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Evolving social responses during the early life of an offshore windfarm

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https://www.brookes.ac.uk/Research/Units/TDE/Groups/SCIA

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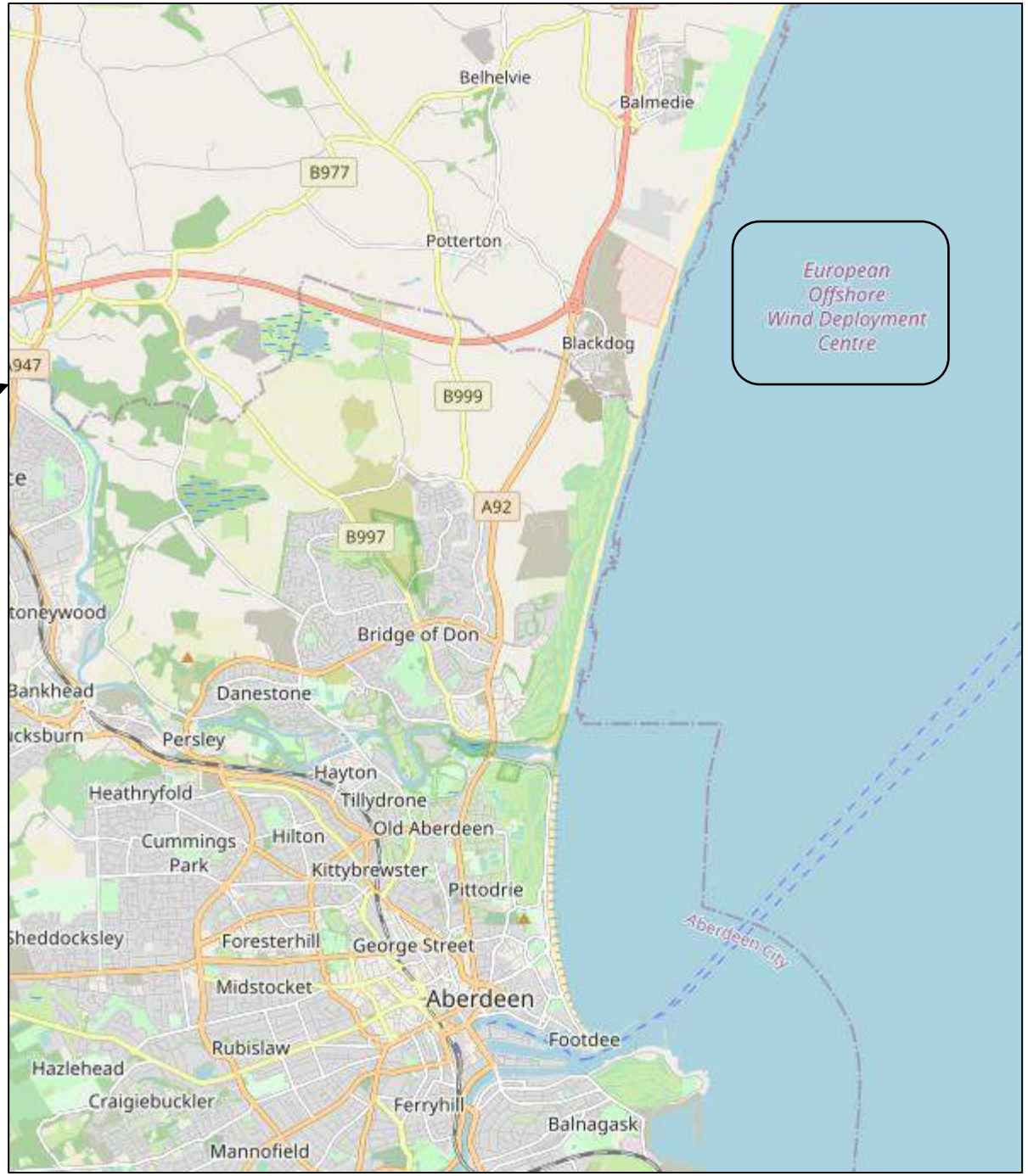

Source: OpenStreetMap.org

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Presentation content:

1. Background to the EOWDC and the consenting process in Scotland
2. Role of EIA
3. Social responses:
    1. Pre-consent phase
    2. Construction phase
    3. One year into operation
4. What can we learn from this for future proposed offshore windfarms

View of European Offshore Wind Deployment Centre (EOWDC) (Aberdeen Offshore Wind Farm) from Balmedie beach, July 2019

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Background to EOWDC

The European Offshore Wind Deployment Centre (EOWDC)

The European Offshore Wind Deployment Centre (EOWDC) is Scotland's largest offshore wind test and demonstration facility.

READ MORE

> Aberdeen City and Shire is emerging as a key location for renewables by successfully transferring its world-class oil and gas expertise into the sector and AREG has done much to advance this through a broad range of initiatives. It has acted as a catalyst in driving further investment in the local economy by engaging with companies, Government, public bodies and existing projects and we have been pleased to support their efforts. Scottish Enterprise will continue to engage with AREG as we increase Scotland's use of renewable energy.
>
> **Scottish Enterprise**

Consenting process in Scotland

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Legislative context - major OWFs require an EIA, leading to EIS document

Scotland: separate EIA assessment and consent processes for offshore and onshore elements of major OWF developments.

- offshore elements (wind turbines) consented by Scottish Government
- onshore elements (e.g. transmission lines and sub-stations) consented by the relevant local authority.

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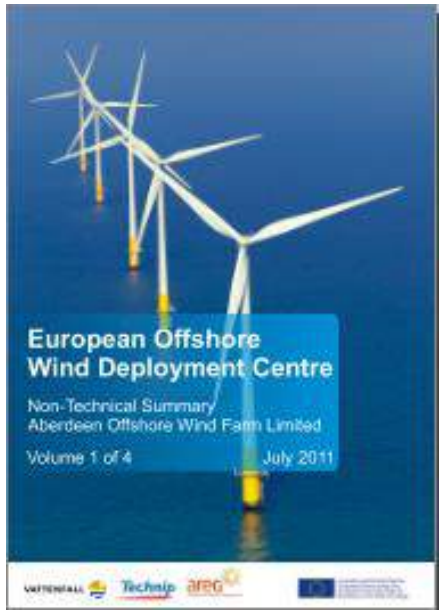
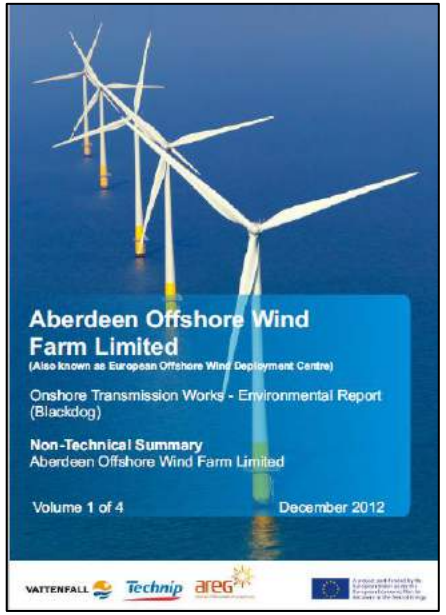
Key steps in EIA:

- baseline studies: understanding the social and economic characteristics of the project
- baseline studies: understanding the local social and economic environment baseline
- scoping: clarifying the key socio-economic issues
- impact prediction
- assessing impact significance
- mitigation and enhancement of impacts
- monitoring of impacts, and associated measures



Importance in assessing OWF impacts

- *'Out of sight, out of mind?'*
- But do come ashore, and may be visible
- Social licence to operate -- social acceptance of a project by a local community is particularly important, involving issues of trust and fairness and a process of community engagement
- Importance of local content – for remote and economically distressed areas



Social responses: Pre-consent phase

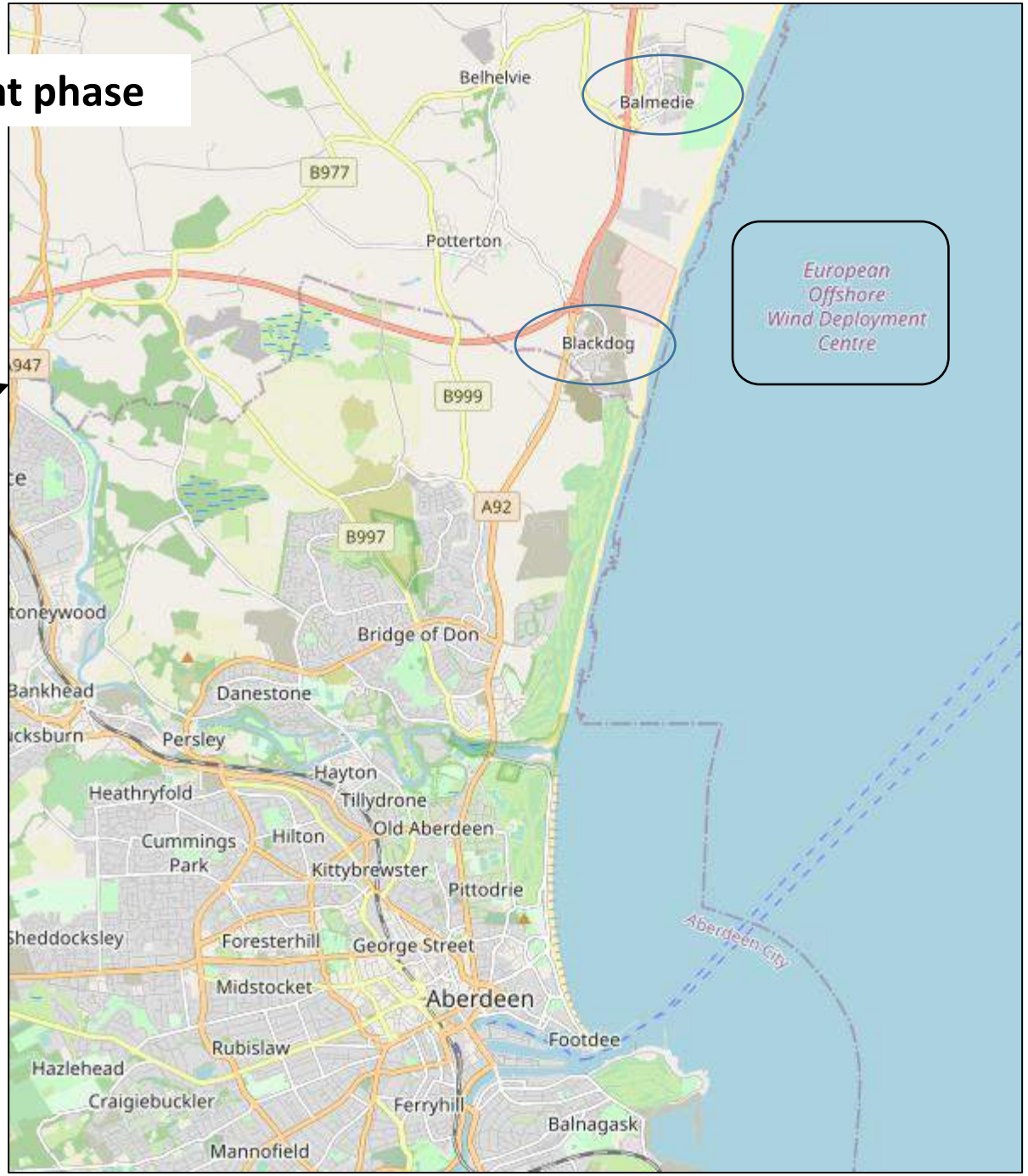


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Figure 5: Prominent Words Associated with the Comment Supporters of AOWF

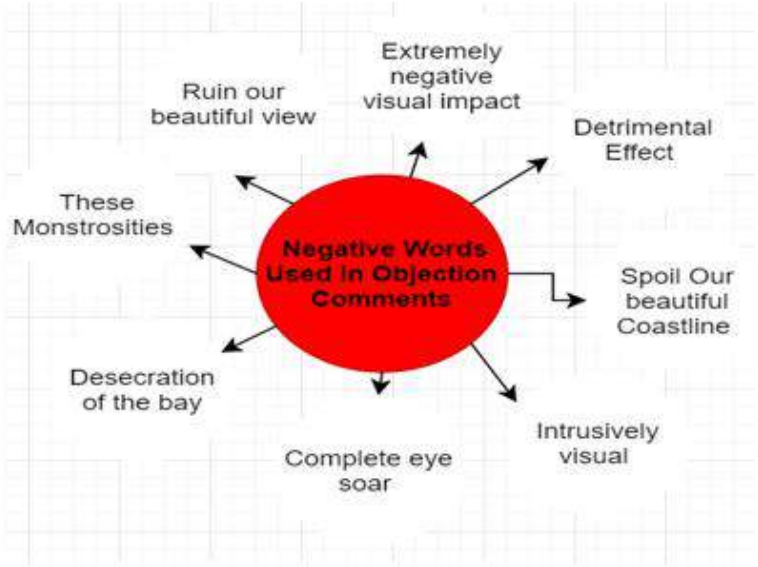

Figure 6: Prominent Words Associated with the Comment Objectors to the AOWF

Search The Guardian UK edition

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Donald Trump takes campaign against windfarms to UK supreme court

Republican presidential contender and golf course owner says planned turbines would be 'monstrous' blight on Aberdeenshire coastline

Owen Bowcott *Legal affairs correspondent*

@owenbowcott

Thu 8 Oct 2015 14.27 BST

▲ Supreme court judges reject an appeal by Donald Trump to prevent a windfarm being built near his golf course in Aberdeenshire Guardian

Owen Bowcott *Legal affairs correspondent, and* **Esther Addley**

Wed 16 Dec 2015 14.23 GMT

Focus group findings at the micro scale on local communities:

- Some impact on social cohesion within the community – some vocal objectors but larger numbers 'who generally don't mind'.
- Historic legacies (landfilling) and multiple other developments happening at the same time – community felt 'blighted'.

Survey findings:

Positive:

- sense of pride-demonstrating Scotland's commitment to renewables;
- I love the look of windfarms, they are beautiful;
- clean energy is beneficial to everyone;
- benefits for jobs and the environment; can take over when oil runs out.

Very few negative comments, but some examples included:

- possible disruption to wildlife/sea-life;
- disruptive onshore infrastructure;
- visual disbenefits.

Social responses: Construction phase

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Summary of community survey responses on actual experience of potential impacts during construction stage

Potential impact	Not experienced	Less than expected	More than expected	As expected
Traffic	60%	16%	7%	17%
Visual impacts during onshore construction	21%	22%	6%	51%
Project bringing benefits to local economy	40%	13%	1%	46%
Project providing local employment opportunities	47%	12%	4%	37%
Project bringing change to local community	39%	21%	6%	34%
Visual impacts of turbine installation	27%	7%	11%	55%
Project providing local education opportunities	41%	15%	10%	34%
Project bringing social benefits	44%	15%	7%	34%

Social responses:
One year into operation

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Survey in August/September 2019, one year into operation, 51% of respondents felt they were '*surprised how close to the shore it is but not bothered by it*'. The biggest 'feeling' in relation to the windfarm was that it was '*good to see clean energy being generated*' (80%). However, a number of qualitative comments indicate some conflicted viewpoints e.g. *'not great for the seascape but the renewable energy is necessary'*.

Summary of community survey responses on actual experience of potential impacts on year into operation and maintenance stage.

Potential impact	Not experienced	Less than expected	More than expected	As expected
Traffic	62%	11%	2%	25%
Visual impacts from onshore component of AOWF	29%	17%	13%	41%
Project bringing benefits to local economy during operation	42%	**16%**	7%	35%
Project providing local employment opportunities	47%	14%	6%	33%
Project bringing change to community character	46%	12%	7%	35%
Visual impacts of offshore turbines	22%	13%	**21%**	44%
Project providing local education opportunities	45%	14%	4%	37%
Project bringing social benefits	49%	16%	7%	28%

What can we learn from this for future proposed offshore windfarms?

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Argument	Percentage out of all arguments fielded
Arguments primarily raised against offshore wind farms	
Aesthetic qualities of the landscape	21.8
Nature conservation	15.1
Emotional arguments	7.6
Shipping safety	3.6
Other categories	8.0
Doubts raised (qualified support)	
Feasibility/technology/financing	4.4
Economic viability	4.6
Other	6.2
Arguments primarily raised in support of offshore wind farms	
Renewable/clean form of energy generation	23.3
Creates employment in the region	5.2
Counteracts climate change	0.2

Selected arguments fielded in opposition to and support of offshore wind farming.
Source: Table 3 in Gee K and Burkhard B (2010) Cultural ecosystem services in the context of offshore wind farming: a case study from the west coast of Scheleswig-Holstein. Ecological Complexity 7 pp349-358

What can we learn from this for future proposed offshore windfarms?

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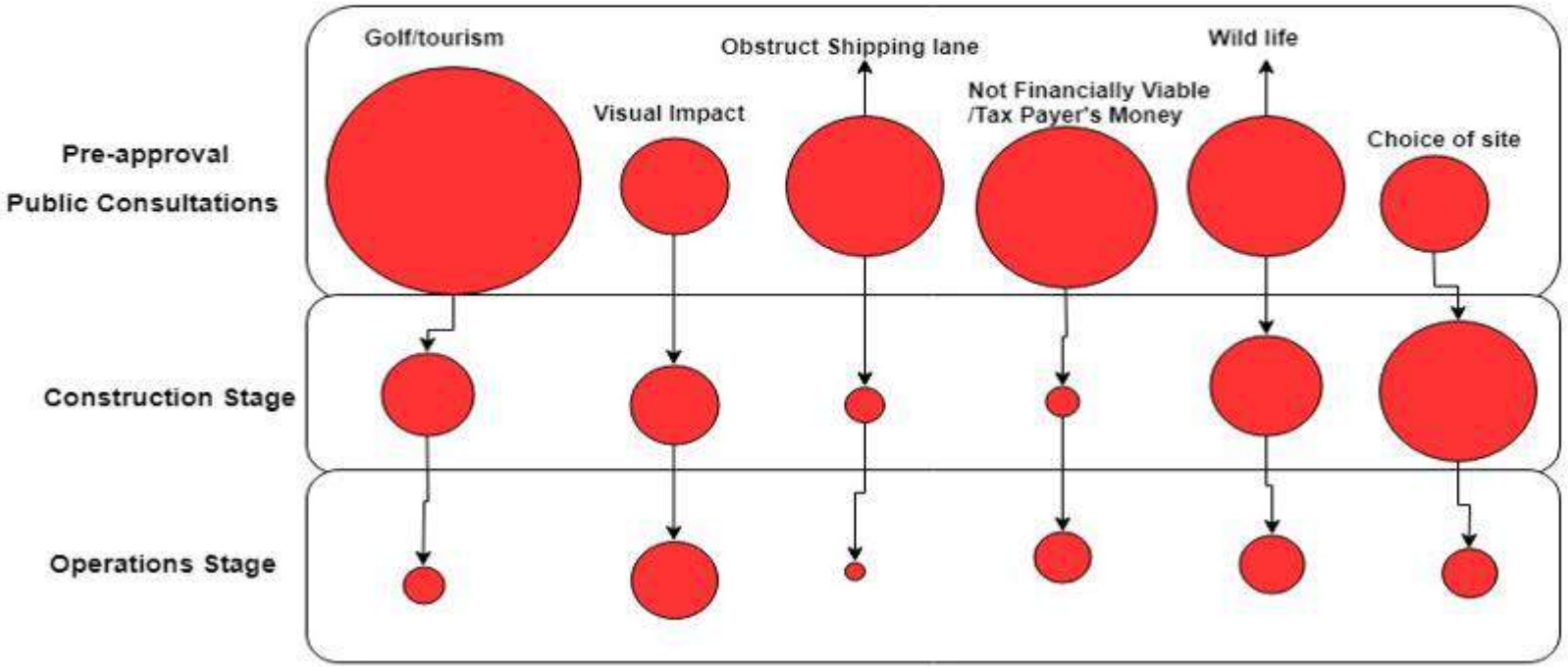
Tracking the changing media perceptions over the Aberdeen OWF project timeline

(a) Showing the spread and degree of dominance of **negative themes** across all stages of the project (shape sizes indicate the frequency of mention of the issues identified).



A graphic representation of how the major negative themes in public perception dominated the different stages of the project

What can we learn from this for future proposed offshore windfarms?

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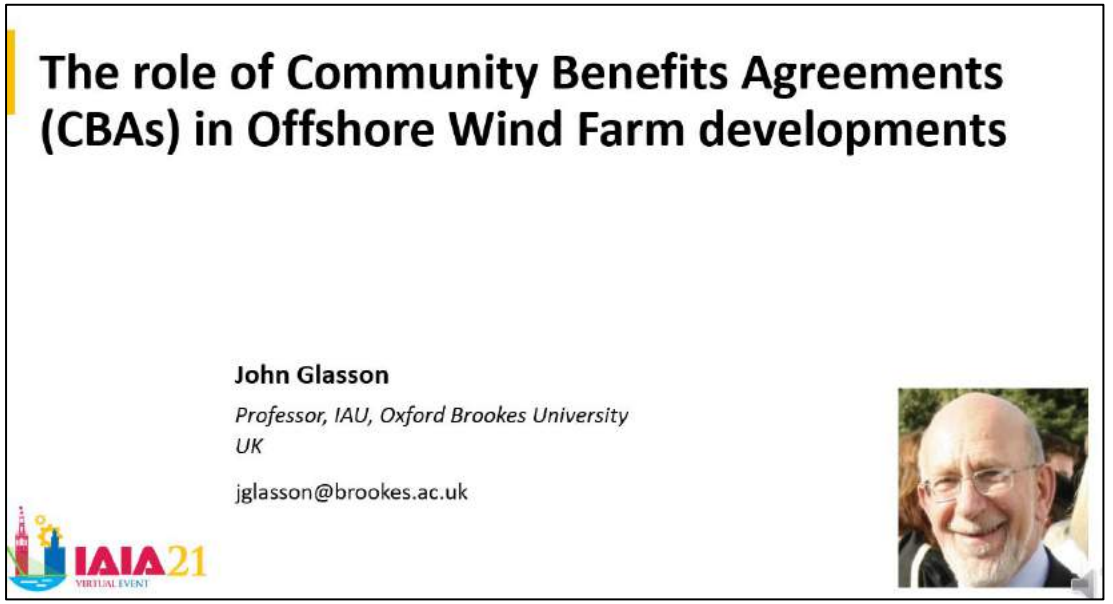
Table 11.4: Responses to statements, which reflect 'feelings' about the EOWDC during first year of O&M

a) It's brilliant	b) It looks great	c) I'm surprised how close to shore it is but not bothered by it	d) It upsets me that it is so close to the shore	e) I like to watch the turbines move	f) I prefer when the turbines are still
5%	7%	51%	24%	32%	5%
g) I don't enjoy the view of them	h) I would like to be able to view them close up by boat	i) They spoil the seascape	j) They enhance the seascape	k) I'd like to see more offshore windfarms	l) I get excited when I see them
24%	29%	29%	15%	37%	7%

Table 11.5: Responses to statements, which reflect their opinion of the EOWDC in relation to wider issues

a) Good to see clean energy being generated	b) I understand why we need offshore windfarms, but they should not be here	c) Windfarms should always be further offshore than this one	d) Its presence effects the area in a positive way	e) Its presence effects the area in a negative way
80%	17%	32%	17%	15%
f) I am more drawn to the coast due to its presence	g) I do not visit the coast as much as I used to due to its presence	h) I now have more understanding of renewable energy technology then I used to	i) Originally, I did not support the windfarm but now my opinion has changed	j) Before the windfarm was constructed, I could not image it being here but now it is part of the geography of the area
2%	10%	29%	7%	37%

For more on the role of community benefit agreements please listen to this related presentation:



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Thank you and to find further information visit our project website:

https://www.brookes.ac.uk/research/units/tde/projects/theow

A recording of the webinar launching our 'Good Practice Guidance on Assessing the Socio-Economic Impacts of Offshore Windfarms' and a link to download the document is available on this website.

Let's continue the conversation!

Post questions and comments via chat in the IAIA21 platform.

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