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## CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

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**Title:** CONSULTATION FROM MORAY COUNCIL:  
HILL OF GLASCHYLE WIND TURBINES

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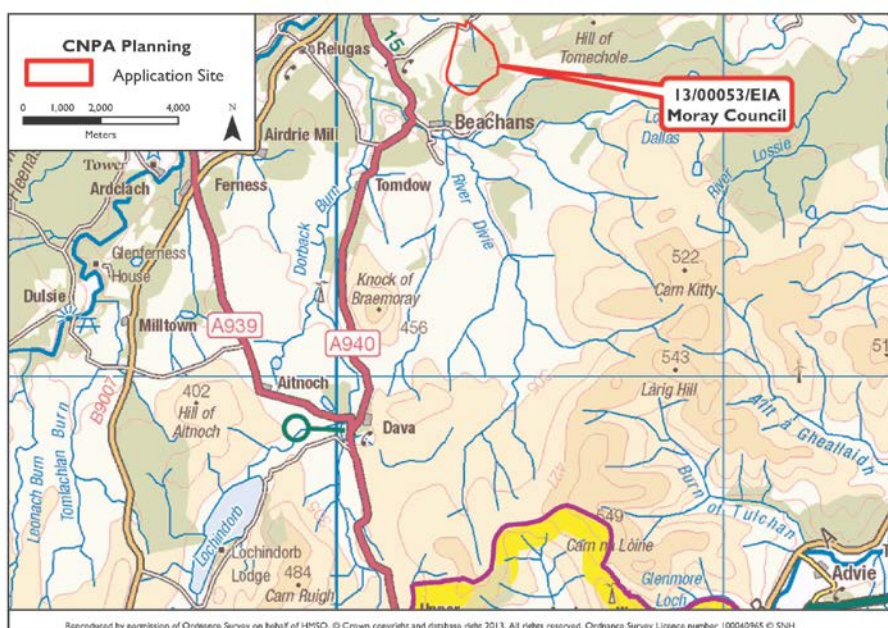
**DEVELOPMENT PROPOSED:** ERECTION OF 12 WIND  
TURBINES ( ROTOR DIAMETER  
71 metres HEIGHT TO TIP 99.5  
metres) AT HILL OF  
GLASCHYLE, DUNPHAIL,  
FORRES, MORAY

**REFERENCE:** Local Authority Ref I3/00053/EIA

**APPLICANT:** MUIRDEN ENERGY

**DATE CONSULTED:** 24 JANUARY 2013

**RECOMMENDATION:** NO OBJECTION



**Fig 1 : Location**

## PURPOSE OF REPORT

1. The purpose of this report is to provide a consultation response to Moray Council on a planning application for twelve wind turbines, situated at Hill of Glaschyle to the south of Forres, and some 11 kilometres to the north of the Cairngorms National Park boundary, as shown on the location plan above.
2. The Cairngorms National Park Authority (CNPA) has been consulted in relation to any impacts upon the park as the application is accompanied by an Environmental Statement under the terms of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2011. The planning issues being considered in relation to this consultation are whether there are any impacts upon the qualities of the park

## SITE DESCRIPTION AND PROPOSAL

3. The site is located on the slopes of Hill of Glaschyle. This is part of an area of mixed woodland and heath/moorland located to the far north of the National Park and some 10 km south of Forres. It is located around 3 km to the south west of the nearest settlement at Logie and takes access off the Grantown to Forres road via a minor rural road leading to the half Davoch area. The site will be accessed off this minor road via extending the existing track network.
4. The proposal seeks consent for 12 wind turbines measuring 99.5 metres to tip with total installed capacity of around 27.6 megawatts. Associated access tracks and hard standing areas are also proposed.
5. The application is accompanied by an Environmental Assessment as noted earlier, and this includes chapters on ecological and landscape impacts. In this regard the Environmental Statement (ES) makes reference to the Cairngorms National Park National Scenic Area being some 30 km south of the site. However it should also be noted that the National Park itself is a national designation and this lies some 11 km metres to the south of the site. The accompanying ZTVs indicate that the turbines will be visible from some parts of the Park. The Environmental Statement considers that there will be no significant landscape and visual impacts upon the Park, with impacts considered to be minor only.
6. By way of background there has been both screening by Moray Council to determine the requirement for an Environmental Impact Assessment, and scoping of the main issues to be addressed, in 2012, with an application for an anemometer approved in 2012 and now built.

7. The Committee will be aware that there has been ongoing pressure for wind turbines around the Park and in the particular vicinity of this site, key applications are as follows;
- Paul's hill – 24 turbines built
  - Rothes - 22 turbines built
  - Berry Burn - 29 turbines consented
- All these sites lie closer to the National Park boundaries than the proposed development

## DEVELOPMENT PLAN CONTEXT

### Strategic Policy - Cairngorms National Park Partnership Plan 2012-2017

8. The Cairngorms National Park Plan sets out the vision and overarching strategy for managing the Park and provides focus and priorities at a time of limited financial resources. The Plan also provides a strategic context for the Local Development Plan and shows how the four aims of the National Park can be achieved together. It sets out the strategic direction and priorities for the Park.
9. Three long term outcomes for the Park are set out as follows:
- A sustainable economy supporting thriving businesses and communities;
  - A special place for people and nature with natural and cultural heritage enhanced; and
  - People enjoying the park through outstanding visitor and learning experiences.
- These outcomes address the interaction of the three main characteristics of the National Park these being that the Park is an internationally important area for nature conservation; a fragile rural economy, and an internationally known tourism destination. Recognising the relationship of these outcomes is at the heart of the National Park. A series of work programmes to help deliver the outcomes is set out in the Plan.
10. Policy 1.3 states that large scale commercial wind turbines ( defined as more than 1 turbine, and more than 30m in height) are not compatible with the special qualities of the National Park and are not considered to be appropriate within the National Park or *where outside the Park they affect its landscape setting*. Policy 2.3 seeks to conserve and enhance the special landscape qualities of the Park with a particular emphasis upon conserving and enhancing wildness qualities amongst other objectives.

## National Policy and Guidance

11. Scottish Planning Policy (SPP) sets out Scottish Government's policy on nationally important land use planning matters, and it sets out the Scottish Government's commitment to increasing the amount of electricity generated from renewable sources, identifying hydro and wind energy as the main sources of supply. Policy stresses the importance of carefully considering

siting to ensure landscape and visual impact is minimised, and sets out the range of issues to be considered. This is reinforced in Planning Advice on Renewable Energy, (note on onshore wind turbines), and in Scottish Natural Heritage guidance on wind energy, which all provide guidance on assessment of wind energy proposals. The importance of particular landscapes such as National Parks is highlighted in Scottish Planning Policy.

## CONSULTATIONS

12. **The CNPA Landscape Officer** has been consulted and advises that the Zone of Theoretical Visual Influence (ZTVs) information demonstrate that the areas with visibility of the wind farm are the high points along the northern boundary of the park and the summits of Meal a Buachaille ridge and the Cairngorm Massif with glimpsed views northwards towards the windfarm when leaving the National Park on the B9007.
13. The landscape setting of the Park on its northern side is largely determined by the continuity of the open undulating plateau moorland of the Strath Dearn hills, broken by the wooded valley of the Spey. The open undulating expanse of moorland of the Dava contributes much to the landscape experience/landscape setting as appreciated from the high points along the northern Park boundary. Beyond these open uplands, the character changes and becomes a mix of upland moorland and large scale forestry which is distinct from the landscape immediately surrounding the Park and contributes less to the landscape experience within the Park. The degree of intervisibility with locations further south in to the Park is limited by the higher ground along the northern boundary and the gradual loss in height as the land slopes away northwards towards the coast
14. The proposed site is on a small hill within the upland moorland and forestry area. Due to its relatively low height, lack of separation from nearby landforms and surrounding woodland, it is not easy to distinguish (in views from the Park) and is not one of the recognised landmark hills (reference Moray Wind Energy Landscape Capacity Study 2012).
15. Consequently, it is considered that the proposed wind farm, whilst appearing as a new focal feature, would not have a significant adverse effect on landscape character as experienced from the National Park, nor have a significant effect on the experience of the special landscape qualities of the Park. In the majority of views from the Park all or part of the turbines will be backclothed and it is considered that the development will not have a significant adverse visual impact on views from the National park.
16. In terms of cumulative impacts with other consented and operational wind farms, these are in all within relative close proximity to the Park, with the additional impact of this proposal considered to be minor.

17. The Landscape Advisor concludes that the proposed wind farm will be a new focal feature in the landscape, visible from some locations within the National Park, but because of its location within a landscape character type that is at some distance from the National park and is notably different from that which 'flows' across the boundary, it will have a negligible effect on the landscape setting of the National Park.
18. Finally, impact upon wildness has also been considered. The wind farm will be visible from areas of medium and high wildness. However, given the low magnitude of landscape and visual impacts likely to be experienced in these areas, and the distances across which the wind farm would be viewed the effects on wildness would be slight to negligible and not significant. Whilst the sense of wildness within the Park would not be compromised, it would not be enhanced and so falls short of fully meeting policy 2.3 of the National Park Partnership Plan.

## APPRAISAL

19. The proposed wind farm is located on a site which lies approximately 11 km north of the boundary of the National Park. Based upon the conclusions of the Environmental Statement and the location of the site relative to the Park, there are unlikely to be any significant ecological issues in this case.
20. Consequently the key planning issue for consideration is that of the visual and landscape impact on the setting of the National Park, and views into and out of this part of the Park.
21. The site is some distance from the Park, with Hill of Glaschyle not forming a distinctive or landmark feature as viewed from the Park, but rather forming part of the mixed forestry and moorland area lying beyond (north) the Dava Moor. The open undulating expanse of moorland of the Dava contributes much to the landscape experience/landscape setting as appreciated from the high points along the northern Park boundary. Beyond these open uplands the character changes and becomes a mix of upland moorland and large scale forestry and it is within this area the application site is located.
22. As a result of this location, it is considered that the proposed development, whilst appearing as a new focal feature, would not have a significant adverse effect on landscape character as experienced from the National park, nor would it have a significant effect on the experience of the special landscape qualities of the Park. In relation to views from the Park it is considered that its relatively compact design, the effects of backclothing against the landscape beyond and the distances involved should help ensure that there are no significant adverse impacts.
23. In terms of cumulative impacts with other wind farms in the area , it is noted that the site lies further from the National Park boundaries than other sites approved, and in some cases built (e.g. Berryburn, Rothes and Paul's Hill) and as such its impact is considered to be minor.

24. The final issue to be considered is the impact upon wildness experienced in the Park. Whilst the proposal could not be considered to enhance the experience of wildness, it is considered that, given the low magnitude of landscape and visual impacts likely to be experienced in the wild areas and the distances involved the impact would be slight to negligible.
25. In these overall circumstances it is considered that the proposed development would not have any significant adverse landscape or visual impacts upon the character or the setting of the National Park nor upon the special qualities of the Park. The proposal has been considered with respect to the statutory aims of the National Park and is not considered to conflict with these objectives. Accordingly it is recommended that the CNPA raise no objection to the proposal.

## RECOMMENDATION

26. That Members of the Committee support a recommendation of **NO OBJECTION** to the construction of twelve wind turbines of height 99.5 metres to tip at Hill of Glaschyle Forres.

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**14 February 2013**

The map on the first page of this report has been produced to aid in the statutory process of dealing with planning applications. The map is to help identify the site and its surroundings and to aid Planning Officers, Committee Members and the Public in the determination of the proposal. Maps shown in the Planning Committee Report can only be used for the purposes of the Planning Committee. Any other use risks infringing Crown Copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings. Maps produced within this Planning Committee Report can only be reproduced with the express permission of the Cairngorms National Park Authority and other Copyright holders. This permission must be granted in advance.