



Press Release

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For immediate release

Wind farm developers ‘playing the system’ Mountaineers challenge SNH to stand up for landscape

Mountaineering Scotland has challenged Scottish Natural Heritage to stand up and protect valuable landscape from windfarm developers accused of ‘playing the system’.

The organisation, which represents mountaineers and hillwalkers in Scotland, has objected to two windfarm proposals in the hills south-west of Garve.

There are already consented developments at Lochluichart and Corriemoille but the developers are now trying to add more turbines.

The two windfarms were given planning consent in 2008 and 2011. However the consent was for considerably less than had been asked for: for Lochluichart alone 43 turbines had been applied for, but permission was granted for only 17. Then in 2012 a Lochluichart Extension was proposed, comprising 13 turbines, which reintroduced turbines back into the general area that had been looked at in the original proposal, and rejected on landscape grounds.

In a Ministerial Decision, consent was given for only six, with the clear explanation that it was approved to “help to round off the consented developments, giving the appearance of one larger scheme.”

But now two further applications are being made in the same general area: the Lochluichart Extension II (9 turbines) and Kirkan Wind Farm (17 turbines). These have both been submitted at the same time and neither refers to the other in its landscape appraisals.

Stuart Younie, Chief Executive Officer of Mountaineering Scotland, said: “What these further proposals do is spread development beyond the consented proposals that were tested and constrained at the time of the initial application and following intervention by Scottish Ministers.

“It is the opinion of Mountaineering Scotland that Scottish Natural Heritage needs to step in here as the guardians of natural heritage. SNH have said that they provide advice. We need more than this from them. They need to share in the responsibility to protect this mountain landscape and object to these two proposals, present the arguments that will lead to them being rejected and if necessary, contest them in Public Inquiry.”

Stuart added: “The planning system can be exploited this way by industrial developers, but we have to remember that Scotland’s landscape is a precious resource. The Scottish Government has said

this, and Visit Scotland banks on it. We need it to be protected from this type of opportunist development that ignores previously agreed outcomes.

“With the Planning Bill stalled in the Scottish Parliament, our politicians still have the opportunity to pick up this challenge and do more to protect our mountain landscapes. There is the need to move to a low carbon economy but we do not believe that this transition need be at the expense of Scotland’s unique mountain landscapes.”

Ends

Notes for editors:

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About Mountaineering Scotland:

- Mountaineering Scotland is the only recognised representative organisation for hill walkers, climbers and ski-tourers who live in Scotland or who enjoy Scotland’s mountains.
- Mountaineering Scotland provides training and information to mountain users to promote safety, self-reliance and the enjoyment of our mountain environment.
- The Mountaineering Scotland is a membership organisation with over 14,000 members representing hill walkers, climbers and mountaineers, funded through a combination of membership subscriptions, non-governmental grants and investment from sportscotland, which supports public initiatives and services in mountain safety, mountain training and the development and promotion of mountaineering activities.
- Mountaineering Scotland also acts for 75,000 members of the BMC or British Mountaineering Council on matters related to Landscape and Access in Scotland.
- Mountaineering Scotland landscape and access work is supported financially by the Scottish Mountaineering Trust and the BMC
- Mountaineering Scotland has launched the ClimbScotland initiative to encourage young people to participate in climbing and support their progression. It offers a dedicated website and a development team, which will introduce young people to climbing at schools, climbing walls and via youth organisations with a range of activities and events, while developing kids clubs and providing specialist support to parents, volunteers and teachers.
- Mountaineering Scotland is the national governing body for sports climbing. It offers pathways to climbing coaching, organises and promotes a range of regional and national climbing competitions, and manages the Scottish climbing and bouldering teams. It contributes to the management of the GB teams with the ultimate aim of seeing a Scottish athlete achieve a podium position in the Olympic Games.
- The MCofS is a not for profit company limited by guarantee and incorporated in Scotland. Company number SC322717.
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