

Planning Application : Olgrinmore Moss, Scotscalder, Halkirk

Proposal Description The application by Lynn Aitkenhead is for the erection of 2 wind turbines 60m to hub and 101m to blade tip, with a total capacity of up to 5 MW, and includes construction of access tracks, site access on to the B870, erection of switchroom, cabling, permanent anemometer mast and temporary contractors compound. Access to the site will be via the B870.

Planning Application Reference 08/00523/FULCA

Deadline for Objections **6 February 2009**

Use the following form to submit an objection on-line

Objection form

Name (Required in capitals)

Address (Required)

Town (Required)

Postcode (Required)

Email

Planning Application Consent to construct and operate a wind farm at Olgrinmore Moss, Scotscalder, Halkirk.

Planning Application ref: 08/00523/FULCA

Please enter your concerns and reasons for objecting in your own words in the text box below. This will ensure that your objection is recognised and counted as an individual objection

Reasons for Objecting

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Please select as many of the items listed below which you consider are also relevant to your objection.

Landscape

- The proposed turbines, by reason of their scale, alien nature and prominent positioning, will be a visually intrusive and pervasive addition to this area. The surrounding landscape is complex, wild and highly sensitive, incapable of visually absorbing these turbines. Significant harm will therefore result to the character and appearance of the wider landscape.
- This development is to be sited on the edge of an Area of Great Landscape Value and on the edge of a proposed World Heritage Site (Caithness & Sutherland Peatlands).

The development site lies within 2 km of the River Thurso Special Area of Conservation (SAC)

It lies within a few kms of the following Nationally Designated Areas –

Caithness & Sutherland Peatlands Special Protection Area (SPA)
Caithness & Sutherland Peatlands Ramsar Site
Caithness Lochs SPA
Caithness Lochs Ramsar Site
Loch Calder Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)
Loch Caluim Flows SSSI
Strathmore Peatlands SSSI

- This windfarm development has no social or economic benefits of either local or national importance. Furthermore there is no doubt that the area's integrity would be significantly compromised and is therefore in conflict with NPPG6. The main qualities of this area are the landscape (habitats, wildlife and birdlife) and the scenic views.
- The site of the proposed development lies within a PP3 Area: - *"PP3 - The Council will presume against development where there is significant damage to heritage, amenity or public health."*

Ornithology

- The proposed development boundary is adjacent to component SSSI of the Caithness and Sutherland Peatlands SPA and Ramsar site and the Caithness Lochs SPA and Ramsar site. The development site, the Black Loch and the surrounding area offer a wealth of very valuable and diverse habitats for local wildlife and birdlife.

- Bird Surveys carried out on behalf of the developer recorded 39 species during their breeding bird survey. Many of these are recorded as breeding on site or within 200 meters and include protected species listed on the UK Birds of Conservation Concern Red & Amber Lists. Flight activity surveys recorded 29 target species. Many of the recorded flights that originated or terminated at the Black Loch - located 40 meters from the development site boundary – are species on the Red & Amber Lists.

It is of great concern that these nationally and internationally protected birds would be exposed to the risk presented by an operational windfarm at Olgrinmore.

- *“They (the Peatlands of Caithness & Sutherland) are recognised to be of national importance for conservation both as a habitat in their own right and because of the diverse range of rare and unusual breeding birds they support. The designated peatlands are also part of the Natura 2000 series of sites (Special Protection Areas and Special Areas of Conservation), which seeks to maintain representative examples of the range of habitats and species across the European Union (EU). Whilst some of the peatland birds spend all of the breeding season on the peatlands, **others make use of areas either close by or further afield for feeding.**”* (SNH – The Peatlands of Caithness & Sutherland)
- The proposal does not accord with Highland Structure Plan Policies G2 and G6 in that this development would have an adverse effect on the priority habitats and species supported by this high quality landscape.

Visual

- The proposed development lies within a huge, open expanse of wild land. The Olgrinmore Windfarm will destroy the experience of ‘wild land’ as the introduction of wind turbines 330 feet in height will seriously undermine an area of wild land extending through uninterrupted open landscape towards the Morven and Scaraben Mountain Range. This development does not accord with Highland Structure Plan Policy L4 in that the proposal does not maintain and enhance present landscape character.
- The turbines will be readily visible in views from, and in panoramic views across, Caithness. When viewed from the north, against a backdrop of exceptional beauty - namely the Scaraben to Morven mountain range, an iconic view for the people of Caithness – the visual impact will be highly significant and objectionable. From the east the view of the Ben Dorrery and Ben Freichdain hills will be dominated by the turbines. Due to the topography of Caithness, Ben Dorrery, at 244 meters (one of the highest hills in Caithness) can be seen across much of the county. From certain areas in the county the blades of these turbines will appear higher than Ben Dorrery itself.
- Local visual amenity will be dominated by this development and there will be a negative impact on the community and residential amenity and is therefore contrary to Highland Structure Policy G2.

Cultural Heritage

- This area contains a wealth of archaeological and historical sites most of which are undisturbed and of great value. Within 5kms of the site boundary there are listed in the Environmental Appraisal - 22 Scheduled Ancient Monuments (1 within 2km of site), 5 Listed Buildings and 38 Non Scheduled Nationally Important Monuments (11 of which are within 2 kms of the site).
- This development will clearly have significant adverse impacts on the area's cultural heritage which is contrary to Policy G2 of the Highland Structure Plan.
"The Council will presume against development, particularly where there is significant damage to heritage, amenity or public health".

Proximity to Settled Areas

- This development is contrary to the Scottish Government's planning policy SPP6 which recommends turbines should not be situated within 2 km of a town or village so the same principle should apply to communities. Scots Calder, Appat, Dorrery and Braehour are all within 2 km of the proposed windfarm and one household is only 700 meters from the nearest turbine.
- *"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".* (NPPG6)

Cumulative Impact and Caithness

- Caithness has experienced intense interest from wind farm developers over the last number of years. There are currently 18 wind farm developments approved or being considered: 5 operational, 3 approved but not yet built and 10 submitted but not yet determined. There are a further 4 wind farm developments at the Scoping Opinion stage in the Planning Process.
- There can be no doubt that there will be a significant cumulative impact from the inclusion of the Olgrinmore turbines. For travellers on the A9 turbines are currently visible at Buolfruich and Causeymire. After construction, Camster will be clearly visible as will those proposed at Shebster, Spittal, Durran and Bower. Halsary, Westerdale and Rumster, at Scoping Opinion would add to the overall effect.
- The turbines at Olgrinmore being located much further inland, would stand alone, as an entirely separate entity but prominent against the hills of Ben Dorrery and Ben Freichdain and would therefore intensify the effect of cumulative impact.

Tourism, Socio-Economic Impact

- There are a number of tourism businesses within a few kilometres of this development that would be adversely affected by this development. The magnetism for visitors to this area is the vast, open and undeveloped landscape with its wide, panoramic views. The cultural heritage and outdoor pursuits such as walking and fishing are the attractions. They do not come to this area to see an electricity generating station and their appreciation of the area would be so seriously degraded they would be deterred from returning.

- The proposed development would be highly visible for tourists and visitors travelling to Caithness by rail, the site being as close as 1 km to the railway line. The wind turbines will have a significant and definite effect on views and will provide the prevailing characteristic in these views, ruining the natural view which is one of undeveloped landscape comprising mostly flat peatlands and wild land.
- This development will also curtail prospects of growing tourism and its supporting businesses in the future and as such does not accord with Highland Structure Plan Policy G1.

Public Consultation

- This application is contrary to Policy G7 of the Highland Structure Plan as there has been no consultation with either the residents of the Scotsclader Community or with the wider Halkirk community over the 4 years this proposal has been in the Planning Process.

Hydrology

- The proposed turbines will be sited within a few metres of the source of a private water supply. The excavation work for the foundations and the vibration during turbine operation has the potential to obstruct and contaminate the flow from this natural spring.

Ecology

- The construction of the turbines, supporting tracks, drains and buildings will have a major detrimental effect on the sensitive ecology of the blanket bog/peatland on which this development is sited. The carbon balance between the environmental benefits of this development against the loss of blanket bog is marginal, with a long payback period far greater than the 1 to 3 years quoted in SNH guidance for such a development.

Noise and Vibration and Shadow Flicker

- The effect of noise has been misrepresented in the Environmental Appraisal, which bases its reassurance on simple noise levels rather than assessing the complex noise patterns emitted by the low frequency, low level aerodynamic and mechanical sound from gearbox, turbine and blades. The noise implications will be significantly detrimental to inhabitants in the local community – contrary to Policy G1 in the Highland Structure Plan.
- The effects of Shadow Flicker which can be detrimental to health and are very distressing, are likely to affect up to ten properties in the local community– contrary to Policy G1 in the Highland Structure Plan.

Roads and Transport and Access

- The B870 is a narrow single track road, bridges are narrow and of traditional stone construction. The Bridge at Westerdale is listed. Construction of this wind farm will require major plant and equipment to be delivered to the site and will demand many large and heavy loads being transported over narrow, fragile roads not suited to carrying such loads.

- Residents along the route will face severe disruption from increased traffic and noise for the period of construction.

MoD

- The proposed wind farm lies within the Ministry of Defence Tactical Training Area 14T, conflicting with PAN 45. It is within this area that Operational Low Flying is permitted. This is when fixed wing aircraft are authorised to fly as low as 100ft, although larger aircraft such as C-130 Hercules are only permitted to fly as low as 150ft. (The Olgrinmore turbines will be approx 330 feet).

Please acknowledge receipt of this objection in writing

*Please complete the form and send it by letter post to **The Director of Planning and Development, Highland Council, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness IV3 5NX.***

Thank you for taking the time to register your concerns about the proposed windfarm.