

Planning Application : Bower Quarry, Watten, Wick

Proposal Description The application by John Gunn and Sons Ltd is for the erection of a wind turbine maximum 77 metres high to blade tip and 50 metres to hub, construction of 50 metres of access tracks and improvement of existing private access tracks.

Planning Application Reference 05/00355/ FULCA

Deadline for Objections **7th September 2007**

Use the following form to submit an objection by post.

Objection Form

Name (Required in Capitals)	<input type="text"/>
Address (Required)	<input type="text"/>
	<input type="text"/>
Town (Required)	<input type="text"/>
Postcode (Required)	<input type="text"/>
E-Mail	<input type="text"/>
Planning Application	Consent to construct and operate a wind turbine at Bower Quarry, Watten, Wick
Planning Application Ref:	05/00355/ 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.

- Loss of Residential amenity**
- This development will be much too close to residential properties. Homes surround the site, some less than 500 metres away and the village of Gillock is approximately 1220 metres away. The elevated position, height, movement and prominent location of the turbine will cause a severe visual impact on residents and a destruction of their residential amenity

Landscape and Visual Impact

- The turbine will be situated on elevated ground between Lochs Scarmclate and Watten which occupy a wide shallow valley with open views all the way to Wick in the south-east. The landscape is of an open nature which is characteristic of Caithness. The developers state *'the proposed development will introduce a single large-scale, man-made, moving object into a landscape where no such similar features exist'*. This is undoubtedly true - the turbine will be a highly visible intrusion over an immense area to many people, both residents of the dwellings and settlements in the surrounding area and tourists using the roads, railway and the trout fisheries of Lochs Watten and Scarmclate.

Cumulative Impact

- This development will add to the already significant cumulative impact of wind farms in Caithness. The developers state that *'all schemes in the vicinity which have been built, which have permissions and which are currently the subject of undetermined applications have been considered in the cumulative assessment'* and yet the applied for thirty-turbine wind farm proposal for nearby Spittal Hill is completely ignored even though a scoping document has been in the public domain since 2004. No mention has been made of the 13 turbine proposal for Durran currently at pre-application stage. Both of these major windfarms are within a short distance of this development. The cumulative impact of this development together with Spittal and Durran will be immense especially when viewed down the Wick River valley from the east of the county.

Noise

- It is now well documented that wind turbines generate noise, both audible and subsonic. There is a growing body of evidence from residents living near operational wind farms that this noise is debilitating, incessant, irritating and destroys residential amenity. Turbines, whether one or many, should not be located near people's homes. Noise measurements may show that the noise will be within 'accepted' limits but where once there was peace and quiet, this disturbance could never be described as acceptable.

Vibration, Shadow Flicker, Strobe Effect

- In this area the parent rock lies generally close to the surface and is in the form of large beds. Vibrations generated by wind turbines will be transmitted readily and inevitably to the underlying rock and may be subsequently transmitted over long distances through the rock. There is evidence from the Causeymire wind farm that vibrations are causing structural damage to older buildings some considerable distance away.
- Blasting at the quarry causes vibration in houses 1000 metres away. The proposed turbine will be located adjacent to the quarry and therefore subject to considerable vibration from blasting which could well make it unstable. This leads to the prospect of the entire structure collapsing across the road.
- Shadow flicker from a wind turbine can be very distressing. It is a fact that shadow flicker at the Forss wind farm in Caithness is such a serious problem to workers in the nearby offices that the turbine has to be shut down. Nearby residences, road users and people working locally on the land may well be subjected to this phenomenon from this development.
- Under certain conditions wind turbines can produce a significant strobe effect to which susceptible members of the public may be very vulnerable. Flash photography on news bulletins for example, are warned of in advance, yet the similar effect caused by wind farms is never mentioned. This is unacceptable and yet another reason why this development is too close to residences, the road and the railway.

Birds

- ❑ The elevated position, location and height of this development will have a serious adverse impact on two of the qualifying species of the Caithness Lochs Special Protection Area (SPA) namely Annex 1 protected Whooper Swans and Icelandic Greylag Geese and therefore, the integrity of the SPA and therefore, breach the European Birds Directive. During the annual migration many thousands of geese and large numbers of swans are constantly moving between Lochs Scarmclate and Watten and all fields between and surrounding the lochs feeding on the stubbles, winter crops and grass. These birds also fly during inclement weather and at night. For the developers to state that '*ornithological impacts were originally predicted to be relatively minor and moving the turbine has improved this situation further*' is at best misguided and at worst fallacious. The new location will not make the slightest difference to the negative effect on these birds. Their own bird surveys record significant numbers of these protected birds using the area of the development.
- ❑ This development poses a serious threat to the most northerly nesting Osprey pair in Great Britain. Ospreys are an Annex 1 species, protected under both European and British legislation. The male bird is regularly seen to fly across the site on feeding forays. A vantage point survey should have been conducted on this important species alone.
- ❑ Raptors are particularly susceptible to collisions with wind turbine blades. Hen Harrier, Peregrine Falcon, Merlin, Kestrel, Sparrowhawk and Buzzards are all present in the area and will be at risk from this development. Many Hen Harrier flights were recorded in the area of the development and suitable nesting habitat is close by.
- ❑ Close to the proposed development is a long established and successful Heronry. These birds fly very slowly, have difficulty in manoeuvring quickly in flight and fly at a height making them extremely vulnerable to collision with turbine blades. This development will have a serious adverse impact on the Heron colony.

Health and Safety

- ❑ This turbine will be sited close to and at the location of a blind bend on a single lane public road in constant use by Heavy Goods Vehicles accessing the quarry. The risk of driver distraction and potential serious road accidents is immense.
- ❑ This turbine will be close to the road, railway line and residences. There is a growing body of evidence on the structural integrity of wind turbines. Failures occur such as blades or blade components being detached and hurled considerable distances at speed. In Germany, for instance, pieces of blade are documented as travelling over 400 metres, some having gone through roofs and walls of nearby buildings. Similar problems exist with ice being thrown from blades.

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 wind turbine.**