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## CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

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**Title: CONSULTATION FROM HIGHLAND COUNCIL**

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MANAGEMENT)**

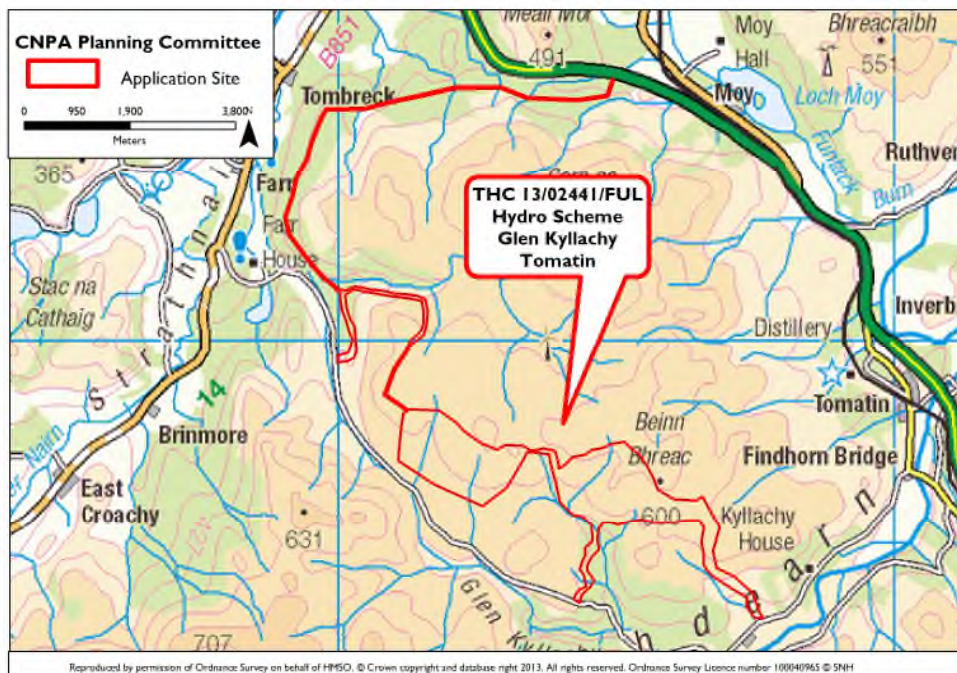
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**DEVELOPMENT PROPOSED: ERECTION OF WIND FARM  
COMPRISING 20 TURBINES (110  
METRES MAX BLADE TIP HEIGHT)  
AND ASSOCIATED  
INFRASTRUCTURE, ACCESS TRACKS  
AND 3 BORROW PITS AT LAND TO  
EAST OF BEINN BHREAC, GLEN  
KYLACHY, BY TOMATIN**

**REFERENCE: HIGHLAND COUNCIL REFERENCE  
13/02441/FUL**

**APPLICANT: RWE N POWER RENEWABLES LTD**

**RECOMMENDATION: NO OBJECTION**



**Fig 1.: Location Plan**

## PURPOSE OF REPORT

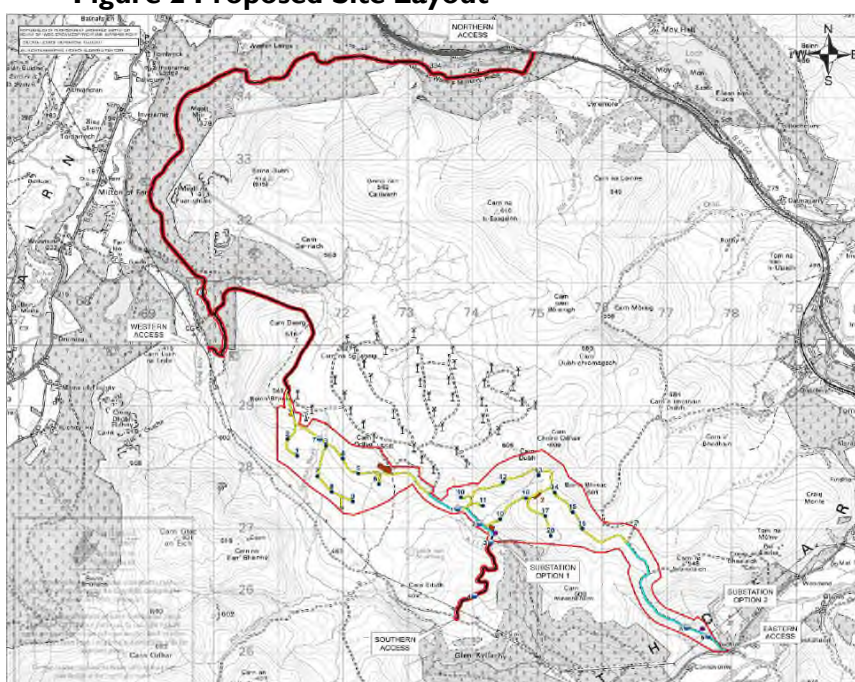
1. The purpose of this report is to provide a consultation response to Highland Council (who are dealing with this planning application) on a planning application for 20 wind turbines situated at Glen Kyllachy, beside the existing Farr Wind Farm near Tomatin.
2. The Cairngorms National Park Authority (CNPA) has been consulted in relation to any impacts upon the National 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

### The Proposals and Site

3. This proposal is to erect 20 wind turbines of height 110 metres to blade tip, together with associated infrastructure including access tracks, and three borrow pits. The applicants expect that the maximum installed capacity of the site would be 50 megawatts.
4. The site is located in the Monadhliath around 4.5 km to the north west of Tomatin and some 16 km to the south of Inverness. It is located to the west of the A9 trunk road beside an existing wind farm known as Farr Wind Farm which is located to the north of the Findhorn river and north of Strathdearn. The site is accessed by a minor, narrow road which runs to the west of the site and Farr Wind Farm. This minor road runs from Farr to Strathdearn. It is proposed to site the new turbines to the south and west of the existing wind farm. A copy of the proposed site layout is illustrated in **Figure 2** below

**Figure 2 Proposed Site Layout**



5. The application site is located around 7km to the north west of the Cairngorms National Park in an upland location, which is visually separated from the Park by Strathdearn, the river Findhorn and the hills north of the Slochd area. The area around the site is a mixture of open moorland and forestry
6. The application is accompanied by an Environmental Assessment as noted earlier, and this includes assessment of ecological and landscape impacts. It includes information on zones of theoretical influence information, wireline drawings and photomontages together with assessment of cumulative effects with other wind turbines in the area.
7. The Environmental Statement (ES) concludes that most of the Cairngorms National Park is located outwith the zone of theoretical influence, with the main visibility predicted as being from the high summits of the central massif and from the north eastern hills of the Cairngorm Mountains, all of which occur at distances of over 15 km.
8. Viewpoints have been provided to illustrate the impacts from these locations. The ES concludes that these illustrate that the proposed wind farm would be seen as an extension to the existing Farr wind farm, slightly increasing the horizontal extent of the turbines in view. The ES concludes that the overall potential impact upon the National Park, in addition to consented and operational wind farms (and those at application stage), will be moderate and not significant.

### **Planning History**

9. The CNPA were consulted at the pre application (scoping stage) and provided information on potential viewpoint locations.
10. As members are aware there has been considerable pressure for new wind farms around the edge of the National Park and in this case the most notable wind farm is the Farr Wind Farm which the application site abuts and which is already built.

## **DEVELOPMENT PLAN CONTEXT**

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

11. 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.

12. 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.

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.*” Also relevant is Policy 2.3 which seeks to conserve and enhance the special landscape qualities, with a particular focus on conserving and enhancing wildness qualities

### **National Policy and Guidance**

13. 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 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 with the aims of the National Parks set out in paragraph 128 which explains that the most sensitive landscapes may have little or no capacity to accept new development, noting that areas of wild land character in some of Scotland’s remoter upland, mountain and coastal areas are very sensitive to any form of development.

### **CONSULTATIONS**

14. **The CNPA Landscape Advisor** advises that in all views from the Park the wind farm will be seen in conjunction with turbines from the Farr Wind Farm, whereby the magnitude of change is assessed in addition to Farr, as opposed to in the context of a wind farm free landscape. In this respect it is considered that the proposal would *intensify*, rather than significantly increase, the effect of Farr in views from the Park.

15. The Landscape Advisor, having considered in detail the visual information submitted, has concluded that the proposals would not significantly impact upon the distinct landscape character of the Park's landscapes. It is also considered that the level of landscape and visual impact is such that it is unlikely to impact upon the sense of wildness or other special landscape qualities to a significant degree
16. In terms of the impact upon the setting of the National Park, it is noted that contiguity and consistency of landscape character across the park boundary, combined with inter visibility between the Park and its context are the parameters which give an indication of the Park's setting. In this case there is a high degree of inter visibility from the Massif and from Meal a Buachaille, but the wind farm itself will be associated with the second or third of several overlapping ridges that appear to rise beyond Strath Spey, as opposed to with the ridge that generally defines the edge of the Park. From other views the Kyllachy/Farr array sits in the rolling uplands of the Monadhliath, with the turbines being seen above and beyond a landform ridge which is separated from the park by the contrasting settled landscape of Strathdearn. Overall it is concluded that the proposal, individually and in combination with Farr, will not adversely affect the landscape setting of the Park
17. The impact upon the Cairngorms National Scenic Area has also been assessed and it is concluded that due to the distances involved (around 28km and beyond) the significance of the additional effect is minor

## **APPRAISAL**

18. The proposed wind farm is located on a site which lies approximately 7 km away from the northern boundary of the National Park. The key planning issue for consideration is that of the visual and landscape impact upon the setting of the National Park, and views into and out of the Park with the existing Farr wind farm giving an indication of existing impacts which assists in the assessment in this case.
19. As noted earlier, the ES suggests that any landscape and visual effects upon the overall National Park will not be significant with viewpoints from a number of points in and around the Park provided which seek to substantiate this view. The CNPA Landscape Officer concurs with this conclusion as summarised in paragraphs 15-17 above.
20. At this northern side of the National Park, the Slochd is a strong visual gateway to the Park and in this case the proposed Kyllachy wind farm, in combination with the existing Farr wind farm, will appear on the "other" side of Strathdearn when travelling down towards the River Findhorn at Tomatin. As outlined in our Landscape Advisor's assessment this means that the overall impact upon the setting of the Park is not considered to be significant. Due to the overall landscape characteristics here it is not considered that there will be any significant impacts upon the National Park in terms of either wildness or distinct landscape quality.

21. Consequently, in this case, given the visual relationship to the Park boundary, local topography, and the existing landscape characteristics of the area, it is not considered that there would be any significant adverse impact upon the special qualities or setting of the National Park arising from this wind farm.
22. 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

23. That Members of the Committee support a recommendation of **NO OBJECTION** to the construction of twenty wind turbines of height 110 metres to tip, and associated infrastructure at Glen Kyllachy , by Tomatin

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**4 September 2013**

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