



**Mountaineering
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Stephen McFadden
Senior Case Officer
Energy Consents Unit
The Scottish Government

30 June 2017

Dear Sir

ELECTRICITY ACT 1989

THE ELECTRICITY WORKS (ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT) (SCOTLAND) REGULATIONS 2017

**SCOPING OPINION REQUEST FOR PROPOSED SECTION 36 APPLICATION FOR MEALL BUIDHE WIND FARM
LOCATED AT THE CROICK ESTATE NEAR ARDGAY IN SUTHERLAND**

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the Meall Buidhe Wind Farm Scoping Report.

Muirden Energy has submitted a scoping report for a proposed wind farm at Meall Buidhe on Croick Estate, by Ardgay, Sutherland. The scoping layout shows 21 turbines of up to 120m BTH at base altitudes of c.330-400m (estimated by eye from Fig. 2). It sits on the eastern side of Beinn Ulbhaidh (496m AOD), Meall Buidhe (458m AOD) and Meall Dheirgidh (507m) which are linked by a broad ridge dipping to around 400m between each of the summits.

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 on those aspects of the Scoping Report of direct relevance to its interests where it is not in full agreement with what is proposed.

Viewpoints

We agree with viewpoints 4, 7 and 14 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.

The visual and wild land assessments would benefit from a more distant viewpoint to the west. Both Seana Bhragh (NC2887) and Cnoc Damh are at 15-20km distance. The former is a Munro; the latter is representative of wild land users' interest in the area, and features a bothy at its foot.

The cumulative impact assessment would benefit from a wireline 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.

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Cumulative impact

The Scoping Report identifies relevant cumulative wind farms. Those most relevant are around the Kyle of Sutherland and the River Oykel which will often be seen together, to varying extents, from hill slopes and summits. A crucial consideration will be the visual 'fit' between the two operational wind farms, the two wind farms in planning (if consented: a decision is long overdue on one and a PLI into the other has just concluded) and the two now scoping, including this proposal.

As noted, a different developer is scoping 21 turbines of up to 145m BTH on the adjacent Braelangwell estate, with less than 3km between the Braelangwell and Meall Buidhe scoping layouts. Avoiding the perception of a 9km wall of turbines from Beinn Ulbhaidh to Cnoc Ghilliondrais must be an important design consideration.

Yours sincerely

David Gibson
CEO
Mountaineering Scotland