



The Mountaineering Council of Scotland

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Letter sent by email to:

David Baldwin
Case Officer
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8 December 2015

Dear Sir

14/02879/FUL

**Dell Wind Farm - Erection of 14 turbine wind farm
(130.5m to tip, approx. 42MW installed capacity) and associated infrastructure
Dell Estate, Whitebridge, Inverness**

Revised response to planning application: objection due to change in circumstances

In our original response to this planning application (dated 11 August 2014) the Mountaineering Council of Scotland (MCoS) made no objection to the wind farm itself but objected to the proposed access road.

As our original submission made very clear, the MCoS took the view that the development of a wind farm at Dell would be harmful to mountaineering interests, but we judged that the *additional* harm from Dell given the then-consented Stronelaig wind farm was limited. This was because the consented adjacent Stronelaig wind farm had already so compromised the quality of the area in landscape and visual terms - extending the strung-out wind farm landscape of the north-western Monadhliath significantly further south - that the proposed Dell wind farm would have little further detriment.

To be totally clear: we viewed the consent of Stronelaig as a crucial step in the degrading of the mountaineering resource in the western Monadhliath to the extent that its mountaineering value had been eliminated north of Stronelaig, which included the proposed Dell site. On that basis we did not object to Dell.

The judicial decision of 4 December to reduce the Minister's decision to grant planning consent to Stronelaig changes the context significantly.

We wrote in our original submission: "Were this proposal to be the first in the area the MCoS would undoubtedly object." In the light of the outcome of the judicial review, Dell now *is* the first proposal in the area that will be decided. It can no longer be viewed as an extension of Stronelaig wind farm since the latter will now need to recommence the planning process or appeal further through the courts, if it is proceed at all.

In the light of these changed circumstances, **the MCofS now wishes to submit an objection to the development of Dell wind farm.** As a stand-alone scheme it will have a severe, significant adverse impact upon mountaineering enjoyment of the western Monadhliath, extending the ill-judged dispersed wind farm landscape of the north-western Monadhliath significantly further south.

The rationale for our objection in terms of landscape, visual impacts, wild land and recreation is clear from our original submission, where it was only the assumed existence of the Stronelairg wind farm that meant the impacts of Dell were sufficiently modified that we did not originally object. Without the assumed existence of Stronelairg, then the impacts of Dell alone are overwhelmingly bad.

The original application and the applicant's more recent Response on Landscape and Visual Impact Matters (August 2015) makes very clear that the developer's case for consent relies heavily upon the existence of Stronelairg to make Dell acceptable.

The developer-commissioned Viewpoint Analysis Peer Review (August 2015) is also substantially framed within the context of Stronelairg existing. This emphasis on limited *additional* impact reflects the logic that the MCofS reluctantly accepted as a reason not to object in its original submission. Yet at times the applicants also seek to argue that Dell would be equally acceptable as a stand-alone development. This is a difficult balancing act, at which they fail since only if Stronelairg exists is the damage inflicted by Dell itself not at an unacceptable level.

The MCofS is firmly of the view that Dell should not be consented as a stand-alone development. We particularly take exception to the applicant citing (p.6 in Response on Landscape and Visual Impact Matters) the lack of an original objection from MCofS *inter alia* as in some way implying support for the development.

We appreciate that the time for submissions is past, but the change in circumstances requires that Dell now be looked at in a wholly different way. It should be refused as a potential stand-alone development, with the door open to a reapplication should Stronelairg ever be built. The judicial review has presented The Highland Council and Scottish Government with a wonderful opportunity to contain the wind farm landscape within the northwest of the Monadhliath rather than allowing it to spill ever further southward. We urge that this opportunity be taken and that Dell be refused.

I look forward to receiving your acknowledgement of this letter.

Yours sincerely

David Gibson
Chief Executive Officer