



The Mountaineering Council of Scotland

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Simon Hindson
Development Planning
The Highland Council
Ref: 15/00010/NONIN & 14/01731/FUL

DPEA appeal reference number: PPA-270-2120

Dear Sir

Further written representation from the Mountaineering Council of Scotland:

**Beinn Mhor Wind Farm - Erection of 6 turbines, height 119.5m (rated at up to 3MW each) & associated infrastructure. Land at Guisachan, Tomich, Cannich
Highland Council planning reference number; 14/01731/FUL**

The Mountaineering Council of Scotland maintains its objection as set out in its submission to The Highland Council (THC) of 21 May 2014 and its further on-line submission of 21 August 2014.

The proposed development sits slightly further west, and would use larger turbines, than the operational Corrimony Wind Farm. It is of note that the MCofS did not object to Corrimony. After careful consideration we concluded that it was, just, at the limit of acceptability in terms of distance from mountainous country and size of turbine, though we thought the turbines were larger than desirable for the location – a view reinforced now that they are erected.

We do not agree with the Planning Officer's report to the Planning Committee (recommending conditional approval) where, in paragraphs 8.41 and 8.61ff it is argued that the proposed development is acceptable because it "will sit comfortably within the landscape between Corrimony and Bhlàriadh within a landscape where there is some capacity for wind turbines" (8.41).

The consented Bhlairaidh turbines are larger (132m BTH) and will provide a turbine landscape backcloth in eastward views from the Affric hills, with Corrimony forming a slightly separated (c.2-3 km) westward projection.

If consented, Beinn Mhor would then provide a further similarly slightly separated westward thrust to this projection (c. 2-3 km from Corrimony) with an adverse landscape impact quite out of proportion to the small number of turbines involved. Viewpoint 10C shows this well. The proposed development is neither close enough to Corrimony to give the appearance of a single larger development nor distant enough to form a clearly separate and distinct development.

The MCofS differs from SNH is that we regard this area, west of the consented Bhlairaidh Wind Farm, as already being at capacity for wind turbine developments. If there is any (limited) capacity for turbines in the area south of Glen Urquhart, it is the view of the MCofS that it lies east of Corrimony (roughly in the area bisected by Glen Coilte) not west.

Reference to general tourists' reaction to wind farms is too broad-brush. What needs to be considered are the particular type of tourists who come to the area where a development is proposed. As the Planning Report rightly says: "The proposed development lies in an area which is rich in recreational assets but is particularly important in terms of mountaineering and walking." (8.67)

Such tourists are likely to be particularly strongly attuned to the quality of the 'natural' environment. It is therefore extremely disturbing that the THC Planning Report can within a single paragraph regard the impact of the proposed development on tourists as "negligible" and "unlikely" to "put hill users off climbing the mountains of this area" yet accept that "it may discourage repeat visits" (8.73). It is surely a more sustainable tourism strategy to maximise repeat custom by offering a good experience in line with customers' expectations than it is to constantly have to attract new customers who are then disappointed by the reality they find and who don't return.

Jeopardising such repeat custom, and more generally the potential reputational damage to Scotland's image as a country of magnificent landscapes, for a trivial amount of low-carbon electricity would be foolish.

It is note that all three local Community Councils have now expressed their opposition to the proposed development. They are perhaps better placed to judge the long-term community interest in maintaining a high quality landscape around - as the setting for and the approach to - the jewel of Glen Affric.

Yours sincerely

David Gibson
Chief Officer