

By email to: stephen.mcfadden@gov.scot

Mr Stephen McFadden
Consents Manager
Energy Consents Unit
The Scottish Government

13 July 2022

Dear Sir/Madam

Fairburn Wind Farm Extension, Contin: Environmental Impact Assessment Scoping Report

ECU reference: ECU00004542

Background and Context

1. SSE Renewables has submitted a scoping report for a wind farm south of Contin, for 14 turbines at 200m BTH.
2. Mountaineering Scotland is a membership organisation with more than 15,000 members and is the only recognised representative organisation for hill walkers, climbers, mountaineers and ski-tourers who live in Scotland or who enjoy Scotland's mountains. We represent, support and promote Scottish mountaineering, and provide training and information to mountain users for safety, self-reliance and the enjoyment of our mountain environment.

Assessment

3. The proposal is labelled as an extension of the existing Fairburn Wind Farm (20 turbines of 100m BTH) with which it would share an access road, though the gap between the two developments' closest turbines would be nearly 2km (direct distance). It is in effect a detached development larger than the original wind farm, presenting as an extension.
4. Our main concern at this stage is ensuring that the proposed viewpoints will allow a comprehensive assessment of the proposed development from a mountaineering perspective should an application be made. With reference to Scoping Report Question in Paragraph 4.8, Mountaineering Scotland **does not agree** with the proposed list of viewpoints as listed in Table 4.1:
 - VP 17 Ben Wyvis. It is our opinion that a more useful viewpoint would be An Cabar (NH450665), a spot enroute to the summit where many people take a break since it offers a much better view than the summit when seated.
 - VP18 Sgurr na Ruaidhe is appropriate.
 - VP 19 Beinn nam Fitheach has negligible value. It is not a destination or route for walkers and sits on the very edge of the Wild Land Area. It will only show that a close view of turbines is overwhelming.
5. We suggest that additional viewpoints are needed to reflect where hillwalkers actually go and from within the WLA rather than on its very edge. We propose:

- Carn na Coinnich (NH324510). This is a Graham *circa* 6km WNW of the nearest scoping turbine, a direction in which there are no viewpoints proposed. It is within the Central Highlands WLA and on the boundary of the Strathconon, Monar and Mullardoch SLA.
- The track from Inverchoran into Glen Orrin where it drops east of Beinn Mheadhoin (a Graham) in the vicinity of NH270474. This would give an impression from a route into the interior of the WLA and the SLA at a distance of c. 11km. It is also an alternative route to the Strathfarrar Munros.

6. We expect a WLA assessment will be needed and commend our proposed additional viewpoints as valuable for this assessment.

7. On the basis of the information in the Scoping Report and our prior knowledge of the local area, it would appear that a small number of the proposed turbines may be responsible for a disproportionate level of visual impact. Substantial mitigation may be achieved if the westernmost turbines (9 & 11-14) were to be located further east and at lower altitude, pulling back from the Druum Bhallach 'ridge' and down from the upper part of Creag a'Bhainne.

Yours sincerely



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