

CWIF-WAYFARER

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To:
Directorate for Planning and Environmental Appeals
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STROUPSTER WINDFARM PLI Statement of Case by Caithness Windfarm Information Forum and Wayfarer (CWIF-W)

Introduction

1. Caithness Windfarm Information Forum is run by a group of people concerned about the proliferation of windfarms in Scotland, particularly the Highlands and more particularly Caithness and Sutherland. CWIF has some 250 members and maintains an active website www.caithnesswindfarms.co.uk which is visited by many seeking information on windfarm issues.
2. Wayfarer is the name chosen for the purpose of the Inquiry to represent the business and charitable interests of Mr Murray Watts. Mr Watts is the owner of Freswick Castle: he is a writer, a director of Wayfarer Productions, a film-maker and an international speaker who is working with the Wayfarer Trust to develop Freswick Castle as a centre of creative excellence and inspiration in the far north.
3. CWIF and Wayfarer were invited by the Reporter to act as a single relevant person, and are happy to do so. However, although sharing a common aim, the parties have different priorities and drivers. This means in practice that the duties of leading and examining witnesses will be shared, dependent upon which party is best informed on the particular subject.
4. The principal participants on behalf of CWIF-W will be Mr Stuart Young, Chairman of CWIF, and Mr Murray Watts. Mr Young will address the windfarm planning related issues and Mr Watts will address the issues which affect Freswick Castle and Wayfarer.

Statement of Case

1. Impact on Residential Amenity.

- 1.1. The impact of Stroupster Windfarm on the residential amenity of those living within its influence has not been adequately addressed in the Environmental Statement (ES).
- 1.2. Highland Council as Planning Authority did not address this issue as a material consideration in the Planning Committee documents.
- 1.3. CWIF-W will present evidence of the widespread significant long-term detrimental impact on the amenity of people living, working, and travelling nearby which would arise if the development were given consent.
- 1.4. The principal witness in respect of impact on Residential Amenity will be Mr Stuart Young.

2. Visual Impact

- 2.1. The quality, presentation and interpretation of the ES visualisations are such that the true visual impact of the development has been understated.
- 2.2. CWIF-W will present visual effects to demonstrate this and will indicate locations from where the Reporter may view existing wind turbines in similar conditions to those shown in ES images so that he can make an informed assessment of their visual impact independent of photomontage and wireframe image etc. technology.
- 2.3. CWIF-W considers that the visual impact of Stroupster Windfarm on its own is sufficient to merit its rejection.
- 2.4. The cumulative impact of Stroupster Windfarm and consented developments in Caithness would be such that the journey from Dunbeath to John o'Groats would be through a landscape dominated by wind turbines, and this must not be allowed to happen.
- 2.5. CWIF-W welcomes SNH's stance in respect of the cumulative impact of Stroupster Windfarm, but disagrees with SNH's contention that its visual impact as a stand-alone development would be acceptable. CWIF-W considers that SNH would have come to a different conclusion on stand-alone impact if clear and informative visual effects had been provided in the Stroupster Windfarm Environmental Statement.
- 2.6. The principal witness in respect of Visual Impact will be Mr Stuart Young.

3. Impact on Tourism and Business

- 3.1. CWIF-W considers that the Scottish Government Report "The Economic Impacts of Windfarms on Scottish Tourism" (The Moffat Report) underestimates the economic impacts of windfarms on Scottish tourism in general and on Caithness tourism in particular, and that the Report may not be relied upon to inform any decision in respect of the Stroupster Windfarm development.

- 3.2. CWIF-W intends to lead local tourism and business organisations and persons as witnesses. Mr Stuart Young will address the implications of the Moffat Report.

4. Impact on Ecology

- 4.1. CWIF-W considers that the 2005 and 2007 Environmental Statements place insufficient weight on peat issues, and that the risk of peat slide has not been properly assessed.
- 4.2. CWIF-W reserves its position in this respect. If CWIF-W wishes to make representation after study of the Supplementary Environmental Information, then a written statement will be prepared by Mrs Lyndall Leet, ARIBA, FRIAS, which she would wish to read out at the hearing session.

5. Wayfarer and Freswick Castle

- 5.1. Stroupster Windfarm will overwhelm one of the most beautiful and significant sites in Scotland. Freswick Bay, the Castle and the surrounding area have a unique combination of historical importance, outstanding natural beauty and remarkable bio-diversity. This site is a precious inheritance which should be treated with the greatest sensitivity. Stroupster Windfarm would unquestionably dominate this whole environment and radically and detrimentally affect this landscape.
- 5.2. All aspects of Mr Watts' enterprise would be affected by this development. Freswick Castle is a unique environment which, by its very nature, attracts a special kind of visitor to the area. Perceptions of a changed landscape would have a negative impact in a variety of ways on the potential for attracting visiting ornithologists, film-makers, visual artists and people seeking artistic and spiritual retreat. Serious concerns about the proposed development range from artistic projects, business issues, tourism and the international image of this remarkable environment. Another major issue to be addressed is the long-term issue of responsibility and stewardship for an outstandingly beautiful and significant historic site. Irrespective of the Wayfarer and Freswick Castle enterprise, the Castle and the surrounding bay are among the most precious assets of the county of Caithness and need preservation and protection of the highest level for future generations.
- 5.3. Mr Watts will address Wayfarer and Freswick Castle issues, supported by appropriate witnesses.

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