

## Planning Application : Bardnaheigh Farm, Westfield, Thurso

Proposal Description

This application by Baillie Windfarm Limited is for 21 turbines - 110 metres to the tip (360 ft), with 80 metres diameter rotors

Access to the site will be via a new track approx. 1.5km east of the village of Shebster on the "back road" between Thurso and Reay.

Planning Application Reference

Deadline for Objections

**28 November 2007**

Use the following form to submit an objection by post.

### Objection form

Name (Required in capitals)

Address (Required)

Town (Required)

Postcode (Required)

Email


Planning Application

Consent to construct and operate a wind farm at Bardnaheigh Farm, Bridge of Westfield, Thurso.

Planning Application ref:

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.

## **Location**

- ❑ The proposed location is contrary to the Highland Renewable Energy Strategy as it is proposed in an area with a presumption against large scale windfarm development.
- ❑ The proposed location is within 2km of a community of over 100 houses, contrary to SPP6.
- ❑ The proposed location is far too close to occupied housing.
- ❑ The cumulative impact of this proposed development - with others already operational, approved, and in planning across West Caithness - is completely unacceptable. The location is extremely close to the nearby Forss wind farm, and within easy visibility of the Causeymire wind farm and others proposed in the area.

## **Transport and Access**

- ❑ 7,800 additional vehicle transports, including 6,300 HGV transports and a further 300 abnormal loads will be required over a 12 month period across roads that were never designed to take the volume of traffic nor the size and weight of the abnormal loads. The dimensions of the abnormal loads have not been submitted, nor the estimated weights of these loads. These loads are likely to be up to several hundred tonnes, and are planned to take place outwith normal working hours in order to minimise transport disruption. This means that significant disruption over a 12-month period will take place during family sleep time along the route from Scrabster to the Weigh Inn, past West Gills and through Buldoo, Dounreay and other roadside villages to the Isauld Bridge then through Achvarasdal and Shebster to the proposed site.
- ❑ Effects of vibration from these transports on homes close to the roads have not been taken into account by the developers.
- ❑ It seems ridiculous to have to take down the recently upgraded stone walls at the Weigh-Inn Motel junction, in order to get the turbines round the corner onto the A836.

## **Landscape and Visual Amenity**

- ❑ This will be more than significant – it will be extreme. The cumulative effect with the existing Forss and Causeymire turbines, as well as those proposed at Shebster, Lieurary, Broubster and other Caithness and North Sutherland locations, will be extreme. Overall visual impact will be enhanced as the site is on a hill. Views from the nearby tourist viewpoints will be devastated.
- ❑ The open character of the sloping landscape is mixed agriculture and settlement. There is an area of peatland and conifer plantation. The elevated nature of this landscape is such that a wind farm with such tall turbines in this location will be visible over much of Caithness, on all sides. I/we do not agree that the effect of these turbines will be moderate. Their effect on the landscape will be significant, on all sides and especially the south-east.

## **Archaeology**

- The archaeological features in and around this site are numerous. The area would be better developed as a heritage site with walkways and a visitor car park for the site and the adjacent Cnoc Frediceadain burial chambers.
- The ambience, atmosphere and views at the adjacent Cnoc Frediceadain burial chambers will be obliterated.

## **Tourism**

- The proposed development would also have a long term detrimental effect on those who visit the area for rest and recreation, and therefore is incompatible with tourism and recreational interests as described in Annex A, 4. Tourism and recreational interests.
- The proposed development would be highly visible from the A836 – a designated primary tourist route.
- The proposed development would be highly visible from Reay Golf Club. Golf is a relaxing game and highly visible rotating turbines will pose a significant distraction on 8 of the 18 holes. This may well be such a distraction that members will be forced to play elsewhere, which may result in the club having to close.

## **Ecology**

- There are a number of the RSPB Schedule 1 – Part 1, highly protected species, including the Greylag goose, the white-fronted goose, the Pink-footed goose, the Whooper Swan, Hen Harrier, Peregrine, Breeding Waders, and the Barn Owl. The proposed site is directly in flight lines for migrating birds arriving for Loch Watten SPA from the north. These birds are at high collision risk from this development.
- Shutting down of turbines for two hours at dawn in April in collision high risk areas is inadequate. The turbines should not be there in the first place but should be on a site where no geese forage or overfly. Other protected species are also at risk, and so are all night flying birds.

## **Geology, Hydrology and Hydrogeology**

- Peat is an excellent carbon sink so it makes no sense to put turbines 4, 5 & 10 on it, with their destructive bases and associated tracks. Such construction would release the CO<sub>2</sub> trapped in the peat and this has not been taken into account by the developers.
- Construction of three turbines on peat may be dangerous and unstable.

## **Noise, Shadow Flicker, Distance to Occupied Houses, Safety and Effects on Human Health**

- ❑ The proposed turbines are within several hundred metres of occupied housing which is far too close from the points of view of safety and effects upon human health. Highland Council's own guidelines (both previous planning guidelines and recommendations in the 2006 Renewable Energy Strategy) recommend a minimum distance to occupied housing of 1000m. Scottish Executive's Planning Policy SPP6 recommends that turbines should not be situated closer than 2km from communities. There are over 100 houses situated within 2km of the proposed site, hence this development is contrary to both SPP6 and Highland Council's own planning guidelines and recommendations.
- ❑ Shadow Flicker is an intolerable phenomenon occurring at window openings, causing distress and health problems, therefore during period of Shadow Flicker the turbines have to be shut down. It is not a good solution particularly for the occupants of Achiebraeskaill (over 30 hours Shadow Flicker per year) who will have no control over the shut down and will be at the mercy of the developer. This is opposite to the situation at nearby Forss.
- ❑ Constant exposure to noise (audible and subsonic) is known to seriously affect human health. Flicker factor and strobe effects of the blades can also cause adverse health effects and can trigger epilepsy. The flicker factor has been very troublesome at the nearby turbines on Forss Business Park. These health effects have been recognized by the Welsh office for over 10 years. Given that there continue to be noise problems up to 2km from the Causeymire Wind Farm, it is completely inappropriate for Highland Council and the Executive to approve this proposal which is situated significantly closer than Causeymire Wind Farm to occupied housing.
- ❑ Table A9.4 illustrates the noise effect of 21 turbines on one site. Those distant from houses will have little effect from 16.3 to 33.2 and all 21 turbines add up to 39 dB, unacceptable noise levels for Achiebraeskaill. Mitigation measures are unsatisfactory and we have a real concern for noise levels at the Shebster houses which are threatened by not only Baillie wind farm to the north but also the South Shebster wind farm to the south. The cumulative effect of this is intolerable.
- ❑ No safety consideration to those living closest to the development has been taken into account by the developers.
- ❑ Turbines are located very close to local roads. Safety to drivers and driver distraction has not been taken into account by the developers.

## **Socio-Economic Issues**

- ❑ There are over 100 houses located within 2km of the proposed development. This development would have a significant long-term detrimental impact on the amenity of people living nearby, as described in SPP6 Annex A, 4. Communities.

## **Privacy**

- I do not wish my details to be published on the Scottish Government website.

All representations received will be published on the Scottish Government 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 **The Scottish Government, Energy Consents Unit, 2nd Floor, Meridian Court, 5 Cadogan Street, Glasgow, G2 6AT** with a copy 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.***