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## CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

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**Title:** CONSULTATION FROM PERTH AND KINROSS COUNCIL

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(DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT)

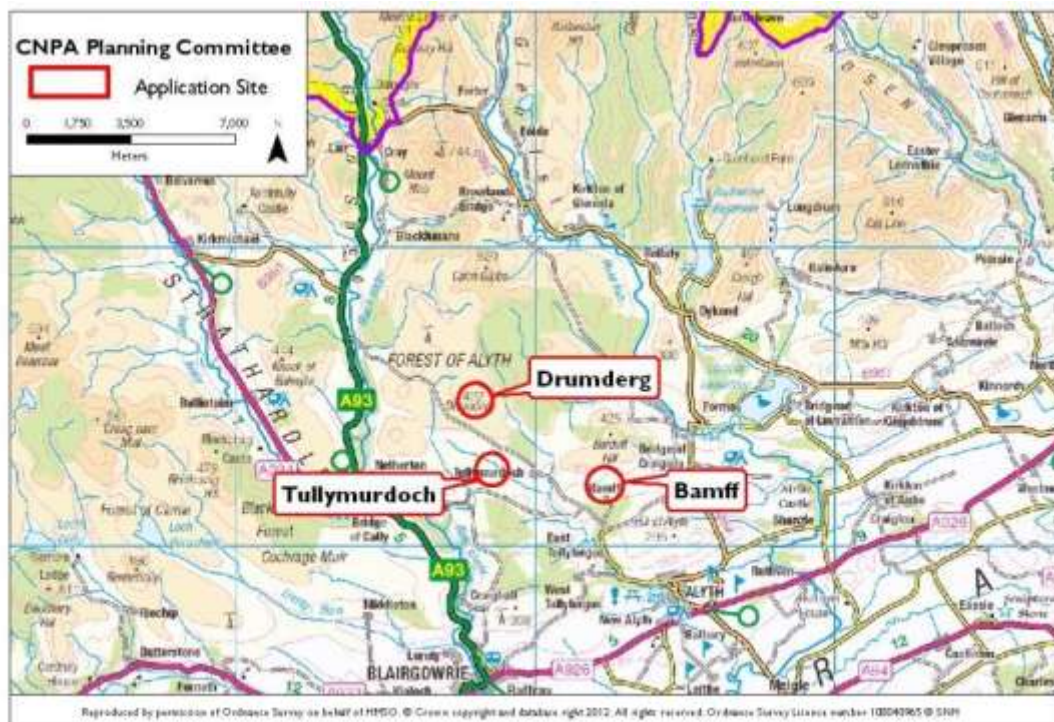
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**DEVELOPMENT PROPOSED:** ERECTION OF 7 WIND TURBINES, AT TULLYMURDOCH, ALYTH

**REFERENCE:** Perth and Kinross Reference 12/01423/FLL

**APPLICANT:** RDS Element Power Ltd

**RECOMMENDATION:** NO OBJECTION



**Fig 1: Location Plan**

## PURPOSE OF REPORT

1. The purpose of this report is to provide a consultation response to Perth and Kinross Council (who are dealing with this planning application) on a planning application for 7 wind turbines situated at Tullymurdoch some 6 km to the north west of Alyth. The site lies some 11.7 km from the south boundary of the National Park, at its nearest point within the Perth and Kinross Area.
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. This proposal is to erect 7 wind turbines of height 120 metres to tip (80 metres to hub) together with associated access tracks, borrow pit, and ancillary infrastructure, such as crane hardstanding, borrow pit and control building. The overall installed capacity is noted at being 14 – 17.5 megawatts, dependent on final turbine design.
4. The site is located to the north west of Alyth, some 2 km to the east of the existing Drumderg Wind Farm which comprises 16 wind turbines of height 107 metres to tip and 67 metres to hub.
5. To the east of the site a planning application is pending for 7 wind turbines at Bamff, of height up to 111 metres to tip. This was the subject of a recent report to the CNPA Planning Committee in respect of a consultation received from Perth and Kinross Council. The relationship of these three sites is shown on figure 1.
6. The Tullymurdoch site is located some 11.7 kilometres to the south of the Cairngorms National Park in an area which has the appearance of a transition area between the Park and the agricultural landscape to the south, with areas of tree planting in the vicinity of the site.
7. 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 in relation to assessing impacts upon national designations. It concludes that there will be visibility of the turbines from high points within the Park, predominantly limited to areas within 2km of the southern boundary of the Park, beyond which visibility is extremely limited.

8. Viewpoints taken from Meall Odhar indicate that the impact from the existing development at Drumderg is minimal, and that any additional turbines beyond Drumderg, as now proposed, will have even less impact. The overall conclusion is that at the southern end of the Park landscape effects are minor/moderate and in the rest of the Park, the effects will be negligible.

## DEVELOPMENT PLAN CONTEXT

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

9. 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.
10. 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.
11. 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*.

## CONSULTATIONS

12. **The CNPA Heritage Manager** advises that the location of wind farm is approx 11.7 km from the boundary of the Park and is set within a relatively settled landscape. There is no particular perceptual link to the National Park and consequently there is no direct landscape impact upon the CNP.
13. The visual impact of greatest magnitude is to the edge of the National Park above Glen Clova, though it is relatively discrete. There are views from higher points such as Lochnagar, and Mount Keen but they are well over 20km distant. In cumulative terms the proposal contributes to the cumulative

effects of multiple wind farms around the park as a whole, but its individual contribution is limited within this sector of the Park boundary where the numbers of wind farms are not as high as other parts. The habitat impacts are well beyond the boundary of the Park and in this situation raptors and geese will be considered by SNH.

14. Overall, in conclusion while there are some impacts upon the Park they are not significant enough in their own right to sustain an objection.

## APPRAISAL

15. The proposed wind farm is located on a site which lies approximately 11.7km away from the southern 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, as noted in paragraph 13 above.
16. 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.
17. The ES suggests that any landscape and visual effects upon the overall National Park will be negligible. The CNPA Heritage Manager has looked at the proposal and generally agrees with this conclusion. The site is located a considerable distance from the National Park and, importantly, is set in a more settled landscape character area which differs from the landscapes in the Park. This landscape forms a “transition” between the National Park and the agricultural land to the south.
18. This is not a pristine or untouched landscape, with existing wind turbines already present close by at Drumderg and one proposed at Bamff to the east. Combined with the distance from the Park boundary, together with the more settled landscape characteristics of the area when viewed from the southern hill summits of the Park, it is not considered that there would be any significant cumulative impact from this wind farm. The limited contribution of this proposal to the base line of existing wind farms/proposals is recognised by the CNPA Heritage Manager.
19. In these overall circumstances, while the development would be visible from some high points in the Park, the impact is not considered to warrant objection and the proposal itself, or indeed in cumulation with others, is not considered to have a significant adverse effect on the setting or character of the Park.
20. 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

21. That Members of the Committee support a recommendation of **NO OBJECTION** to the construction of seven wind turbines of height 120 metres to tip at Tullymurdoch, Alyth.

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**25 September 2012**

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