

**Appendix J:**  
**Community Engagement Plan**





PREPARED FOR:

**Natural Forces Wind Inc.**

PROJECT:

**Community Engagement Plan**

Gaetz Brook Wind Farm

June 2013

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## **1 INTRODUCTION**

Natural Forces Wind Inc. (Natural Forces) is proposing to develop a one-turbine wind farm near the community of Gaetz Brook in the Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM). This 2.3MW wind energy project is being developed under the Nova Scotia Department of Energy Community Feed in Tariff (ComFIT) program. A ComFIT contract was awarded to Wind4All Communities, a Community Economic Development Corporation, for this 2.3MW project in the May 2012; this project will be administered by Natural Forces.

Natural Forces is an established, privately owned wind energy developer based in Halifax Nova Scotia. Natural Forces developed and is part owner of the 150MW Kent Hills wind farm near Moncton, New Brunswick. The company also recently commissioned its first wind farm in Nova Scotia, the 4.6MW Fairmont wind farm near the town of Antigonish. The Fairmont Wind Farm is majority owned by Natural Forces, and was equity financed through a Community Economic Development Investment Fund (CEDIF). The Proponent is currently working on developing other projects in Nova Scotia, as well as British Columbia.

This Community Engagement Plan outlines the approach and general methods of engagement proposed by Natural Forces. Engagement of the community forms an integral part of the proposed Gaetz Brook Wind Farm development. This plan has been prepared to guide the engagement activities of Natural Forces as it plans, designs, constructs and operates its one-turbine wind farm in the community of. While specific engagement activities are presented, this plan also incorporates flexibility to allow Natural Forces to respond to the needs of the community as the project progresses. Natural Forces is committed to addressing, to the best of their abilities, concerns pertaining to this proposed development raised by local residents and community members.

## **2 BACKGROUND**

### **2.1 Project Overview**

The turbine is proposed to be situated on privately-owned land in the community of Gaetz Brook. The site is approximately 2.5 km east of Head of Chezzetcook, 5.5km southwest of Musquodoboit Harbour and 9 km east of Porters Lake. To the south of the site is Highway 107 and to the north is Highway No.7, also known as Marine Drive.

The lands under option consist of four land parcels owned by 10 different land owners. The land is currently used for wood harvesting and for the use of off-highway vehicles such as ATVs. Land surrounding the Project land parcels is primarily used as residential land; land to the west of the project site is currently used as an industrial park. The project land is located in HRM Planning Districts 8 & 9 and is zoned as Rural Wind Zone (RW-1); that is, wind turbine generators are permitted with a minimum setback of 1000m.

The community of Gaetz Brook and surrounding communities of Porters Lake, Musquodoboit Harbour and Chezzetcook has a population of approximately 10,000 people (Statistics Canada, 2011). The community is small with sparsely spaced rural development. Points of interest within

the community include a community center, firehall and Gaetz Brook Junior High School. There is an industrial park located immediate west of the Project site which is used for small scale fabrication and other local industrial businesses. There are a total of 338 dwellings within a 2,000 m radius of the proposed turbine location. The turbine will not be located closer than 1 km of residential dwellings.

The 2.3MW turbine will have a tower height ranging from 78 m to 98 m and blade length of approximately 46 m. From base to blade tip, the turbine will have a maximum height of 144 m. The project requires an access road to be constructed off Motts Drive and laydown areas for assembly of the turbine. A utility corridor is also required to connect the project to the local electrical distribution line. The total area of disturbance for the project is approximately 2 ha. During operation of the wind turbine, lighting will be required as per aviation safety requirements. No buildings or other ancillary features are required.

Construction activities are currently expected to begin near the end of 2013 with project completion expected in early 2014. It typically takes approximately three years to develop and construct a wind farm. Public consultation began in late 2011 with an open house, a presentation to HRM Council, as well as several one-on-one meetings with local residents. Since then, Natural Forces has held a second public information session, and numerous meetings with local residents and community groups.

## **2.2 Purpose, Need and Alternatives**

This proposed Gaetz Brook Wind Farm will help meet the provincially mandated targets outlined by the Nova Scotia Renewable Electricity Plan; this plan sets out clear legal requirements for renewable electricity supply, that is, 25% renewable by 2015, and a further target of 40% renewable by 2020. As part of the ComFIT program, the proposed Gaetz Brook Wind Farm, also enables local ownership and community economic development.

The ComFIT program is part of Nova Scotia's Renewable Electricity Plan, which sets out a detailed path to move Nova Scotia away from carbon-based electricity toward sources that are greener and closer to home. It is designed for locally-based renewable electricity projects that must be majority-owned by residents from communities throughout the province. Natural Forces is using a CEDIF to enable local investment and ownership in the proposed project.

The CEDIF program, administered by the Nova Scotia Department of Economic and Rural Development empowers community members to invest and reap the financial benefits of local development projects. The CEDIF program also encourages support for local products and services, job creation, and stimulates economic growth. To date, almost \$18 million dollars has been raised through CEDIF's located on Cape Breton Island.

As per the requirements of the ComFIT program, the project will provide renewable electricity to the distribution grid. This means that local Nova Scotia Power's customers will be, in part, drawing on the renewable electricity produced by the one-turbine wind farm. The 2.3MW wind energy project is expected to produce enough energy on average to satisfy the energy needs of approximately 550 Nova Scotian homes.

The constraints for siting a wind energy project are technical, environmental, social, cultural and financial. To meet the requirements of ComFIT program, this includes available capacity within the electrical distribution system, but also environmental protection, Aboriginal engagement, and community support.

The location of the proposed Gaetz Brook Wind Farm was selected after a thorough review of considerations such as proximity to the electricity grid, road access, ecology, archaeology and cultural significance, proximity to residential dwellings, and health concerns. Natural Forces believes that the proposed site selected for this one-turbine project is the best alternative to provide renewable electricity to the local area.

### **2.3 Regulatory Requirements for Consultation**

As the proponent of the proposed Gaetz Brook Wind Farm, Natural Forces is required under the *Nova Scotia Environmental Assessment Act* to conduct a Class 1 Environmental Assessment (EA) for the project. When conducting a Class 1 EA, the proponent is required to consult with stakeholders who may be affected by the proposed development. Members of the public will have an opportunity to review and submit comments on the EA document, which will then be considered by the provincial Minister of Environment for a decision on whether to approve the development. The EA document will include a plan for environmental management, community engagement, and complaint resolution.

The ComFIT contract for the development of the Gaetz Brook Wind Farm was awarded in May 2012. This approval has conditions that must be met; one of which requires the proponent to conduct community consultation in the form of at least two public information sessions prior to the construction of the project.

This Community Engagement Plan outlines how Natural Forces will consult and engage the relevant stakeholders throughout the EA process, and meet the relevant ComFIT approval conditions. The activities described in this Community Engagement Plan will not only meet prescribed regulatory requirements, but far exceed the regulatory requirements described above.

### **2.4 Objectives and Approach to Engagement**

The local community of Gaetz Brook has valid interests in this 2.3MW wind energy project. The proposed project has local benefits, such as investment opportunities, local construction contracts, increased tax base, long-term employment during operation, and distribution of renewable electricity. There have also been questions identified by some members of the community around issues of visual impact, health, noise and enjoyment of property.

Natural Forces strongly believes that open, transparent and comprehensive community engagement is crucial to the success of any development. Accordingly, consultation began very early in this project planning (i.e., spring of 2012) and are still ongoing. Natural Forces is committed to maintaining consultation throughout the life of this project at a level appropriate to the community's level of interest.

The various engagement activities described in this Plan will provide an opportunity to facilitate meaningful dialogue between various stakeholders and Natural Forces. The project proponent intends to provide accurate information about the project and answer questions in an open and

transparent fashion. As stakeholders have different interests and preferred modes of dialogue, many different activities are proposed to address these differences.

Natural Forces has developed a list of stakeholders who have expressed an interest in the project to date. This will be maintained throughout the project planning, construction and operation. The list of stakeholders includes those who expressed interest in the project via one-on-one discussions or attendance at one of the two open houses. This list is maintained to facilitate communication from Natural Forces. Perhaps more importantly, Natural Forces will maintain a clearly identified contact person such that community members know whom to contact at Natural Forces if a question or concern arises.

This Community Engagement Plan sets out the formal engagement activities Natural Forces will undertake throughout the development, construction, and operation of the wind farm. It also allows flexibility to allow Natural Forces to adapt to the needs of the community. This Plan does not address Natural Forces' engagement activities with the Mi'kmaq First Nations of Nova Scotia specifically, yet some of the same activities will occur. Engagement of the Mi'kmaq is very important, yet it is a distinct and separate activity. This plan focuses on engagement of the community near the Gaetz Brook Wind Farm.

### **3 ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES**

Key tools of engagement are outlined below in terms their application for the Gaetz Brook Wind Farm. Following this section, the proposed implementation plan is laid out. While the minimum engagement activities are outlined, it is important to maintain flexibility such that the engagement plan can respond to various stages of the project and level of interest of the community.

#### **3.1 Media and Press Releases**

Use of media (such as newspapers, radio, etc.) to inform the general public about a proposed development is one very broad way for a wind farm developer to share general information about a proposal. To be effective, it must be used in concert with other tools of engagement.

To date, Natural Forces has used the media to advertise its engagement opportunities, and will continue to do so as identified in the next section on use of this engagement tool.

#### **3.2 Newsletters**

Newsletters allow the proponent to easily share factual information with the local community and other members of the public who have expressed an interest (i.e., on contact list). Also circulating newsletters with the proponent contact information allows a member of the community to easily contact the proponent if questions or concerns arise. Previous wind farms developed by Natural Forces included newsletters as a key engagement tool used to update and inform the local community on recent project activities.

To date, no new newsletters have been sent out. Natural Forces may circulate newsletters via email, website, and through Canada Post to local residents throughout the 2013 and 2014 calendar year. See Section 4 for more information on use of this engagement tool.



### 3.3 Website, Email and Social Media

Project websites are a great tool to share information as they can be updated periodically and used to inform the general public about numerous aspects of the proposed development. Natural Forces has used this tool on prior projects (e.g., Fairmont Wind Farm, <http://www.fairmontwindfarm.ca>). Website content and updates will include some or all of the below items:

- Notices for public information sessions;
- Photos of the project location and turbine types;
- Posting of technical reports such as the Environmental Assessment document;
- Investment seminar schedules;
- Construction activity notices; and
- Educational and media related material.

Recently, a project website was constructed (<http://gaetzbrookcommunitywindfarm.ca>). This website has comment and question form to collect comments. From this source and other forms of engagement, an email list will be maintained. Email will be used comparable to the use of newsletters but as a digital approach.

A social media presence exists for Wind4All which is the Community Economic Development Corporation for this project; this includes a Facebook page ([www.facebook.com/Wind4All](http://www.facebook.com/Wind4All)) and an active Twitter account (<https://twitter.com/Wind4AllINS>). While these tools are primarily used by Wind4All to increase awareness of investment opportunities, they are a good vehicle for awareness of the proposed projects.

See Section 4 for more information on use of the website and social media as an engagement tool.

### 3.4 Open Houses

Open houses allow a project proponent to inform the general public about a proposed development. Open houses have been, and are still currently, one of the most effective ways for a wind farm developer to gauge community interest in a proposal.

In an open house, interested members of the public have the opportunity to view information and speak directly with representatives of the proponent. This allows one-on-one discussions to answer any questions of the visitor. For many members of the public, this can be a more comfortable form of communicating with the proponent than town hall type meetings.

The meetings can take many forms but usually involve information boards and displays showing the location of the proposed project in relation to nearby communities, fact and figures pertaining the wind energy generation, and an update of the general public on the status and progress of development activities, such as the EA and anticipated construction schedule.

To date, Natural Forces has held two public information sessions (March 19, 2012 and June 19, 2013). During these sessions, there were approximately 65 and 10 attendees, respectfully. More open houses may be held if Natural Forces sees the need in the community as the project progresses; the use of an open house as an engagement tool is discussed in the Section 4.

### **3.5 Community Liaison Committee**

A Community Liaison Committee (CLC) acts as an advisory body to a project proponent by providing input on existing or potential concerns of the community with respect to a proposed development. CLCs have been used successfully to facilitate communication between community representatives and a project proponent, while providing a public and transparent forum to present true and accurate information pertaining to the project. This is in line with the *Guide for the Formation and Operation of a Community Liaison Committee* (Nova Scotia Environment, 2010).

In some other projects, Natural Forces has begun the process of forming a CLC; this occurs where the community expresses a particular interest and it is believed that community members will be found to volunteer as a representation on the CLC. As a CLC is comprised majorly of residents living near the proposed wind farm and is dependent on input of the CLC members, interest of the community is necessary for a CLC to be successful.

In reviewing the level of community interest for the Gaetz Brook Wind Farm, Natural Forces has determined that the use of a CLC is not appropriate for this 2.3MW project. It has been determined that other engagement tools as expressed in this Plan are more appropriate for the Gaetz Brook Wind Farm. However, should the community express an interest in any subsequent phase of the project, i.e., development, construction, and operation phases, Natural Forces will review the need for and benefit of a CLC with interested community members.

Should there be sufficient interest and community member commitment to form a CLC, Natural Forces will facilitate its formation. This will include development of a Terms of Reference (ToR) to define the CLC membership, operation of the CLC and the rules and responsibilities of parties involved. See Section 4 for more information on use of this engagement tool should it be warranted in the future.

### **3.6 Individual Follow Up**

One-on-one dialogue can often resolve issues that other engagement techniques cannot. Where individuals or small groups of residents have specific concerns, Natural Forces welcomes the opportunity to engage with them. This allows Natural Forces to better understand and try to address the concerns, and it provides a better understanding of the issues of concern to the interested community members. There are many engagement tools; often it is the individual discussions that can most quickly and easily facilitate mutual learning and exchange of perspectives. Natural Forces will use this tool on an ad hoc basis when individual or small groups identified specific issues or concerns.

To date, Natural Forces has met with many members of the community individually; this has primarily been residents in closer proximity to the proposed turbine. See Section 4 for more information on use of this engagement tool.

### **3.7 Investment Seminars**

In order to raise the required capital for the project, Natural Forces will run numerous investment seminars throughout the province. The main goal of the investment seminars is to introduce the

project to potential investors and to present the details of the investment opportunity, including all associated risks and rewards. The investment seminars do not play a key role in the Community Engagement Plan, but will certainly aid in raising awareness of the benefits of renewable energy CEDIFs and ultimately the success of the Gaetz Brook Wind Farm.

To date, several seminars were held for the current CEDIF offering of two projects, including two in the local community in February 2013. See Section 4 for more information on use of this engagement tool.

### **3.8 Signage**

At the entry point(s) to many wind energy projects, signage is often posted to identify the presence of hazards, such as ice throw during certain weather conditions. Natural Forces will use this as an opportunity to provide some additional information about the Gaetz Brook Wind Farm. This can include facts about construction schedule, electricity generation, and wind energy statistics. At a minimum, signage will include contact information for the proponent.

See Section 4 for more information on use of this engagement tool.

### **3.9 Other Engagement Tools**

There are many other engagement tools that Natural Forces could implement to increase engagement of the local community. These include:

- *Participation in community events:* Local BBQs and other community events can allow an opportunity for Natural Forces to have an information table and share information on the project. This is a very broad level of increasing awareness and starting a dialogue.
- *Presentations to school and other community groups:* Information sessions held in local schools and for other community groups can be completed if interest by such groups. This is also a broad level of increasing awareness and starting a dialogue.
- *Organize visit to existing wind energy projects:* By allowing interested citizens to experience comparable developments, such as Fairmont Wind Farm near Antigonish, a better understanding of potential impacts can be developed.
- *Workshops:* Workshops can be facilitated in many different ways and for a number of different objectives; these include: education by using theoretical design exercises; empowerment by using a World Café format to decide on a project parameter; and joint fact finding on specific issues of interest or concern.
- *Expert visits:* If a key area of concern is identified, an expert can be integrated into the community engagement as opposed to working solely with the proponent. The expert can attend an open house or community workshop as most appropriate to the level of interest and the issue of concern.

These should be used when a specific need or synergy exists, i.e., on an opportunistic basis or when a specific need is identified. For example, Natural Forces may be approached by staff of the Gaetz Brook Junior High School to facilitate a workshop on wind energy; this is an example

of a unique opportunity to engage the community that would be of interest to the Proponent should interest be shown.

The potential use of these other engagement tools are noted in see Section 4 as appropriate.

## **4 IMPLEMENTATION PLAN**

For the phases over the stages of planning, development, construction, operation and maintenance and decommissioning of the Gaetz Brook Wind Farm, the approaches to community engagement are laid out below. These are presented in context of driving factors and benefits of the tools at each stage to maintain a nimble plan of engagement. Indeed the level of and tools for engagement is expected to be aligned with level and type of interest in the community; this is expected to change over time and hence, a flexible plan is required. To visualize the milestones associated with this project, the general schedule with is shown in Appendix A (<http://gaetzbrookcommunitywindfarm.ca/community-engagement.html>).

### **4.1 Planning**

During the planning phase, the key aspect is early notification of the general intent to construct a wind farm. It is important that the community be notified by Natural Forces directly rather than learn of the proposal from others. This allows Natural Forces to share accurate and true information with the community. It is important that the preliminary nature of the project planning stage be communicated to the community. Often early project plans change; while this may be a result of community input, it can cause some individuals to question the legitimacy of the project.

Engagement tools that are broad based and information sharing should be used primarily to introduce the project. Tools include media and press releases, website, email, and social media. It is key that each tool clearly indicate the preliminary project stage and the contact information of Natural Forces.

During this planning stage, one-on-one discussions are highly recommended with those residents in closest proximity to the proposed turbine. While information sharing is key at this stage, it is often quite beneficial to have a tool that allows more engagement. This enables concerns and questions of the community to be heard early in the project, allowing issues to be addressed early.

### **4.2 Development**

Once the ComFIT approval is received and announced, the project moves to development stage (May 2012 for Gaetz Brook Wind Farm). This stage is active involving much data collection and analysis (technical, social, cultural, environmental and financial), project design, and associated financing and permitting. This includes key public milestones such as raising money under the CEDIF and the Nova Scotian EA process; both of these have distinct aspect of community engagement.

This stage is the most important from the perspective of community engagement. If concerns develop in the community and are not adequately addressed in a timely manner, they can lead to low levels of community support for the project. Addressing concerns can consist of changes

to the proposed project (e.g., turbine location, etc.); however, it can also simply be acknowledging the concerns and sharing information with the community.

Accordingly, engagement tools should range from the low end of the engagement scale, such as information sharing (e.g., media, newsletters, website, email and social media) to more engaged techniques (e.g., encouraging dialogue via one-on-one discussions and open houses, etc.). The initial open house was held early in the planning process, i.e., March 19, 2012.

The use of other engagement tools, such as site visits, workshops and use of experts, are more directed toward a specific issue or concern (e.g., noise, health, etc.); they are only appropriate if a specific interest is expressed in the community. Ad hoc information booths and presentations within the community are also good to raise awareness, but are only recommended should an opportunity present itself. Investment seminars are held at this time as part of the CEDIF; these are a tool to raise awareness of the project but need to be supported by other engagement tools.

As noted, the EA process occurs during project development. While there is a formal consultation process administered by Nova Scotia Environment after registration (i.e., a 30-day period to accept public comments), engagement of the community directly immediately before registration with Nova Scotia Environment allows the community more time to respond and to continue the dialogue with Natural Forces. The second open house was timed to facilitate this, i.e., June 19, 2013.

### **4.3 Construction**

During construction, it is necessary to update the community on the activities involved which may have a direct effect, such as transportation of turbine sections, concrete truck traffic, use of heavy equipment on this site, and blasting if required for the Gaetz Brook Wind Farm. Natural Forces is expected to have several conditions of approval from the NSE EA process. During this time, Natural Forces will be implementing many environmental protection measures.

It is important that engagement tools, like signage, media, newsletters, and the use of website, email and social media, be used to keep residents up-to-date on physical activities and compliance with the environmental protection measures, including specific regulatory conditions. The tools will be used to address specific concerns that may arise. In particular, it is recommended that one newsletter be sent out at start of construction and one at its completion, i.e., commissioning.

It is also important – as with every stage but perhaps more so during construction – for community members to know how to contact Natural Forces if a complaint, question or suggestion arises. This includes specifying a specific employee with this role.

### **4.4 Operation and Maintenance**

When the Gaetz Brook Wind Farm is commissioned (expected in summer of 2014), a community event will celebrate this milestone and further facilitate the dialogue between the community and Natural Forces.

It is expected that the level of interest in the project will change over time after commissioning as uncertainty diminishes. As the ComFIT fixed price contract is a 20-year term, a 20-year

operation and maintenance period is expected. During this time, information sharing with project updates via newsletters, website, email, etc. are expected. Frequency may decrease to annual over time; however, it is important to maintain an openness for dialogue and allow the community to share in the success of the one-turbine wind energy project. As always, website and signage should clearly indicate the up-to-date contact information for Natural Forces.

#### **4.5 Decommissioning**

Depending on the extension or decommissioning activities after a 20-year life span, the engagement tools used should respond to the type of concern and level of interest of the community at that time. Indeed the forms of engagement and community expectations will also be drivers for the engagement plan.

### **5 COMPLAINT RESOLUTION**

Natural Forces will draft a Complaint Resolution Procedure document that will be included in the EA report. The protocol will identify who community members should contact should there be concerns about negative impacts affecting community members or the environment caused by the wind farm development. Some of the activities which may be scoped into the Complaint Resolution Protocol include:

- Commercial traffic and noise due to construction activities
- Noise from the operation of the wind farm
- Noise mitigation
- Shadow flicker annoyance
- Bird or bat mortality caused by the wind farm
- Any other annoyances which may result from the wind farm activities, e.g., lighting.

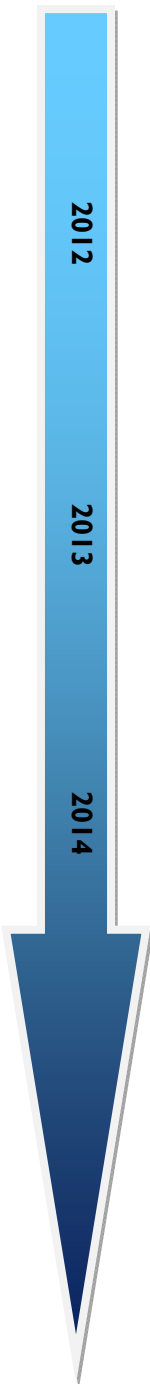
### **6 CLOSURE**

This Community Engagement Plan outlines Natural Forces' approach to facilitating an open and transparent dialogue with the community near the proposed Gaetz Brook Wind Farm. Tools of engagement and their proposed uses are outlined. Engagement is a spectrum ranging from information sharing (e.g., newsletters) to open dialogue (e.g., an open house). The use of specific tools will be made by Natural Forces as the project evolves based on demonstrated interest of the community. Common in all engagement tools is the need for respect of the opinions of community members.

Natural Forces has developed this flexible plan in an attempt to address the various preferred modes and levels of engagement. It is expected that the levels of interest of the community will change over time. Hence this engagement plan has been designed not to be prescriptive but as a guidance document. Natural Forces is committed to addressing, to the best of their abilities, concerns pertaining to this proposed development raised by members of the community.

## **APPENDIX A: PROJECT SCHEDULE**

### **Representative Engagement Approaches for Gaetz Brook Wind Farm**



**June 2011- May 2012** – Discussions with local landowners, planners and council

**March 2012** – Open house #1

**May 2012** – Community Feed-In Tariff Approval

**May 2012-Dec 2012** –Comprehensive consultation with the local residents, MLAs, local business owners, local Regional Development Agencies and HRM planners

**Dec 2012** – Website built

**Jan 2013-Feb 2013** – Investment seminars

**June 2013** – Open house #2

**Sept 2013** – Projected project construction start

**June 2014** – Projected project commissioning

**Jun 2034** – Decommissioning of the project