

Vineyard Wind takes steps to cut turbine light impact, Nantucket watches

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[Vineyard Wind](#) has finished installing a radar-based lighting system on all of its installed turbines, a move aimed at reducing the nighttime pollution seen from shore.

The [Aircraft Detection Lighting System](#), or ADLS, keeps turbine lights off by default and only turns them on when aircraft enter the area. Once the aircraft leave, the lights shut off — reducing constant blinking while meeting Federal Aviation Administration safety rules.

[Vineyard Wind CEO Klaus S. Møller](#) called the turbine lighting system “a critical priority for our neighboring island communities.” He said the company has worked over the past year to speed up the lighting system deployment across the project.

Møller noted that the technology is complex and requires a lot of coordination between contractors and construction teams. He added that “as the project advances, the system will be integrated into additional turbines.”

In all, 62 turbines are planned for the 800-megawatt Vineyard Wind 1 project. Of those, at least 23 are fully installed and 17 are operational, according to [Iberdrola](#), a parent company.

Increase in public pressure

Vineyard Wind’s turbine lighting system announcement follows increased public pressure for its completion. [At a press conference on July 29](#), Nantucket leaders repeated demands that the company honor its promise to deploy the lighting system. They said the lights on completed turbines have remained a persistent issue for islanders, and called for immediate action under the terms of the [2020 Good Neighbor Agreement](#).

Nantucket officials criticized Vineyard Wind for delaying a long-promised fix. They welcomed the news that the system is installed on the completed turbines, but made clear that it doesn’t mean the issue is over.

Before celebrating, the town wants to make sure the ADLS is not just installed, but actually doing what it’s supposed to do — working consistently and cutting down the light pollution islanders have been experiencing for months. As a [National Historic Landmark](#), islanders have pointed at the once dark skies as one of Nantucket’s treasured assets.

“The town urges Vineyard Wind to focus its continued attention on significantly reducing the lag time between when lights get turned on and when ADLS reduces their impact on the night sky,” town leaders noted in a statement on Aug. 1.

Nantucket is also pushing the company to keep community members in the loop going forward, especially as more turbines go up. They’re asking for regular public updates on how the lighting system is being rolled out.

Scanning the airspace around the wind farm

The aircraft detection lighting system operates using radar units on the turbines that scan the airspace around the wind farm. If an aircraft is detected within a certain radius, the lights on the turbines automatically switch on. When no aircraft are nearby, the lights are programmed to stay off — reducing the hours turbines are illuminated to just a few hours in total over the course of a year.

Vineyard Wind noted that it is the first offshore wind project to voluntarily commit to installing ADLS, working with [GE Vernova](#) and Semco. At the beginning of July, “Vineyard Wind had a functioning radar system across the entire radius of the project, and the lighting system functional on more than 60% of installed turbines,” the company noted in a statement on Aug. 1.

Throughout July, the company integrated the system on the remaining turbines.

“With the system activated, lights on the turbine towers will flash if an aircraft enters the project radar radius, and will cease flashing once the aircraft exits the area,” the company stated. “Blinking lights indicate that an aircraft is traveling within the radius of the project, as required by federal aviation safety regulations.”

The company emphasized that while construction is ongoing, “the lights may be periodically activated due to a number of factors. More turbines will be brought online as installation continues, and some blinking may be observed as commissioning of the system takes place.”

Community waits to see if other concerns are addressed

Meanwhile, Nantucket is waiting on a full response from Vineyard Wind to other concerns raised at the July 29 press conference. Those include better communication with the town and making sure local voices are part of emergency planning tied to offshore operations. Officials have asked Vineyard Wind to respond to its [list of 15 specific demands](#) by Aug. 12.

At the federal level, Nantucket is cautiously optimistic after [a new announcement](#) from the [Department of the Interior](#), also on July 29, promising stronger rules for how coastal

towns, Native Nations, and fishing communities are consulted on offshore wind projects. Town leaders said it's about time.

“The Department of the Interior has promised that local communities will have ‘a real seat at the table’ with offshore wind developers,” said Select Board member and former chairwoman Brooke Mohr. “We intend to hold the federal government to that promise.

The town also welcomed news that the Department of the Interior is reviewing outstanding legal challenges, including whether it should continue defending the [Bureau of Ocean Energy Management](#) against Nantucket's appeal of the South Coast wind project "after BOEM's failure to conduct meaningful consultation with Nantucket," town leaders noted.

Greg Werkheiser, an attorney with [Cultural Heritage Partners](#) representing the town, said if the government chooses to stop defending how the earlier consultations were handled, “it would have the profound effect of improving the quality of offshore wind development for decades to come by ensuring that developers listen to impacted coastal communities and Native Nations. That outcome will benefit everyone and the planet.”

Through it all, Nantucket leaders say their position hasn't changed — the town supports clean energy and wants to be part of the solution to climate change. But they won't sit quietly by while environmental protections or community voices are pushed aside.

As Nantucket leaders put it, cutting corners for green projects now just makes it easier to cut them for other types of development — and that could make the climate crisis worse, not better.

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