

## Planning Application : Hill of Stroupster, Auckengill, Wick

Proposal Description                      Planning Application is for erection of 12 turbines, 70 metres high to tower hub and 113 metres high to tip of blades, construction of 7 km of site access tracks and improving existing private access tracks, upgrading of site access from A99 onto the Nybster public road, conversion of existing farm building to form control and electrical sub-station, site office and store including septic tank and soakaway, erection of two permanent 70 metre on-site anemometry masts, installation of underground on-site cabling, formation of an on-site quarry or borrow pit and erection of two temporary construction compounds and welfare facilities.

Ordinance survey grid reference: easting 334180, northing 966161.

Planning Application Reference                      07/00244/FULCA

Deadline for Objections                      **6 July 2007**

Use the following form to submit an objection by post.

### Objection Form

Name (Required)

Address (Required)

  

Town (Required)

Postcode (Required)

E-Mail

Planning Application                      Consent to construct and operate a wind farm at  
Hill of Stroupster, Auckengill, Wick, Caithness

Planning Application Ref:                      07/00244/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

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

## Previous History

The application and layout are almost identical to the one submitted in May 2005, which was **refused** by the Highland Council Planning Committee at a Hearing on 8 May 2006.

The reasons for the application being refused were as follows:

1. The proposals are contrary to the Highland Council Renewable Energy Strategy (HRES) in that the proposals lie within an area classed as having a 'presumption against development' for national and major scale onshore wind farms projects and where Policy E7 in the Renewable Energy Strategy would apply.
2. The proposals are contrary to Policy N1 of the Highland Structure Plan in that the proposals would have an adverse effect on a priority habitat and species as defined in Article 1 of the Habitats Directive.
3. The proposals are contrary to Policy E2 of the adopted Highland Structure Plan in that the visual and landscape impacts of the proposals would be significantly detrimental.
4. The proposals are contrary to Policy T6 of the adopted Highland Structure Plan which states that the Council will protect important scenic views enjoyed from the A99 (Wick to John o'Groats) the A836 ( John o'Groats to Thurso) tourist routes and viewpoints, as identified in the adopted Caithness Local Plan.
5. The proposals are contrary to Policy L4 of the adopted Highland Structure Plan in that the proposals do not maintain and enhance present landscape character.

Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) had a number of concerns, including the location of this wind farm, which could have far reaching effects.

Many other Planning Policies are included in the Highland Council's report for the Hearing, including G2, E1, A2, T6, NPPG 6 (revised 2002), PAN 45, and National Policies NPPG14 & 15.

- Except for raising the option of either chipping the felled trees for mulch to be spread on site or sending it to Wick proposed biomass plant, none of the above points have materially changed and this application should be refused.

## Site Layout

- As the site layout has not been changed in any way, how have any of the reasons for refusal at the planning Hearing been addressed?

## Public Resources

- It is a waste of public resources for Npower to reapply for Planning Permission. It is about time the developers were made to fund the cost which otherwise falls to the hard pressed councils, both in terms of money and time, and is ultimately funded by us - the public - via the Council Tax. This is bullying on the part of the developers, who make massive profits through ROC's (subsidies), the cost of which goes onto all our electricity bills.

### **Over Provision**

- This proposed wind farm would power 19% of the whole of the Highlands, which will amount to over provision as far as Caithness is concerned, as we already produce over 85MW in operational and approved on-shore wind capacity, as against an HRES target of 10-100MW. Caithness should now only be considered for small community-based schemes.

### **Landscape & Visual**

- It is more a case of where this wind farm will **not** be seen over a 35 km area rather than **from where** it will be seen! The site's elevated position on a hilltop and the massive size of the turbines will be detrimental to tourism and residents in the vicinity. Areas which are low lying would be the only ones to escape. The north east of Caithness will be particularly badly affected.
- The water tower at Nybster is clearly visible from Noss Head and Bridge of Wester, but is indistinguishable from these viewpoints in the Environmental Statement, as are the proposed turbines. The water tower is around 18 metres high and just under 7 metres wide. The proposed turbines are 110 metres high with a tower width of about 6 metres. The photomontages cannot be relied upon.

### **Geology & Hydrology**

- Stroupster Hill is an area of active blanket bog. The site is immediately adjacent to the Caithness & Sutherland Peatlands, Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) / Special Protection Area (SPA) / Special Area of Conservation (SAC) Ramsar designation. The site itself is over-planted with forestry and major changes occur to the upper layers of peat being dried out and by increasingly deep cracking in the lower levels. This leads to more drying out which de-stabilises the peat beds. This is exacerbated by the felling of trees, the construction of access tracks and turbine bases, and can cause the peat to become detached from the underlying peat base and start to move independently.

### **Peat Slide**

- This is more likely to happen when the site is sloping and where the peat is deep. The applicant describes the site as being between 1 and 3% and the peat depths recorded at 0 to 4.8 metres. However there is no mention of the NE part of the proposed site where the slope is over 7% and where the peat is deepest, up to 4.8 metres. This is a combination which is particularly unstable and at risk of peat slide. Yet the borrow pit, or quarry, is sited in the same area, increasing the risk. Should peat slide occur it would leave an ugly scar on the landscape which would be seen from John O'Groats to Freswick and also on the Everly to Canisbay road. The peat slide risk assessment is inadequate as no account has been taken of this vulnerable NE part of the site.

### **Global Warming**

- Caithness & Sutherland Peatlands are the best eco system and carbon sink in the world, twice as good as all the forests in Britain, France and Germany combined. Some recent research at Durham University has discovered that peatlands, especially blanket bog, store the equivalent of Britain's output of CO2 for the last 21 years. That is the combined output of all the power stations, all the cars and all the CO2 processes you can think of. It follows that where our peatlands are damaged, removed or burned they release CO2. Therefore in the interests of saving CO2, our peatlands must be saved from all developments, especially wind farms.

### **Ecology & Ornithology**

- The development could affect otter, a European protected species, likewise water vole, which is a UK Biodiversity Action Plan priority species in severe decline, though Caithness still maintains a population. The developers identify the site as suitable habitat for both species. Hen Harriers are Annex 1 protected species and they have been observed. It should also be pointed out that there are many protected bird species, too numerous to list, in the adjacent Caithness and Sutherland Peatlands and birds know no boundaries when flying, so there is a risk of bird strike. It is clear insufficient survey work has been completed for the proposal.

### **Tourism**

- The developers' claim that the turbines would not be seen in the same direction as views to the coast is irrelevant, since their size and movement will in fact draw the eye away from the coastal view and towards the windfarm. Tourists do not look in one direction only and the impact on a large stretch of an internationally famous tourist route will be overwhelming.

### **Socio-Economic Issues**

- In recent years, many hundreds of people from around the world have come to Freswick Castle to work on film projects and arts initiatives of all kinds. These include a Hollywood producer, who remarked that 'Caithness is a film-maker's dream' because of the light and immense spaces of this unique area. Freswick Castle Ltd, managing accommodation and events; and Wayfarer Productions, the film and media production company, will become significant local employers. The economic impact of one feature film project here would be immense. Young people in the area will benefit from media training courses and facilities; and the profile of Caithness will continue to be raised around the world through arts, TV, film projects etc. The proposed windfarm will devastate these prospects.
- The effect on the long term amenity of people living nearby cannot be mitigated and the Environmental Statement does not address this question.

### **Noise and Shadow Flicker**

- Construction and wind turbine noises will be heard by the nearby residents. Some residents at Westerdale and the Causeymire are affected by noise, especially at night. Infrasound can be detected up to 10km from a wind turbine. It is also possible that some residents near Stroupster may suffer from shadow flicker, which can be very distressing.

### **Please acknowledge receipt of this objection in writing**

*Please complete the form and send it by letter post to **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.**