

# CWIF-WAYFARER

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## STROUPSTER PLI PRECOGNITION OF STUART YOUNG RESIDENTIAL AMENITY

SPP6 tells us in Annex A:

### “Communities

Broad criteria should be used to set out the considerations that developers should address in relation to local communities. These should ensure that proposals are not permitted if they would have a significant long term detrimental impact on the amenity of people living nearby. When considering spatial policies, planning authorities may consider it helpful to introduce zones around communities as a means of guiding developments to broad areas of search where visual impacts are likely to be less of a constraint. PAN 45 confirms that development up to 2 km is likely to be a prominent feature in an open landscape. The Scottish Ministers would support this as a separation distance between turbines and the edge of cities, towns and villages so long as policies recognise that this approach is being adopted solely as a mechanism for steering proposals to broad areas of search and, within this distance, proposals will continue to be judged on a case-by-case basis.”

Consider the phrase “PAN 45 confirms that development up to 2 km is likely to be a prominent feature in an open landscape.” This phrase is derived from the following table extracted from PAN 45:

**Fig 8 : General Perception of a Wind Farm in an Open Landscape**

	<b>Perception</b>
Up to 2 kms	Likely to be a prominent feature
2-5 kms	Relatively prominent
5-15 kms	Only prominent in clear visibility - seen as part of the wider landscape
15-30 kms	Only seen in very clear visibility - a minor element in the landscape.

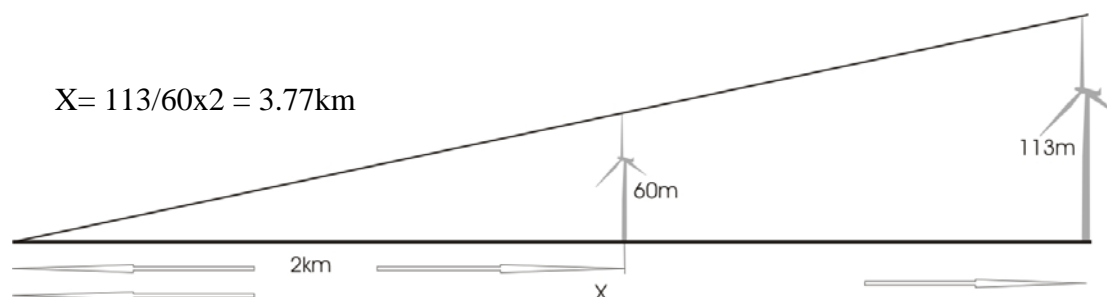
When PAN 45 was revised in 2002, there were 4 operational commercial windfarms in Scotland:

- Hagshaw Hill with turbines 45m to hub and rotors of 41m diameter, 65.5m to tip.
- Windy Standard with turbines 35m to hub and rotors of 37m diameter, 53.5m to tip.

- Novar with turbines 35m to hub and rotors of 41m diameter, 55.5m to tip.
- Beinn Ghlas. I cannot find size details but they are 600w turbines and are likely to be similar in size to the others above.

SPP6 is somewhat disingenuous in quoting directly from PAN 45, revised 2002, and ignoring the fact that a typical turbine nowadays is about 110m with height to hub of 70m and rotor diameter of 80m, that is, almost exactly twice the height and twice the width of a Novar turbine. Twice the height and twice the width is four times the size.

It is therefore reasonable to assume that turbines as proposed for Stroupster are likely to be a prominent feature at a greater distance than 2km. This distance can be easily calculated as shown, assuming an average 60m turbine in PAN 45.



Therefore if a 60m turbine is likely to be a prominent feature at 2km, a 113m turbine is likely to be a prominent feature at 3.77km.

It follows that if a 60m turbine has the potential to impose a significant long-term detrimental impact on amenity at 2km, then a 113m turbine has the same potential at 3.77km.

If **PAN 45 Fig 8 : General Perception of a Wind Farm in an Open Landscape** was first written today, then it is likely that the distances in each perception category would be up to twice the values given.

### SPP6

“Broad criteria should be used to set out the considerations that developers should address in relation to local communities. These should ensure that proposals are not permitted if they would have a significant long term detrimental impact on the amenity of people living nearby.”

The protection of residential amenity which this clause affords was missing from the Consultation Draft of SPP6 even though NPPG6\* had a clause using almost identical words to protect residential amenity. The SPP6 consultation draft was devoid of any mechanism whereby residential amenity was protected. SPP6 in its final form confirms that it is still Scottish Government Planning Policy to protect residential amenity against significant long-term detrimental impact resulting from a wind energy project. The clause is unequivocal. Unlike elsewhere in the SPP, it does not open a possibility of compromise and the Scottish Government has made the conscious decision to include this provision in SPP6 after consultation with the electorate.

\* NPPG6 which was in force when the Application was rejected in 2006, said at Para 22 - In relation to the local community, developments should not be permitted where they would have a significant long term detrimental impact on the amenity of people living nearby, and where the impact cannot be mitigated satisfactorily.

The terms of Clause 54, “ **Consideration of the significance of any adverse impacts of a renewable generation proposal should have regard to the projected benefits of the proposal in terms of the scale of its contribution to the Scottish Executive’s targets for..**”are not relevant when a significant long-term detrimental impact on the amenity of people living nearby is the likely result of the development. The Scottish Government has already made that decision.

Determining Authorities only require to assess whether or not the impact of the development is sufficiently long-term and detrimental to their amenity to invoke the only protection afforded by SPP6 to ordinary people in their own homes.

CWIF-W Document CW16 is a compilation of relevant correspondence dealing with this issue.

The first item is a letter from CWIF addressed to Highland Council Members and to Mr Mooney prior to a local windfarm hearing. It is included here as it explains the background to an approach by an organisation called Stop Highland Windfarms Campaign to Mr Jim Mather MSP asking for clarification of the terms of the SPP6 paragraph headed “Communities” quoted in full at the start of this precognition.

The second item is the question put to Mr Mather.

The third item is a response by Ms Alison Hurd on behalf of Mr Mather, and the last item is a letter received from Dr Stuart Black, Director of Planning, Highland Council.

Ms Hurd’s response on behalf of Mr Mather is crystal-clear:

**“The 2 km separation distance is intended to recognise that, in relation to local communities, visual impacts are likely to be a prominent feature and this should be taken into account when identifying the most suitable search areas. However, impacts will clearly vary considerably depending on the scale of projects and the proposed location. That is why SPP6 confirms that, in all instances, proposals should not be permitted if they would have a significant long term detrimental impact on the amenity of people living nearby. This principle applies to houses within and outwith 2 km of the proposed development and regardless of whether they are single dwellings or part of a settlement.”**

Dr Black’s reply is totally in accord with Ms Hurd’s:

***“Turning now to the substantive matters contained within your letters, I agree with you that development that is judged to have significant long-term detrimental impacts on communities or individual householders for that matter should not be granted. Indeed, this is a fundamental aspect of the Council’s current planning policy. However, this judgement is a matter for the Planning Authority when considering proposals on a case by case basis. This is I believe what Ms Hurd is referring to in her response; not that the 2km separation distance should apply to individual houses.***

CWIF-W’s view is identical to those of Ms Hurd and Dr Black.

To assist the Reporter to assess the extent to which the Stroupster Windfarm might impose long-term detrimental impacts on the amenity of people living nearby, CWIF-W commissioned me to prepare a number of photomontages.

The purpose of these photomontages is not to show how turbines might appear, the people of Caithness are well aware of that, but to illustrate their relationship to people's homes.

Documents CW1 and CW2 show the communities of Freswick, Skirza, and Auckengill. Note the number of homes affected. I could have prepared similar pictures for any community in north east Caithness.

Stroupster Windfarm comprises twelve 370 foot high and 260 foot wide rotating industrial units on top of a 200 foot high hill in the centre of a widespread community. No arrangement or colour combination can mitigate the impact.

The wide nature of the Caithness landscape can be appreciated by observing how the vertical man-made structures of Nybster Tower, the communication masts on Odrig Hill, the communication mast at Brabster and the very tall but very slender mast at Rumster come in and out of view as one moves around the county.

If you are unlucky enough to live in sight of the Stroupster Windfarm and your home is oriented in that direction, then Stroupster Windfarm will permeate your life for the next twenty years or so, or you can live behind closed blinds.

Document CW21 is the windfarm viewed from Sophie's house at Dunnet. Sophie's mother works from home on her computer. Although nearly 13 km away, the prominent position on the horizon will make it impossible from time to time to work without the blinds closed.

Document CW22 shows the windfarm from Bagend. The garden is a delight but the Salisbury family's peaceful enjoyment of it would be severely compromised by the development.

Document CW23 illustrates how Stroupster Windfarm would intrude into the Greig home. Watching TV will become very difficult without having the blinds drawn.

Document CW24 shows the windfarm from the Farmhouse B&B. Guests take their breakfast in the conservatory whilst absorbing the tranquillity of Freswick and its air of history.

Document CW25 shows the view from the Nellies' home in East Mey. The Nellies' home is fortunately oriented such that the development will not intrude into their home, but it will as they go about their business, and there are plenty of other homes in East Mey less fortunate in their orientation.

It can, and no doubt will, be argued that none of the illustrations I have presented qualify for "significant long-term detrimental impact on the amenity of people living nearby", but there is no doubt that there will be a considerable long-term detrimental impact on these individual homes, and there would be hundreds of dwellings similarly imposed upon.

It could be argued that a considerable long-term detrimental impact on a large number of homes is at least as undesirable as a significant long-term impact on a single dwelling.

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The Reporter will have to judge at which point considerable becomes significant, and I would suggest that if the Greig home at Barrock were a bit closer to the development that would be significant, and there are at least dozens of homes in that situation, possibly in Auckengill alone.

Ms Hurd explains that a significant long-term detrimental impact on a single dwelling is sufficient to ensure that the development should not be permitted.

Mr Shiel. CWIF-W urges you to reject this appeal, and the long-term amenity of hundreds of people in Caithness will be preserved.