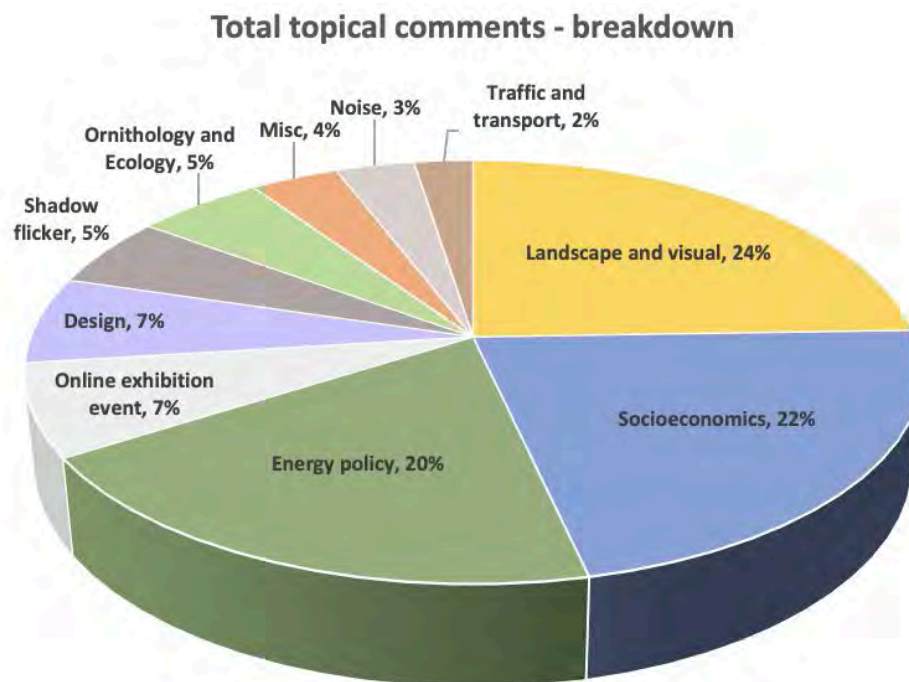
4.9.6. In addition to feedback on the 'closed' questions on the comments forms, people also provided feedback to the 'open' questions and this feedback together with other written comments received via other means (such as email) covered a range of topics. A summary of these topical comments is provided in [Section 5](#) of this report.

5. OUTCOMES AND RESPONSES

5.1. Breakdown of topical comments

5.1.1. The balance of topical comments (amalgamated from both sets of exhibitions) is represented in the Figure 17 below.

Figure 17.



5.1.2. More topical comments (194) were provided on the comments forms submitted at the online exhibition in February 2022 compared to the topical comments (47) submitted on comments forms made at the public exhibitions held in the local area in May 2022.

5.1.3. The topics raised at both sets of exhibition events were the same, with the exception of 'noise' which was mentioned in online exhibition consultation feedback but not mentioned in the later public exhibition feedback from the May events.

5.2. EIA topical comments

5.2.1. This PAC Report accompanies the EIA Report. As such, the topical comments received from both sets of exhibitions (February 2022 and May 2022) have been collated and categorised into EIA topics and summarised in Table 1, together with RES' response and a reference to the relevant chapter of the EIA Report for further detail.

5.2.2. Non-EIA topical comments are summarised in Table 2 in section 5.3 of this report.

Table 1.

Summary of EIA topics raised during the online exhibition and consultation	
Topics raised	Description of comments and the Applicant's response
Landscape and visual	<p>As is fairly typical for any onshore wind farm proposal, the largest number of comments received from both exhibitions related to the visual aspects of the Proposed Development. The comments focused on four key areas which were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Site location; • Visual impact on local area; • Cumulative impact; and • Turbine height. <p><u>Site location</u> The majority of comments raised concerns about the location of the Proposed Development, stating that it was too close to residential properties and the town of Thurso. Some comments also raised concern about proximity to the A836 or the site's location on top of a hill. In contrast, a couple of comments received supported the location of the site because it was in an area zoned for wind farm development and on the North Coast 500 tourist route.</p> <p><u>Visual impact on local area</u> A number of comments raised concerns about the impact of the Proposed Development on the skyline of Thurso and wider Caithness area, including Thurso Bay and the North Coast 500 tourist route, or on residential properties closer to the proposal. In contrast, one comment stated that they didn't mind seeing wind turbines as they caused less visual impact and damage to the landscape than the commercial forestry plantations.</p> <p><u>Cumulative impact</u> A similar number of comments were made about the cumulative visual impact of the Proposed Development, with people stating that they felt there were too many onshore wind farms in Caithness and that the county was generating enough power.</p> <p><u>Turbine height</u> A few comments were made about the height of the turbines, with people stating that they were too tall for the location.</p> <p><u>Applicant's response</u> The Proposed Development is located in an area identified as having 'potential for wind farm development' within the Highland Council's Spatial Framework policy.</p> <p>A full Landscape and Visual Assessment (including a cumulative impact assessment) has been undertaken by the Applicant to help assess the new 5-turbine design and turbine layout for the Proposed Development. The proposed layout seeks to create a well composed single group of turbines in key views.</p>

Summary of EIA topics raised during the online exhibition and consultation	
	<p>Effects on residential visual amenity from the closest properties have also been considered through the design process and layout refinements have sought to create a balanced layout and maximise offset from the closest properties to the site.</p> <p>The location of the turbines and ancillary infrastructure has taken account of the local topography and views of the site from the surrounding area. From the studies undertaken, and the professional advice received, the Applicant believes that the current turbine locations and heights proposed are appropriate for a wind farm at this location.</p> <p>Further information can be found in the EIA Report, Chapter 5: Landscape and Visual.</p>
Socioeconomics	<p>The second topic which was almost of as much interest as landscape and visual was socioeconomics and the potential benefit that the Proposed Development could bring to the area. The comments focused on three key areas which were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local jobs and inward investment; • Community benefit; and • Tourism. <p><u>Local jobs and inward investment</u></p> <p>The majority of comments focused on the positive benefits and ‘boost’ that the Proposed Development could bring to the local area including job opportunities, inward investment (use of local contractors, local spend for accommodation and other businesses), and the green energy revolution in general. An example was given by one person of a family member who had returned to the area and was now working in the sector due to the opportunities available. Comment was also made about the benefit that the project could bring to the crofters involved. In contrast with the above, one of the comments suggested that the Applicant wouldn’t use local companies within Caithness.</p> <p><u>Community benefit</u></p> <p>There were a few comments which raised concerns that there wouldn’t be any benefit to the community from the Proposed Development, but quite a few more comments which criticised proposals* for making the site more attractive. Comments suggested that the proposals wouldn’t help make the site more attractive and that people wouldn’t want to visit a viewpoint near a wind farm. There was some agreement that better access to the site for walking would be welcome, but this could be achieved without a wind farm on site. There was also a comment suggesting that the Applicant should declare its profits and make 50% available to the community.</p> <p>In contrast, there were quite a number of comments received which supported the proposals to make the site more attractive, stating that the</p>

Summary of EIA topics raised during the online exhibition and consultation

viewpoint would be good for locals and tourists - including those travelling the North Coast 500 route - to walk or cycle to, and that car parking at the entrance with electric-charge points would be welcome. An interest was also shown in community benefit funds from the Proposed Development supporting community projects and initiatives in the Thurso area (an area which, people noted, didn't seem to receive any wind farm funding and yet provided lots of amenities to wider communities), as well as Forss Community Hall which was used by a wide variety of local groups, and a 'village hall' in Thurso. Interest was also shown in funding support for education, skills development, training and apprenticeships to help the younger generation forge careers in the county. There were also a couple of comments suggesting that free or discounted electricity to properties closest to the proposal would be well received, and that community benefit funding should be used to repair the local roads. A suggestion for funding green spaces and planted areas was made. One of the comments received also suggested that the fund should be administered by a suitable organisation such as the Caithness Chamber of Commerce.

It's also important to note here, too, the responses reported in 4.8.5 (to the 'closed' question on the comments form about community benefit ideas) which confirmed that there was also interest in maximising supply chain opportunities, cycle tracks around the site, as well as electric car-charging points at the site entrance.

Tourism

A few comments were raised regarding tourism suggesting that the site (and onshore wind farms in general) wouldn't attract tourists and that the Proposed Development would be detrimental to the North Coast 500 tourist route. In contrast, a couple of comments stated that wind farms didn't put tourists off as numbers kept growing or that visitors to the North Coast 500 were unlikely to be affected by a few wind turbines.

Applicant's response

Some of the most direct and meaningful benefits that can be delivered from a project like Cairnmore Hill, situated in an area such as Caithness which has extensive experience and skills in wind farm development, are jobs and employment for local businesses and contractors in addition to the use of local services and amenities.

The Applicant has a strong track-record of working closely with the local supply chain in order to maximise inward investment opportunities wherever possible and has been engaging with Caithness businesses as well as the Caithness Chamber of Commerce in order to understand the growing skills and capabilities within the county.

The redesigned 5-turbine Proposed Development is predicted to deliver approximately £1.4 million of inward investment into the local area in the form of jobs, employment, and use of local services, in addition to £8.75 million in business rates to The Highland Council over its

Summary of EIA topics raised during the online exhibition and consultation	
	<p>operational lifetime. The Applicant is also committed to ensuring that its wind farms benefit the local community in various ways and has been in the process of exploring ways to maximise the local benefits to the area.</p> <p>The Applicant proposes to create additional benefit from the scheme through a community benefit package. The Applicant will work with the local community to gain feedback on their priorities and deliver projects that will help to secure long-term economic, social and environmental benefits. This approach will deliver a tailored package of benefits that are aligned with the local communities' priorities. The Applicant is proposing that the package of additional benefits will be £5,000 per MW (or equivalent) of installed capacity per annum. It is important to note that voluntary community benefits are not a material planning consideration</p> <p>With regard to tourism, the Applicant is aware that there have been several independent studies carried out of the years that have consistently found that wind farms do not impact tourism.</p> <p>Further information can be found in the Environmental Impact Assessment Report, Chapter 13: Socio-economics.</p> <p><i>* Restoring the old sheepfold near the top of site and establishing it as a viewpoint location with seating and site information; installing traditional dry-stone seating on the tracks up to the viewpoint; and featuring traditional dry-stone dyking at the site entrance with car-parking and a community noticeboard as well as more site information for visitors.</i></p>
Energy Policy	<p>The third major topic of most interest (which followed closely behind landscape and visual and socioeconomics) was Energy policy and the needs case for onshore wind. The comments focused on five areas which were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offshore wind; • Other alternative energy generation; • Energy usage and costs; • Onshore wind and climate change; and • Grid capacity and constraint payments. <p><u>Offshore wind</u> The majority of comments received focused on people's preference for offshore wind, with people stating that it was more effective with higher outputs and located away from people and the countryside. Comments also suggested that onshore wind wasn't required any more due to the focus on offshore wind and recent ScotWind leasing by the Scottish Government of rights for 17 sites for offshore wind projects.</p> <p><u>Other alternative energy generation</u> A large number of comments focused on other alternative energy generation including nuclear, hydro, wave and tidal. Nuclear was particularly popular, with comments focused on it: being far more cost</p>

Summary of EIA topics raised during the online exhibition and consultation

effective; being more efficient; delivering more jobs; and, having recently been declared 'Green Energy' by the EU. A couple of comments also focused on the abundance of oil and gas in Scotland stating that this industry created a lot more jobs. One comment stated a preference for micro-generation which was fed to local households instead of onto the National Grid.

Energy usage and costs

A couple of comments stated that more should be done to promote reducing the use of electricity. A comment was also made about Scotland generating too much electricity which was then sold to other countries only to be bought back when needed. A few other comments referred to the area paying some of the highest charges in the UK and the concerns about fuel poverty within Caithness. One comment stated that with energy bills increasing and the need for sustainability, generating from onshore wind in the local area would help reduce energy bills.

Onshore wind and climate change

A number of comments referred to the global climate change emergency and the need for clean, sustainable energy from onshore wind: one comment stated that onshore wind developments were vital and cost effective; another stated that Caithness had an abundance of wind and could be proud of being at the forefront of the new green energy revolution; another stated that Caithness could make a real difference; and, the remaining comments focused on the Proposed Development helping meet greenhouse targets and supporting the sustainable energy that could be generated. In contrast, three comments suggested that the Proposed Development wasn't about climate change: one comment stated that it was about profit; another comment stated that there had always been climate change - even before the Industrial Revolution - and gave historical examples of climate change; and, another comment stated that the turbines couldn't be recycled which wasn't environmentally friendly.

Grid capacity and constraint payments

A few comments raised concerns about the lack of grid capacity in Caithness and the grid constraint payments that were paid to developers when wind farms had to be turned off.

Applicant's response

Offshore wind has advanced considerably as a renewable technology over the last decade or so; costs have continued to reduce, and more sites are now being built. However, onshore wind remains a mature technology which can be deployed more quickly than offshore wind and generate electricity more cheaply. New onshore wind, together with large scale solar, is now the cheapest form of electricity generation. Onshore wind is also needed as part of a balanced energy mix - alongside offshore wind - and continued advances in turbine technology also mean that the efficiency of onshore wind continues to improve.

Summary of EIA topics raised during the online exhibition and consultation	
	<p>Interconnectors are used between the UK and the rest of Europe to help broaden and diversify sources of energy. The use of interconnectors is also contributing to making the electricity system more secure. Interconnectors allow operators to react quickly to swings in supply due to the intermittent nature of renewable energy generation.</p> <p>New onshore wind will continue to play an important part in the UK's energy mix. The Onshore Wind Policy Statement (October 2021) Scotland is seeking to install an additional 8-12 GW of onshore wind by 2030 to help meet its binding net zero commitment. Onshore wind deployment timescales are significantly shorter than offshore and will have the ability to make meaningful reductions in Scotland's carbon emissions in a much shorter time. Progress is being made within the industry towards improving the recyclability of turbine components. If consented, the 5-turbine Proposed Development would be capable of generating low-cost, clean renewable electricity for around 24,000 homes.</p> <p>Transmissions charges associated with electricity are significantly higher in the North of Scotland than they are in the rest of the country. This is a legacy imposed by the UK government from policies implemented several decades ago. The network operators are aware of this issue and reviews are underway to rectify the situation.</p> <p>Grid constraint payments are made to all types of generators, as necessary, to help balance the electricity grid system. Onshore wind is often one of the quickest and cheapest technologies to 'turn off' if demand isn't meeting supply - and the electricity system operator (National Grid) is incentivised by the regulator (OFGEM) to balance the grid in the most cost-efficient way possible. It is also important to state that generators are also fined by OFGEM when they cannot supply electricity that they are contractual obliged to provide.</p> <p>Further information can be found in the EIA Report, Volume I: Planning Statement.</p>
Shadow Flicker	<p>A number of comments were raised regarding concerns about shadow flicker affecting nearby properties or drivers on the A836 public road.</p> <p><u>Applicant's response</u> The Applicant has designed the Proposed Development in a way that will minimise any potential for shadow flicker. Shadow flicker can be easily modelled and mitigated in a number of ways (e.g. shadow detection technology on relevant turbines to create a shutdown timetable if necessary) and will form part of the planning conditions should permission for the Proposed Development be granted.</p> <p>Further information can be found in the EIA Report, Technical Appendix 2.8: Shadow Flicker.</p>

Summary of EIA topics raised during the online exhibition and consultation	
Ornithology and Ecology	<p>A number of comments were raised regarding concerns about the impact of the Proposed Development on wildlife and local bird life - with three of these comments referring to Hen Harriers.</p> <p><u>Applicant's response</u> The Applicant has undertaken a number of detailed site environmental surveys including ecology, hydrology, hydrogeology, geology, and gathered extensive information on the site including ornithological data (vantage points, flight lines, nesting and breeding bird surveys) over the last few years in relation to both the previous 8-turbine proposal and the current Proposed Development.</p> <p>Historical surveys recorded no evidence of Hen Harrier nesting or roosting within 2 km of the site. Consultation with the Highland Raptor Study Group and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds also returned no nesting or roosting evidence of Hen Harrier. Therefore, whilst Hen Harrier were occasionally recorded hunting during surveys, overall activity was low (only 2-9 records during any breeding season and 5-21 records during any non-breeding season) and not associated with a breeding territory or roosting location. Hen Harrier activity was therefore considered to be associated with wider ranging non-breeding birds. Furthermore, the risk of collision was predicted to be very limited.</p> <p>A full EIA has been undertaken to determine the likelihood of any potential impacts on the environment. The results of the EIA are described in the EIA Report, Chapter 7: Ecology and Chapter 8: Ornithology.</p>
Noise	<p>A number of comments were raised regarding noise in relation to concerns about the potential impact on local residents with properties close to the proposal.</p> <p><u>Applicant's response</u> The Applicant has commissioned baseline background noise surveys and assessments on the site to determine the impact of construction and operational noise in accordance with ETSU-R-97 noise guidelines and other relevant guidance. If the Proposed Development is consented the site will be required to comply with strict noise limits set within planning conditions.</p> <p>Further information can be found in the Environmental Impact Assessment Report, Chapter 10: Noise.</p>
Traffic and Transport	<p>A few comments were raised regarding traffic and transport considerations, with one comment raising concerns about the site access point location and another couple of comments raising concerns about the impact of construction traffic on the A836 public road and wider area. In contrast, one comment suggested that because the site was close to Scrabster Harbour there was unlikely to be much disruption from the turbine deliveries. A final comment stated support for the fact that the</p>

Summary of EIA topics raised during the online exhibition and consultation	
	<p>secondary access to the site via Hill of Forss (from the previous 8-turbine proposal) was no longer proposed.</p> <p><u>Applicant's response</u> The Applicant has undertaken traffic and transport studies to assess the likely impacts which may arise during the construction period for the Proposed Development. This includes detailed traffic counts to assess the volumes of existing traffic, swept path analysis of the turbine delivery route, and careful design of the site access point to ensure appropriate visibility splays to meet strict safety standards. The Applicant has also taken Dounreay traffic and the North Coast 500 tourist route into account.</p> <p>Due to the levels of traffic likely to be generated, the construction phase is likely to result in the greatest impact, so safety is a priority. RES will consult with The Highland's Council's Roads Department as well as the emergency services and other relevant consultees.</p> <p>Further information on Transport and Access can be found in the Environmental Impact Assessment Report, Chapter 9: Traffic and Transport.</p>

5.3. Summary of non-EIA comments received

- 5.3.1. In addition to the EIA topical comments outlined in Table 1 above, the Applicant also received some feedback on other topics which are captured in Table 2 below - together with the Applicant's response.

Table 2.

Summary of EIA topics raised during the online exhibition and consultation	
Topics raised	Description of comments and the Applicant's response
Online exhibition	<p>A number of people provided further feedback on their comments form about the online exhibition, with the main points being as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • no new information presented (since previous 8-turbine proposal); • no visualisations from Hill of Forss area or resident's homes; and • no reason not to have a face-to-face event (rather than online). <p>There were also a couple of comments from people criticising the visualisations, and a couple of comments from people who would have preferred that the proposal was called 'Hill of Forss Wind Farm'. A further comment also criticised the narrative of the consultation and its reference to the historical positive support for the Proposed Development based on the April 2019 public exhibitions (for the previous 8-turbine proposal).</p>

Summary of EIA topics raised during the online exhibition and consultation	
	<p>There was also a positive comment received which stated how helpful the online exhibition in February 2022 had been.</p> <p><u>Applicant's response</u> Whilst the 5-turbine Proposed Development is a redesigned version of the original 8-turbine scheme, it is a new project in its own right and new information, including a revised turbine layout, was presented at the online exhibition. The visualisations presented were selected as the nearest 'viewpoints' (from a wider list of viewpoint locations agreed with The Highland Council and NatureScot) to help give an impression of what the Proposed Development could look like from different viewpoints in the area based on the 'scoping' layout. A viewpoint from Janetstown was included specifically by the Applicant at the second set of exhibitions in response to feedback from the first (online) exhibition.</p> <p>With regard to the format of the online exhibition event, the decision to hold an online event was driven by public health and safety considerations as explained in 3.1.3; however, the decision to hold events in the local area for the second set of public exhibitions was made in direct response to feedback from the first (online) exhibition and the fact that public health and safety concerns about Covid at that point (May) had lessened.</p>
Design	<p>A number of comments were received about the design in general, with the main points being that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • very little new in layout (since previous 8-turbine proposal); • new layout was better (than previous 8-turbine proposal); and • concerned that site may be extended longer term. <p>A positive comment was also received in support of site battery storage.</p> <p><u>Applicant's response</u> The Proposed Development has resulted in reduced turbine numbers since the original 8-turbine proposal and carefully refinements have been made to some of the remaining turbine locations and ancillary infrastructure to further improve the design and layout. With regard to the concerns about any extension to the site, The Highland Council refused the larger previous 8-turbine proposal under delegated powers (without it going to committee) within the same development area, so an extension of the Proposed Development would be highly unlikely.</p>
Misc	<p>There were also a number of comments received which reflected generally negative attitudes towards the proposal, with the majority of these referring to the high number of objections to the previous 8-turbine proposal and the suggestion that the Proposed Development should not be progressed. In contrast, there were number of comments which reflected positive attitudes towards the scheme and pointed to Caithness' legacy of being at the forefront of experimental energy and stated that projects like the Proposed Development should be welcomed and locals allowed to express their support for the proposal.</p>

6. SUMMARY

6.1. Key points

- 6.1.1. In accordance with Pre-application Consultation (PAC) Regulations and associated Covid Regulations, the Applicant has fulfilled and exceeded the minimum statutory consultation activity - including documenting and reporting on the consultation activities undertaken.
- 6.1.2. The Applicant has engaged and consulted early with the community, to facilitate a constructive consultation process; this has helped the Applicant to understand and address concerns, where possible, as the project has developed.
- 6.1.3. The Applicant has also demonstrated its commitment to the consultation process by holding phone-calls and video-calls on alternative dates or times that better suited local residents or local businesses, where necessary, to ensure that they did not miss the opportunity to discuss the Proposed Development and have their views heard.
- 6.1.4. A good level of comments form feedback was received from the initial (online) exhibition and consultation period, and careful refinements were made to the Proposed Development to help improve the scheme - particularly from a landscape and visual perspective in order to create a balanced layout and maximise offset from the closest properties to the site. When the final design was presented at the second set of exhibitions, fewer concerns were raised in the consultation feedback which the Applicant believes is a positive sign.
- 6.1.5. In addition, the Applicant took on board feedback received from the initial (online) exhibition about the event itself in order to try and improve the effectiveness of the second exhibitions. Some of the ways that the Applicant responded to consultation feedback included:
- Holding face-to-face events in the local area for the second set of exhibitions (rather than another online event which would still have been permitted under Covid regulations); and
 - Voluntarily including a viewpoint from Janetstown as part of the visualisations for the second set of exhibitions (to help give a better impression of what the site may look like from nearby residential properties), in addition to the list of representative viewpoints agreed by Nature Scot and The Highland Council. This viewpoint has now also been included in the visualisations that accompany the planning application.
- 6.1.6. Throughout the consultation process the Applicant has continued to engage with the local supply chain in order to build understanding of the growing skills and capabilities within Caithness and place the Applicant in a better position to help maximise the inward investment opportunities to the county should the proposal receive consent.
- 6.1.7. The Applicant has also demonstrated its commitment to the area by joining the Caithness Chamber of Commerce as a Premier Partner, in order to further improve its understanding of the local supply chain as well as the needs and priorities of the wider area, with a view to continuing to work closely with the Chamber to help focus community benefit funding in a way that will make a meaningful difference to the area should the proposal receive consent.
- 6.1.8. Throughout the consultation process, RES has helped the community understand the benefits and impacts of the Proposed Development and added value and improved the quality of the proposal through meaningful and productive consultation. The consultation process has resulted in a high-quality proposal that RES hopes the local community will largely support in their area.

7. APPENDICES

7.1. Appendices

- 7.1.1. [Appendix 1](#): Introductory letter to key stakeholders (Scoping) - January 2022
- 7.1.2. [Appendix 2](#): Newspaper advert 1 (online exhibition) - January 2022
- 7.1.3. [Appendix 3](#): Information flyer 1 - January 2022
- 7.1.4. [Appendix 4](#): Exhibition 1 (online) information - February 2022
- 7.1.5. [Appendix 5](#): Comments form 1 (online exhibition) - February 2022
- 7.1.6. [Appendix 6](#): Newspaper advert 2 (local exhibition events) - May 2022
- 7.1.7. [Appendix 7](#): Update letter to key stakeholders (exhibition events) - May 2022
- 7.1.8. [Appendix 8](#): Information flyer 2 - May 2022
- 7.1.9. [Appendix 9](#): Comments form 2 (public exhibition events) - May 2022
- 7.1.10. [Appendix 10](#): Example of information board at exhibition - May 2022
- 7.1.11. [Appendix 11](#): Example of visualisation board at exhibition - May 2022

Appendix 1: Introductory letter to key stakeholders (Scoping) - January 2022



RES

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T +44 (0)141 404 5500. F +44 (0)141 404 5501
E info@res-group.com www.res-group.com

Sent by email to: [REDACTED]

20 January 2022

Dear [REDACTED]

Cairnmore Hill Wind Farm proposal – redesign

I am writing to inform you that [RES](#) is redesigning its Cairnmore Hill Wind Farm proposal (approximately 4.5 km northwest of Thurso) and will be launching an online exhibition event in February to consult with the local community on the redesigned proposal early in the development process.

Project overview

We continue to believe that Cairnmore Hill offers excellent potential for a wind farm development. It has good wind resource, few ecological constraints, straight-forward access off the A836 public road and is close to Scrabster harbour for turbine deliveries. Importantly, it also lies in an area identified by Highland Council as having ‘potential for wind farm development’¹ and within an area that the Caithness and Sutherland Local Development Plan seeks to promote as an internationally renowned centre for renewable energy and area for energy business expansion.

Following further technical analysis, we have been exploring an optimised design which reduces our previous 8-turbine proposal to a more optimised 5-turbine design. This week we submitted a Scoping Report to The Highland Council, as well as other consultees (including local Community Councils), seeking feedback on the scope of environmental work for the redesigned scheme. A copy of the Scoping Report can be viewed on our project website at www.cairnmorehill-windfarm.co.uk.

Online exhibition and consultation event

RES believes in meaningful and effective consultation, and we aim to engage early with the local community and key stakeholders in order to facilitate constructive consultation. This helps to identify issues and concerns, as well as benefits and opportunities, which we can then consider when developing the design.

Originally, we had hoped to hold local public exhibitions in Forss and Thurso (as we have done previously), but due to the current situation regarding Covid we consider the risks of this to both the community and RES too high. As such, we believe an online event is the most appropriate format at this current time.

An online exhibition and consultation are being launched on **Wednesday 2nd February 2022** on the project website at www.cairnmorehill-windfarm.co.uk to inform the community about the revised design, as well as highlight opportunities for the local supply chain to get involved in the project, and to gather feedback. The exhibition will provide a range of information, including: information boards covering key aspects of the proposal; photomontages and wirelines to help give an impression of what the redesigned scheme would look like from different viewpoints within the area; ZTVs (Zones of Theoretical Visibility) showing theoretical visibility

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Registered Offices: Beaufort Court, Egg Farm Lane, Kings Langley, Hertfordshire, WD4 8LR, United Kingdom

of the redesigned scheme; and, FAQs which will aim to answer a wide range of potential questions. Hard copies of the exhibition materials will be available from the date of the event, by contacting RES.

In order to help raise awareness of the proposal within the wider community a leaflet is being mailed out to over 1,000 households in the local area, in addition to adverts being placed in local papers. We will also be offering phone and video appointments on Wednesday 2nd February 2022 from 12 noon until 8pm to discuss any questions that people may have regarding the proposal. Appointments should be booked in advance with RES by calling 07900 193045.

Comments to RES on the proposal must be submitted in writing via a 'comments form' which will be available online on the project website from the date of the event as well as in hard copy format by contacting RES. **The closing date for comments to RES on the proposal is Wednesday 2nd March 2022.** We will also make it clear to people that any comments submitted to RES are not representations to the determining authority (The Highland Council) and that there will be an opportunity to submit representations to the determining authority should an application be made.

Benefits of the scheme

New onshore wind and large scale solar are now the cheapest forms of electricity generation². With the ever-growing threat of climate change and the catastrophic impacts that it could have, it is imperative that we deliver clean, low-cost electricity as efficiently as possible.

The redesigned Cairnmore Hill Wind Farm will have an installed capacity of around 21 MW and be capable of providing low-cost, clean renewable electricity for around 24,000 homes³. With the recent COP26 event in Glasgow, there has never been a greater need for projects like Cairnmore Hill to help support Scotland's longer-term goal of net zero carbon emissions by 2045 and to support a 'green recovery' within the region.

Cairnmore Hill is also predicted to deliver £8.75m in business rates to The Highland Council over its 35-year operational lifetime⁴. In addition, the project also has the potential to deliver approximately £1.4 million of economic benefit in the form of jobs, employment and the use of local services and RES has been actively working with the local supply chain to understand the growing skills and capabilities available within Caithness in order to maximise inward investment wherever possible.

We hope that you have found this update helpful. If you have any questions, or would like further information, please don't hesitate to get in touch.

Yours sincerely

[Redacted signature block]

¹ Draft Onshore Wind Energy Supplementary Guidance, August 2016.

² Electricity Generation Costs - Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy, November 2016.

³ The 24,000 homes equivalent figure has been calculated by taking the predicted annual electricity generation of the site (based on RES assessments Cairnmore Hill has a predicted capacity factor of 49.66% - based on a 4.3 MW candidate turbine) and dividing this by the annual average electricity figures from the Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) showing that the annual UK average domestic household consumption is 3,748 kWh (December 2021). Final wind farm capacity will vary depending on the outcome of planning permission and the turbine type selected.

⁴ The business rates figures of £250,000 (annually) and £8.75 million (over 35-year operational period) have been calculated from the most recent Scottish business rates (2017 valuation) and predicted performance of the wind farm.

Appendix 2: Newspaper advert 1 (online exhibition) - January 2022



Cairnmore Hill Wind Farm Redesign

ONLINE EXHIBITION

RES is revising and optimising the design of its Cairnmore Hill Wind Farm proposal, located approximately 4.5km northwest of Thurso.

An **online exhibition** is being launched on **Wednesday 2nd February 2022** to inform the community and local supply chain about the revised design and to gather comments.

The exhibition will be hosted on the project website at www.cairnmorehill-windfarm.co.uk and will provide a range of information, including opportunities for the local supply chain to get involved in the project. Hard copies of materials will also be available from the date of the event, upon request, by contacting RES.

RES will be offering phone and video call appointments on Wednesday 2nd February 2022 from 12 noon until 8pm to discuss any questions that people may have with regard to the proposal.

Appointments should be booked in advance with RES by calling 07900 193045.



Comments to RES on the proposal must be submitted in writing via a 'comments form' which will be available on the project website from the date of the event. Hard copy comments forms will also be available upon request. The closing date for comments is **Wednesday 2nd March 2022**.

For more information please visit www.cairnmorehill-windfarm.co.uk or contact Euan Hogg, RES Development Project Manager, at ewan.hogg@res-group.com.

Please note that comments to RES at this time are not representations to the determining authority (The Highland Council). There will be an opportunity to submit representations to the determining authority should an application be submitted.

Appendix 3: Information flyer 1 - January 2022

CAIRNMORE HILL WIND FARM REDESIGN



ONLINE EXHIBITION

RES is currently consulting on plans to redesign its 8-turbine wind farm proposal at Cairnmore Hill, approximately 4.5km northwest of Thurso, to a more optimised 5-turbine scheme.

An online exhibition and consultation event will be launched on **Wednesday 2nd February 2022** to inform the community about the revised design and gather feedback on the proposal. The event will be hosted on the Cairnmore Hill Wind Farm project website at www.cairnmorehill-windfarm.co.uk.

We will be offering phone and video call appointments on **Wednesday 2nd February 2022 from 12 noon until 8pm** to discuss any questions that people may have with regard to the proposal. Appointments can be booked in advance with RES by calling **07900 193045**.



A range of information will be available, including photomontages to help give an impression of what the site could look like from different viewpoints in the area.

Comments to RES on the proposal must be submitted in writing via a 'comments form' which will be available on the project website from the date of the event. The closing date for comments is **Wednesday 2nd March 2022**.

Hard copies of the exhibition materials, including comments forms, will be available from the date of the event by contacting RES.

Please note that comments to RES at this time are not representations to the determining authority (The Highland Council). There will be an opportunity to submit representations to the determining authority should an application be submitted.

REDESIGN OF CAIRNMORE HILL

Over the last few years, we have undertaken extensive survey work and environmental studies in order to build a thorough understanding of the site. We have also carefully considered consultation feedback from key consultees and the local community regarding the scheme's design.

We continue to believe that Cairnmore Hill offers excellent potential for a wind farm development. It has good wind resource, few ecological constraints, straight-forward access off the A836 public road and is close to Scrabster harbour for turbine deliveries. Importantly, it also lies in an area identified by The Highland Council as having 'potential for wind farm development'.

As such, we have been exploring an optimised design for Cairnmore Hill Wind Farm – taking the concerns previously raised into consideration. In January 2022 we submitted a Scoping Report to The Highland Council, setting out the proposed scope of environmental work, for a more compact 5-turbine scheme.

Our online exhibition, which is being launched in early February 2022, will provide more information and seek to gather feedback from the local community on the redesign. Further details of the event are provided overleaf.

ABOUT RES

RES, a privately-owned British company with a proud history in the Highlands, is one of the world's leading independent renewable energy project developers. Employing over 100 staff in Scotland, RES has 40 years' experience of developing, constructing and operating projects of outstanding quality, including Forss Wind Farm in Caithness.

If you would like further information on the redesign of Cairnmore Hill Wind Farm please visit www.cairnmorehill-windfarm.co.uk or get in touch using the contact details below.

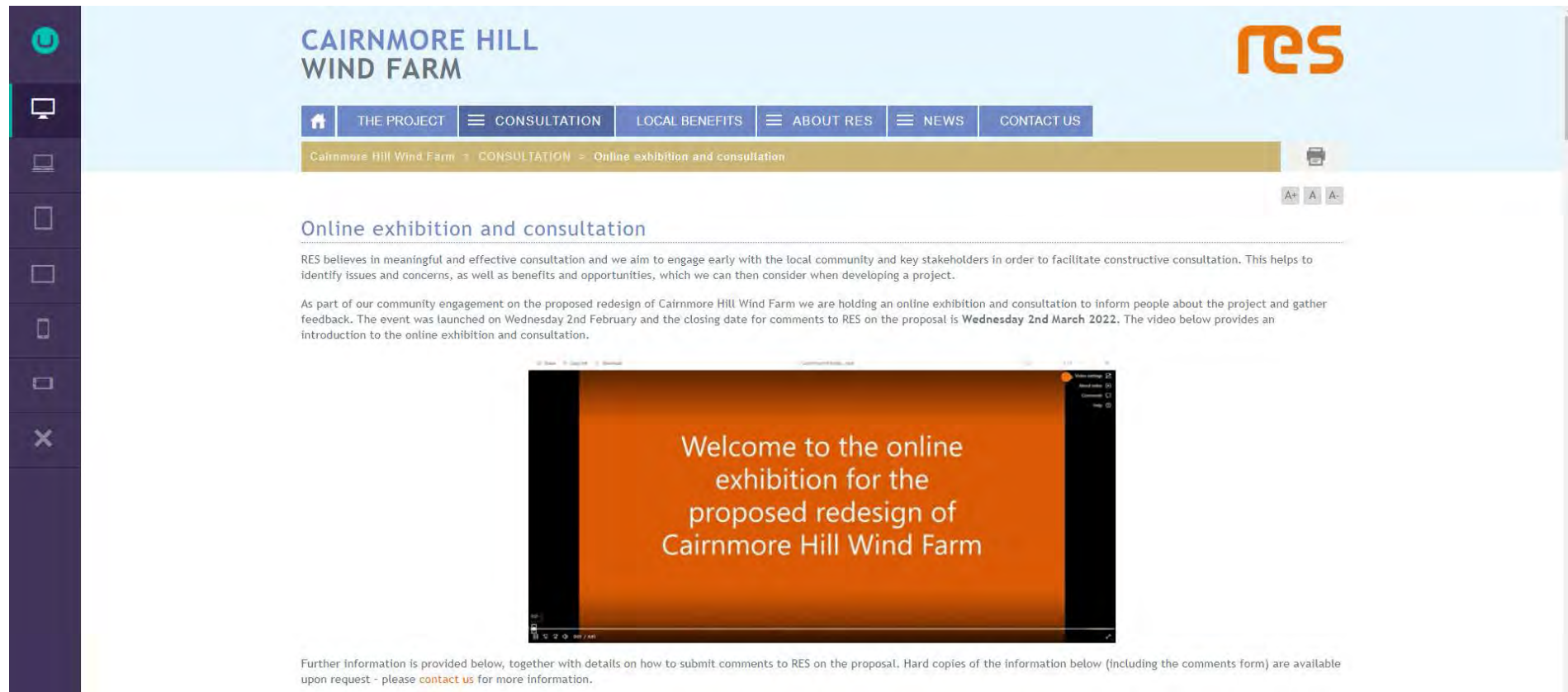


Euan Hogg
Development Project Manager
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If you would like information in Braille, large text or audio please let us know. For those receiving this newsletter by post, we obtained your address through a national postcode database or following a separate request from you during which you provided your contact details and asked to be kept up to date with the project. If you do not wish to receive further information from us about the proposal please let us know.

Appendix 4: Exhibition 1 (online) information - February 2022



The screenshot shows the website for Cairnmore Hill Wind Farm. The header includes the title "CAIRNMORE HILL WIND FARM" and the RES logo. A navigation menu contains links for "THE PROJECT", "CONSULTATION", "LOCAL BENEFITS", "ABOUT RES", "NEWS", and "CONTACT US". A breadcrumb trail indicates the current page is "Online exhibition and consultation". The main content area features a section titled "Online exhibition and consultation" with a sub-header. The text explains that RES values meaningful consultation and aims to engage with the local community. It mentions an online exhibition and consultation event held on Wednesday 2nd February 2022, with a closing date for comments on Wednesday 2nd March 2022. A video player is embedded, showing a welcome message: "Welcome to the online exhibition for the proposed redesign of Cairnmore Hill Wind Farm". Below the video, further information is provided regarding how to submit comments and where to find hard copies of the information.

CAIRNMORE HILL WIND FARM

RES

THE PROJECT CONSULTATION LOCAL BENEFITS ABOUT RES NEWS CONTACT US

Cairnmore Hill Wind Farm > CONSULTATION > Online exhibition and consultation

Online exhibition and consultation

RES believes in meaningful and effective consultation and we aim to engage early with the local community and key stakeholders in order to facilitate constructive consultation. This helps to identify issues and concerns, as well as benefits and opportunities, which we can then consider when developing a project.

As part of our community engagement on the proposed redesign of Cairnmore Hill Wind Farm we are holding an online exhibition and consultation to inform people about the project and gather feedback. The event was launched on Wednesday 2nd February and the closing date for comments to RES on the proposal is **Wednesday 2nd March 2022**. The video below provides an introduction to the online exhibition and consultation.

Welcome to the online exhibition for the proposed redesign of Cairnmore Hill Wind Farm

Further information is provided below, together with details on how to submit comments to RES on the proposal. Hard copies of the information below (including the comments form) are available upon request - please [contact us](#) for more information.

Project background

Over the last few years, RES has been exploring the potential for a wind farm at Cairnmore Hill, approximately 4.5 km northwest of Thurso.

A 10-turbine scheme was originally developed and then later reduced to 8-turbines. The project received positive feedback from the public at the 2016 and 2019 public exhibition events held in Forss and Thurso.

However, the scheme was refused by The Highland Council in March 2021.



[Click on image to enlarge](#)

We continue to believe that Cairnmore Hill offers excellent potential for a wind farm development.

The site has good wind resource, few ecological constraints, straight-forward access off the A836 public road and is close to Scrabster harbour for turbine deliveries. Importantly, it also lies in an area identified by The Highland Council as having 'potential for wind farm development'¹.

As such, and following further technical analysis, we have been exploring a potential 'redesign' of the scheme over the last few months.

Redesign

The proposed redesign reduces the previous 8-turbine proposal to an optimised 5-turbine scheme shown on the map opposite). The maximum turbine tip height would remain at 138.5m.

The redesigned scheme would have an installed capacity of around 21MW and an expected operational life of 35 years - during which the project is predicted to deliver £8.75 million in business rates to The Highland Council².



[Click on image to enlarge](#)

In January 2022 we submitted a Scoping Report to The Highland Council, as well as other consultees (including local Community Councils).

The Scoping Report presented the optimised 5-turbine layout and sought feedback from key consultees on the scope of environmental work for the redesigned scheme.

A copy of the Scoping Report can be viewed [here](#).

Traffic and Transport

Given the location of the site, it is most likely that turbine components would be delivered to site from the Port of Scrabster. Turbine components would then be transported, by special abnormal load vehicles, along the A836 to site (using a new entrance off the A836). Safety is the key consideration and a detailed swept path analysis has been undertaken of the turbine delivery route, as well as careful assessment of the proposed site entrance.

RES would also undertake pre and post condition road surveys of roads and implement repairs, following the completion of the development, as a consequence of any damage caused by construction traffic.



Dounreay traffic is another important consideration, and RES will continue to consult with The Highland Council's Roads Department, emergency services, and other relevant consultees on its transport plans.

The secondary access that was being considered for the previous scheme (to the south of the site, from the unclassified Hill of Forss road, in order to potentially extract stone from existing quarries in that area) is no longer being considered as part of the redesigned scheme.

Environmental considerations

Over the last few years RES has undertaken a wide range of technical studies to build a thorough understanding of the site, including:

- Landscape and visual
- Ornithology and Ecology
- Archaeology and Cultural Heritage
- Hydrology, Hydrogeology and Geology
- Traffic and Transport
- Noise

A wealth of data has been gathered, providing a rigorous dataset to help develop the redesign.



As part of the redesign, RES is undertaking further Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) work to investigate any significant potential effects of the redesigned scheme on the environment and, where applicable, identify mitigation measures to eliminate or reduce potential effects.

The results of the EIA will be presented in an Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) which will accompany any planning application submitted to The Highland Council.




What would the wind farm look like?

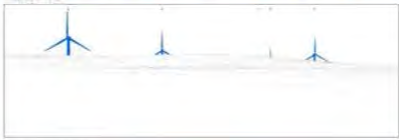
We have produced indicative visualisations (photomontages and wirelines), to help give an impression of what the redesigned scheme could look like from different viewpoints in the area based on the current 'scoping' layout.

Please click on the links below to open visualisations for the following viewpoints:


- [A836 by Motocross Track](#)
- [A836, Thurso](#)
- [St Mary's Chapel, Crosskirk](#)
- [A9, South of Thurso](#)



AERIAL VIEW



WIRELINE (PLAN)



PHOTOMONTAGE OF HEIGHTS

VIEWPOINT INFORMATION					
Location	S1725, N48E37	Altitude	102m AOD	Nearest turbine	0.98km
Viewing distance	812.5km	Bearing to centre of photograph	304°	Approximate horizontal field of view	53.5°

res
power for good

View from A836 by Motocross track

CAIRNMORE HILL WIND FARM

We have also produced a **Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV)** map showing where the turbines could be visible from.

The ZTV is based on bare landform (without trees and buildings).

The landscape and visual impacts of the redesigned scheme will be considered in detail as part of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) work and the findings will accompany any planning application submission.



Supply chain opportunities

The redesigned Cairnmore Hill Wind Farm is predicted to deliver approximately £1.4 million of economic benefit in the form of jobs, employment and the use of local services.

Caithness has a fantastic variety of businesses that have extensive experience in wind farm development. Some of the skills, services and materials which are likely to be required are: civil engineering, groundworks, electrical works, steel fixing, plant operators, labourers, cleaners, plant hire, crane hire, concrete, aggregates, quantity surveyors, fencers, local accommodation.



If you're a local business who may be able to offer skills and services during the construction or operation of Cairnmore Hill Wind Farm and would like to know more about the project, please [contact us](#).

RES has a strong track record of working closely with the local supply chain and maximising inward investment opportunities wherever possible. Some examples of this include:

- Kintradwell Wind Farm (Sutherland)
- Solwaybank Wind Farm (Dumfries & Galloway)

Other local benefits

In addition to exploring the skills and capabilities in Caithness and working with the local supply chain to explore how we can maximise the economic benefits to the area, we are inviting input from the local community on ideas, aims and priority projects which Cairnmore Hill Wind Farm may be able to support.

As part of the previous Cairnmore Hill Wind Farm proposal, RES explored ideas to make the site more attractive and accessible for visitors, in response to feedback.



Photo: sheepfold on Cairnmore Hill site

Previous ideas included restoring the old sheepfold near the top of site and establishing it as a viewpoint location with seating and site information - as well traditional dry-stone dyking at the site entrance with car-parking and a community noticeboard with site information for visitors.

We would like to know whether these ideas are still of interest to the community - and whether people have any other ideas. If you'd like to provide feedback, please complete our [comments form](#).

Why wind?

Wind is a free and inexhaustible resource which has an important role to play as part of a balanced energy mix.

New onshore wind and large scale solar are now the cheapest forms of electricity generation³.

With the ever-growing threat of climate change and the catastrophic impacts that it could have, it is imperative that we deliver clean, low-cost electricity as efficiently as possible.



Photo: Hill of Towie Wind Farm, Moray

If consented, the redesigned Cairnmore Hill Wind Farm scheme would be capable of generating low-cost, clean renewable electricity for around 24,000⁴ homes.

With the recent COP26 event in Glasgow, there has never been a greater need for projects like Cairnmore Hill to help support Scotland's longer-term goal of net zero carbon emissions by 2045 and to support a 'green recovery' within the region.

We have also put together some [Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQs\)](#) about the project.

Commenting on the proposal

Comments to RES on the proposal must be submitted in writing via a 'comments form'. You can either fill in our online [comments form](#), download a comments form [here](#) and return it to us by post or email using the details on our [contact us](#) page, or [contact us](#) to request a hard copy of the comments form which we will post out to you.

We are also offering phone and video call appointments on **Wednesday 2nd February 2022** from 12 noon until 8pm to discuss any questions that people may have with regard to the proposal. Appointments should be booked in advance with RES by calling 07900 193045.

The closing date for comments is **Wednesday 2nd March 2022**. Comments will still be accepted after this date but may not be considered in relation to the design development.

Please note that comments to RES at this time are not representations to the determining authority (The Highland Council). There will be an opportunity to submit representations to the determining authority should an application be made.

¹ Draft Onshore Wind Energy Supplementary Guidance, August 2016.


² The business rates figure of £8.75 million (over 35-year operational period) have been calculated from the most recent Scottish business rates (2017 valuation) and predicted performance of the wind farm.

³ Electricity Generation Costs - Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy, August 2020.

⁴ The 24,000 homes equivalent figure has been calculated by taking the predicted annual electricity generation of the site (based on RES assessments Cairnmore Hill has a predicted capacity factor of 49.66% - based on a 4.3 MW candidate turbine) and dividing this by the annual average electricity figures from the Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) showing that the annual UK average domestic household consumption is 3,748 kWh (December 2021). Final wind farm capacity will vary depending on the outcome of planning permission and the turbine type selected.

Appendix 5: Comments form 1 (online exhibition) - February 2022

CAIRNMORE HILL WIND FARM



Cairnmore Hill Wind Farm > CONTACT US > HAVE YOUR SAY

Cairnmore Hill Wind Farm Redesign

RES believes in meaningful and productive consultation, and we aim to engage early with the local community and key stakeholders in order to facilitate constructive dialogue. This helps to identify issues and concerns, as well as benefits and opportunities, which we can then consider when developing the design of the proposal.

Feedback from the local community is an important part of our pre-application consultation and we would be grateful if you would take time to fill out this comments form. The closing date for comments is **Wednesday 2nd March 2022**. Comments will still be accepted after this date but may not be considered in relation to the design development. Please note that any comments submitted to RES are not representations to the determining authority (The Highland Council) and that there will be an opportunity to submit representations to the determining authority should an application be made.

1. Cairnmore Hill Wind Farm Redesign

1.1 How did you find out about the proposed wind farm redesign?

If other please specify:

1.2 Before visiting the online exhibition how would you describe your knowledge of the proposed redesign of Cairnmore Hill Wind Farm?

1.3 Having visited the online exhibition, to what extent do you feel you have increased your understanding of the proposed redesign of Cairnmore Hill Wind Farm?

1.4 What part of the online exhibition did you find most helpful?

If other please specify:

1.5 What do you think about the proposed layout for the redesign of Cairnmore Hill Wind Farm?

We welcome any constructive technical comments that you may have regarding the turbine layout, or proposal in general, so that we can consider these in relation to the development of the design (i.e. turbine layout, access route, on-site tracks, etc.):

If you would be willing for us to get back in touch with you regarding any information that you have provided about the design, please tick below:

Please keep me updated

1.6 We welcome any further constructive comments or suggestions that you may have regarding the proposed redesign of Cairnmore Hill Wind Farm:

If you would be willing for us to get back in touch with you regarding any information that you have provided about the design, please tick below:

Please get in touch

2. Climate change and renewables

2.1 Do you agree that we are facing a global climate change emergency?

If you disagree or strongly disagree please explain why:

2.2 Do you agree that generating electricity from renewable sources, and reducing our reliance on fossil fuels, can help towards tackling the issue of climate change?

If you disagree or strongly disagree please explain why:

2.3 Do you agree that we need to develop onshore wind farms to help reduce our carbon emissions?

If you disagree or strongly disagree please explain why:

3. Local benefit

RES seeks to be a power for good in the communities that neighbour its projects by working

openly and constructively to ensure tangible local benefits. In addition to exploring the skills and capabilities in Caithness and working with the local supply chain to explore how we can maximise the economic better to the area, we are inviting input from the local community on ideas, aims and priority projects which Cairnmore Hill Wind Farm may be able to support.

As part of the previous Cairnmore Hill Wind Farm proposal, RES explored ideas to make the site more attractive and accessible for visitors, in response to feedback, and proposed: restoring the old sheepfold near the top of site and establishing it as a viewpoint location with seating and site information; installing traditional dry-stone seating on the tracks up to the viewpoint; and featuring traditional dry-stone dyking at the site entrance with car-parking and a community notice-board as well as more site information for visitors.

3.1 Do you agree with the ideas described above for making the site more attractive and accessible for visitors?

If you disagree or strongly disagree, please explain why:

3.2 Are there any other ideas, aims or community priority projects which you would like us to consider supporting (should the project be consented)?

If you would be willing for us to get back in touch with you regarding any information that you have provided about the design, please tick below:

Please get in touch

4. Your details

Please provide your name, address and/or email below in order to authenticate this comments form (any forms missing these details will not be accepted).

Your contact details will be treated by RES with the strictest of confidence, in line with the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) 2018. We may at times share your contact details, in confidence, with third parties who we employ to help process your comments or update you on the project and by providing your details below you consent to this. You may write to RES at any time to ask that your contact details be removed from our records and from any third parties we work with.

Name

E-mail

Address

Which Community Council represents your area?

If other please specify:

Thank you for taking the time to complete this comments form, your feedback is important to us.

If you would like to be kept up to date with the project, please tick box below:

Please keep me updated

I am not a robot

I'm not a robot reCAPTCHA
Privacy - Terms

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Appendix 6: Newspaper advert 1 (local exhibition events) - May 2022

Cairnmore Hill Wind Farm Redesign Public Exhibitions



RES has finalised the redesign of its 5-turbine Cairnmore Hill Wind Farm project, approximately 4.5km west of Thurso.

We are holding public exhibitions to update the community and local supply chain ahead of submitting our planning application.



Wednesday 25 May 2022

Forss Village Hall 11am - 2pm Forss, Near Thurso, KW14 7XU	Pentland Hotel (ballroom) 5pm - 8pm Princes Street, Thurso, KW14 7AA
--	--

Anyone wishing to provide feedback to RES on the final design can do this by filling out a 'comments form' at the exhibition events or online from the project website at www.cairnmorehill-windfarm.co.uk from Wednesday 25 May when copies of the exhibition information will be available on the project website for people to view. **The closing date for comments is Wednesday 1 June 2022.**

For more information please visit www.cairnmorehill-windfarm.co.uk or contact Euan Hogg, RES Project Manager, at ewan.hogg@res-group.com.

Please note that comments to RES at this time are not representations to the determining authority (The Highland Council). There will be an opportunity to submit representations to the determining authority should an application be submitted.

Appendix 7: Update letter to key stakeholders (exhibition events) - May 2022

Renewable Energy Systems Limited
3rd Floor, 5TV, Pacific Quay
Glasgow G51 1PQ, United Kingdom
T +44 (0)141 404 5500 F +44 (0)141 404 5501
E info@res-group.com www.res-group.com

[Redacted]

Sent by email to: [Redacted]

19 May 2022

Dear Councillor [Redacted]

Cairnmore Hill Wind Farm Redesign – Public Exhibitions

Congratulations on your re-election as a local Councillor for Thurso and Northwest Caithness ward.

In January I wrote to confirm details of an online exhibition that we were launching in February to consult with the community on our redesign of Cairnmore Hill Wind Farm proposal to the west of Thurso. The online event received more than 144 'unique visits' during the consultation period and over 25 comments forms with people's feedback on the proposal. We also held a number of phone and video calls with residents, wider members of the community, and local businesses who wanted to understand more about the project.

We have now finalised the design and are holding public exhibition events in the local area on **Wednesday 25 May 2022** to update the local community and answer any questions that people may have:

- **Forss Village Hall from 11am - 2pm** (Forss, Near Thurso, KW14 7XU)
- **Pentland Hotel (ballroom) from 5pm - 8pm** (Princes Street, Thurso, KW14 7AA)

A leaflet is being mailed out to over 1,300 local households, in addition to adverts being placed in local papers (and letters sent to the local Community Councils), to help raise awareness of these events.

Whilst the design is now finalised, anyone wishing to submit comments to RES on the proposal can still do so by filling in a 'comments form' at the exhibition events, or by completing an online 'comments form' from the project website at www.cairnmorehill-windfarm.co.uk from Wednesday 25 May when copies of the exhibition information will be available on the project website for people to view. **The closing date for comments to RES on the proposal is Wednesday 1 June 2022.**

We will also make it clear to people that any comments submitted to RES are not representations to the determining authority (The Highland Council) and that there will be an opportunity to submit representations to the determining authority should an application be made.

If you have any questions, or would like further information, please don't hesitate to get in touch.

Yours sincerely

[Redacted Signature]

Development Project Manager

[Redacted Name]

Registered in England & Wales Number 1589961
Registered Office: Beaufort Court, Egg Farm Lane, Kings Langley, Hertfordshire WD4 8LS, United Kingdom

Appendix 8: Information flyer 2 - May 2022

CAIRNMORE HILL WIND FARM REDESIGN



PUBLIC EXHIBITIONS

RES has finalised its redesign of Cairnmore Hill Wind Farm proposal, approximately 4.5km west of Thurso. Public exhibition events are being held to update the community and local supply chain on the final design before the project is submitted into planning.

Wednesday 25 May 2022

Forss Village Hall 11am - 2pm
Forss, Near Thurso, KW14 7XU

Pentland Hotel (ballroom) 5pm - 8pm
Princes Street, Thurso, KW14 7AA

A range of information will be available, including photomontages to help give an impression of what the site could look like from different viewpoints in the area, and RES staff will be on hand to discuss the proposal and answer any questions.

Anyone wishing to provide feedback to RES on the final design can do this by filling out a 'comments form' at the exhibitions or visiting the project website www.cairnmorehill-windfarm.co.uk (from Wednesday 25 May) and completing an online comments form. **The closing date for comments is Wednesday 1 June 2022.**

Copies of the exhibition information will also be available for people to view online at www.cairnmorehill-windfarm.co.uk from Wednesday 25 May.

Please note that comments to RES at this time are not representations to the determining authority (The Highland Council). There will be an opportunity to submit representations to the determining authority should an application be submitted.

REDESIGN OF CAIRNMORE HILL

Over the last few years, RES has been exploring the potential for a wind farm at Cairnmore Hill, approximately 4.5km west of Thurso, in an area identified by The Highland Council as having 'potential for wind farm development'.

A 10-turbine scheme was originally developed and then later refined to 8-turbines before being submitted into planning. However, the scheme was refused by The Highland Council in March 2021.

We continue to believe that Cairnmore Hill offers excellent potential for a wind farm development. As such, we carefully considered the reasons for the refusal and in January 2022 submitted a Scoping Report to the Council, setting out the proposed scope of environmental work, for a more compact 5-turbine scheme.

Over the last few months, we have undertaken further site survey work, consulted with key consultees, and held an online exhibition (in February) to gather feedback from the local community. This work has helped us reach a final design for the 5-turbine scheme which will shortly be submitted as a new planning application to The Highland Council.

ABOUT RES

RES, a privately-owned British company with a proud history in the Highlands, is one of the world's leading independent renewable energy project developers. Employing over 100 staff in Scotland, RES has 40 years' experience of developing, constructing and operating projects of outstanding quality, including Forss Wind Farm in Caithness.

If you would like further information on the redesign of Cairnmore Hill Wind Farm, please visit www.cairnmorehill-windfarm.co.uk or get in touch.




Euan Hogg
Development Project Manager
✉ euan.hogg@res-group.com
☎ 07500 045754

Address
3rd Floor STV,
Pacific Quay,
Glasgow G51 1PQ

If you would like information in Braille, large text or audio please let us know. For those receiving this newsletter by post, we obtained your address through a national postcode database or following a separate request from you during which you provided your contact details and asked to be kept up to date with the project. If you do not wish to receive further information from us about the proposal please let us know.

Appendix 9: Comments form 2 (public exhibition events) - May 2022



Cairnmore Hill Wind Farm Redesign

Public Exhibitions (Final Design) - Comments Form

We have now finalised the redesign of our 5-turbine Cairnmore Hill Wind Farm project and are grateful to everyone who visited our February 2022 online exhibition and consultation and provided feedback.

These final May 2022 public exhibitions present the updated final design to the community and local supply chain ahead of the submission of a new planning application to The Highland Council. No more changes will be made to the design, but should you wish to provide comments to RES on the final design you can do so by filling in this comments form. The closing date for comments is Wednesday 1st June 2022.

Comments will still be accepted after this date but may not be considered in relation to the design development. Please note that any comments submitted to RES are not representations to the determining authority (The Highland Council) and that there will be an opportunity to submit representations to the determining authority when the new planning application for the redesigned scheme is submitted.

1. Public exhibition

1.1 How did you find out about this public exhibition?

- Flyer through the door
- Advert in local newspaper
- Project website (www.cairnmorehill-windfarm.co.uk)
- Word of mouth
- Other (please specify)

1.2 Which exhibition event did you attend?

- Forss Village Hall
- Pentland Hotel (ballroom)
- Neither - looked at exhibition information online

1.3 What part of the public exhibition did you find most helpful?

- Exhibition information boards
- Visualisations (photomontages)
- Ability to ask RES questions
- Other (please specify)

Page 1 of 3



Cairnmore Hill Wind Farm Redesign Public Exhibitions (Final Design) - Comments Form

2. Redesigned proposal

2.1 What do you think about the final redesigned layout for Cairnmore Hill Wind Farm proposal?

- I am happy with proposed layout
- I am neutral towards the proposed layout
- I have concerns about proposed layout
- I don't like wind farms in general

2.2 Do you have any further comments on the final design?

3. Local benefit

3.1 Our online exhibition and consultation in February 2022 asked people for their feedback on ideas, aims or community priority projects for local benefits that they would like to see delivered from the redesigned Cairnmore Hill proposal, should it receive consent. Below we have listed some of the main themes from the feedback and would be grateful if you put a tick against any of these ideas that interest you.

- Funding to support education, skills development, training and apprenticeships
- Maximising local supply chain opportunities (during construction and operation)
- Electric car-charging points at site entrance
- Funding for Forss Village Hall
- Funding for fuel poverty initiatives
- Funding for Thurso area
- Cycle tracks around the site
- Viewpoint (at site sheepfold) and car-parking and notice-board (at entrance)

Page 2 of 3



Cairnmore Hill Wind Farm Redesign Public Exhibitions (Final Design) - Comments Form

- 3.2 Are there any other ideas, aims or community priority projects which you would like us to consider supporting (should the project be consented)?

4 Your details

Please provide your name, address and/or email below in order to authenticate this comments form (any forms missing these details will not be accepted).

Your contact details will be treated by RES with the strictest of confidence, in line with the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) 2018. We may at times share your contact details, in confidence, with third parties who we employ to help process your comments or update you on the project and by providing your details below you consent to this. You may write to RES at any time to ask that your contact details be removed from our records and from any third parties we work with.

Name	
Email	
Address	

Which Community Council represents your area?

Thurso

Caithness West

Other

Thank you for taking the time to complete this comments form, your feedback is important to us. If you would like to be kept up to date with the project, please tick this box:

Hard copy comments forms can be posted back to RES at Cairnmore Hill Wind Farm Redesign - Project Team, Renewable Energy Systems Limited, 3rd Floor, STV, Pacific Quay, Glasgow G51 1PQ.

Appendix 10: Example of information board at exhibition - May 2022



CAIRNMORE HILL WIND FARM REDESIGN

Maximising the local benefits

Working with the local supply chain

If consented, the redesigned Cairnmore Hill Wind Farm is predicted to deliver approximately £1.4 million of economic benefit to the area in the form of jobs, employment and use of local services – in addition to £8.75 million in business rates to The Highland Council over its operational lifetime.

Caitness has a fantastic variety of businesses with extensive experience in wind farm development. Some of the services and materials likely to be required are:

- Civil engineering
- Electrical works and cabling
- Plant hire and crane hire
- Environmental surveyors
- Concrete and aggregates
- Groundworks
- Steel fixing
- Labourers
- Fencers
- Accommodation

RES has a strong track record across Scotland for working with the local supply chain, to maximise the opportunities for local jobs and contracts from its projects.

Your feedback

Commenting on the proposal

Anyone wishing to provide feedback to RES on the final design can do this by filling out a 'comments form' at the exhibitions or online at www.cairnmorehill-windfarm.co.uk. **The closing date for comments is Wednesday 1 June 2022.**

Comments to RES at this time are not representations to the determining authority (The Highland Council). There will be an opportunity to submit representations to the determining authority once the application is submitted.

Exploring community priorities

We are also keen to understand community ideas, aims and priority projects which RES may be able to support should the redesigned Cairnmore Hill Wind Farm receive consent. Please provide any feedback that you may have to us in writing on a 'comments form'.



RES partnership with Edward Mackay Contractors, Brora

www.cairnmorehill-windfarm.co.uk

Appendix 11: Example of visualisation board at exhibition - May 2022

EXISTING VIEW



WIRELINE DRAWING



PHOTOMONTAGE OF PROPOSAL



VIEWPOINT INFORMATION					
Location	305041, 969065	Altitude	52 m	Nearest turbine	T3 @ 1.37km
Viewing distance	812.5 mm	Bearing to centre of photograph	125 degrees	Approximate horizontal field of view	53.5° (planar projection)



View from A836 (near Brims)

CAIRNMORE HILL WIND FARM