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# CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

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**Title: REPORT ON CALLED-IN PLANNING APPLICATION**

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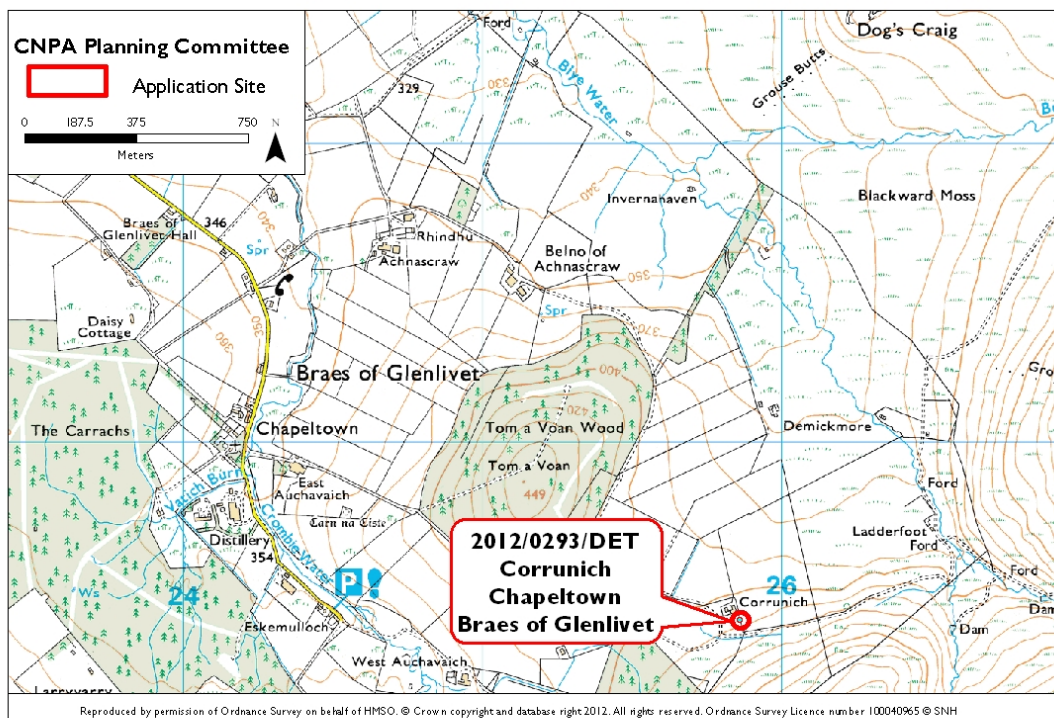
**DEVELOPMENT PROPOSED: ERECTION OF 1 WIND TURBINE  
(ROTOR DIAMETER 7.54metres)**

**REFERENCE: 2012/0293/DET**

**APPLICANT: MS GHILLIE BASAN**

**DATE CALLED-IN: 29 SEPTEMBER 2012**

**RECOMMENDATION: Approval Subject to Conditions**



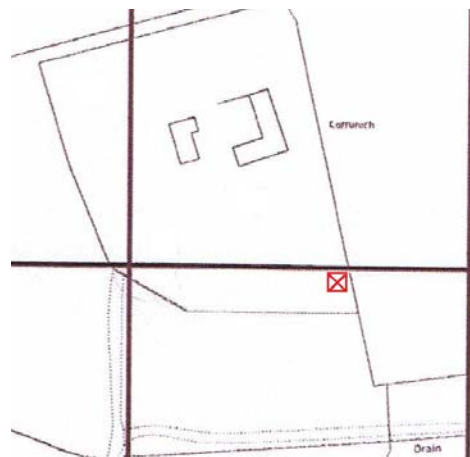
**Fig. 1 - Location Plan**

## SITE DESCRIPTION AND PROPOSAL

1. This application seeks full planning permission to erect a wind turbine measuring 15 metres to the hub and 19 metres to blade tip at Corrunich, Braes of Glenlivet. The proposed turbine design is a standard three bladed one with an output of 10 kW
2. The proposed site is located to the south of an existing cottage known as Corrunich and the turbine will be located within the curtilage of that property. Corrunich is a remote rural property at Braes of Glenlivet, located some distance up a private track which runs through the farm yard of East Auchavaich and serves a further house to the far north east at Denickmore. This track leads onto a core path network which runs over the Ladder Hills. The site is located at the foot of the Ladder Hills which are designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest and Special Protection Area. The site itself lies outwith this designation.



**Figure 2 above shows the location of the house behind trees turbine to the right**



**Figure 3 Site Plan**

3. The abovementioned access track will be used for construction access, and no other servicing is required.
4. The nearest residential property is Corrunich itself which belongs the applicant and is around 70 metres to the north of the proposed turbine site. Other residential properties are located over 500 metres away.
5. Supporting information has been submitted including site assessment information, photomontages to show the visual relationship of the turbine in the landscape together with a zone of theoretical influence map. Noise information has also been submitted. The conclusion of these studies is that there will be no adverse impacts arising from the development.
6. A planning application for this site was submitted earlier in the year and was called in by the CNPA. (Reference 2012/0019/DET) That application was withdrawn because the proposed site of the turbine was shown on land outwith the applicant's control.

## **DEVELOPMENT PLAN CONTEXT**

### **National policy**

7. **Scottish Planning Policy (SPP)** is the statement of the Scottish Government's policy on nationally important land use planning matters. It sets out that planning authorities are encouraged to take a positive approach to development, recognising and responding to economic and financial conditions in considering proposals that would contribute to economic growth and has the basic aim "to achieve the right development in the right place."
8. As a replacement for a variety of previous planning policy documents the new Scottish Planning Policy includes 'subject policies', of which many are applicable to the proposed development. .
9. The key topic in this case is renewable energy which contains a section on wind farms. This sets out the Scottish Government's commitment to

increasing the amount of electricity generated from renewable sources and identifies 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 for onshore wind turbines. Also 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.

### **Strategic Policies** **Cairngorms National Park Partnership Plan 2012-2017**

10. 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.

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.

11. 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

12. Policy 1.3 of this Plan 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.

### **Local Plan Policy** **Cairngorms National Park Local Plan (2010)**

13. The Cairngorms National Park Local Plan was formally adopted on 29<sup>th</sup> October 2010. The full text can be found at:  
<http://www.cairngorms.co.uk/parkauthority/publications/results.php?publicationID=265>
14. New development requires to be assessed in relation to all policies contained in the Plan. In this case the key policy is as follows :

15. Policy 15- Renewable Energy Generation which sets out that developments for small scale renewable energy generation will be favourably considered where they contribute to minimisation of climate change and complement the sustainability credentials of the development. The need to ensure there is no adverse impact upon residential amenity or upon the environment is set out.
16. Also of particular relevance are the following policies:
17. Policy 6 – Landscape which sets out that there will be a presumption against any development that does not complement and enhance the landscape character of the Park. Where development does not complement and enhance the landscape character, any significant adverse effects must be clearly outweighed by social and economic benefits of national importance and all adverse effects must be minimised and mitigated. This is reinforced within the CNPA's Landscape Toolkit which provides information on siting of wind turbines and assessment of landscape character.
18. Policy 16: Design Standards for new development applies which sets out the design standards to be met with new development and is supported by supplementary planning guidance in the form of sustainable design guide.
19. Policy 5- Biodiversity which sets out the importance of ensuring there is no adverse impact upon habitat or species identified in the local biodiversity action plan.
20. Also relevant are Policy 1: Natura 2000 Sites and Policy 2: National Natural Heritage Designations given that the site lies close to a SSSI and special protection area. These policies basically seek to ensure there is no adverse effect on the overall integrity of the designated area.

### **Supplementary Planning Guidance**

21. In addition to the adoption of the Cairngorms National Park Local Plan (2010) on 29th October 2010, a number of Supplementary Planning Guidance documents were also adopted. Guidance on Natural Heritage applies here. This guidance sets out how the natural heritage of the National Park will be taken into account when considering development proposals. Also relevant is the landscape toolkit mentioned in paragraph 18 above.

### **CONSULTATIONS**

22. **The CNPA Landscape Officer** advises that the turbine will be seen in relation to the small farm and a stand of substantial trees, in an area characterised by open, expansive pasture rising to a backdrop of moorland slopes and hills. Within this context the turbine is diminutive, relates to the more managed land and does not dominate the land use or landform. Accordingly it is considered that there are no significant landscape character effects.

23. Similarly the visual impacts are not considered to be significant, with a relatively small zone of theoretical visibility, limited by the “basin” of the Braes of Glenlivet, with the turbine “backclothed” against this area from the majority of views. It is not considered that the turbine will be dominant or intrusive in terms of views from the public footpaths either. In terms of cultural heritage impacts the College of Scalán lies around 1.5 km south west of the site in a north facing bowl. The lower ridge of Cam Mhor screens the application site from Scalán and views of the turbine from the access track to Scalán will be screened by forestry.
24. It is concluded that the development does not raise any landscape issues and it is recommended that it be coloured pale grey.
25. **Moray Council’s Environmental Health Officers** have no objections subject to a noise condition being imposed.
26. **Moray Council’s Contaminated Land and Environmental Protection Officers** have no adverse comments
27. **Moray Council’s Roads Officers** have no objections noting that this small scale turbine is remote from public roads and would not require any abnormal loads for delivery of components.
28. **The CNPA Ecology Officer** has no adverse comments regarding the principle of this development but is unable to comment in any detail given that an ecology study has not been submitted. The applicant’s agent has been asked to submit an assessment of the impact upon ecology in and around the site but to date the study has not been submitted.
29. **The Archaeology Service (Aberdeenshire Council)** has no comments.
30. **Glenlivet Community Council** has been consulted and no comment have been received at the time of writing.
31. In terms of communications issues **Ministry of Defence, Atkins, NATS and Ofcom** have no objections

## REPRESENTATIONS

32. The application was advertised in the local press and two representations have been received which are attached as **Appendix I**. These raise concern that the special, historical qualities of the Braes of Glenlivet area (not only Scalán, but the crofting history) should be conserved. The area is popular with walkers and visitors, and should be kept unspoilt. Approval of the application will set an undesirable precedent for further applications to proceed. A query is raised as to ownership of the site (*NB in this regard the applicant’s agent has certified that the applicant owns the site which lies within the curtilage of her house.*)

## **APPRAISAL**

### **Principle**

33. National and local planning policies support the principle of small scale renewable energy proposals such as this , providing they are suitably sited.

### **Technical Issues**

34. There are no particular technical issues with this site which uses an existing access track. This access will only be required for a very short term construction period (less than a week) which is little different from normal agricultural operations.
35. Due to the small scale of the development and the site's location within a large and remote rural curtilage there is also unlikely to be any particular issues with drainage etc.

### **Residential Amenity**

36. The nearest house to the application site belongs to the applicant Environmental Health officers, having considered the potential impacts of the turbine have no objections subject to imposition of a noise condition. Further discussion is taking place with the Environmental Health Service to establish whether the noise condition is essential given the distances involved and an update will be provided at Committee.

### **Ecology**

37. The proposed turbine will be located within the garden of an existing house, in an area where, as noted our Landscape Advisor, there is pastureland adjacent. However the site lies close to the Ladder Hill and the applicant's were asked to carry out a site specific ecology study to supplement the generic material submitted. This is awaited at the time of writing and will be assessed upon submission. Given the scale of the turbine it is not anticipated that there should be any major issues.

### **Cultural Impacts**

38. It is not considered that the turbine will impact adversely upon the setting of Scalan due to the topography and distances involved. This conclusion is shared by our Landscape Advisor Also given the clear visual relationship with an existing cottage, and the scale of the development, it is not considered that the proposal will detract from the wider cultural heritage of this important area, but rather represents an evolution of development.

### **Landscape and Visual Effects**

39. Wind turbines are inevitably obvious in the landscape and cannot be hidden. The key planning issue is the level of their impacts in the landscape.
40. In this case the proposed turbine will be located in a remote rural area, set against the backdrop of the Ladder Hills. The scale of the turbine, particularly in relation to the scale of its surroundings is small and it will be "read" visually in relation to the existing grouping at Corrunich. As such it is not considered



that it will have any undue landscape impact providing the colour of the turbine is light grey as suggested by our Landscape Advisor.

41. The supporting information has satisfactorily demonstrated that wider visibility of the turbine will be limited and that, again, its scale in the landscape is suitable.
42. The concerns of objectors are noted, but given the distances involved and the scale of the turbine it is not considered that it will have an adverse impact upon Scalan or indeed the wider area. Any future applications for turbines in this area will also be carefully considered on the merits of the particular case, the setting and scale and in such circumstances approval of the application is not considered to establish an undesirable precedent for wind energy proposals.

#### **Conclusion**

43. In these overall circumstances it is considered that the proposed wind turbine, complies with Local Plan policies as it is considered the landscape impact is not significant or adverse, and that the site relates reasonably to existing features. Approval is therefore recommended.

### **IMPLICATIONS FOR THE AIMS OF THE NATIONAL PARK**

#### **Conserve and Enhance the Natural and Cultural Heritage of the Area**

44. The proposal is not considered to have an adverse effect on the important cultural heritage of Scalan due to its location and scale. Similarly the turbine is not considered to have an adverse effect upon the natural heritage of the area, due to its small scale and siting within a domestic cartilage.

#### **Promote Sustainable Use of Natural Resources**

45. The proposed development supports this aim by providing locally sourced renewable energy which can be used to provide energy for the dwellinghouse and for export if any surplus arises. Whilst the components of the turbine are unlikely to be locally sourced, there is potential for site construction materials to be locally sourced. In any event the long term benefits of renewable energy are ultimately the sustainable use of natural resources.

#### **Promote Understanding and Enjoyment of the Area**

46. The proposal does not directly relate to this aim. As noted in the appraisal section, the relatively discrete location of the site, scale of the development and visual relationship with the existing grouping, together with and the temporary nature of the proposal should also help ensure there is no loss of enjoyment of the visual qualities of the Park

#### **Promote Sustainable Economic and Social Development of the Area**

47. The proposed development will help support the social development of the area by providing energy to the householder. There is also some potential for construction materials and work to be locally sourced thus supporting economic development.



## RECOMMENDATION

48. That Members of the Committee support a recommendation to **GRANT** full planning permission for the erection of 1 wind turbine ( rotor diameter 7.54 metres)

### Subject to :

- (a) **Submission of a satisfactory ecology report, with any recommendations arising out of the CNPA's Ecology Officer's assessment of the findings being incorporated as planning conditions**
- (b) **Further consideration of the requirement for noise conditions to be imposed and**
- (c) **the following planning conditions**

1. The development to which this permission relates must be begun within three years from the date of this permission.

**Reason:** To comply with Section 58 of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act, 1997.

2. Unless otherwise agreed with the Cairngorms National Park (CNPA) acting as Planning Authority, no construction shall take place in the bird breeding season (March to August).

**Reason:** To ensure that there is no un-necessary disturbance to breeding birds.

3. In the event that the wind turbine becomes redundant or obsolete the turbine shall be removed and the site restored to the satisfaction of the acting planning authority within 6 months.

**Reason:** To ensure that the turbine is removed from the site when no longer required.

4. Unless otherwise agreed in writing with the CNPA acting as Planning Authority the wind turbine hereby approved should be finished in a light grey colour. Samples of the colour to be submitted to (and approved in writing by the CNPA acting as Planning Authority) before the turbine is erected.

**Reason:** To reduce the visual impact of the turbine and any potential reflectivity and glare in accordance with planning policies.

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**27 November 2012**

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