
CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

Title: REPORT ON CALLED-IN PLANNING APPLICATION

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DEVELOPMENT PROPOSED: ERECTION OF ANEMOMETER MAST (TEMPORARY PERMISSION FOR 2 YEARS)

REFERENCE: 10/339/CP

APPLICANT: MR E GRANT, GASKBEG FARM, LAGGAN

DATE CALLED-IN: 15 OCTOBER 2010

RECOMMENDATION: GRANT SUBJECT TO CONDITION

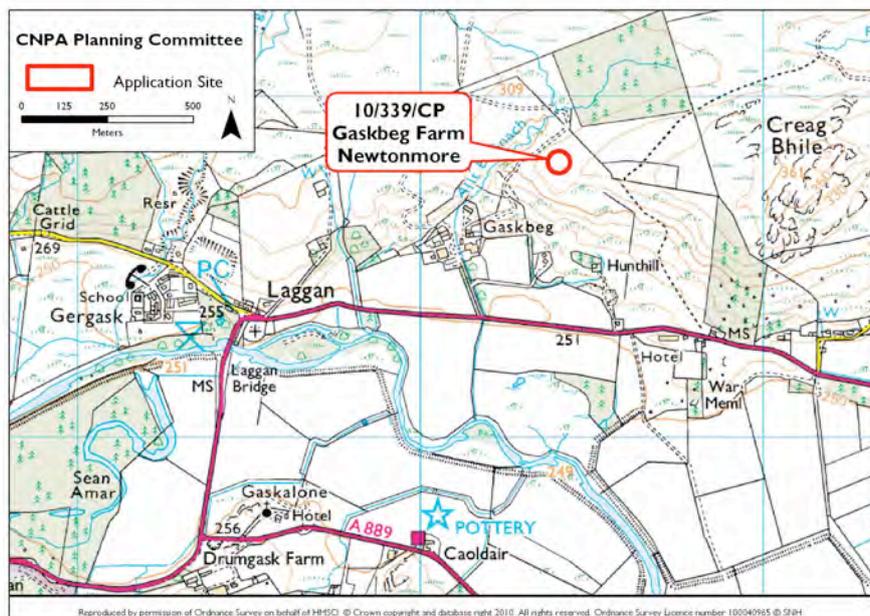


Fig. 1 - Location Plan

SITE DESCRIPTION AND PROPOSAL

1. The site of this application is located on a northward sloping plateau, approximately 400 metres to the north east and above Gaskbeg Farm which lies on the north side of the A86 to the east of Laggan village (see fig. 1). The site can be accessed via an existing farm track from Gaskbeg Farm. The site is currently used for grazing purposes. There is a forestry plantation to the north east of the site.
2. The proposal is for an anemometer mast of 20 metres in height, the anemometer would be set at the top of the mast which would be held in place at four anchor points by guy lines extending 10 metres from the mast (see figs 5 and 6). The mast would be grey in colour and a small box would be attached at the bottom of the mast to house the wind speed recording equipment.



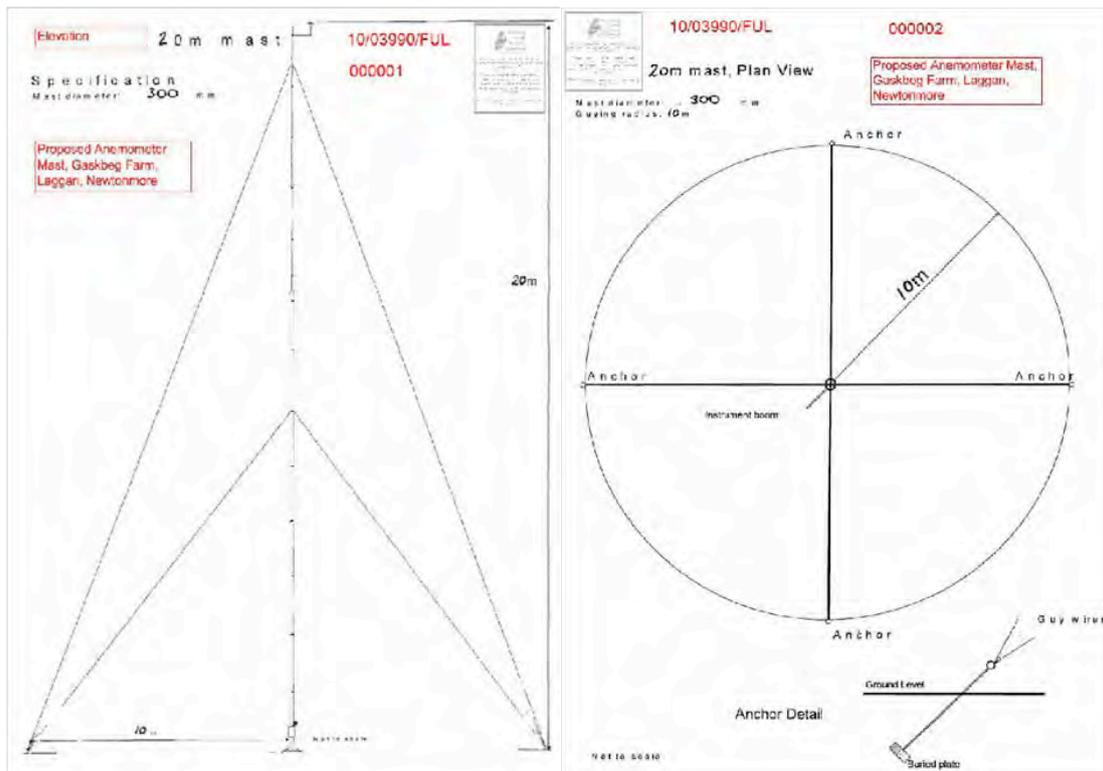
Figure. 2- View across the strath from A889 (arrow marks approx position)



Figure. 3- View of site for mast (location of car) looking north west.



Figure. 4 -Looking west from site (car) showing A86 (arrow)



Figures 5 & 6 Elevation and plan of mast.

3. Planning permission is sought on a temporary two year basis for the mast; although the applicant considers that (weather dependent) it may be possible to gather the required data in 3-6 months.

DEVELOPMENT PLAN CONTEXT

4. Section 25 (1) of the Planning etc (Scotland) Act 2006, requires that planning applications are determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

National policy

5. **Scottish Planning Policy (SPP) 2010** is the statement of the Scottish Government's policy for the land use planning system, supporting the central purpose of increasing sustainable economic growth. All new development should respond to the specific local character of the location, fit in the landscape and seek to achieve high design and environmental standards.

Highland Structure Plan 2001

6. **The Highland Structure Plan 2001** contains relevant policy G2 Design Standards for Sustainability which considers that amongst other things developments will be considered on the extent to which they impact on resources such as habitats, species, landscape and scenery. Policy L4 Landscape Character considers that the Council will have regard to the desirability of maintaining and enhancing present landscape character.

Cairngorms National Park Plan (2007)

7. **The Strategic Objectives for Landscape, Built and Historic Environment include;** ensuring that development complements and enhances the landscape character of the Park; and that new developments within settlements and surrounding areas complement and enhance the character, pattern and local identity of the built and historic environment. Under strategic objectives for Energy the Park Plan comments that there is a significant opportunity in the Park to develop renewable sources of energy such as biomass, wind, hydro, geothermal and solar to serve communities and households. This paragraph in the Plan goes on to consider that large-scale wind farms are not appropriate in the National Park but the development of domestic, business and community scale facilities in a full range of energy options should be pursued in appropriate locations.

Cairngorms National Park (CNP) Local Plan (2010)

8. The CNP Local Plan is now the Local Plan used for the determination of planning applications in the National Park.
9. **Policy 2 National Natural Heritage Designations** considers that development that would adversely affect the CNP will only be permitted where it has been demonstrated that the objectives of the designation and overall integrity of the area would not be compromised and any significant adverse effects are outweighed by social or economic benefits of national importance.
10. **Policy 6 Landscape** states a presumption against any development that does not complement and enhance the landscape character of the Park.
11. **Policy 11 The Local and Wider Cultural Heritage of the Park** considers that development should protect, conserve and enhance the cultural heritage of the area.
12. **Policy 15 Renewable Energy Generation** considers that developments for small scale renewable energy schemes which support the aims of the CNP and the National Park Plan strategic objective regarding energy production will be favourably considered where they contribute positively to the minimisation of climate change. Development will be sited and designed to have no significant adverse visual or landscape impact.
13. **Policy 16 Design Standards for Development** requires that all development minimises the effects of climate change, reflects the local vernacular and uses materials and landscaping that complements its setting.

CONSULTATIONS

14. **Laggan Community Association** has been consulted but no reply has been received.
15. The CNPA **Ecologist** has no comment.
16. The CNPA **Landscape Officer** comments that although the site is located back from the edge of a terrace the location is prominent. An anemometer mast is a visually 'light' structure and will in itself not have a significant visual impact and is temporary in nature. However, it must be noted that a wind turbine on this site (of a similar height to the mast) would be a lot more obvious and visible over a wide area. From a landscape perspective the mast is not a particular issue. However, any positive decision on the mast should not prejudice any subsequent decision for one or more wind turbines at the site.

REPRESENTATIONS

17. No representations have been received.

APPRAISAL

18. In this case temporary two-year permission is sought for an anemometer mast. The mast may be a precursor to an application for a wind turbine/s but all that is to be considered here is the appropriateness of a temporary mast in terms of planning policy and local environmental impact.
19. There are no direct policies contained within the CNP Local Plan which relate to anemometer masts but they are seen as part of the infrastructure of wind turbine development. Policy 15 Renewable Energy Generation does encourage smaller scale renewable development and the second paragraph of the policy refers to ancillary works. The mast could be considered as an ancillary works and considered under this policy. Another key policy is Policy 6 Landscape.
20. The National Park Plan and Policy 15 of the Local Plan encourage the development of business scale renewables and the renewable options being investigated by the applicant are a measure to boost the income of the farm business. Policy 6 Landscape of the CNP Local Plan holds a presumption against development that does not complement and enhance the character of the CNP. The mast would have some landscape impact as the site can be seen from the south across the Glen, though from some viewpoints it would be viewed against the backcloth of a higher hill to the north of the site. The mast would not be appropriate as a permanent feature. However, it would be of a very temporary nature (up to 2 years, possibly much less).

21. While the mast would not in strict terms conserve or enhance the landscape there is positive encouragement for small scale renewable development in both the National Park Plan and Local Plan. An anemometer mast is a necessary step in the process of considering renewable development in the form of wind energy. The Landscape Officer has considered the proposal and has no particular concerns given that the mast is a visually light and temporary structure.
22. The installation of the structure would have very little impact in terms of works required to anchor it to the ground and the site is easily accessible by a track from the farm. There are no localised impacts from the temporary positioning of this mast that would justify withholding permission.

Conclusion

23. While the mast would not be an appropriate form of development on a permanent basis this is a temporary request for permission and it is considered acceptable on this basis. A planning condition ensures that the permission is for 2 years only. However, it is understood from the applicant that the time required to gather data may be much less. Consequently, an advice note is attached to the recommendation to request that the mast be removed once adequate wind speed figures have been gathered.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE AIMS OF THE NATIONAL PARK

Conserve and Enhance the Natural and Cultural Heritage of the Area

24. As a new form of development in the area the proposal would have some landscape and visual impact but the siting and temporary nature of the mast means that there would be no significant effect. The proposal (on a temporary basis) is not considered to offend the first aim.

Promote Sustainable Use of Natural Resources

25. The proposal is intended to measure wind speed and forms part of the renewable energy generation process, which in turn forms part of promoting the sustainable use of the area's natural resources.

Promote Understanding and Enjoyment of the Area

26. The mast is not sited close to any particular public viewpoint or core path; otherwise the proposal has little relevance to this aim.

Promote Sustainable Economic and Social Development of the Area

27. The proposal can be considered to be part of the economic development of the farm business.

RECOMMENDATION

28. That Members of the Planning Committee support a recommendation to **GRANT** temporary planning permission for the erection of an anemometer mast at Gaskbeg Farm, Laggan subject to the following condition:
1. This permission is for two years from the date of this decision notice only. Beyond this time the mast in its entirety must be removed from the site.

Reason : The structure is of a temporary nature and of a design not suitable for permanent retention; the temporary permission is in accordance with the request made by the application.

ADVICE NOTES

1. You are advised that the mast should be removed as soon as possible after a satisfactory period of wind speed measurements has been achieved.
2. You are advised that the granting of this permission does not in any way indicate the acceptance of a wind turbine development at the site. Any wind turbine proposal would have to be the subject of a separate planning application and be considered on its own merits. Should you consider submitting any future application for a wind turbine at the site reference should be made in any application to Scottish Natural Heritage guidance contained in the document 'Natural Heritage Assessment of Small Scale Wind Energy Projects Which do Not require Formal EIA'. Reference should also be made to the CNP Local Plan and any prevailing supplementary planning guidance.

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29 November 2010

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