



CNPA APPLICATION REF. NO. : 0317/DET

**INTERNAL SPECIALIST RESPONSE**  
**Landscape**

*Internal specialist* : Frances Thin Landscape adviser

Interests affected by proposal (category e.g.- natural heritage, cultural heritage, access issues, economic development, housing)

- Landscape

Potential impacts on interests, including evidence of impacts :

At 50m high the proposed anemometer mast is taller than many pylons. The nature of its light weight construction means that it will be a lot less visually prominent than a turbine on the same site. However, the location of the site at the bealach means that from 1 to 2 kilometers in either direction the mast will sit prominently on the skyline in forward views from the A939 (A promoted tourist route) and at its closest point the guys will also be visible. In certain weather and lighting conditions the mast may be visible from further afield, with any aviation lighting (should that be necessary) affecting both visibility and the quality of dark skies. No access tracks are necessary for construction but it is likely that the pull-off area at the closest roadside point may need to be widened to facilitate safe access.

Appraisal of impacts :

In the case of **landscape character** I would assess the impact to be **slight**, derived from a medium sensitivity and low magnitude (nature of effects and temporary duration). NB The significance of effect is likely to rise to moderate on removal of the pylons because the character of the site will be more sensitive and the nature of the effects more pronounced.

In the case of **visual amenity** I would say that the impact would be **slight**, derived from a medium sensitivity and low magnitude. NB the significance of the effect is likely to rise to moderate on removal of the pylons because the change to views by the addition of the mast is greater.

Concluding advice :

The landscape and visual impact of the proposed anemometer mast as assessed in December 2011 (with the pylons still in place) is likely to be **slight and not significant**. However, the projected date for the removal of these pylons is not fixed but it will be before November 2014. Thus during the course of the 3 year permission, should it be granted, both the landscape and visual impact would increase to a level which is likely to be **moderate and significant** . In these circumstances the proposed wind mast would fail to complement and enhance the landscape character of the CNP and the setting of the development. It may be possible to reduce adverse landscape and visual effects on the

setting by locating the mast away from the beach. However minor adjustments to positioning would in my view make little difference.

**The development raises issues in relation to Landscape that are not capable of resolution, though these may only become significant some time after construction.**

NB the duration of this proposed development is factored in to the landscape and visual assessment (where magnitude of effect includes nature and duration of change).

Further detail in support of advice : (please continue on additional page where necessary)

### **Nethy Bridge Community Turbines**

The application being considered is for a wind monitoring mast and not for wind turbines. However, my understanding is that if the anemometer records favourable wind data it is likely to be followed with an application for 3 wind turbines of somewhere between 74m and 90m in height. As the proposed mast is intimately linked with this wider development I felt that some consideration of the potential landscape and visual effects of the latter might assist us in providing feedback to the community at this juncture.

### **Landscape and Visual Effects of Wind Turbines on the Site of the Proposed Anemometer Mast**

The following text in black is taken from the Landscape Framework Guidance for Single Turbines (15m to 30m). Whilst the application is likely to be for 3 turbines and of a much greater height than 15m to 30m, the guidance none the less provides a structured approach to what is a **very preliminary assessment**.

The assessment has been informed by familiarity with the area of the site and consideration of a ZTV (see attached ZTV and statement). A planning application would have to be accompanied by a full landscape and visual impact assessment.

***By way of comparison the turbines at Novar windfarm on the northern side of the Cromarty firth are 65m high and the turbines at Dunlaw (on Sutra) just south of Dalkeith are 67.5m and 75m.***

### **Landscape Character and Special Qualities**

I have made the landscape character assessment (in red) in respect of 1 turbine. The effect of three turbines would be greater but not necessarily proportionately so. The effect of access roading, transformers and grid connection would also add to the effect of

the development.

- Look for sites where a turbine will be seen to relate to an aspect of human management and to the size of built or managed features, for smaller turbines this will be large farm or industrial buildings or perhaps a stand of mature trees, for taller turbines this may be a settlement, the pattern of woodland or the pattern of land management. There should be a favourable scale relationship between the key characteristics of land use and the turbine. A turbine of this size (74m to 90m) would generally be sited so as to relate in the first instance to landform (see below). The pylons which previously may have given some kind of rationale to the development are to be removed.
- Look for sites that have existing access. I presume that access would be from the A939 at some 500m distance and would take the form of a 5m to 8m constructed hardcore track.
- Choose a site where the size of the turbine will relate to the shape and size of the topography. The scale relationship should be such that the turbine does not dominate the landform on which it sits. The proposed site is on the side slope above the pass or bealach. The size of the turbine is such that it would not be much different from the height of the adjacent landforms, and the position is such that when experienced from the road it would almost certainly dominate the landform.
- Avoid landforms that are an obvious threshold between different areas. The site is right on the boundary between the Landscape Character Area 'Abernethy Forest' and the 'Hills of Cromdale'. It sits on part of the fringing hills that ring the low lying basin of Abernethy and provide a striking backdrop to views from the Dorback area and beyond.
- Avoid sites where there is a strong sense of wildness, remoteness or seclusion. The site is close to the road. It is not wildland but the road gives the opportunity for people to experience the extensive heather-clad moorland hills, and give a sense of expanse and wildness to some.
- Avoid archaeology and its setting, (the area that is important in terms of the atmosphere of the place) and respect historic field patterns. Consider whether the turbine might compromise the setting of any cultural landmarks, historic buildings, historic routes and designed landscapes. The site is very close to the military road.
- Avoid sites where the landform is a notable natural landmark feature in the landscape e.g. a crag, prominent ridge, glacial drumlins or eskers, a narrow glen or natural gateway. The bealach is a subtle landform, the most prominent feature is the open basin itself which lying within an arc of dramatic high mountains provides

a sense of openness and space that is best appreciated from elevated viewpoints such as the A939.

### **Visual Effects and Views**

- Look for a site that has a small Zone of theoretical visibility (ZTV) and where visibility is limited to the character area. The visual effect will extend well beyond the immediate character area. The ZTV (attached) shows visibility for three 74m high turbines independently and cumulatively. The ZTV will depend on the exact siting arrangements of turbines (this one was the best i.e. least visible, of the two layouts considered). Indicative though it may be, the ZTV shows extensive visibility; in the immediate area (5km radius), the low ground extending west from the Abernethy basin and taking in Nethy bridge, Boat of Garten, Aviemore, Duthill and parts of Carrbridge and extending eastwards to take in Tomintoul. The Meal a Buachaille Ridge, the hills west of Aviemore, the southern end of the Cromdales, the western side of the Ladder hills and Ben Rinnes would also be affected. Depending on the location of turbines there may also be visibility from Ben Avon, Bynack More, Cairngorm, Macdui and Breariach. Without further information and analysis it is not possible to assess the level of significance of visual effect accurately however experience suggests that it would be major, significant and adverse.
- Avoid sites where the turbine would be visually dominant or intrude into key views from public places (settlements, roads, footpaths and visitor sites). The site is a few hundred metres from the public road and a turbine or turbines of this stature would visually dominate the experience of road users and some residents within the 5km radius as well as affecting views from further afield.
- Use computer technology to test a number of potential sites and compare their visual impact.

### **Cumulative Effects**

There would be cumulative landscape and visual effects with a number of other windfarms outside the National Park and the single turbine approved at the Lecht.

### **Policy and Precedent**

It is highly unlikely that a 1, 2 or 3 turbine development (at 74m or 90m) could be designed in such a way as to complement and enhance the landscape character of the Park and so meet policy 6 Landscape. In addition a wind turbine or wind cluster in this location would reduce the benefits of the Beaully Denny mitigation scheme in the immediate locality.

It is highly unlikely that a 1, 2 or 3 turbine development (at 74m or 90m) could be

designed in such a way as '...to have no significant adverse visual or landscape impact...' and so meet policy 15 Renewable Energy Generation.

In the last 3 years we have made detailed representations at 4 PLLs objecting to wind farms outside the National Park on landscape, visual and wildness grounds. To permit an application for a large turbine or turbines within the National Park with significant adverse landscape and visual effects, would undermine our case and send out some confusing messages.

Frances Thin

2/12/2011