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21 August 2018

Dear Sir/Madam

**Scoping Opinion Request for Proposed Meall Buidhe Wind Farm, Croick Estate near Ardgay, Sutherland  
Planning reference No: 18/03611/SCOP**

Muirden Energy has submitted a scoping report for a proposed wind farm at Meall Buidhe on Croick Estate. This follows a scoping report of May 2017 for the same site, now withdrawn. That envisaged 21 turbines of 120m BTH, with a capacity of 63MW. The new Scoping report envisages 9 turbines of 149.5m BTH with a capacity of 38MW. The reasons for the change are not disclosed.

The site is a wet elevated, hilly moorland with summits at c.460-510m altitude. The turbine base altitudes would be c. 370-420m.

The proposed approach to the EIA appears to be standard and Mountaineering Scotland has no comment to offer on it. Mountaineering Scotland comments here only in relation to viewpoints, where it is where it is not content with the limited mountain representation proposed.

**Viewpoints**

We agree with viewpoints 4, 7 and 17 as representing mountain users' interests (respectively, Carn a' Choin Deirg, Carn Chuinneag and Ben More Assynt). Carn Salachaidh, a Graham c.9km distant, is adequately represented by the proposed viewpoint of Carn Chuinneag.

In our response to the 2017 scoping, we noted that the visual and wild land assessments would benefit from a middle-distance viewpoint to the west. This was cited in the Scottish Government's Reponse but is not picked up in the present Scoping Report. We repeat our suggestion here with added emphasis since the larger turbines now under consideration will have a stronger middle-distance visibility.

We suggest either Seana Bhraigh (NC2887) or Cnoc Damh (NC2796) is included as a viewpoint. The former is an iconic Munro; the latter is representative of wild land users' interest in the area, and has a bothy at its foot. They both sit c.15-20km from the proposed wind farm in the direction in which it seeks to extend the present/consented cluster of wind farms around Lairg. Either would enable a middle-distance assessment of the impact of such an expansion upon mountaineering

interests.

The cumulative visual impact assessment would benefit from wirelines from either Canisp or Cul Mor and from Ben Wyvis to show the visual relationship between different operational and proposed wind farms in the area. This was also picked up in the Scottish Government's response to the 2017 Scoping Report but is not incorporated into the present Scoping Report. Again we repeat that comment here with added emphasis.

A crucial consideration in any planning decision will be the visual 'fit' between the different operational and proposed developments around Lairg. From a mountaineering perspective, the proposed Meall Bhuidhe wind farm would be seen beyond or behind current/consented with farms when viewed from the north through to southeast. It would be seen separately from northwest through to south, and perceptibly closer than existing wind farms from west though south. The EIA needs to provide the information on which the impact of this can be judged.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "D. Black". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looped 'D' and a trailing flourish.

**Davie Black**  
**Access & Conservation Officer**  
**Mountaineering Scotland**