

## Planning Application : Strathy North

Proposal Description                      This application by Scottish and Southern Energy is for 35 turbines - 110 metres to the tip (360 ft), 80 metres diameter rotor - and includes access tracks, temporary borrow pits, anemometer masts, a control building, switching station and underground cabling.  
Access to the site will be off the A836, 5 km south of Strathy.

Planning Application Reference                      07/00020/S36SU

Deadline for Objections                      **2nd March 2007**

Use the following form to submit an objection by post.

### Objection Form

Name (Required - in Capitals)	
Address (Required)	
Town (Required)	
Postcode (Required)	
E-Mail	
Planning Application	Consent to construct and operate a wind farm at Strathy North
Planning Application Ref:	07/00020/S36SU

Please enter your concerns and reasons for objecting in your own words in the 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.

### Grid Connection

- The application does not include a future off-site grid connection by National Grid. Turbines would be connected to a control building/switching station and then by underground cable 6 km to a proposed sub-station within the Strathy South forest, where a future 78 turbine wind farm is proposed. From there it will continue by underground cable a further 12 km to connect into the existing Beaully to Dounreay 275kV tower line near the Strath Halladale to Forsinard A897, through the Flow Country. (This is like building a house with all services terminating at the edge of the site. Planning Permission would not be granted without all service connections being included in the application.)

## **Landscape & Visual Amenity**

- ❑ This is an area of Great Landscape Value. The proposed 7km square wind farm is situated in a semi-mature conifer plantation, surrounded by internationally important peatlands of high quality blanket bog, heathland and associated habitats together with lochs, lochans, streams and the River Strathy. These Peatlands are designated as a Special Protection Area (SPA), Ramsar Site and Special Area of Conservation (SAC). The Peatlands extend east, west and southwards from the site boundary. SSIs (sites of Special Scientific Interest) surround all the forest boundaries.
- ❑ This wind farm will impact visually on numerous points over a wide area, extending from Strathnaver, Bienna Mhadaid, Ben Griam Begg, Forsinard, Strath Halladale, the settled North Coastal strip extending from Bettyhill & Farr, towards Melvich, including Strathy Valley as well as parts of Strathy, which would be adversely affected. The visual and landscape impacts would be significantly detrimental and contrary to Policy G2 and Policy 4 in the Highland Structure Plan.

## **Noise and Flicker**

- ❑ The noise implications will be significantly detrimental, contrary to Policy G2 in the Highland Structure Plan. The effect of noise has been misrepresented in the Environmental Impact Assessment, which bases its reassurance on simple noise levels, rather than assessing the complex noise pattern emitted by low frequency, low-level aerodynamic and mechanical sound from gearbox, turbine and blades. The claims that noise levels will be within night time limits except for Braerathy Lodge, and that only Dallangwell will be at the upper daytime limit, are questionable. Bowland Lodge and the village of Strathy are not included, they might also be affected by shadow flicker.
- ❑ Infrasound can be detected at distances up to 10 km from a wind turbine. Although the measurements might be small, the effect on peat stability and structures within that radius, is still an unknown factor and no mitigating measures have been put forward by the developer.

## **Ecology**

- ❑ The area is inhabited by a large number of protected species, include Pine Marten, Wildcat, Badger, Water Vole, Bats and Otters on the River Strathy, which is also home to Atlantic Salmon and Brown Trout. Important Habitats are covered in Annex 1 and Species in Annex 2 of the EC Habitats Directive, which requires the establishment of a network of protected areas to ensure conservation status of these habitats and species to be preserved intact.
- ❑ There will be a negative impact and disturbance of shelter and movement corridors of protected species.
- ❑ There will be an impact on stream fauna and food sources.

- There would be a habitat change and an ecological change to the heathland, where the foresty plantation is cleared, with a water table drawdown near the cut faces in the peat for turbine foundations and tracks, including floating tracks, within the wind farm site.

### **Birds**

- This development would have an adverse impact on several European protected species and qualifying interests of the Caithness and Sutherland Peatlands Special Protection Area and Ramsar site and is therefore, contrary to policy N1 of the Highland Structure Plan. Qualifying SPA species recorded were Hen Harrier, Golden Eagle, Short-eared Owl, Merlin, Red-Throated Diver, Black-Throated Diver, Golden Plover, Dunlin and Wood Sandpiper. In total 85 different species of birds were recorded on, near or flying over the site. Birds of conservation concern recorded on the site include 14 red listed and 37 amber listed species. Of particular concern is the impact on breeding Hen Harrier, Black-Throated Diver, Golden Plover, Greenshank and Dunlin.

### **Geology and Peat**

- This area forms part of the Caithness & Sutherland Peatlands, one of the largest and most intact known areas of blanket bog in the world, which should not be destroyed. Peat depths vary from 0.1 to 4.5 metres, it dries out at excavations and is likely to change into dry heath. Excavating for turbine foundations, tracks and floating tracks, and watercourses for the construction of a wind farm, will permanently damage the peat. It is physically impossible to restore it once damaged. Restoration attempts are going on at Forsinard by the RSPB, where trees have been felled, but no wind farms are being constructed here. It has yet to be proved by RSPB that it can be fully restored to blanket bog, not in our lifetime; it will be a very long process, requiring maintenance far longer than the 25 year lifetime of wind farms.
- There is considerable risk of peat slide. Strathy Forest is on the same blanket bog as the rest of the area. When trees are felled, this puts slopes at risk of peat slide, or peat instability, particularly should the construction period coincide with dry weather followed by very wet weather. Turbine foundations should not be sited on or near peat slopes. Turbines 1, 5, 9 and 17 are sited on slopes grossly exceeding 7% and turbine 34 is too close to the safe limit of 7%.
- Destroying peat adds to global warming. Peat stores 3 to 3.5 times as much carbon dioxide as rain forests.
- The hydrogeology of the site will be affected. Below the peat the Precambrian rocks are impermeable, so there will be little capacity for storing the water.
- The hydrology of the whole catchment area of the River Strathy will be affected. Lochs and private water supplies to Dallangwell and Bowland Lodge could also be affected with the drying out of the site. There will be an increase in silt, a risk of blocking watercourses and smothering of fauna and flora with dust and debris during the construction period.

- There will be permanent scarring of the ground next to tracks from Borrow pits, i.e. new local quarries.

### **Archaeology**

- The site contains many archaeological remains. There are records of 2 archaeological sites within the wind farm site, pre-clearance settlements at Dalangwell and Braestrathy. One new site was discovered during the field survey. There are extensive remains of medieval or later rural settlements, both deserted and still occupied along the west bank of the River Strathy. There are five archaeological sites within the proposed access corridor and at Bowside. The whole area to the south was extensively settled, there are one or more hut-circles on the east side of the river. More archaeological sites may be discovered during the construction period.

### **Socio-economic issues**

- Local employment will be affected as it will impact on tourism and any new jobs would only last for the length of the construction period, i.e. under one year. There is no guarantee that local contractors would be employed. Contractors outside the area may be employed by SSE, who also state two people only would be sufficient to maintain it.
- This proposed development is contrary to Policy G1 of the Highland Council Structure Plan in that it will not promote and enhance the social and environmental wellbeing of the people of Strathy.

### **Privacy**

- I do not wish my details to be published on the Scottish Executive website.  
*All representations received will be published on the Scottish Executive website unless you request otherwise. Please select this paragraph if you do NOT want your details published.*

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

*Please complete the form and send it by letter post to **Scottish Government, Energy Consents, 4th Floor, Atlantic Quay, 150 Broomielaw, GLASGOW G2 8LU.***

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