

DEVELOPMENT SERVICES  
PLANNING APPLICATION REPORT  
OBAN, LORN AND THE ISLES

Local Member - Cllr Macaskill  
Date of Validity - 31.12.04  
Committee Date - 08.03.2006

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**Reference Number:** 05/00016/ELSE36  
**Applicants Name:** Green Power  
**Application Type:** Electricity Consultation  
**Application Description:** Erection of Windfarm Consisting of 20 Turbines  
**Location:** Carraig Gheal, Inverinan, Taynuilt

## (A) THE APPLICATION

### Development Requiring Express Planning Permission.

- The erection of 20 (originally 24) turbines with tubular towers and a three blade rotor (84m diameter) 9 x 65m at hub, 110m to blade tip, 11 x 80m at hub, 125m to blade tip.
- Anemometer mast (for monitoring) lattice, up to 85m tall.
- Sub Station at Control Room 34m x 10m
- Access Road
- Access Track
- Temporary construction compound (generic layout) 70m x 50m in temporary security fence containing site accommodation, generator, fuel storage, 3 x secure storage and parking area.
- Connections to local electricity grid by underground cables to the existing national grid Taynuilt/Inverinan 132kv overhead system to the east of the site.

There are two possible routes for vehicular delivery of large turbine components under escort.

One is from the east from A85 at Taynuilt along the B845 (Glen Nant Road) to a point 1km north of Kilchrenan.

One is from the west from the A85, 5km west of Taynuilt along forest roads to Beinn Ghlas and then south to the site.

## (B) DETERMINATION OF THE APPLICATION

Because the proposal will generate over 50kw the decision on this proposal will be made by the Scottish Executive. Argyll & Bute Council is a consultee and the Executive will carry out other consultations and consider representations.

## (C) RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Council inform the Scottish Executive that it is considered that the proposed wind farm should be refused because of the visual impact on the Loch Awe area and the cumulative impact of this proposal and the existing Beinn Ghlas windfarm.

Further that should the Executive decide to grant permission, that vehicular access for turbine deliveries be restricted to the westerly routes to reduce the impact on Glen Nant.

## (D) THE APPLICATION SITE, APPLICATION AND SUPPORTING INFORMATION

The site for the turbines is adjacent to Carraig Gheal at Inverinan. It is an undulating area at a height of about 400m to the west of Kilchrenan and about 3km south of Beinn Ghlas wind farm.

This is an area of craggy uplands with commercial forest to the south and to the north east and open woodland to the west and east.

Vehicular access for turbines is by two possible routes.

The eastern route is from the A85 at Taynuilt (and would involve improvements to that junction) and along the B845 Glen Nant Road where there would be upgrading of sight lines on some bends.

The Westerly route is from Fearnoch, west of Taynuilt following the access route to Beinn Ghlas wind farm and then continuing south to the applicants site.

The proposed development would be visible from a number of viewpoints and these are covered in the Environmental Assessment.

Originally the application was for 24 turbines but following concerns from SNH and RSPB regarding the affect on Golden Eagles the layout was changed and 4 turbines were deleted/repositioned and others changed

## **SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

The application is accompanied by an Environmental Statement (ES) and an amended Environmental Statement.

## **VISUAL IMPACT**

The ES contains views for 21 points. I have assessed these later in the report.

## **ORNITHOLOGY**

The ES concludes that the key species for which there was potential for significant effects were:-

Merlin, Red Throated Diver, Golden Eagles and Golden Plover. The conclusions are that there are no significant impact on these birds.

## **(E) ASSESSMENT AND MATERIAL DETERMINIGN CONSIDERATIONS**

Section 25 of the Planning Act requires that applications be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless other material considerations indicate otherwise. Whilst this is not a formal application I am processing it in the same way. The policy matters which need to be considered by the Executive are in the Appendix.

I will assess the proposal under a number of headings:-

- a) Road Safety
- b) Archaeology
- c) Ornithology
- d) Noise and Disturbance
- e) Shadow Flicker
- f) Landscape
- g) Cumulative Impact
- h) Health and Safety
- i) Historic Environment
- j) Telecommunications and Electromagnetic Matters
- k) Economic Development
- l) Tourism and Recreation

### **a) ROAD SAFETY**

As described above there are two possible vehicular routes to the site. The Roads Department have raised no objections to either route and have had discussions with the Applicants regarding improvements to the Glen Nant road and its junction with the A85. There is also a possibility of improvements to the Strategic Forest Haul Route to avoid Kilgreggan.

### **b) ARCHAEOLOGY**

The Executive will consult separately on this matter. However the ES identifies no significant archaeology on the site. In the circumstances the proposal appears to comply with Structure Plan Policy STRAT DC9 and NPPG18.

## c) **ORNITHOLOGY**

Following amendment to the proposed RSPB and SNH have raised no objections to the proposal for ornithological reasons. Therefore the ES confirms that the proposal complies with Structure Plan Policy STRAT DC7 and NPPG 14 Natural Heritage.

## d) **NOISE AND DISTURBANCE**

The ES contains information on Noise Impact and shows that the nearest residences are relatively distant from the proposed turbines.

Protective Services have not yet responded on this matter.

## e) **SHADOW FLICKER**

Protective Services were consulted and have not yet responded.

## f) **LANDSCAPE ASSESSMENT**

This is an important aspect of the assessment and for simplicity I have divided this into separate sections.

- Impact from distant points
- Impact from Kilchrenan area
- Impact from hilltops
- Impact from East side of Loch Awe
- Cumulative impacts from east side of Loch Awe

### **Landscape Impact from Distant Points**

The ES includes a number of distant viewpoints such as south of Pulpit Hill, Oban or Mull (see 10,13,17, 18, 19, 20 and 21). All these are a considerable distance from the application site and I consider that the broad and mountainous landscape of Lorn absorbs the proposed windfarm when seen from these distant locations.

Therefore, the wind farm when viewed from remote points will not have any significant impact with the turbines blending into the background. From distant viewpoints the proposal complies with Development Plan Policy and National Planning Guidance.

### **Landscape Impacts from Kilchrenan and Annat**

The character of this area is a road through a glen with development along the road and at junctions, with rolling hills and woodland rising to the west and a flatter area to the east and Loch Awe.

The ES includes views taken from this area towards the windfarm (4). I have considered the impact on this area which is probably the closest community to this windfarm and my conclusions are that the proposal will have a minimal impact on this area.

### **Landscape Impacts from Hilltops**

The ES contains views of the Carraig Gheal area from two important and popular hilltops Beinn Cruachan and Beinn Bhidhe (15 and 11). From these points, to the north and to the east the proposal is seen in a wider and large landscape and is not skylined in any way. I consider that because of the vast scale of this landscape this windfarm can be absorbed and does not have a significant impact.

### **Landscape Impact from east side of Loch Awe**

Carraig Gheal and the surrounding area is particularly open to views from the east, for people travelling from Dalmally to Cladich on the A819 single track road B840 from Cladich all the way to Eredine. It will also be visible from hotels and houses along this route.

The ES shows the windfarm from a number of viewpoints from the MacIntyre Monument through Portsonachan to Eredine. The following number of tips and hubs are visible in those views.

Balliemeanoch (2)	20 tips	17 hubs
Loch Awe Waterfall (3)	20 tips	20 hubs
Portsonachan (6)	19 tips	13 hubs
Blarghour (7)	20 tips	20 hubs
Ardbrecknish (8)	20 tips	20 hubs
Eredine (9)	7 tips	5 hubs
MacIntyre Monument (14)	20 tips	20 hubs

From these photomontages it can clearly be seen that the turbines sit on the hills and march over the landscape. The windfarm is not absorbed within the folds of the landscape but projects above the skyline and by its overall size and scale has an adverse impact on an area which is currently devoid of significant structures.

From the photomontages it is clear that the major features of the area are horizontal shore line, the lower hills partly covered in woodland (some deciduous, some commercial) all producing a wide and horizontal landscape. Carraig Gheal is a relatively flat area and the views from the east side of the loch are key to the assessment of this application and the ES contains many of the key views but there are many points along this road where Carraig Gheal is visible.

As can be seen from the photographs in the ES Carraig Gheal windfarm which can be clearly seen from most of these viewpoints forms a prominent vertical feature in the landscape. Beinn Ghlas (which is 3 km to the north) is a smaller windfarm, less turbines, considerably smaller turbines and has been absorbed into the landscape because Beinn Ghlas is constructed in folds in the hills, not on top of the landscape and respects the landscape.

Carraig Gheal is an exposed landscape and because of the horizontal landscape (when viewed from a Local Scenic Area) and the size and number of turbines proposed I consider that this windfarm will represent an intrusive, alien, industrial feature into an open rural landscape. It does not respect the landscape and is on the skyline.

## **Conclusions on Landscape Impact from the east side of Loch Awe**

Whilst SNH have raised no objections to the landscape impact of the windfarm I consider that the impact from the east side of Loch Awe is the main key to the assessment of the whole development.

When viewed from the east side of Loch Awe the landscape has a very open and horizontal scale. The windfarm because of its vertical nature and the number and size of turbines will create an extremely intrusive feature which I consider cannot be absorbed into the landscape and will create an industrial alien feature on the skyline. The proposal is therefore contrary to Policy RUR 1 of the Lorn Local Plan because of its impact in a Local Scenic Area.

## **Cumulative Impact from the East Side of Loch Awe**

The ES shows that when viewed from the east both Beinn Ghlas and the proposed Carraig Gheal windfarm will both be visible. Whilst the landscape has absorbed the Beinn Ghlas windfarm in its folds the windfarm is visible from the east and I am concerned about the visual impact of 2 windfarms, seen together from views on the A85, B840 and the possibility that other proposals in this area such as Stacain on the ridge south of Dalmally will have a detrimental cumulative impact on the area and that Beinn Ghlas and Carraig Gheal could be viewed due to their proximity as one very large windfarm.

### **g) CUMULATIVE IMPACT**

This potential impact of seeing more than one wind farm in one view or vista or experiencing viewing a number of wind farms in a journey through an area.

The photomontages show that there is a cumulative impact of this proposal and Carraig Gheal when viewed from many points to the east. I consider that this proposal does result in a significant cumulative impact.

**h) HEALTH AND SAFETY**

Scottish Executive have consulted:  
National Air Traffic Services  
Health and Safety Executive  
Civil Aviation Authority  
Scottish Environmental Protection Agency

These bodies have raised no objections to the proposal.

**i) HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT**

Scottish Executive has consulted Historic Scotland. There are no listed buildings in the vicinity of the application site and therefore there should be no historic environment issues and the proposed development will comply with Structure Plan Policy STRAT DC9 Historic Environment.

**j) TELECOMMUNICATIONS AND ELECTROMAGNETIC MATTERS**

The Scottish Executive will have consulted OFCOM.

**k) ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

In terms of economic impact there will be a limited impact during the construction period with the creation of employment. Similarly there could be jobs associated with the manufacture of turbines but the actual produce cannot be guaranteed.

There will be a very limited number of permanent jobs for maintenance and monitoring of the wind farm.

**l) TOURISM AND RECREATION**

There has been debate about the effect of windfarms on tourism. If a windfarm is successfully absorbed into the landscape the effects on tourism should be negligible.

In this case whilst the wind farm can be absorbed into the local landscape and from most distant views I consider it will have a significant adverse effect on Loch Awe when viewed from the East. This is an area with a large number of tourism related developments and I consider there would be a negative effect on these.

**F) CONCLUSION**

The windfarm when viewed from the East, from the MacIntyre Monument to Eredine would have a significant adverse visual impact and is contrary to Strategic and Local Plan Policy. The proposal is contrary to Policy RUR 1 of the Lorn Local Plan as it would be prominent development having an adverse impact on the Loch Awe Local Scenic Area. The proposal would be contrary to POL WF 1 as the proposal would have a significant adverse impact on a Scenic area.

There are no Ornithological concerns.

There are no objections from the Roads Department, however, if permission were granted they would require an agreement with the developer to ensure that the Glen Nant Road and its junction with A85 is improved to their satisfaction.

Protective Services have not completed their investigation and these observations can be forwarded to Scottish Executive at a later date.

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**REASON FOR REFUSAL 05/00016/ELSE36**

1. The proposal for erection of a windfarm at Carraig Gheal would have an adverse visual impact on the Loch Awe Local Scenic Area as it would introduce a prominent alien industrial feature into the open unspoilt and relatively undeveloped horizontal landscape of Loch Awe.

The windfarm would have an adverse impact when viewed from points along the road on the east side of Loch Awe.

The cumulative impact of the proposal together with the existing windfarm at Beinn Ghlas would dominate the landscape of Loch Awe and would not respect the landscape form.

The proposal by virtue of the above adverse impacts on the character and setting of Loch Awe would be contrary to Policy RUR 1 of the Adopted Lorn Local Plan and Policy WF1 of the approved Argyll and Bute Windfarm Policy which seek to resist development which would have an adverse impact on the landscape quality of scenic areas.

**APPENDIX RELATIVE TO 05/00016/ELSE36**

## A. POLICY OVERVIEW

### National Planning Policy Guideline 6 (NPPG6 – revised 2000) Renewable Energy Developments Planning Advice Note 45 (PAN 45 – revised 2002) Renewable Energy Technologies

The promotion of renewable sources of electricity generation, an integral part of the UK Government's energy policy, has been identified as having a key role in its commitment to addressing the causes of climate change and the introduction of measures in support of the UK "*Climate Change Programme*". The policy is for renewables to make a steadily increasing contribution to secure, diverse and sustainable energy supplies, as electricity consumption increases, existing generating capacity is retired and climate change reduces the incentive to generate electricity by burning fossil fuels. The Scottish Executive is therefore committed to increasing the amount of renewable energy used in Scotland. The UK Utilities Act 2000 and the associated new renewables obligations in Scotland and in England and Wales will provide the mechanisms for achieving more renewable sourced electricity.

In support of the UK Government's commitment to renewable energy and its contribution to the climate change programme, more renewable energy developments are required to meet UK international obligations. The Scottish Ministers wish to see the planning system play its full part by making positive provision for such developments by:

- Facilitating and guiding renewable energy developments in up to date structure and local plans;
- Ensuring that development control decisions are taken efficiently, consistent with national and international climate change policy commitments and obligations and
- Preventing unnecessary sterilisation of renewable energy resources.

Whilst at the same time:

- Meeting the international and national statutory obligations to protect designated areas, species and habitats of natural heritage interest and historic environment from inappropriate forms of development; and
- Minimising the effects on local communities.

Other relevant national planning policy guidance includes:

- NPPG1: The Planning System
- NPPG 14: Natural Heritage
- NPPG 15: Rural Development
- NPPG 18: Planning and the Historic Environment
- SOED Circular 6/95 (as revised June 2000): Habitats Directive.

The underlying principle of all NPPGs and related policies is sustainable development. Some NPPGs are intended to encourage development, while others are intended to safeguard resources and features of national and international importance. Policies in the latter group do not necessarily preclude renewable energy developments, but development proposals should avoid significant adverse impact upon the character, quality, integrity and setting of a designated resource.

### Argyll and Bute Structure Plan 2002

Policy STRAT SI 1 – Sustainable Development.

Argyll and Bute Council shall adhere to the following principles in considering development proposals, and in its policies, proposals and land allocations in Local Plans, It will seek to:-

- a) maximise the opportunity for local community benefit
- b) make efficient use of vacant and/or brownfield land
- c) support existing communities and maximise the use of existing service infrastructure
- d) maximise the opportunities for sustainable forms of design, including energy efficiency
- e) avoid the use of prime quality or locally important good quality agricultural land



- f) use public transport routes fully and increase walking and cycling networks
- g) avoid the loss of recreational and amenity open space
- h) conserve the natural and built environment and avoid significant adverse impacts on biodiversity, natural and built heritage resources
- i) respect the landscape character of an area and the setting and character of settlements
- j) avoid places where there is a significant risk of flooding, tidal inundation, coastal erosion or ground instability and
- k) avoid having an adverse effect on land, air and water quality.

## Policy STRAT DC 7 – Nature Conservation and Development Control

- A) Development likely to have a significant effect on a Natura Site will be subject to an appropriate assessment. The development will only be permitted where the assessment indicates that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the site, or, there are no alternative solutions and there are imperative reasons of overriding public interest.
- B) On sites of national importance, SSSIs and NNRs, development will only be permitted where it can be demonstrated that the overall objectives of the designation and the overall integrity of the designated area would not be compromised, or where any adverse impacts are clearly outweighed by social or economic benefits of national importance.
- C) Development which impacts on Local Wildlife Sites or other nature conservation interest, including sites, habitats or species at risk as identified in the Local Biodiversity Action Plan, shall be assessed carefully to determine its acceptability balance along with national – or local – social or economic considerations.
- D) Enhancement to nature conservation interest will also be encouraged in association with development and land use proposals.

## Policy STRAT DC 8 – Landscape and Development Control

1. Development which, by reason of location, siting, scale, form, design or cumulative impact, damages or undermines the key environmental features of a visually contained or wider landscape or coastscape shall be treated as 'non-sustainable' and is contrary to this policy. Outwith the National Park particularly important or vulnerable landscapes in Argyll and Bute are those associated with:

- a) National Scenic Areas
- b) Historic landscapes and their settings with close links with archaeology and built heritable and/or historic gardens and designed landscapes.
- c) Landward and coastal areas with semi-wilderness or isolated or panoramic quality.

2. Protection, conservation and enhancement to landscape will also be encouraged in association with development and land use proposals.

## Policy STRAT DC 9 – Historic Environmental and Development Control

Protection, conservation, enhancement and positive management of the historic environment is promoted. Development that damages or undermines the historic, architectural or cultural qualities of the historic environment will be resisted; particularly if it would affect a Scheduled Ancient Monument or its setting, other recognised architectural site of national or regional importance, listed building or its setting, conservation area or historic garden or designed landscape. More detailed policy and proposals for the historic environment will be set out in the Local Plan.

## Policy STRAT RE1 – Wind Farm/Wind Turbine Development

- A) Wind farm development is encouraged where it is consistent with STRAT DC 7, 8 and 9. Proposals shall be supported where it can be demonstrated there is no significant adverse effect on:
  - Local communities.

- Natural environment.
- Landscape character and visual amenity.
- Historic environment.
- Telecommunications, transmitting or receiving systems and

- B) The Council will identify, with appropriate justification in the Local Plan, broad areas of search or, where appropriate, specific sites where wind energy development may be permitted. The Council will also indicate sensitive areas or sites which it is adjudged that for overriding environmental reasons, proposals for wind farm development would only be considered in exceptional circumstances in line with the criteria set out above. Issues associated with the cumulative impact of wind farm and wind turbine developments will be addressed. This will be done in partnership with the industry and other interested parties including local communities.

## LORN LOCAL PLAN

### POL RUR 1

The Council will seek to maintain and where possible enhance the landscape quality of National and Regional Scenic Areas and coasts and areas of local landscape significance and within these areas will resist prominent or sporadic development which would have an adverse environmental impact:

- a) National Scenic Area: (i) Lynn of Lorn; (ii) Ben Nevis and Glencoe
- b) Regional Scenic Areas: (i) Knapdale/Melfort; (ii) North Argyll
- c) Regional Scenic Coasts: North West Argyll
- d) Areas of local landscape significance: (i) Loch Etive/Benderloch Coast; (ii) Loch Awe; (iii) Loch Nell; (iv) Glen Lonan; (v) Loch Avich; (vi) Glen Gallain/Loch Scammadale.

### POL RUR 2

Proposals for development in or affecting Regional Scenic Areas and Coasts or areas of local landscape significance will be required to be assessed against the following criteria:

- (a) environmental impact
- (b) locational/operational need
- (c) economic benefit
- (d) infrastructure and servicing implications

## **Argyll and Bute Local Plan**

The Argyll and Bute Finalised Draft Local Plan 2005 is not a significant material consideration as the Council is still considering representations received during the recent public consultation relating to windfarm policy.

## **Wind Farm Policy 1995**

The Council's Wind Farm Policy 1995 arose from the need to address the complex issues regarding the impact of such developments on the environment and to assist developers in site selection and to indicate the type of information required. This remains relevant and in the context of this planning application relevant policies include:

Policy WF 1 states that the Council will support wind farms which are consistent with existing development plan policies and of a high quality of design but will resist developments which either cumulatively or individually, would have an adverse impact on the environment by virtue of scale, location, setting or design.

Policies WF6 and WF7 seek to resist wind farms within 300m of residential properties or which are likely to result in shadow flicker on occupied premises or be a potential distraction to drivers.

Policy WF8 states that developments which would have an adverse affect on telecommunications, will be resisted.

Policy WF9 states that the Council will protect bird species covered by EC Directives by resisting wind farms which are likely to affect the breeding, feeding, roosting and flight areas (ie., areas of caution) of specially protected bird species.

Policy WF11 seeks to minimise long term visual and ecological impact and seeks the developer to enter into a legal agreement and financial bond to secure the highest quality of re-instatement.

Policy WF12 states that wind farms should normally be operational within two years of approval.

Policy WF13 recognises that wind farms are essentially temporary structures and states that the Council will:

- impose conditions of permission to ensure that such sites are fully restored upon the expiry of consent;
- seek legal agreements to secure a financial bond to cover such costs;
- normally grant permission for an initial period of 20 years.

## CONSULTATION RESPONSES

### Roads

The Department has no objections subject to the conditions that there is a control of the geometry and the necessary construction work required to be undertaken (as previously agreed at meetings). The geometry changes are relevant to the final route that is chosen from which they still wait notification.

### Protective Services

No observations to date. Have reminded them.

### SNH

No objections to revised proposal.

### Avich and Kilchrenan Community Council

Object regarding:-

Affect on landscape

Ornithology – possible affect on juvenile eagles.

Access – alteration and disruption to B845 and the affect on Glen Nan National Nature Reserve and Loch Etive Woods SAC

**Taynuilt Community Council** – no specific objections but express concerns regarding access route and would prefer the turbines to be determined by the western route.

## PUBLICITY AND REPRESENTATIONS

The Scottish Executive advertised the original submission and the amendment. They have sent a list of objectors and supporters.

73 supporters to the original proposal

69 out of time supporters to original proposal

15 supporters after addendum

5 objectors to original

1 out of time objectors to original proposal

8 objectors to the addendum

The supporters made points about

- 1) road improvements

- 2) economic boost to the area
- 3) careful design
- 4) community fund
- 5) Beinn Ghlas fits into landscape

The objections are summarised as follows:-

- 1) affect on wildlife
- 2) affect on tourism
- 3) affect on transport/disruption to B845
- 4) landscape.