

# Gortloughra Community Consultation Chapter

## Background

Public consultation for the Gortloughra Wind Farm comprised of two phases, the first conducted by EMPower, the former owner of the project, beginning in May 2021 and concluding in January 2024 when the project was acquired by Statkraft. The second phase was conducted by the Statkraft Community Engagement Team from January 2024 - Present. The Statkraft Community Engagement team will continue to be contactable by the local community throughout the lifetime of the project.

## Community Consultation May 2021 – January 2024

The community consultation undertaken by EMPower comprised of:

- newsletters (X5);
- project update letters (x2);
- webinars (X4);
- public events (X2).

EMPower provided project material to 52-54 houses within 2km radius of the proposed Wind Farm.

### Round 1 (May - June 2021) (EMPower)

#### *Newsletter (Annex 1.1)*

The first round of community consultation conducted by EMPower included the first project newsletter. This newsletter was distributed on 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2021. This newsletter contained information on: introduction to project of 9 turbines; Community Benefit Fund Totalling € 267,741 with payments to neighbours up to 2 km; notification of the first project webinar taking place on 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2021.

#### *Webinar (Annex 1.2)*

The first project webinar was held online on the 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2021. The following topics were discussed during the project webinar: An introduction of the project; the proposed project area and lay out of turbines; the Community Benefit Fund; social impact; hydrology and ornithology; shadow flicker/sound; construction and civil engineering/archaeology and; the Virtual Consultation Room.

- Project update letter
- Newspaper advert

### Round 2 (Feb 2022) (EMPower)

#### *Newsletter (Annex 2.1 and Annex 2.1.1)*

The second round of community consultation conducted by EMP included the second project newsletter which was distributed on 2nd February 2022. This newsletter contained information on: project updates; the upcoming webinar; and the first in-person event.

- Webinar
- Newspaper advert
- First in-person public event was held in February 2022 at the Dunmanway Park Hotel and was advertised in the local paper a week prior to the event.

### **Summary Numbers Round 2**

#### **(Figures based on receptor file Annex 2.1.1)**

Total Number Houses Delivered: 61

Total Number Missed: 8

Number of Derelict: 2

Total of Houses Received Material: 51

### Round 3 (July 2022) (EMPower)

- Project update letter distributed 16<sup>th</sup> July 2022 (Annex 3.1 and Annex 3.1.1)

### **Summary Numbers Round 3**

#### **(Figures are based on Annex 3.1.1)**

Total Number Houses Delivered: 59

Total Number Missed: 3

Total Number Received Material: 56

### Round 4 (March-April 2023) (EMPower)

- Project update letter (Annex 4.1)

The second letter distributed to local residents within the 2km on the 27<sup>th</sup> March 2023 provided an update on the timeline of the project. The letter outlined that the project submission date would be delayed until summer 2023.

- Newsletter (Annex 4.2 and Annex 4.2.1)

The Fourth round of community consultation conducted by EMP included the third project newsletter which was distributed on 2nd April 2023. This newsletter contained information on: the proposed project; notification of the webinar taking place on the 12<sup>th</sup> April 2023; it included 5 photomontages; turbine layout; design process and the Community Benefit Fund.

- Webinar (Annex 4.3)

The third project webinar was held online on the 12<sup>th</sup> April 2023. The following topics were discussed: Site Screening Design Iteration 2; grid connection; TDR route assessment; Community Benefit Fund and; the project schedule.

### **Summary Numbers Round 4**

#### **(Figures based on Annex 4.2.1)**

Total Number Houses Delivered: 52 houses

Total Number Missed: 3 houses

Total Number Received Material: 49 houses

## Round 5 (June 2023) (EMPower)

- Newsletter (Annex 5.1, Annex 5.1.1 and Annex 5.1.2)

The fourth project newsletter was distributed in June 2023. This newsletter contained information on: Design Iteration 3; proposed project; project updates; Community Benefit Fund; it included 3 photomontages; site map and layout and; TDR proposal.

### **Summary numbers Round 5 (Figures based on Annex 5.1.2)**

Total Number Houses Delivered: 54 houses

Total Number Missed: 0 houses

Total Number Received Material: 54 houses

## Round 6 (November – December 2023) (EMPower)

- Newsletter (Annex 6.1, Annex 6.1.1 and Annex 6.1.2)

The fifth project newsletter was distributed in November 2023. This newsletter contained information on: Introduction Design Iteration 3(a); proposed project with reduction of turbines by 1; project updates; 3 photomontages; site map layout; indicative TDR route map; a reduction of the Community Benefit Fund in line with reduction of MW output due to the loss of turbine.

- Webinar - 28<sup>th</sup> November 2023
- Newspaper advert
- Public Event

The second public event was held in the Dunmanway Park Hotel on the 4<sup>th</sup> December 2023. This event showcased infographics and offered information on the Irish Wind Energy and renewable energy sector. Members of the design team were present to answer queries and to discuss the proposed project. A total of 9 members of the public attended this event.

### **Summary numbers Round 6 (Figures based on Annex 6.1.2)**

- Total Number Houses Delivered: 54 houses
- Total Number Missed: 4 houses
- Total Number Received Material: 50 houses

## **Community Consultation January 2024 – Present (Statkraft)**

In preparation for the second period of public consultation, conducted by Statkraft Ireland, a Community Liaison Strategy (CLS) was developed by the Community Engagement Team in Statkraft. The CLS involved desk research on the local area including research on the 2016 Census figures, the County and Local Development Plans and feedback received from previous community consultation conducted by EMPower. This was in order to gain an understanding of the local heritage, people and business environment. Additionally, the appointment of a dedicated Community Liaison Officer (CLO) as the main point of contact between the public and the Statkraft Project Team, and how the CLO was to engage with the public throughout the project, was a central part of the CLS. The CLS is based on

the 'Code of Practice for Wind Energy Development in Ireland Guidelines for Community Engagement' and the Aarhus Convention.

The Statkraft Gortloughra CLS was built around key cornerstones such as our commitments to:

- Engage with the local community in an open, honest, and transparent manner;
- Provide clear and understandable information on the project;
- Encourage feedback from local community and to use this information to inform the design and development of the project and;
- Inspire a sense of community ownership of and pride in the project and to instil a sense that their contributions will have shaped the outcome.

The Statkraft Community Engagement Team conducted two rounds of door-to-door engagement with the local residents living within a 2 km radius of the proposed project. This was done in order to introduce Statkraft and the Community Engagement Team after the project acquisition in early 2024. In total there are 74 residential properties occupied within the 2 km radius surrounding the proposed Gortloughra Project and 15 residential properties occupied within the 1 km radius. Engagement was extended to a certain number of properties up to 2km radius. Of the 74 residential properties 7 were either vacant, under construction or belonging to elderly residents which the CLO was asked 'not to disturb'. In relation to these elderly residents, project material was left with adjacent neighbours who agreed to pass on the project material.

There were three stages to the community consultation process;

1. The first round of consultation took place in April 2024 and consisted of meeting with residents in the immediate 2 Km radius of the project. The CLO team went door-to-door visiting residents, supplying project material and in cases when it was not possible to speak with the resident, a 'Sorry I Missed You' card was left to encourage residents to arrange a time for the CLO team to return and discuss the project.
2. A second round of consultation was conducted in August 2024, which followed the same process and was used to present the final project design and inform the residents of the upcoming planning submission and how to access the planning documents online.
3. The third round of consultation took place in November 2024 and consisted of distributing a newsletter to all occupied residential properties within the 2km radius of the proposed development. This Newsletter contained information on the upcoming planning submission.

The dedicated project CLO has remained in contact with residents and community groups in the area since April 2024 and will continue to be contactable, by both phone and email, throughout the lifespan of the Gortloughra Project.

Results from three rounds of community consultation are highlighted below;

### Round 1 Statkraft Community Consultation

- No. of residential properties identified - 72
- No. of residential properties without eircodes - 16
- Derelict / vacant homes - 7
- The CLO had face-to-face meetings with 39 residents living within the 2 km radius, 12 of which were living within the 1 km radius
- There were 4 requested meetings with the CLO during the consultation period.
- 84 residential properties received project information through the first project booklets

There were 45 callbacks to residential properties where the CLO was unable to initially speak with residents

## Round 2 Statkraft Community Consultation

- No. of residential properties identified - 74
- No. Of residential properties without eircodes - 18
- Derelict / vacant homes - 7
- The CLO had face-to-face meetings with 35 residents living within the 2 km radius, 11 of which were living within the 1 km radius
- There were 3 requested meetings with the CLO during the consultation period.
- 86 residents received project information through the second project booklet

There were 40 callbacks to residential properties where the CLO was unable to initially speak with residents

- In cases where the Community Engagement Team were aware of residential properties that were holiday homes, letters were sent via registered post. These letters also included both project booklets. There were 5 of these letters sent after the second round of consultation had ended.

## Round 3 Statkraft Community Consultation

- No. of residential properties identified - 74
- No. Of residential properties without eircodes - 18
- Derelict / vacant homes – 7
- 59 residents received project update newsletter
- The CLO had face-to-face meetings with 14 residents living within the 1km radius
- In cases where the Community Engagement Team were aware of residential properties that were holiday homes or there were no accessible post boxes, the project update newsletter was sent via registered post. There were 8 of these letters sent after the third round of consultation had ended.

## Emails and phone calls

- The CLO sent 21 emails in relation to the proposal (as of December 2024)
- The CLO received 11 emails in relation to the proposal (as of December 2024)
- There were 6 phone calls from residents over the three consultation periods

## Letters to local councillors

The local councillors of the West Cork Municipal District were written to to inform them of the proposed project and the upcoming planning submission to Cork County Council.

## Project Booklets, Project Newsletter, Project Website, Virtual Consultation Room, Consultation Feedback Form and Subscription Form

## **Project Booklets**

### **First project booklet**

The first project booklet distributed during the first round of community consultation was an 8-page booklet that provided details on: the type of project being considered; why the project was being considered in the Shehy More/Coole Mountain area; a map of the proposed project site along with indicative turbine locations; how the residents and the wider community could provide feedback on the proposed project either through the online feedback form or through direct contact with the CLO; Community Benefit Funds and how they work; and lastly on where people could get further information. CLO contact and website details were clearly outlined on this booklet and were aided by a QR code which directed consultees to the project website.

In addition, a separate booklet was distributed, alongside the project booklet, which introduced Statkraft to the residents as the new entity which was developing and managing the Gortloughra project after a handover from EMPower.

- There were 81 project booklets distributed during the first consultation period.

### **Second project booklet**

The second project booklet contained information on the final project design and was centred around the feedback we received from the first round of consultation with the community. This included: a detailed map of the final design; information on the Near Neighbour Funds; the associated Community Benefit Fund; a map of the proposed turbine delivery route; the subsequent planning applications for the Turbine delivery Route and the Substation/Grid Connection; information on environmental and habitat considerations and; information on the Project Update Subscription Form, VCR, Consultation Feedback Form and the CLO's contact information.

- There were 83 project booklets distributed during the second consultation period.

### **Project Newsletter**

This project newsletter was developed specifically to update the community on the upcoming planning submission (i.e. the exact date of submission and how to access the planning documentation online) and to thank the community for their engagement.

- There were 59 project newsletters distributed

### **Project Website**

A project-specific website (<https://projects.statkraft.ie/gortloughra-wind-farm/>) was created for this proposal. The website includes project information and updates, digitised versions of the Project Booklets (x2) which are outlined above, and information on climate change, renewable energy and biodiversity. The website went live in April 2024 to coincide with the commencement of the Statkraft community engagement period. The purpose of the website is to provide a platform for the local and wider stakeholder community to engage with project material and easily source up-to-date project information. The information on the website has been continually updated as the project progresses. The aim has been to keep the information clear, concise, and engaging on this website.

The website was visited 658 times by over 469 users between April 2024 – December 2024.

### **Virtual Consultation Room (VCR)**

A VCR (<https://projects.statkraft.ie/gortloughra-wind-farm/virtual-consultation-room/>) was developed for the Gortloughra project. The VCR was designed to enable people to engage with the project material virtually. The online site consisted of: a full set of photomontages; information on the EIAR process and outcomes; information on the community benefits associated with the project; digitalised booklets (in both English and Irish) and; detailed maps of the proposed project and turbine delivery route. The VCR was visited 59 times between September 2024 – December 2024.

#### *Consultation Feedback Form*

A specialised online form was created to capture feedback from the local community (<https://projects.statkraft.ie/gortloughra-wind-farm/contact-us/>). The form was accessible through QR codes on the Project Booklets (x2) and the 'Sorry we missed you' cards left with residents who the CLO was unable to engage with in person during initial door-to-door consultations.

#### *Subscription Form*

In order to keep residents informed of project updates, the Community Liaison Team developed a Project Update Subscription Form. Residents could subscribe to this service through the project website or by scanning the QR codes on the project booklets and 'Sorry I missed you cards'. This tool was developed as a result of feedback from the first round of consultation with residents, many of whom expressed an interest in being regularly kept up to date with project developments. This service was offered via the project booklets, 'Sorry I missed you cards', the project website and was also referenced during face-to-face consultations with residents. There were 2 subscribers to the Project Update Subscription Form and therefore 2 project updates were sent via email to the subscribers.

#### *Irish language Consultation and Project Material*

As the project is situated near a Gaeltacht area, project information was also provided in the Irish Language. Both Statkraft project booklets were translated into the Irish language. The digital copies are available to view on both the VCR and the project website. Additionally, physical copies of the translated project booklets were made available in the post office in Ichigeela.

#### *Engagement with Local Special Interest Groups*

##### *Dunmanway Trails Management Committee*

The Statkraft Community Engagement Team had two consultations with the Dunmanway Trails Management Committee, one in person and one telephone consultation.

##### *Cork Environmental Form*

The Statkraft Community Engagement Team attempted to make contact with the Cork Environmental Form via email however no reply was received.

##### *Dunmanway Historical and Cultural Association*

The Statkraft Community Engagement Team attempted to make contact with the Dunmanway Historical and Cultural Association via email however no reply was received.

##### *Cork Public Participation Network*

The Statkraft Community Engagement Team attempted to make contact with the Cork Public Participation Network via email however no reply was received.

### **Key Issues Raised During Consultation**

The main areas of concern that were recorded through one-to-one interactions with local residents during the door-to-door consultations, as well as through our Consultation Feedback Form, were:

#### *Visuals*

How the turbines would look on the rural landscape was a topic of relevant concern for the local residents. If residents voiced this concern, photo montages would be referred to so that these concerns would be met.

### The Community Benefit Fund

Feedback on how the community would like to see the Community Benefit Fund (CBF) spent in their area was actively sought by the CLO. Information on the Renewable Energy Support Scheme (RESS) was provided through the project material outlined above and also during the one-to-one consultations with residents. The overriding message received from residents was that the CBF should benefit those living in closest proximity to the proposed development.

### Water quality

The community were particularly interested in understanding how Statkraft would ensure that water quality in the Shehy Mountain area would be protected. The Community Engagement Team engaged with the project management team and the appointed consultants to bring forward the requested information to residents. It was also relayed to residents that the full hydrology report would be available to view along with all other EIAR documentation in the planning submission.

### Biodiversity

Biodiversity featured strongly in the team's conversations with the community. The team informed residents about the EIAR which would include extensive studies of the area and its biodiversity and would also highlight measures which would be undertaken by Statkraft to ensure the upmost protection of the natural environment, along with the any additional lands which were acquired for habit enhancement.

### Conclusion

The Community Liaison Strategy for the Gortloughra Windfarm Proposal was designed and implemented to maximise participation and dialogue in the community and with Statkraft. The Statkraft Community Liaison Officer through door-to-door consultation with residents living within the 2km radius enabled all residents to be kept up to date with information and an opportunity to participate in the design of the project. The CLO hopes that this will result in greater community ownership and local pride in this project if it is granted planning.