

Response by Innerleithen and District Community Council

Bowbeat Wind Farm Operational Period Extension Planning Permission Application

Scottish Borders Council Reference: 24/00571/FUL

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2 July 2024

Innerleithen & District Community Council (IDCC) is submitting this representation to the application to extend the operational period of Bowbeat Wind Farm by 5 years to 14th August 2030. Bowbeat Wind Farm has been operational since 2002 and comprises of 24 turbines, with a total capacity of 31.2MW. The extant planning permission 00/00371/FUL is due to lapse in August 2025.

The proposal is located approximately 10km to the north-west of Innerleithen. Innerleithen & District Community Council (IDCC) is the main host Community Council with the redline boundary largely contained within our area including over 6km of access track from the B709, and the eastern section of the wind farm where the turbines are located.

As a Community Council, we have taken a view on the proposal to extend the operation period of Bowbeat Wind Farm, considering the effects and the overall benefits to our community. As such, we **support the application**.

IDCC takes that view that the long-term generation of sustainable energy is vital to reduce carbon emissions and reverse the effects of climate change, and can eliminate the reliance on imported fossil fuels. Using home-grown renewable energy sources increases energy security and reduces the exposure to wildly fluctuating electricity prices which is a major cause of the cost-of-living crisis affecting so many following on from Russia's invasion of Ukraine. These are the primary reasons for our support and it was a unanimous view from our members.

Given that Bowbeat Wind Farm is already operational the impacts are known IDCC is content that the further operation of the windfarm will result in a continued meaningful contribution.

Our response is focussed on our specific remit, and should be read alongside responses from specialist organisations representing the natural environment.

Expected Benefits

National Planning Framework 4 published by the Scottish Government in February 2023. In relation to wind farms, Policy 11 relates to Energy developments and includes the following:

c) Development proposals will only be supported where they maximise net economic impact, including local and community socio-economic benefits such as employment, associated business and supply chain opportunities.

As a consequence of this new national policy IDCC has been in dialogue with the applicants, RWE. Bowbeat wind farm was originally constructed and built before the Scottish Government Good Practice Principles for Community Benefits from Onshore Renewable Energy Developments were first introduced in 2014. This established the expectation that a community benefit fund of £5,000 per installed MW should be provided for wind farms such as Bowbeat. It is the view of IDCC that this level

of community support should be included in order to ensure that Policy 11 of NPF4 is complied with, and the economic benefits are maximised.

IDCC is pleased that RWE has confirmed in correspondence by email on 27 June 2024 that:

RWE is really committed to supporting the communities in which they operate and will take a case-by-case approach to considering how they continue to support communities in association with any planning application extension. At Bowbeat Wind Farm they would like to build on their informal history of supporting community activities in association with the Bowbeat Wind Farm by providing a community fund for the extension period of the project.

I can confirm that RWE will make community funding available each year of any extension period of the Bowbeat Wind Farm to value of the £5,000 per MW of installed capacity, that is operating.

In line with their usual approach to delivering community funding, RWE's community investment team will support setting up a bespoke, flexible fund, tailored to meet the needs of the local area and with local people at the heart of decision making.

Kind regards

Andrew Sierakowski

Onshore Wind Project Manager

RWE Renewables UK Operations Limited

IDCC notes that as the wind farm has an installed capacity of 31.2MW, a fund of £5,000 per MW equates to £156,000 per annum. IDCC welcomes the opportunity to engage with RWE to establish the fund.

Summary

Innerleithen & District Community Council **supports** the application and trusts that our views and requests are carefully considered by Scottish Borders Council when determining this application.