

Strathy North Wind Farm



COMMUNITY CONSULTATION SUMMARY REPORT

Details of the top three legacy projects requested by residents in the community council areas benefitting from the SSE Strathy North Wind Farm Community Benefit Fund.



This Community Consultation took place between March and October 2018 and a full report is available. This report summarises its findings

Data collected and analysed by:



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Bettyhill residents completed 36 surveys and 22 people attended the afternoon tea event in July. From the responses received, below are the top three priorities:

1. Improvement to tourist facilities

The NC500 has substantially increased visitor numbers in the area, but the amenities have not improved to meet the demand. Requests were made for:

- Waste-emptying facilities for Motorhomes, both grey water and chemical-toilet waste; the current lack of facilities means tourists leave waste in inappropriate places and residents are concerned about health issues.
- Parking needs to be improved. The most common concern was the view of Torrisdale beach (where improved access is also needed), as tourists are causing road hazards by stopping in dangerous places. Parking was also mentioned for the museum, and spaces need to be created for coaches.
- The creation of a Visitor Centre was seen as a possible solution to house the new facilities; some disused buildings were suggested as potential sites.

2. Community care organisation

Many residents felt that the NHS service being offered did not meet the needs of the elderly and infirm and the current solution, of friends and family bridging the gap, is not robust. Ideally a community care organisation would offer a wider range of services than the NHS, which would better meet community need. This was echoed in all three community council areas.

- First priority is improving the amount of time carers are with patients, as fifteen minutes was not considered enough to meet most people's needs.
- Tackling social isolation, with volunteer befrienders visiting those in need, for companionship.
- Public transport is failing many, particularly settlements further from the main road, so assistance with travel is needed, facilitating people attending doctor appointments or shopping trips.

3. Low-cost housing

There is a lack of housing in the area, with holiday home demand exacerbating the problem. As a result, residents are either priced out of the market or properties do not become available. Correspondence was received, highlighting the issues faced by three local people. Overcrowding was a common theme, with families not able to access bigger homes when their families grew.

Melvich residents completed 51 surveys and 24 people attended events either in Strathy or Melvich. Their top three priorities were:

1. Melvich Hall

There was huge support from Melvich residents to renovate or rebuild the hall, with people in other community council areas voting for it too.

- Renovate – it was felt that the building has historical value and people were sentimentally attached to it. Priorities for renovating would be the heating, insulation and a larger kitchen.
- Rebuild – demolish the current building and build something more fit for purpose. This could then be used as the community café, with the meals-on-wheels service based there. Revenue from tourists using the café would help cover the running costs.
- Rebuild on a new site – families mainly voted for finding a new site for the hall, one not so close to the main road which is dangerous for children, but the usage would be as above.

2. Development Trust Worker

Due to the amount of money coming into the area, the consensus was to form a Development Trust and employ a worker to ensure projects were managed and completed. The only issue was how this would be accomplished and who would be employed. Discussions included:

- One Trust, with one worker who worked impartially for all three areas. In this instance it was believed that the worker should not live in any of the three community council areas.
- One Trust with Melvich having its own accountable employee. It was felt that this person should be a local, as they would understand the issues.
- Three Trusts, with the Melvich Trust employing their own worker. This was probably the least favoured option.

3. Community Care provision

Many concerns were raised at the proposed closing of Sinclair Court, not only how this would affect the older population but also the repurposing of the building. There were also fears about the deteriorating NHS service and how people do not receive a good standard of care. Their comments repeated those in Bettyhill, although here people suggested that the meals-on-wheels service be run from the new hall too, along with the community café. The most popular needs identified were:

- The priority is a service where carers turn up and give people more time, rather than small slots where carers are rushed, or not turning up at all.
- Creating a befriending section to help combat isolation.
- Offering a community transport service, so that people can attend hospital appointments or social events, and can get out of the house.
- Meals-on-wheels service for the elderly and infirm.

STRATHY

Strathy residents completed 32 surveys and 17 people attended the lunch in Strathy Hall. From the responses received, the top three priorities were:

1 Hall renovation

The hall at Strathy is generally well-liked, particularly as a good central space for events, but there were issues that needed to be addressed:

- The hall is too cold in winter and this must be prioritised. Suggestions included lowering the ceiling, adding thermal insulation and a new heating system.
- A new kitchen needs to be fitted and then it could be used as a community café, offering facilities to tourists to help cover the costs of the meals-on-wheels service, which could also be run from the hall.

2 Improvements to transport

All ages and abilities were concerned about access to transport and supported community intervention to help tackle the issue. This included:

- Community transport so that all ages can go out at night, from children to pensioners.
- Offering a subsidised taxi service so that people can get to the buses, and get into work.
- Assistance in getting non-drivers to appointments
- Help for people with mobility issues.

3. Community Care provision

Concerns here duplicated those in Bettyhill and Melvich, with the need for a service to supplement the NHS provision a priority. This included:

- The highest priority was residents receiving a better level of care, with carers having more time and turning up at the allotted times.
- Offering a befriending service to help combat isolation.
- Offering social events to get people moving and out of their homes.
- Meal-on-wheels with traditional Scottish meals