



Caithness Windfarm Information Forum

www.caithnesswindfarms.co.uk

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Dear Members

Wind Development update, and Spittal Windfarm Planning meeting.

We are not yet half-way through 2010 and there has been a lot of activity. Please take the time to read this round-up of windfarm activity this year. The pressure from the Scottish Government and Highland Council's drive to foist windfarms on Caithness is immense. Given recent decisions at Baillie, Stroupster, Bettyhill, Dunbeath and Wathegar, it appears that there is no valid reason for refusal of wind development. Residential amenity, visual impact, landscape, tourism, all overruled, and the fact that wind power can never supply electricity as and when required is lost to our political SERVANTS acting as MASTERS.

January 6th - Beauly-Denny Upgrade approved. It has to be filled with something so this ramps up the pressure on Highland Council to push through wind development.

January 12th - Baillie Windfarm approved hot on the heels of the announcement that the Beauly-Denny upgrade was given the go-ahead. Efforts are still being made to get the Scottish Government to explain why the development was approved when it clearly went against its own guidance in respect of residential amenity.

February 4th - **Scottish Planning Policy** came into force. It has taken a while to realise the implications but one aspect is that the only Guidance which offered protection to residential amenity (in SPP6), and which should have seen Baillie refused, has been dropped and there is now no policy to protect residential amenity from long term detrimental impact, only a requirement to consider it. About as useful as a developer's consultation with the local community.

February 9th - Dunbeath Windfarm Hearing. Councillors met to decide whether to oppose or support a 22 turbine development and decided not to object to a 17 turbine development instead. The developers hastily amended their plans, and Highland Council have effectively allowed 17 turbines to be built. The remainder will probably follow, sooner rather than later. CWIF has made a formal complaint about various aspects of the hearing, and the first response from Highland Council is dismissive. CWIF will continue to pursue the matter, most likely ending in a complaint to the Public Services Ombudsman.

8th April - Stroupster Wind Farm Appeal upheld. Once again residential amenity grounds for refusal overruled. Guidance says significant long term detrimental impact is enough to refuse, the Reporter wanted "over-bearing" instead.

Sometime in May - Olgrinmore Wind Farm refused by delegated powers. This took everyone by surprise, but it is a small scheme, well worthy of refusal.

21st May - Wathegar Wind Farm approved by delegated powers. Again a big surprise, not least to the Chairman and Members of the Planning Committee and other Caithness Councillors. A rule designed to save committee time on small uncontroversial matters was used to slip through a £10M industrial development which will effectively turn 2 small schemes in Central Caithness into a major 11 turbine scheme.

Late May - CWIF becomes aware of another new development at Latheronwheel seeking a scoping opinion.

3rd June – Shebster Windfarm appeal refused. A very welcome result but it was refused only because Shebster would be the jam in the Shebster/Baillie sandwich. The Reporter did not consider the enormous detrimental impact it would have in its own right on people nearby. The message is clear. People don't matter one bit to this Scottish Government.

22nd June - Spittal Wind Farm Hearing date, except it is not going to be a hearing, and nobody, not even Councillors and the Committee Chairman, knew that until CWIF asked why letters to objectors had not been sent out. The reason given for the change was a change of rules last year, but since then Hearings have taken place at Dunbeath and at Dunmaglass, so there is a different agenda for Spittal.

Still to come through planning, which can happen at any time. It seems now they could be unannounced and done and dusted before we hear about them:

- Bower
- Burn of Whilk (Yarrows Archaeological Trail)
- Durran
- Forss Extension Extension
- Halsary
- Latheronwheel
- Nottingham Mains
- Rumster
- Westerdale

(see Windfarm Sites page on CWIF website)

Yours sincerely,



Stuart Young
Chairman