



Supporting Statement

Review of Application 12/00619/PP

Reference 12/00619/PP

Proposal Erection of a 15kw wind turbine (21m high to blade tip)

Address Land South East of Croish House, Caolis, Isle of Tiree, PA77 6TS

The following statement supports the request for the review of application 12/00619/PP for the installation of a single 15kw wind turbine, which was refused consent on 18th October, 2012.

The proposed wind turbine development was refused due concerns about potential visual impact and cumulative impact. This statement will argue that concerns about visual impact are exaggerated, and that the sphere of influence of the wind turbine will be much less than indicated in the refusal papers. Furthermore, at a much smaller scale and positioned so as to have a visual relationship with the Croish buildings, the landscape is capable of absorbing the moderate impact of the proposed wind turbine. In relation to cumulative impact concerns, we will demonstrate that due to vast difference in scale and size of the community wind turbine and the Croish machine, it is highly unlikely that the two wind turbines will result in unacceptable confusion or clutter across the landscape.

Renewable Energy Policy

The European Union's current Renewable Energy Directive on the promotion of the use of energy from renewable sources sets ambitious targets for all Member States, such that the EU will reach a 20% share of energy from renewable sources by 2020. For the UK, the Directive sets a target of 15% of energy from renewables by 2020.

The Scottish government is committed to increasing the amount of electricity generated from renewable sources. The current target is to meet the equivalent of 100% of Scotland's electricity requirement from renewable sources by 2020. The government is keen to encourage communities and small businesses to invest in renewable energy projects. Scottish Planning Policy, published in February 2010, seeks to support these initiatives.

Argyll and Bute Council Local Plan (2009) recognises that onshore wind power is likely to make the most substantial contribution towards meeting the targets for electricity generated from renewable sources set by Government and supports the wider application of medium and smaller scale renewable technologies.

12/00619/PP Proposal Overview

Proposal 12/00619/PP applied for consent to a single 15kw wind turbine, measuring 20.97m to blade tip, on grazing land approximately 130m to the south side of Croish House. The land is situated approximately 148m to the southeast of the B8069 at Caolis. The development will generate green electricity for consumption at Croish House, with any excess to be sold to the national grid. The energy produced will reduce the carbon emissions and energy bills at the Croish House property, and contribute to the Scottish Government target for renewable sources to generate the equivalent of 100% of Scotland's gross annual electricity consumption by 2020.

12/00619/PP Background

Prior to submission of a full application, care was taken to pursue pre-application discussions with the local planning authority. Pre-application discussion consisted of a written preliminary enquiry and an on-site meeting between planning officer and the applicants. At the early stages of the proposal, enquiries were based on the installation of two 15kw wind turbines.

As a result of the on-site meeting, positions were selected as the most appropriate for the wind energy development, upon which a written request for pre-application advice was sought from Argyll and Bute Council. Concerns about visual impact were not raised at the time of the site visit, neither was there mention of potential adverse effects due to cumulative impact despite the presence of the community wind turbine.

Response to the initial written preliminary enquiry suggested investigation into potential visual, cumulative and noise impact. However, the concluding comments considered that the proposal was “generally consistent with the provisions of the Development Plan.” As a result of more in depth examination of the proposal, the final application was reduced to a single 15kw wind turbine installation in order to meet noise impact regulations. Thus, though considered generally acceptable from the outset, the final planning application had already addressed and reduced potential visual and cumulative impact concerns by the removal of one of the proposed wind turbines.

Landscape Capacity

The proposed development site is situated in a landscape characterised as “marginal farmland mosaic” by the SNH Argyll and Clyde Landscape Assessment 1996, a landscape type which is further considered by the Argyll and Bute Wind Energy Capacity Study March 2012 (WECS). Though the marginal farmland area on Tiree is described as being sensitive to change in the Landscape Assessment, the island is not included in the WECS. However, similar landscapes in Argyll are identified as having medium-high sensitivity with some capacity for small wind energy development (20 – 35m to tip) within the WECS. It would therefore seem that there is room within the landscape to accommodate wind turbines of the scale proposed for installation at Croish.

Visual Impact

Grounds for refusal for the Croish House wind turbine include concerns about the possible Visual Impact of the wind turbine due to a “skylining” position that may impact views from the ferry route and further afield at Gott Bay, and dominate views from the eastern side of the island. On further examination, these claims appear to be exaggerated.

The report of handling considers that the position of the turbine may result in views of the wind turbine from the ferry route and further afield at Gott Bay. Although the zone of theoretical visibility does indicate that the wind turbine will technically be visible, the ferry route and Gott Bay are situated beyond the visual sphere of influence of the wind turbine. Beyond a distance of approximately 2 - 3km, it is difficult for the naked eye to discern a structure at the height of the Croish wind turbine. Furthermore, at these distances the eye will certainly be drawn to the community wind turbine. In comparison to the dominating presence of the Enercon wind turbine, the “skylining” of the Croish turbine is unlikely to have any significant impact.

From visual receptors closer to the wind turbine on the east of the island, the machine will be viewed in context with the cluster of buildings at Croish. The interrelationship between the wind turbine and the buildings that it is intended to serve will moderate the visual impact of the development, and also present a sense of scale for the size of the proposed wind turbine. As a result, the installation will not have an adverse visual impact.

Furthermore, in order to ensure the lowest level of visual impact, the wind turbine colour can be selected so as to blend effectively with its surrounding. At other similar sites across Scotland, an off-white or ash grey colour has been popular and suitable. We would be happy to explore and discuss other options presented by the Review Body.

Cumulative Impact

The Report of handling and grounds for refusal for application 12/00619/PP cite concerns about the potential cumulative impact of the installation when viewed alongside the community wind turbine. Concerns about “confusion within the landscape” are described. We assert that it is highly unlikely that the installation of the 20.97m wind turbine at Croish would in any way confuse a viewer, or lead them to believe that there is more than one community wind turbine. The two machines are clearly of a different scale – the Croish proposal measuring 20.97m to tip and the community wind turbine at 75m to tip – and would not be considered as related developments. Grounds of refusal based on visual confusion between the two developments are insupportable and presume a lack of intelligence on the part of the viewer. As the location of the proposed wind turbine is at one end of Tiree which has access via only one road, any viewers from the east side of the wind turbines will already have seen both from the road as they head east. Viewers will therefore have had the opportunity to view both structures and thereby deduce a sense of each turbine’s size before seeing them from the east side.

In addition to “confusion,” the report of handling explains that cumulative impact will be unacceptable due to the creation of a “cluttered appearance” on the landscape. Clutter is only likely to be perceived when viewing the two wind turbines together, which is possible from a distance when there is a wider view of the landscape. As shown by the supporting visualisations, when viewed from a distance, the Croish wind turbine will appear to be of a similar scale to existing residential development on Tiree. There is not a great deal of clutter on the existing landscape and thus it is unlikely that the addition of one machine at this scale will introduce a perception of clutter. It is highly unlikely that there will be a perception of clutter due to cumulative impact when the community wind turbine and the Croish machine are viewed together. Although both are vertical structures, as noted above, the community machine is of a significantly larger scale and draws the eye away from the Croish wind turbine which is at least 500m away from the Enercon E44. Thus, it is not anticipated that the addition of one wind turbine would create a group of cluttered vertical structures.

Summary

The development 12/00619/PP will reduce the energy bills and provide clean energy for the residents at Croish House, as well as contributing towards Scotland’s renewable energy targets. The wind turbine has been positioned in line with local guidance to create a visual relationship between the machine and the buildings which it is meant to serve, in an area with a capacity to accommodate small wind development. As discussed above, it is not anticipated that this single small scale wind turbine installation will have an adverse visual impact, nor will its installation result in confusion, clutter and unacceptable visual impact when viewed alongside the community wind turbine. On this basis, we find the grounds for refusal unfounded and believe that the application should be granted planning consent.