

Grange Wind Farm



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STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT



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FOREWORD

This Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) has been produced in accordance with the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. It accompanies an application for planning permission for Grange Wind Farm .

The purpose of this statement is to demonstrate the extent to which the emerging proposals for the development of this site have evolved within a thorough and robust programme of stakeholder and community consultation and involvement.

The statement outlines the measures undertaken on behalf of the applicant, to involve the public, statutory consultees and other interested groups and individuals in the development of the Grange Wind Farm. It details the methods of engagement with statutory and non-statutory consultees; the results of the consultation process; and the consideration of responses in project decision-making.

GRANGE WIND FARM PROPOSAL

Grange Wind Farm Ltd proposes to erect seven wind turbines and ancillary structures on land near Burton upon Stather and Flixborough village, for the purpose of generating electricity from wind energy. Figure 1, Volume 3 of the ES shows the site location and regional context of the proposal.

The UK government has forged a commitment to sustainable development and public participation in environmental decision-making has emerged as a procedural obligation for the attainment of a sustainable society, most significantly under the Aarhus Convention (UNECE 1998)¹.

This regard for the concept of public participation has significant implications for energy policy and especially local energy planning. This is reflected in the focus on stakeholder involvement in planning and renewable energy development within government law and policy.

PLANNING POLICY STATEMENT (PSS) 1: DELIVERING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT, December 2005

In the planning statement it is recognised that effective community involvement requires an approach which:

- Tells communities about proposals in good time;
- Enables communities to put forward ideas and suggestions and participate in developing proposals and options. It is not sufficient to invite them to simply comment once these have been worked up;
- Ensures that consultation takes place in locations that are widely accessible; and
- Provides and seeks feedback.

PPS 1 also states that the government's overall approach to community involvement is set out in more detail in the document considered below.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT IN PLANNING: THE GOVERNMENT'S OBJECTIVES 2005

This guidance was published as an accompaniment to PPS 1 and outlines the government's aim to build opportunities for local people to participate in key decisions about their area, as well as the case for community involvement in planning.

- Involvement leads to outcomes that better reflect the views and aspirations and meet the needs of the wider community in all its diversity;
- Public involvement is valuable as a key element of a vibrant and open participatory democracy;
- Involvement improves the quality and efficiency of decisions by drawing on local knowledge and minimising unnecessary and costly conflict;
- Involvement educates all participants about the needs of communities, the business sector and how local government works; and

¹ United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters, 1998

- Involvement helps promote social cohesion by making real connections with communities and offering them a tangible stake in decision-making.

With respect to the above values it is acknowledged that engagement of the local community and interested parties is mutually beneficial – offering advantages to members of the community as well as WDPL as it can enhance and facilitate the development process.

PLANNING AND COMPULSORY PURCHASE ACT 2004

A key item of legislation is the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. This introduced major changes to the planning system in England and Wales and notably provisions for more meaningful community involvement. It requires Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) to produce a Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) within the Local Development Framework, which sets out how the LPA intends to involve the public in the planning process.

THE PLANNING GREEN PAPER 2001

The stimulus for the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and the requirement to produce SCIs was a shift in government policy towards a more streamlined and community friendly planning process, which emerged at the start of the decade with the publication of the Planning Green Paper: 'Planning- Delivering a fundamental change' (December 2001). In the case of major developments its states that:

'...compliance with the terms of the [Council's] statement and its requirements for engaging the community should be a material consideration supporting a planning application. This is in keeping with the Government's view that there is mutual benefit in developers and communities working together to plan developments that are likely to have a major impact on a local area.' (Para 4.23)

The values of the Green Paper and the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 have subsequently been reflected in other items of planning (and energy) policy and guidance, notably: PPS 1: Delivering Sustainable Development (December 2005), and its accompanying guidance Community Involvement in Planning: The Government's Objectives (ODPM, February 2004); PPS 12: Local Spatial Planning (June 2008); Statements of Community Involvement and Planning Applications (December 2004); Environmental Impact Assessment: A guide to the procedures (ODPM, 2003); PPS 22: Renewable Energy (2004); and UK Renewable Energy Strategy (2009). All are relevant to the Grange Wind Farm application.

PLANNING POLICY STATEMENT 22: RENEWABLE ENERGY (2004)

Specific to the planning of renewable energy developments, Planning Policy Statement (PPS) 22: Renewable Energy (ODPM 2004) is directly applicable to the Grange proposal. It states that:

'Developers of renewable energy projects should engage in active consultation and discussion with local communities at an early stage in the planning process, and before a planning application is formally submitted'.

SCI'S AND PLANNING APPLICATIONS (ODPM, December 2004)

This document is a report of a study into SCI preparation, including the approach to consultation in planning applications.

Various factors are set out as a means to assess the extent to which developer consultation can be considered contributory to the requirements of an SCI.

The report also specifies the types of community involvement activities developers may be advised to undertake, including public exhibitions.

THE UK RENEWABLE ENERGY STRATEGY (2009)

The UK Renewable Energy Strategy 2009 (DECC 2009) expands on this communitarian principle and refers to 'outcome' as well as the 'process' dimension of public involvement in renewable energy projects:

'Our expectation is that government will encourage a regime in which all communities in the UK understand how they can contribute effectively to the achievement of energy and climate change goals. It is also our expectation that based on support we provide, developers will follow best practice in sharing benefits of projects and that this becomes the norm.' (Paragraph 6.10).

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT: A GUIDE TO PROCEDURES (ODPM, 2003)

By undertaking an extensive, iterative scoping exercise Grange Wind Farm Ltd has adopted a pro-active consultation strategy similar to that encouraged in more recently published best practice guidelines – Environmental Impact Assessment: A guide to procedures (ODPM, 2003). This recommends early and continuous public participation specifically at key decision-making stages of the EIA process.

NORTH LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCIL STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT (SCI)

North Lincolnshire council issued a revised SCI for public consultation in November 2009. The SCI was finalised and adopted by the council on 14th July 2010, with the stated vision:

'...is to ensure that all sections of the community and stakeholders have the opportunity to be actively involved throughout the planning process. This includes during the preparation of the Local Development Framework and in the decision making process on significant planning applications.'

and goes on to state with reference to 'Involving Community and Stakeholders in Significant Planning Applications':

'Apart from the council's requirement to consult on all planning applications, developers will be encouraged to undertake community involvement for applications which the council considers are likely to have a significant impact on the local community'.

The SCI states in relation to significant planning applications:

- Developers to engage in pre-application discussions with the council and where there is a potentially large scale and/or controversial development to engage with the local community whilst the council maintains an impartial stance.
- To consider the following methods of community involvement: Public Meetings, Public Exhibitions, Development Briefs, Workshops such as 'Enquiry by Design' or 'Planning for Real', Citizen Panels, Consultation Panels, Town/Parish Councils, Media, Website, Yorkshire Planning Aid, Local Architectural or Design Panel.

Local residents are important stakeholders in the wind farm development process. Their detailed local knowledge and interest form a vital input to design considerations. In order to be informed of their views, a public consultation exercise was conducted prior to the original 2008 application. As this application has previously proceeded through a consultation exercise from open day through to a Public Inquiry it is considered unnecessary to conduct a further information day at this time. Adverts will be placed in the local newspapers to inform residents that the application has been submitted.

PUBLIC INFORMATION DAY

The initial Information Day was held on 6th March 2008, at Flixborough Village Hall. The day was advertised by sending out the newsletter included in Appendix 4.1, Volume 4 to over 1,800 local households within approximately 5 km from the site centre. Notices were also sent to local post offices in both Burton upon Stather and Gunness. In addition, a press release was sent to the Scunthorpe Telegraph.

During the Information Day, there was an opportunity to fill in a questionnaire about wind energy and the specific proposal for the site at Grange Wind Farm. A total of 32 people completed the questionnaire on the day and Wind Prospect and RidgeWind have since received 5 completed questionnaires through the post.

In summary:

- 46% of the responses received on the day thought the proposed Grange Wind Farm is to be a positive development. More than half of them reported living within 1 mile of the proposed site.
- 38% of respondents thought the proposed Grange Wind Farm would not be a positive development, most of which reported living within 1 mile.
- The remaining 16% of respondents were unsure on whether the development would be positive or not.

The most common concerns over the proposed development were the visual impact and perceived noise levels of the turbines. Both of these issues are respectively addressed in Chapter 5 and Chapter 8 of this volume.

There were also concerns about the proposed access route. Following the public consultation, the feasibility of an alternative access route for the larger vehicles was studied and as a result, the proposed access route was modified to likely transport turbine components directly to Flixborough Wharf via the River Trent and delivered to site via a new access road through the northern boundary of the Wharf adjacent to the mineral railtrack, as shown in Figure 3, Volume 3.

PRESS AND OTHER INFORMATION SOURCES

As stated above, Grange Wind Farm Ltd will issue a press release to all relevant local and regional media outlets on submission of the application. In addition the developers will commission an advert in the appropriate local newspaper(s).

The RidgeWind website will provide a basis to display the details of the project, the progress of the application and any important aspects that are pertinent. This will include a description of the project, a site location plan as well as a downloadable copy of the Non-Technical Summary. Visitors to the web page will also be informed of the planning application details, the planning officer managing the application and an invitation to seek further information directly from the developer or through the North Lincolnshire Council Planning Portal. The project will also be represented on the Wind Prospect Ltd web pages. A dedicated project email address is made available to allow interested parties to further consult directly with the developers.



COMMUNITY TRUST FUND


As part of the Grange Wind Farm proposal, contributions would be made to a local trust fund. The value of this fund, based on a 7 turbine, 14 MW wind farm, would be £21,000 per annum for the lifetime of the development. We envisage that the fund will be managed by a committee of local residents and used for environmental and educational community projects within the vicinity of the development.

OTHER POTENTIAL DIRECT BENEFITS

Grange Wind Farm Ltd will actively seek to provide further direct benefits to the local area. We envisage this being directly linked to the needs and activities of the surrounding area. Examples of benefits received from the operational Bagmoor wind farm, include donations to assist in rebuilding Normaby Pavillion, to fund playpark equipment at Burton Playing Fields and to offer Scholarships for local school leavers.

Further to this, a targeted electricity subsidy was offered to homes within 1km of the operational Bagmoor site. These residents being offered £250 in the first year of operation and £250 in the second year provided they switched to a green electricity tariff. In excess of 50 homes were included in this scheme.

Should a planning permission be given, Grange Wind Farm Ltd would look to investigate area specific benefits in a similar manner to the approach outlined above.



Through the life time of the development a comprehensive range of community consultation has taken place inclusive of newsletter drops, exhibitions, websites and local/regional press and advertisement. This consultation has helped aid the development process and allowed the project to benefit from a wide variety of input from members of the community.