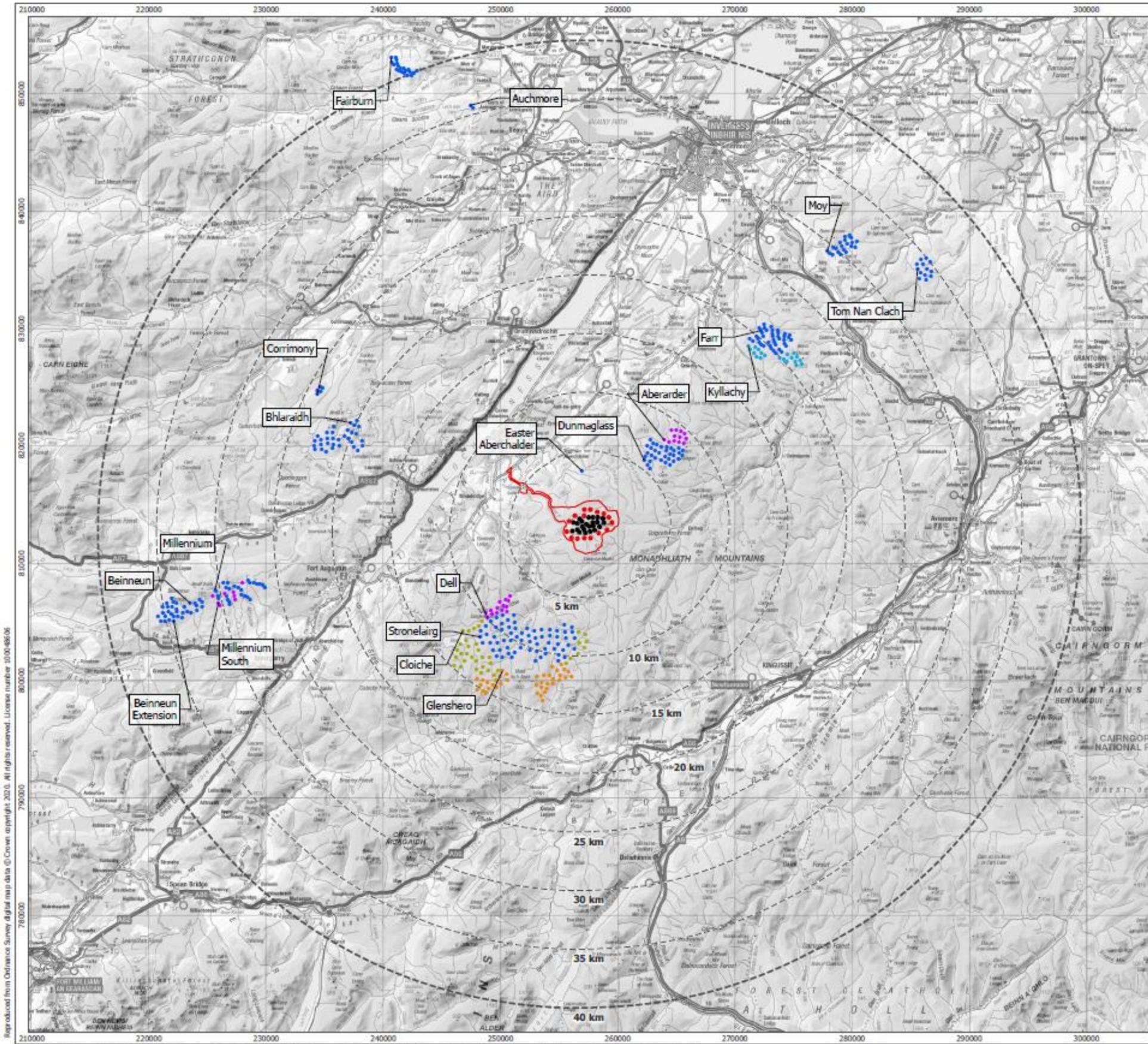


**CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY**

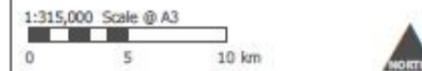
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<b>DEVELOPMENT PROPOSED: Corriegarth 2 wind farm</b>	
Consultation from Scottish Government Energy Consents & Deployment Unit	
<b>REFERENCE:</b>	2021/0050/PAC (ECU00002175)
<b>APPLICANT:</b>	Corriegarth 2 Wind farm Ltd
<b>DATE CONSULTED:</b>	10 February 2021
<b>RECOMMENDATION:</b>	No objection
<b>CASE OFFICER:</b>	Nina Caudrey, Planning Officer

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- Development boundary
- Existing Corriegeath turbine location
- Corriegeath 2 turbine location
- 5 km intervals from outermost turbines
- 40 km from outermost turbines
- Wind farms (by status)**
- Operational
- Under Construction
- Consented
- Application Submitted
- Appeal/Public Inquiry
- Design/Scoping



Produced By: JN	Ref: 10792-6.8b
Checked By: DW	Date: 11/09/2020

**Other Wind Farm  
 Developments - 40km  
 Figure 6.8b**

**Corriegeath 2 Wind Farm  
 EIA Report**

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## PURPOSE OF REPORT

1. The purpose of this report is to inform the committee decision and subsequent consultation response to the Scottish Government Energy Consents & Deployment Unit (ECDU) on an application submitted under Section 36 of the Electricity Act 1989 for a proposed wind farm located to the south west of the Cairngorms National Park. The Scottish Government are the determining Authority for this application as the output is more than 50 MW. The application is accompanied by an Environmental Report (ER), which presents the findings of the applicant's Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA).
2. The planning issues to be considered are confined to the effects of the proposed wind farm on the landscape character and Special Landscape Qualities (SLQs) of the National Park. All other matters, such as ecology, noise, general amenity, etc, are assessed by the decision maker (Scottish Ministers) with advice from statutory consultees.
3. Under the current working agreement on roles in landscape casework between NatureScot and the Park Authority, NatureScot lead on the provision of advice on the effects on the SLQs caused by proposals outwith the Cairngorms National Park. Their advice has been used to inform this report.

## SITE DESCRIPTION AND PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

4. The proposed wind farm will encircle the existing Corriearth wind farm in the Monadhliaths, approximately 15 kilometres (km) north-east of Fort Augustus and 10 km south-east of Foyers by Loch Ness, as shown in the applicant's ER figure 8.6b on page 2 of this report. The existing Corriearth wind farm has 26 turbines at a blade tip height of 120m. As also shown in the figure, in the surrounding area there are numerous other existing and consented wind farms, plus several proposed wind farms in the planning system.
5. The proposed development would comprise 16 turbines with a maximum height of 149.9m to the tip of the blade in an upright position, approximately 13km of upgraded existing track plus 10km of new track, as well as other infrastructure and works (such as substation, underground cabling, borrow pits, etc). It is expected that the proposed wind farm would have an estimated total installed capacity of around 76.8MW, dependent on the turbine specification used.
6. The nearest turbine would be approximately 10 km to the north of the closest part of the boundary of the Cairngorms National Park, with the other turbines, tracks and associated infrastructure located further from the National Park boundary.
7. Theoretical visibility of the proposed wind farm from within the National Park is shown by the applicant's ER figure 6.3a (**Appendix I**). However, when considering the cumulative visual effects, figure 6.10b of the applicant's ER (**Appendix II**) demonstrates that the area is already influenced by a number of other existing and consented wind farms. The proposed wind farm does not create visibility of a wind farm in areas that do not or would not already see existing wind farms.

8. Visualisations from three viewpoints, VP9 Carn Sgulain and VPI3 Geal Charn (both in the Monadhliaths near the boundary of the National Park) and VPI9 Ptarmigan restaurant (Cairngorm mountain), have been provided in the applicant's ER to demonstrate the level of visibility that would be had from within/on the boundary of the National Park, at distances of approximately 12, 13 and 42 km respectively to the nearest proposed turbine. In addition, visualisations were produced to support the wild land assessment, including three viewpoints looking from within the National Park towards the proposed wind farm, which are also of use when considering the effects on the SLQs of the National Park: VP 6.42 (Carn Ban), 6.43 (Càrn an Fhreicheadain) and 6.44 (A'Chailleach).
9. The visualisations associated with each view point are available to the public by searching the application documents on the ECDU website <https://www.energyconsents.scot/ApplicationDetails.aspx?cr=ECU00002175> for:
  - Vol 2d Fig 6.29 Viewpoint 9 Carn Sgulain
  - Vol 2d Fig 6.33 Geal Carn
  - Vol 2d Fig 6.39 Viewpoint 19 Ptarmigan Restaurant, Cairngorm
  - Vol 2c Fig 6.42 WLA3 Carn Ban
  - Vol 2c Fig 6.43 WLA5 Càrn an Fhreicheadain
  - Vol 2c Fig 6.44 WLA7 A'Chailleach

## RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

10. **PRE/2020/0012** CNPA responded to scoping and gatecheck consultations by ECDU in March and July 2020.

## PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

11. The proposed development is located wholly outwith the National Park, therefore the Cairngorms National Park Local Development Plan policies do not apply. However, an assessment of the proposal must have regard to Scottish Planning Policy (SPP) and the National Park Partnership Plan (NPPP).

### National Policy

12. **Scottish Planning Policy** (revised December 2020) sets out national planning policies that reflect Scottish Ministers priorities for the development and use of land, as well as for operation of the planning system. The content of SPP is a material consideration in planning decisions that carries significant weight.
13. Policy relating specifically to National Parks and development management can be found in paragraphs 84 and 85 of SPP. These re-state the four aims of the National Parks as set out in the National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000, as well as the need to pursue these collectively. SPP highlights that if there is a conflict between the first aim (conserving and enhancing the natural and cultural heritage of the area) and any of the others, then

greater weight must be given to the first aim. Planning decisions are expected to reflect this weighting and be consistent with the four aims.

14. Paragraph 85 of SPP also clarifies that the aims and requirements of paragraphs 84 and 85 apply to development outwith a National Park that affects the Park.
15. Paragraph 212 of SPP states that “where development affects a National Park... it should only be permitted where:
  - a) the objectives of the designation and the overall integrity of the area will not be compromised; or
  - b) any significant adverse impacts on the qualities for which the area has been designated are clearly outweighed by social, environmental or economic benefits of national importance”.

## Strategic Policy

16. The **Cairngorms National Park Partnership Plan (NPPP) 2017 – 2022** is required under section 11 of the National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000. It is the management plan for the Cairngorms National Park approved by Scottish Ministers. The NPPP sets out how all those with a responsibility for the National Park will coordinate their work to tackle the most important issues. There is a duty for decision makers to have regard to the NPPP, a requirement set out in Section 14 of the Act. As such, the NPPP is a material consideration in planning decisions.
17. The NPPP identifies that the landscapes of the National Park are valued by many and underpin the area’s economy. It contains policies to safeguard landscape interests. Of relevance to wind farm development proposals are policies 1.3 and 3.3.
18. Policy 1.3 seeks to conserve and enhance the SLQs as a general policy objective for management of the National Park.
19. Policy 3.3a seeks to support development of a low carbon economy and increase renewable energy generation where this is compatible with conserving the SLQs. In relation to wind farm development, the policy states that “large scale wind turbines are not compatible with the landscape character or special qualities of the National Park. They are inappropriate within the National Park, or where outside the Park they significantly adversely affect its landscape character or special landscape qualities”.

## CONSULTATIONS

### NatureScot advice

20. In accordance with the NatureScot/CNPA casework agreement, NatureScot have provided CNPA with advice in relation to the effects on the National Park, of the proposed wind farm both alone and cumulatively with other existing and consented wind farms in the surrounding area.

21. NatureScot advise that there will be no significant adverse effects on the landscape character of the National Park.
22. In relation to the SLQs, NatureScot advise that there would be a moderate and significant adverse effect on one SLQ, 'vastness of space, scale and height', when experienced from a small number of hill summits on the north western edge of National Park at a distance of 10 – 15km from the proposed wind farm.
23. The area is already influenced by a number of existing and consented wind farms. The proposed wind farm would increase prominence of turbines due to the combination of the greater turbine size and higher elevations that they would be located on (compared to the existing Corriegarth wind farm), as well as adding to visual complexity due to different turbine heights and increased overlapping. There would be a slight extension to the horizontal extent occupied by wind turbines, however it would not significantly change the visual separation between existing wind farm and the proposed wind farm.
24. Overall, the magnitude of change would be medium. The effects on the 'vastness of space, scale and height' SLQ would be moderate, being localised and limited to a small number of hill tops on the boundary of the National Park at a distance of 10 - 15km, in an area already influenced by wind farm development.
25. Follow up discussions with NatureScot confirm that nature and significance of the effects on the affected SLQ are such that the integrity and objectives of the National Park would not be compromised.

## APPRAISAL

26. The policies of the NPPP and SPP set out how proposals outwith the boundary of the National Park should be considered in terms of effects on the National Park.
27. Policy 3.3a of the NPPP sets out a test for considering effects on the landscapes of the National Park, in that large scale wind turbines are inappropriate outside the Park where they 'significantly adversely affect its landscape character or special landscape qualities'. If a proposal fails policy 3.3a, it would also be in conflict with policy 1.3, which seeks to conserve and enhance the SLQs.
28. Paragraph 212 of SPP sets out that "development that affects a National Park... should only be permitted where:
  - a) the objectives of designation and the overall integrity of the area will not be compromised; or
  - b) any significant adverse effects on the qualities for which the area has been designated are clearly outweighed by social, environmental or economic benefits of national importance."
29. In the policy context of the NPPP and SPP, consideration is required of the effects of the proposed development, on landscape character and the SLQs, both alone and cumulatively with other wind farms in the surrounding area.

30. There are a number of existing and consented wind farms in the area surrounding the proposed wind farm, as shown on page 2 of this report. Adding the proposed Corriegarth 2 wind farm to the baseline would not significantly add to the existing level of effects, either alone or in combination with other existing or consented wind farms.
31. Only one SLQ is moderately affected, with the effects being limited and localised to areas that already have visibility of existing and consented wind farms. The nature and significance of the effects are such that the proposal is therefore considered to comply with National Park Partnership Plan policy 3.3a.
32. Because the proposal is considered to comply with policy 3.3a, and is also considered to comply with policy 1.3.
33. When considering the localised and limited nature and significance of the effects, in an area already affected by other wind farm developments, the proposal is not considered to compromise the integrity or objectives of the National Park. The proposal is therefore also considered to be in accordance with Scottish Planning Policy paragraph 212.
34. For these reasons, it is recommended that CNPA should **not** object to the proposed wind farm development.

## RECOMMENDATION

That Members of the Committee confirm:

- That the CNPA has **NO OBJECTION** to the application for the proposed Corriegarth 2 wind farm.