

## Communicating Safely and Effectively with Local Communities during COVID-19

This document outlines Statkraft's approach to public consultation during a period where social distancing is in place to reduce the spread of the COVID-19 virus. It considers the content of the Chief Planners Letter dated 3 April 2020 which provides the first stage of formal Government Guidance on progressing developments in light of these restrictions.

Statkraft are committed to continuing local engagement on wind farm applications in a safe and transparent way. We will take an innovative approach, using all options available to safely continue with our community consultation responsibilities whilst developing our projects. Although face-to-face meetings and events may not be able to happen until social distancing restrictions are lifted, we are confident that we can continue to facilitate discussions and conduct meaningful engagement in our project areas using a digital first approach.

### A Focus on Effective Communication

Statkraft already employ effective online engagement and host dedicated project websites that enable interaction with the community throughout the planning period. There are a suite of tools and platforms that can be used to conduct conversations with stakeholders and communities as an alternative to physically-attended events which maintain the spirit of best practice consultation and engagement, without putting public health at risk.

The following activities are proposed:

#### 1. Printed Communication

- a. **Newspaper ads** with detailed information on the project, and contact details for further information.
- b. **Newsletters distributed directly to local residents** within an appropriate catchment area, including freepost reply cards and phone number to enable residents without internet to ask questions and provide feedback.
- c. **Community noticeboards** can be used to display posters, where community councils are able to facilitate this

#### 2. Verbal Communication

- a. A **phone number** continues to be available for residents to speak to a member of the project team.
- b. For meetings held online, a **dial-in meeting option** will be made available.

### 3. Online Methods of Communication

The current situation has already transformed the perceptions and acceptance of communicating online. For over a year Statkraft have been communicating with communities via bespoke consultation software which facilitates a wide variety of communications methods.

#### Interactive Events

- a. **Town Hall meetings** allow the team to present to an invited audience, get feedback and controlled Q&A. This can be recorded for playback.
- b. **Digital workshops** allow collaboration with an invited (smaller) audience, to get feedback and participate in interactive conversation.
- c. **Embed pre-recorded videos** on subject specific topics to enable access at any time.

#### Hear Views & Opinions

- a. **Quick Polls** are a survey tool to gauge sentiment on a specific topic.
- b. **Online Forum** allows for ongoing Q&A.
- c. **Online Drop In Sessions** host live chat sessions for the project team to answer questions.

#### Information

- a. All pre-application and planning documents will be available to view on the project website.
- b. An overview of the design iteration and key feedback received will be displayed for projects with planning applications submitted.

#### Advertisements

- a. Targeted advertisements can be utilised to increase awareness of the project and link to the project website, such as local newspaper websites and facebook.

### 4. Next Steps

In setting out the range of engagement methods above, Statkraft are providing reassurance to all stakeholders that it has identified appropriate alternatives to continue public engagement.

We are aware that Scottish Government is looking to issue guidance to developers and local authorities about how to continue with community consultation in a safe and effective manner while social distancing restrictions are in place. We will continue to review the effectiveness of our consultation and engagement techniques, and adapt our approach as necessary. We will monitor any new guidance from the Scottish Government as it emerges and ensure that our approach to consultation reflects best practice, while taking account of local circumstances.



**Alison Hood**

Communications Manager

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