

Delegated or Committee Planning Application Report and Report of handling as required by Schedule 2 of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (Scotland) Regulations 2008 relative to applications for Planning Permission or Planning Permission in Principle

Reference No: 12/02695/PP

Planning Hierarchy: Local

Applicant: Rosneath Peninsula West Community Development Trust

Proposal: Erection of five wind turbines (up to 92.5m high to blade tip) with associated control building, hardstandings, underground cabling, construction compound and formation of new access track and upgrading of existing track.

Site Address: Land at Barbour Farm, Knockderry Farm and Clynder Woodland Cove, Rosneath

DECISION ROUTE **Local Government Scotland Act 1973**

(A) THE APPLICATION

Development Requiring Express Planning Permission

- Erection of 5 wind turbines, hub height 57m and rotor diameter of 71m (92.5m to blade tip);
- Improvement of existing forestry access (1.4km);
- Formation of new on-site access track (1.7km);
- Installation of two watercourse crossings;
- Erection of control building (10m x 8m x 5m);
- Installation of underground cabling (3km);
- Formation of 5 crane hard-standing areas (40m x 20m);
- Formation of construction compound (40m x 30m).

Other specified operations

- Borrow pit workings to provide the aggregate required during construction (to be subject of separate planning applications);
 - Connection to 33kv overhead line.
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B) RECOMMENDATION: This proposal is recommended for refusal for the reasons stated in this report, subject to a pre-determination Discretionary Hearing being held in view of the number of representations which have been received.

- (C) **HISTORY:** 11/00348/PP- Temporary erection of 60 metre high Anemometer Mast for period of 3 years on land north east of Knockderry Farm, Cove – application approved 26.04.2011.
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(D) **CONSULTATIONS:**

Scottish Government (EIA) – no response.

Transport Scotland (17th January 2013) – no objection subject to conditions relating to the approval of the proposed route for abnormal loads; any accommodation measures required such as the temporary removal of street furniture, junction widening, and traffic management; and, any additional signing or temporary traffic control measures.

Area Roads Manager (30.05.13) – has no objection to the development in principle but has issued a holding objection on the basis that whilst the submitted Traffic Plan provides an assessment with regard to component delivery, it does not account for the vehicles movements associated with either ready mixed concrete or primary materials to produce concrete on site, nor movements associated with the removal of any excavated spoil from the site. A commitment would also be required from the applicant to ensure that any construction related damage to the link road between the North Access Road and Peaton Road is made good to the satisfaction of the Roads Authority and the Ministry of Defence.

Historic Scotland (28th January 2013) – no objection, do not consider that issues of national interest are raised in this case.

West of Scotland Archaeology Service (WoSAS) (28.05.13) – do not consider that this application raises serious archaeological issues either in terms of assets on the site or the setting of surrounding historic sites.

Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) (7th March 2013 and 14th May 2013) – advised initially that in their opinion, the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) section of the ES as submitted was inadequate to enable a proper analysis of the environmental effects of the development. Further comment was subsequently received in response to additional graphics supplied by the applicants. In summary this concludes that:

- The development will produce significant adverse landscape and visual impacts in relation to parts of the National Park and parts of the upper Firth of Clyde and adjacent coasts;
- It will erode the character of a highly sensitive coastal landscape and set an unwelcome precedent for further development of this scale;
- It fails to confirm with the advice in the 'Argyll & Bute Wind Energy Capacity Study', SNH published guidance on the 'Siting and Design of Windfarms in the Landscape' or Scottish Planning Policy.

- The development may contribute to the deterioration of habitat for wild birds including two EU Birds Directive Annex 1 species.

The Council is advised to consider this position in the light of its own policies in reaching a conclusion in the matter. *(Members should note that SNH current practice is only to object formally to proposals which they consider to be unacceptable in circumstances where national designations are affected, and that in all other cases they will restrict themselves to advice).*

SNH at pre-application stage indicated to the applicants that turbines of the 'large scale' typology being proposed would be unlikely to prove acceptable, in line with the position already adopted in the Landscape Wind Energy Capacity Study. Although the landscape of Rosneath is undistinguished, its location is such that it is an important component in the composition of the wider landscape and seascape, where the development proposed would impinge on the setting of more complex and dramatic hill and loch scenery and on views from the access by water to, and from within, the National Park. Turbines of the scale proposed would significantly affect the landscape experience of the approach to the highlands from the developed lowlands, particularly given the pivotal location of the site where the development will be exposed to large numbers of people for prolonged periods of time, including transport routes, ferry links, recreational areas and settlements. Scottish Planning Policy recommends that the design and location of any windfarm should reflect the scale and character of the landscape. SNH considers this proposal to be out of scale and to the detriment of landscape character with significant implications for the Upper Firth of Clyde and west Loch Long areas including key views from and the setting of the National Park.

It is advised that the revised visualisations submitted in March 2013 now accord with minimum standards set out in SNH published guidance in terms of their size and viewing distance (whereas the originals included in the Environmental Statement did not), although they appear to under-represent actual conditions in the field. Accordingly SNH have used enlarged wireline diagrams to inform their judgments. The Council is advised not to rely on these alone in the assessment, and that judgements should be reached at first hand in the field.

No consequences of importance are identified for habitats and species. The site is frequented by 58 identified bird species, including two Annex 1 species (Hen Harrier and Short Eared Owl) and eighteen species listed in the Argyll & Bute Local Biodiversity Action Plan. It is also a Priority One site under the Argyll Black Grouse Project. Subject to conditions, adverse impact on the conservation status of these species in terms of Natural Heritage Zone 14 could be avoided. However SNH concludes that in their view the proposal will nonetheless contribute to the degradation in habitats for wild bird species in Argyll and brings to the Council's attention the Habitats Regulations obligation that '*so far as it lies within its powers, a competent authority must use all reasonable endeavours to avoid pollution or deterioration of habitats of wild birds in Scotland*'. It also points out that in terms of the RSPB's 'Bird Sensitivity Map to provide locational guidance for onshore wind farms in Scotland' the site rates as the highest sensitivity out of nine categories identified in the guidance.

Loch Lomond & the Trossachs National Park (2nd April 2013) – the Planning & Access Committee of the Park Authority has resolved to object to the proposal on the grounds that it would have a significant adverse visual impact on the landscape setting of the southern aspects of the National Park from the Firth of Clyde, Loch Long, the communities of the Cowal Peninsula and the southern marine gateway to the National Park. It is also their view that the proposal will have a significant impact on the residents and recreational/visitor enjoyment and landscape experience of the southern and western areas of the National Park. In addition, the National Park Authority requests the Council to consider carrying out an economic assessment of the impact on tourism of the proposed development.

Inverclyde Council (30th January 2013) – the Lower Clyde/Firth of Clyde is identified a 'strategic environmental and scenic (tourism) resource' in the Inverclyde Local Plan. Visual impact concerns are raised relative to views out from Inverclyde and from the Gourock – Dunoon ferry route, for both residents and tourists. The development would impinge on views not only of Rosneath, but also of the Argyll Hills beyond from both inland locations and from the water. This panoramic outlook is a significant asset for Inverclyde and there is a desire to see these views protected.

West Dunbartonshire Council – no response.

The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) (15th March 2013) – does not object to the proposal, subject to mitigation measures for black grouse and other species of conservation importance via a Habitat Management Plan along with a programme of monitoring being required as part of any consent, and with a condition to restrict the type and timing of construction activities during the grouse lekking season.

Scottish Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA) (25th January and 14th February 2013) – no objection subject to a condition requiring groundwater investigation and groundwater permeable access tracks in areas of groundwater dependant terrestrial ecosystems on the site. In the absence of the imposition of such conditions, SEPA would formally object to the application. SEPA also recommend planning conditions relating to: submission of a site specific construction environmental management plan (CEMP); details of the design of watercourse crossings and the submission of a separate mineral planning application for the borrow pit.

Public Protection (5th February and 10th June 2013) – no objection. The development satisfies the requirements of ETSU-R-97 which is the standard against which Planning Advice Note 1/2011 recommends that the noise implications of turbine developments should be assessed. Conditions are recommended in relation to relating to noise aspects of the development, wind farm construction hours and methods, and control of lighting.

In response to criticism raised by an objector, Public Protection has confirmed that the applicant's noise monitoring exercise was undertaken in accordance with recognised standards and from sites selected as being most representative of the lowest background noise rather than the highest and that they stand by their

conclusions in respect of the acceptability of the impact of the development upon existing residential properties, subject to appropriate conditions in the event of an approval..

Ministry Of Defence (MoD) (14th February 2013) – no objection and no aviation lighting requirements, subject to notification of constructed details.

National Air Traffic Services (NATS) (10th January 2013) – no safeguarding objections.

Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) – no response.

Prestwick Airport (7th January 2013) – no safeguarding objections.

Glasgow Airport (19th March 2013) – no safeguarding objections.

Ofcom (CSS Spectrum Management) (4th January 2013) – has identified two fixed links (Denbridge Marine Ltd & BT) which could potentially be affected by the proposal. They further recommend direct consultation with the operators of these links the Joint Radio Company and Atkins Ltd. Atkins (on behalf of Scottish Water). Further to that **British Telecom** (20th February 2013) have confirmed no objection in relation to their microwave radio links. **Denbridge Marine** (3rd June 2013) provide the Vessel Traffic Service for HMNB Clyde on behalf of the MoD and have radar transmitters and microwave links for this purpose. They consider that one of the turbines in particular is in direct line of sight between their microwave link from Clach MaKenney to Ravenrock and other turbines have a negative effect also. In the absence of path calculation analysis or agreed mitigation they would maintain a holding objection on telecommunications interference grounds.

Joint Radio Company (JRC) – no response.

Scottish Water (4th January 2013, 5th March 2013 and 7th May 2013) – objection raised in terms of impact upon UHF radio telemetry links between water infrastructure outstations and the Glasgow operational control centre station. Scottish Water are in discussions with the applicants about mitigation measures available to maintain operational links and will only remove this holding objection in the event that these progress to an agreed resolution prior to any permission being granted. No objection in relation to other fixed assets.

Cove and Kilcreggan Community Council (16th January 2013) – strongly support the proposal in line with opinion in the local community, with respondents expressing 80% support for the project. There is a desire to promote housing, leisure, employment and tourism initiatives in the area and a community windfarm has been identified as the only practicable means of generating funding. The final details of the proposal have emerged following input from professional consultants and surrounding communities have been provided with advice and information regarding what is intended.

Garelochhead Community Council – no response.

Rosneath & Clynder Community Council (6th March 2013) – fully supports the application on the basis that it will bring much needed funds to the peninsula as well as producing green energy.

Rhu & Shandon Community Council (13th February 2013) – object to the proposal following a special public meeting having being convened. The objections are founded upon conflict with the Council's 'Landscape Wind Energy Capacity Study' which does not identify capacity for the scale of turbines proposed in this particular landscape character area, conflict with various development plan policies in terms of nature conservation, the scenic qualities and visual amenity of the landscape and recreation and tourism interests. It is considered that the proposal will have significant visual impact consequences for the Clyde and the National Park. The development will be visible from the higher parts of Rhu and much of Shandon and from parts of the Highlandman's Way and Three Lochs Way walking routes. It will impinge on local recreational areas and sailing routes. There is insufficient justification to accept the community benefit/economic benefit arguments advanced in support of the proposal, as these benefits will be local to the community surrounding the site and will not be shared by surrounding communities, who will be disadvantaged by the presence of the turbines. Some conditions in the event of permission being given are recommended.

Hunters Quay Community Council (4th and 22nd January 2013) – object on the grounds of the quality of photomontages, visual impact, landscape impact and impacts upon tourism from a development with extreme height and influence over a wide area. The development would be contrary to the local plan.

Kilmun Community Council (15th February and 3rd May 2013) – object to the proposal on the basis of an over 80% expression of local objection on the part of respondees to the community council. The grounds of objection are based on the inappropriate scale of the turbines proposed which would give rise to adverse visual impact and adverse landscape impact upon the Marine Gateway to the National Park, to the detriment of the scenery and character of the area. Inappropriately sited windfarms at Corlarach, Black Craig (both dismissed on appeal) and Stone Saul have all be refused on the grounds of detrimental impact on the visual amenity, landscape quality and tourism value of the area. Approval of the project would be likely to encourage such sites to be re-visited with the potential for enormous cumulative impact upon the Clyde estuary. The development conflicts with the findings of the 'Argyll & Bute Landscape Wind Energy Capacity Study' and relevant development plan policies. Loch Long is designated as a water-related tourism development area by the National Park. The development would adversely affect recreational sailing and tour boat operations and loch-side tourism facilities to the detriment of the local tourism economy in Cowal. Noise, shadow flicker and strobing would all affect Loch Long and coastal settlements. Development of the site would have adverse consequences for a range of protected birds including European protected species. In the absence of a Full Life Carbon Analysis of the manufacturing, construction and operational implications of the development for global warming, justification for the proposal in environmental terms is unproven. It is also pointed out that it has come to light that Hen Harriers are nesting on the shore of Loch Long at MoD Coulport. The presence of these protected birds of national

importance is not recognised in the applicant's EIA and therefore the ornithology section should be updated to reflect this.

Ardentinny Community Council (27th January 2013) – have carried out a local resident survey and only 7.5% (22 No.) have objected, so it has been concluded that the majority of residents are not particularly concerned about the prospect of a windfarm in West Rosneath.

Dunoon Community Council (12th February 2013) – object on the ground of visual impact on the Cowal coast in the National Park between Strone and Ardentinn, and on the Dunoon to Hunter's Quay and Gourock ferry routes and also upon the Dunoon waterfront and upper parts of the town, including higher walking routes. Views from the Dunoon area and from the local road network towards the higher parts of the National Park would be adversely affected and sensitive areas of high landscape value would be impacted upon. The adverse impacts of windfarms upon the tourism value of Cowal and the Firth of Clyde islands has been previously recognised in the dismissal of the appeal for the proposed windfarm at Corlarach. The upper Clyde area is already impacted upon by windfarms giving rise to further unwelcome cumulative impact. The applicant's photomontages are unrealistic and misleading and under-represent the actual visual impact of development on this scale.

Inveraray Community Council (18th February 2013) – point out that they have two operational windfarms in their area and a third being planned. Some impact on the landscape is inevitable in order to be able to exploit the benefits of renewable energy, and as energy consumers we should be more tolerant of that. Their experience has been that there is no problem of noise or impact on birds associated with windfarms, they can be dismantled at the end of their lives, and they bring financial benefit to rural areas.

Cardwell Bay & Greenock West Community Council (Inverclyde) (26th February 2013) – express concern in terms of scenic impact upon views obtainable from various elevated vantage points above Greenock and Gourock, which not only serve the local community but are also visited by cruise ship passengers and other tourists. The height of the turbines is too tall and will impact adversely upon the panoramic views available towards the Arrochar Alps and the Cowal Hills across the Clyde Estuary.

(E) PUBLICITY:

EIA Regulations Advert and Addendum Advert – final expiry date 9th May 2013

(F) REPRESENTATIONS:

At time of writing, a total of 2,468 representations have been received – 1,408 in support, including expressions of support from Councillors Anne Horn, John Semple, Michael Breslin and Maurice Corrie, along with Mike MacKenzie MSP and Patrick Harvie MSP (plus a supporting letter and an analysis of representations and the

response from SNH by the applicant), and 1,050 against, including an objection from Struan Stevenson MEP, plus a further 9 representations raising matters but not expressing a view either way.

One of the letters of objection has been received from Elizabeth Gladden who is an employee of the Council providing administrative support to the Planning Service in Helensburgh. She has not been party to the preparation of this report.

Full details of representees are given at Appendix B. Due to the large amount of correspondence received, the key issues raised are summarised below and are addressed in the assessment at Appendix A. Members should note that representations which have illegible names, or where addresses have not been given have been discounted. Multiple representations from the same person have been discounted as far as has been possible in order to avoid double-counting, so although a name may appear more than once in the appendix it will not have been counted more than once towards the total. A single representation with more than one name from a single address has been counted as a multiple representation.

Whilst a large number of representations in respect of a windfarm proposal is not uncommon, Members should note that in this case the vast majority of representees reside in Argyll, with a general split between supporters who are largely, although not exclusively, drawn from Rosneath addresses; and objectors who are largely, but not exclusively, drawn from various locations surrounding Rosneath.

IN SUPPORT OF THE PROPOSAL

Policy

- The development will provide renewable energy through a community led scheme in line with local and national policy.

Community Benefit

- The development will provide a unique opportunity to reverse the decline in local assets and provide future community facilities through the delivery of a local Community Action Plan.
- 100% of the profits will be invested in social cultural, environmental, tourist and economic improvements in the local area to provide young people with opportunities and to attract new families to the area, and to provide better opportunities for older people to stay in the area, with financial support also being provided to neighbouring communities.
- The windfarm has huge local support with 617 (49%) of the electorate participating of whom 508 (82%) voted in favour.
- The development will provide opportunity for a community which although isolated is vibrant and with ambition, to take its future into its own hands, rather than to continue to decline and sit and hope. This will reduce financial pressure

on the council and other public service providers and help the Council deliver its own objectives.

- The fact that the development is being promoted by a non-profit group from within the community who have its best interests at heart is important in demonstrating local initiative to enable the aspiration of the communities to be realised. The trust has a strong track record on community action and a detailed 160 page Community Action Plan prepared with community engagement and participation.
- The peninsula is in decline with local businesses having closed and community and recreational facilities being neglected and run down. Lack of facilities contributes to the decisions people make to move away to better served areas. There is particular demand expressed by a number of individuals for affordable housing in the area.
- The project management have worked very closely with the community to ensure that it is supported before going ahead. It is an example of environmental soundness and a model of community consultation and involvement.
- The Rosneath Peninsula Amenity Society supports the application which would reduce reliance upon external grant funding.

Visual & Landscape Impact

- The location of the turbines is discrete and sympathetic to its surroundings to give them the minimum possible visual and environmental impact.
- Although the turbines will primarily affect residents at Strone, they should not be allowed to veto the proposal. They already have to look at the large ugly development at Coulport which is more obtrusive than the turbines proposed.
- The Council's Landscape Study did not allow for the design strategy behind this proposal in locating the turbines along a single contour some distance down from the ridge. Accordingly, they benefit from backclothing in views from the west, the effect of distance from the south and shielding by landform from the east. An adverse visual impact is outweighed by the huge benefits to local communities.

Climate Change

- This is a local community-led project with a national and global dimension.
- The development will provide a sustainable green source of energy for the long-term.
- The case for continued investment in wind power as a significant contributor to the production of renewable energy is extremely persuasive. Further evidence of climate change emerges on a regular basis so the debate around renewables needs to move on from the aesthetics of wind turbines.

AGAINST THE PROPOSAL

Policy and Guidance

- The proposal is contrary to the Council's development plan policies; notably Policies STRAT DC 8, LP ENV 1, LP ENV 19 and LP REN 1 and lies within 'Sensitive Countryside' defined by the Council's local plan.
- The proposal conflicts with adopted advice set out in the Council's 'Landscape Wind Energy Capacity Study'. This advises that turbines more than 50m high ought not to be used on low ridges such as Rosneath. Those now proposed are nearly twice this height. If this landscape study is now disregarded it begs the question as to why public money was used to commission it in the first place.
- The applicants have failed to address Scottish Natural Heritage advice at the pre-application stage to reduce the size of the turbines. Since the Scoping Report stage the height of the turbines has conversely increased.
- Draft consultation Scottish Planning Policy proposes increasing the separation distances between communities and windfarms from 2.0km to 2.5km, which indicates that government takes separation seriously. Cove, Peaton, Ardpeaton, Clynder, Rahane and Shandon would all be within such a revised distance.

Landscape Character & Landscape Impact

- The scale of the turbines is out of character with the peninsula and out of proportion with the landscape, and would impinge on the appreciation of the landscape in terms of views out from, towards, and over the peninsula towards more impressive landscapes.
- The proposal would harm the landscape and scenic qualities of the area which are of such importance as to outweigh any benefits associated with climate change or financial benefit to the community.
- The proposal would be visible from both the land and sea for miles around and would be a scar on the landscape. Such an inappropriately scaled development would adversely influence the appreciation of landscapes from locations across the Clyde, including huge areas with recreational value and long stretches of coastline.
- The siting of 300' high turbines on a peninsula only rising to 500-600' would adversely affect landscape character by becoming a dominant feature dwarfing the scale of the peninsula.
- The 'open ridgeland' Landscape Character Type defined in the Council's Landscape Wind Energy Capacity Study is identified as one of '*high sensitivity*'

unsuited to turbines of the scale proposed. The advice contained in the that study should be taken most seriously in the planning decision process.

- The landscape and views of the surrounding hills and seascapes are amongst the best in Scotland.
- The Cowal Marketing Group draws attention to the value of scenic landscapes as a tourism and economic asset. It considers that the impact upon the National Park will undermine the remit to conserve its special landscapes and seascapes. Appreciation of landscape will be compromised by the adverse views of the development from the Strone - Ardentinnny, Hunter's Quay - Dunoon and the Gourock coast roads, from the Clyde ferry routes and from elevated coastal areas used for recreation. The Reporter dismissing the Corlarach windfarm appeal in Cowal accorded weight to *the 'prime tourist attraction of scenic value'* which is equally relevant here give that this proposal is even closer to the National Park.
- The area around Cove is rural in character and characterised by small scale development, so is unsuited to industrial scale development of the type proposed.

Visual impact

- The proposal will be visible from land and sea from a wide range of directions and would dominate a scenic panorama founded upon sea lochs of great natural beauty.
- The visual impact of the turbines will extend over a wide area beyond Argyll into Inverclyde and West Dunbartonshire. It will impinge on important views out from areas valued for their scenic and recreational qualities including the National Park and the Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park.
- The turbine blades will extend over the skyline and draw the eye in views from locations east of the Gare Loch.
- The required transmission route to the grid at Whistlefied will entail further undisclosed visual impacts on the peninsula.
- The Scottish Campaign for National Parks points out that the visual impact on the National Park conflicts with the Park Authority's primary purpose, which is to conserve the terrestrial and marine environments whilst promoting appropriate development and managing natural resources.
- The 'Save Your Regional Park Campaign' on behalf of the Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park object to what they consider to be an inappropriate proposal with visual impacts not in the interests of the millions of visitors to the park.

- The low lying open ground of the peninsula is inappropriate for the disproportionate type and scale of development proposed, given its ready visibility from Strone-Blairmore-Ardentinny, Sandbank, Hunter's Quay, Dunoon and Gourock, plus the Clyde and Loch Long.
- Visibility of turbines from the Helensburgh waterfront, Rhu, Shandon and from the areas used for recreation above these communities has been deliberately played down by the applicants and will be more significant than their Environmental Statement suggests.
- Aviation lighting and the suggested red striping of blades would be intrusive and eye catching.
- The presence of the turbines along Barbour Road with its sublime vistas, the scale of the development when experienced from the margins of Cove village, and the influence upon recreational areas associated with high ground, would be such that despite its relatively contained visibility across the peninsula as a whole, it would still be a very significant development with imposing visual impacts upon its immediate surroundings;
- The development would interrupt the layered relationship of the peninsula with its backdrop of mountains when viewed from a range of locations, and would therefore still be significant in longer distance views. It would impinge on key views from both land and water which are often the first sight of Highland Scotland, especially as experienced from the gateway ferry route to the National Park and from Inverclyde.
- The promoters of the development appear to have gone out of their way to protect the communities on the peninsula, but have paid scant regard to the widespread visual impacts upon surrounding communities.
- It is inappropriate to locate large wind turbines adjacent to a National Park particularly where it will impose itself on key views out of the Park, such as that from Blairmore Pier. There is no logic in considering a site so exposed to view from within the National Park.

Natural Heritage & Ecological impact

- The ecology of the area has already been adversely impacted by afforestation, so further attrition is unwelcome.
- The application site and its surroundings is designated as a Local Nature Conservation Site which will suffer from the effects of the construction and operation of the windfarm.
- RSPB bird sensitivity mapping re onshore windfarms identifies the location of this site as one of '*high sensitivity*'.

- Wild birds and bats will suffer from loss of habitat and risk from operation of the turbines. Bats can avoid the blades easily, but in passing through the slipstream behind the blades, there is a violent pressure change which can rupture their lungs.
- The Environmental Statement fails to identify the presence of other raptors in the area including Ospreys and Golden Eagle. Recent Golden Eagle breeding success in the Lomond area indicates the importance of territory remaining available to juveniles.
- The Scottish Wildlife Trust raise concern re collision risk for Hen Harriers, Black Grouse, Short Eared Owl frequent the site for feeding and breeding. These species are all of conservation importance and declining populations, so the risk is such that on a precautionary basis planning permission should be refused.

Tourism and Recreation Impacts

- The proposal will adversely affect visitor perception and the experience of the wider area which is valued for its peace, tranquillity and scenic qualities.
- The area is widely appreciated from the water with visiting cruise ships, the ferry crossings to Dunoon and vessels visiting Loch Long such as the 'Waverley' and the 'Hebridean Princess' and the presence of turbines will devalue the existing experience.
- Argyll & Bute Council has designated Loch Long as a 'Tourism Development Area' so the introduction of a windfarm runs counter to that.
- The local tourism economy of Cowal is of economic importance to the area but is fragile, so anything that runs the risk of dissuading visitors from coming should be avoided. A number of individuals have expressed the view that as tourists they would be deterred from returning to an area subject to significant visual impact from wind turbines.
- The 'Friends of the Loch Lomond & the Trossachs' conservation and heritage charity object in terms of landscape and visual impact upon National Park assets west of Loch Long, the impact on the Marine Gateway to the Park and from more elevated distant vantage points in the Park, as they consider that these impacts will have consequent adverse implications for tourism.
- If permitted the development will set an unwelcome precedent for more turbine development in and around Cowal, which will reduce the tourism potential of the area, which is founded mainly on unspoiled natural beauty.

Amenity Impacts

- This is an area of little traffic and low background noise with those who have chosen to live in the area benefitting from peace and tranquillity, which is likely to

be ruined by the noise and shadow effects created by this proposal. The prospects of low frequency noise and the ready propagation of sound across water are particular concerns expressed.

- The presence of such large turbines in proximity to homes would exert an oppressive and dominant presence over those properties.
- The woodland and moorland around the site is valued for recreation which will be impacted upon by construction with a diminution of amenity.

Status as a Community Project

- The project is the product of propaganda and is not one which is universally supported in the local community. Those supporting it cling to the financial benefits whereas opponents have been more measured in their responses citing relevant planning and environmental grounds for resisting the proposal.
- The stated intention of the project is to counter depopulation which is a false argument, as most studies have concluded that the opposite is the case as a result of adverse effects on property values and tourism, which make areas subject to wind power development less attractive to prospective residents and visitors. It will take a generation to reap the benefits envisaged by which time the damage will already have been done.
- The suggested threat to services in Rosneath is overstated and overall the area is not in decline compared to other parts of Argyll and Inverclyde, and the quality of life in the locality is good. The project is set to benefit the Cove community without any consideration for surrounding areas. The most direct impact will be upon residents of and visitors to Blairmore and Strone, not Cove and Rosneath. The community set to benefit will suffer negligible adverse consequences which will instead afflict other communities. Assets which benefit the whole area should be safeguarded and ought not to be sacrificed to pockets of local interest.
- An investigation should take place as to how a splinter group can access public funds to promote a proposal which does not have widespread support and which divides a local community and which then marginalises and excludes others from discussions. Public money has already been wasted, so put a stop to this proposal now.
- This is not a community scale proposal and ought to be regarded as a community owned commercial enterprise. It is ill conceived in its objectives and uncertain of producing the scale of financial return envisaged. In the event of an unserviceable loan there could be a need to seek public money to bail out the community, and in the event that the project fails, there would be need to find a means to clear the site of dereliction and a redundant eyesore.
- A community scheme on this scale could generate demand for similar ventures and could set a precedent for further inappropriately scale commercial schemes,

including ones promoted under the term 'community' in order to cloak commercial agendas. The promotion of this development as a community scheme ought not to take precedence over wider community interests and the national interest in respect of the National Park.

- There is no compelling case why a community of some 1250 people need a scale of scheme which on their estimations could prove capable of generating income of around £2.5million per year. In any event, their estimates of what could be achieved during the design life of the windfarm are fanciful. The applicants make much of the fact that their community is dying and in need of funds, yet Cowal is in a far poorer economic and social position, so to secure benefit at Cowal's expense would be a tragedy from which it would be unlikely to recover.
- Public consultation by the applicants with communities on the east side of the Gare Loch has been inadequate. The community ballot they conducted was flawed and was not independently scrutinised so it cannot be relied upon. In any event it was carried out in advance of the necessary detail becoming available.
- The Community Council do not speak for all, just those blinded by optimistic financial predictions who do not have a real appreciation of the scale of the development or the detrimental impact it will have locally and upon the wider area.
- The Trust should focus on sustainable jobs which bring money and life to a community rather than a project of this sort.

Precedent

- Success of this application would open up the prospect of further successful turbine applications. Proposals are already being devised for sites above Helensburgh and Shandon, above Greenoch and at Gartocharn, all of which would have cumulative impact implications if approved in conjunction with this site.

Wind Data, Emissions Savings and Productivity

- The lack of access to raw wind data and the applicant's persistence in quoting average wind speeds means that assertions about the generation potential of the site cannot be authenticated, and therefore assertions about likely productivity and cash generation cannot be verified. Given that the project has been advanced on the basis of such benefit and has been publically funded thus far, this data should be released.
- UK planning authorities are obliged to comply with the Aarhus Convention which requires transparency in decision-making so that the public can follow the rationale behind what is being proposed and participate in decision-making in an informed manner. The lack of detail on emission savings and the carbon balance associated with the proposal mean that the actual benefits of the

scheme, rather than the generic benefits of wind power, cannot be weighed in the balance, casting doubt as to whether convention obligations can be fulfilled. A complaint to the UN in this regard is pending consideration so it would be inappropriate to determine the application favourably in advance of the outcome.

Quality of Graphics

- The photomontages provided do not appear to reflect accurately the impact the scheme will have and ought not to be relied upon in decision-making, as SNH have pointed out. They exaggerate the apparent distances between viewpoints and the development, the panoramic style diminishes the significance of the turbines, photos with a white or light grey sky do not demonstrate a worst case, and relief appears compressed. They under-represent the impact of the development on the landscape and are therefore misleading.

Micro-siting

- The applicant's suggest a micro-siting tolerance of 50m in the event of an approval. This should be resisted in order to avoid turbine locations migrating up the hillside with additional skylining and further impact upon points east of the Gare Loch, for which there has already been inadequate visual assessment and some doubt as to the magnitude of the visibility available.

TV interference

- This is already experienced in association with large vessels in transit passing through the signal from the Rosneath transmitter, so may be an issue in the event permission is granted.

Property Values

- There are concerns expressed that the proposal will result in loss of property value, affect saleability and make the areas surrounding the site less attractive for prospective purchasers.

Technology & Efficiency

- Wind energy is not as 'green' and environmentally friendly as it is portrayed. The efficiency and expediency of wind turbines is already in serious doubt with no evidence of long-term benefit to the global environment once embodied energy in manufacture, energy and resources used in transport, construction, dismantling and CO₂ release from peat disturbance are all taken into account .
- The way forward in Scotland should be wave power and hydro-electricity rather than by more wind turbines.
- Turbines have generally less than 30% efficiency given that they will not operate when there is too much or too little wind.

- Wind turbines are an unsightly waste of money which amount to a token gesture reliant on public subsidy and result in inflated electricity bills for all. There is a misapprehension that wind energy is cheap whereas it is expensive and contributes to the transfer of wealth from the poor to the rich.

APPLICANT'S RESPONSE TO THIRD PART REPRESENTATIONS

In response to objections received, the applicants have provided a comprehensive and detailed response to the various grounds of objection cited, the contents of which may in turn be summarised as follows:

- Conflict with Policy

The ES demonstrates how the Cove Community Wind Farm proposal meets Argyll & Bute Council plans and policies for renewables, and the local Community Action Plan meets the Council's objectives. It provides planning gain, involving 100% community benefit for local 'Rural Renaissance settlements.'

- Environmental Impact

After consultations with the Council, SNH, and SEPA, six separate independent specialist consultancy organisations (Appendix 1) were engaged in impact assessments, which followed a systematic approach and used survey and analysis methods which met regulatory requirements and standards.

The use of mostly existing forest track, and borrow pits, and a 'cut road' moor track make the long term negative impact on habitats of medium or low magnitude with moderate to minor significance.

The majority of potentially significant negative hydrological impacts are predicted as short term, with mitigation possible to acceptable levels through best practice management and control procedures, under a Management Plan implemented by an Ecological Clerk of Works. Habitats will be reinstated after the construction period, and final decommissioning would involve removal of the wind farm and a return to its previous agricultural and grassland use.

- Visual Impact

The site and its surroundings are not designated for their landscape value. Zones of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) analysis has included worst-case scenario assessment on the basis of bare ground without trees to sight lines within built-up environments. The proposal has limited visual impact and visual sensitivity through siting and design, with turbines tightly grouped in an arc shape on single contour below the ridgeline in horizontal landscape against mountains. The development would have limited areas of cumulative theoretical visibility with others proposed, and with insignificant and slight adverse impact on existing developments. The wind farm has localised and limited significant adverse impacts, and on the Study Area would have slight adverse landscape and visual impact, which is considered not significant. Turbines would be fitted with infrared

lighting at the highest practical point, for identification at night, but not visible to the naked eye. The control building would be within the existing forest, and not be visible from the surrounding area. If micro-siting became essential to the maximum distance of 50m. towards the ridge, it would result in a turbine tip-height increase of about 5m. beyond the ridge.

The Argyll & Bute 'Landscape and Wind Energy Capacity Study', a technical background document, is intended to help inform decision making, which needs to consider the merits of each application. In this case, the detailed site-specific location of the turbines has used existing topography to limit visual impact: on the side slopes of the peninsula; off the ridgeline and screened by it; appearing visually contained within the larger surrounding horizontal landscape; back-clothed by mountains; avoiding cumulative impact; away from wild land and wilderness and reflecting the developed coastal fringe of Inverclyde, Faslane and Coulport with settlements, man-made structures and managed landscape.

- Noise

The project would comfortably meet the noise constraints applicable during both construction and operation.

- Ecology and Wildlife

The site is not subject to national nature conservation designations. The wet heath-land at its southern end is a Site Important for Nature Conservation (SINC), and much of the site has a designation of Local Nature Conservation Site and has to take account of the Argyll and Bute Local Biodiversity Action Plan and Council Policies LP ENV 8 and STRAT DC 7. The Planning Application clearly meets the grounds for approval defined in this Council policy through major public benefit and as no alternative site is available locally.

The ES gives full detail of surveys carried out and the subsequent assessment methodology for plants and animals, including reptiles, bats and birds, against statutory requirements and practice guidance.

The overall prediction for impacts on bats is medium or low magnitude with moderate to minor significance, with species specific proposals to mitigate against any detrimental effects, alongside actions on a Habitat Management Plan (HMP) and to monitor and prevent bat collisions.

- Ornithology

The ornithological study notes the 2006 RSPB Research Report identified the area as of high sensitivity, emphasised the importance of site-specific Environmental Impact Assessment, and stated that climate change poses the single biggest long-term threat to birds and other wildlife. The ES considered bird species using the site for nesting / roosting or foraging, or using the airspace above the site as a regular flight path and in particular examined the five species classed as high sensitivity: black grouse, hen harrier, kestrel, curlew and short-

eared owl. Mitigation measures are proposed across all of the sensitive species, including against birds striking the turbines, with less than one fatal bird collision projected for them in any one year.

Black grouse leks are approximately 400 m and 800 m away from the closest turbine locations proposed with the result that disturbance for black grouse is therefore likely to be of low magnitude for the local and regional population, and so of low significance.

- Tourism and Recreation

There are no specific guidelines for the assessment of tourism and recreation impacts. Research findings indicate that the vast majority of tourists that had seen a wind farm would not be deterred from returning to that area, or to Scotland. The conclusion reported from the literature reviewed is that wind farms: have no impact on the majority of visitor population; are supported by a greater proportion of the population than those who oppose them; and that any supposition that visitors' views would be automatically negative towards wind farms due to their presence in the countryside is not sustained by the available evidence.

Claims by the SG Reporter on the Cowal Corlarach appeal about wind farms deterring potential visitors have never been substantiated by empirical evidence, and tourist numbers have grown in areas with a number of wind farms, with little adverse reaction. A 2012 Edinburgh University study reviewed the relevant academic and industry data, and concluded that there has been no economic impact, positively or negatively, from wind farms on tourism and that in 15 years of wind farm development, no evidence has emerged from developed sites that tourism has suffered as a result.

- Benefits

The fact that the wind farm will be in community ownership with 100% of the 'profits' being used for community benefit within the peninsula communities and external communities, with economic, social, cultural and environmental improvements against the trend of population decline and loss of facilities within those communities is a material issue, which supports the case for planning consent.

- Renewables

There is evidence that comparative lifetime carbon emissions can be described in ratios of CO₂e/kWh as: if onshore wind = 1; nuclear power = 6.6; and coal = 96. The average wind farm is expected to generate some 20-25 times more energy over its lifetime than was required in building and running it compared with the energy return on investment of coal at around 8 and nuclear around 9.

- Involvement

The Rosneath Peninsula West Community Development Trust has over 400 members. It is a registered charity and works entirely for community benefit. A community survey and community events determined the Community Action Plan (CAP). The community has voted with more than 80% in favour of the wind farm on two separate occasions, and more than 90% of those responding from the whole Peninsula in the Council consultation responses have commented in favour of the planning application.

- Finances

The financial strength of the proposed development has been confirmed through the support of the Big Lottery Fund, Argyll and Islands LEADER, and CARES, which have all signalled financial commitment, with a major Bank also responding positively to the terms of Trust financial planning.

APPLICANT'S RESPONSE TO SCOTTISH NATURAL HERITAGE'S CONSULTATION

- Landscape advice

This has been founded on the regional based landscape capacity study and fails to take into account the site-specific design strategy adopted in response to the sensitivities of this site. The 'local' landscape impacts referred to by SNH reflect the conclusion of the Environmental Statement. Significant visual impacts on the local area are to be expected with any commercial scale turbines.

- Pre-application advice

Scottish Natural Heritage fails to acknowledge the reduction in turbine size from 125m at pre application stage and the applicant's willingness to amend the proposal in accordance with professional landscape advice.

- Landscape character

The design of the development reflects the simple landscape character and composition of the peninsula. Theoretical visibility covers less than half of the study area. SNH has overstated the influence of the development upon views of the dramatic mountains in the National Park.

- Scale

SNH fail to give cognisance to the presence of Coulport (2m north-west) and Faslane (3m east) and the Gallow Hill radio mast which between them influence the heavily developed character of the coast. The heavily developed coastal fringe provides a series of scale references in relation to the horizontal emphasis of the peninsula and the addition of turbines would add a further scale reference rather than introducing the only scale reference.

- Visualisations

Full size copies of the photomontages were provided to SNH at pre-application discussion stage and further copies were provided as part of the application on request. It is agreed that judgements regarding likely impact should be considered at the viewpoint concerned and not be reliance on the visualisations alone. Shortcomings regarding water based viewpoints are recognised but there is no accepted method of addressing visualisations taken from moving boats.

- Ornithology

SNH agrees with the conclusions of the Environmental Statement that particular species of conservation importance will not be significantly affected but then adds a catch-all to the effect that the proposal will degrade wild bird habitat generally. It has also misplaced the site in an area of level 4 sensitivity in respect of the RSPB bird sensitivity mapping whereas it is actually in a level 1 area. The nature of this error and the silence of the ES and the RSPB on the matter gives cause for concern in terms of SNH's response to bird issues.

NOTE: Committee Members, the applicant, agent and any other interested party should note that the consultation responses and letters of representation referred to in this report, have been summarised and that the full consultation response or letter of representations are available on request. It should also be noted that the associated drawings, application forms, consultations, other correspondence and all letters of representations are available for viewing on the Council web site at www.argyll-bute.gov.uk

(G) SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Has the application been the subject of:

- (i) An Environmental Statement (ES):** Yes
- (ii) An appropriate assessment under the Conservation (Natural Habitats) Regulations 1994:** No
- (iii) A design or design/access statement:** No
- (iv) A report on the impact of the proposed development e.g. Retail impact, transport impact, noise impact, flood risk, drainage impact etc:**

Yes – Planning Statement (November 2012); Landscape Capacity Report (22nd November 2011); Environmental Statement, Volume 1: Non-Technical Summary; Environmental Statement, Volume 2: Written Text; Environmental Statement, Volume 3: Figures; Environmental Statement, Volume 4: Technical Appendices and additional graphics.

(H) PLANNING OBLIGATIONS

Is a Section 75 (S75) agreement required: Due to the recommendation of refusal a S75 is not required.

(I) Has a Direction been issued by Scottish Ministers in terms of Regulation 30, 31 or 32: No

(J) Section 25 of the Act; Development Plan and any other material considerations over and above those listed above which have been taken into account in the assessment of the application

(i) List of all Development Plan Policy considerations taken into account in assessment of the application

'Argyll & Bute Structure Plan' (2002)

Policy STRAT SI 1: Sustainable Development
Policy STRAT DC 5: Development in Sensitive Countryside
Policy STRAT DC 6: Development in Very Sensitive Countryside
Policy STRAT DC 7: Nature Conservation & Development Control
Policy STRAT DC 8: Landscape & Development Control
Policy STRAT DC 9: Historic Environment & Development Control
Policy STRAT RE 1: Wind Farm/Wind Turbine Development

'Argyll & Bute Local Plan' (2009)

Policy LP ENV 1: Development Impact on the General Environment
Policy LP ENV 2: Development Impact on Biodiversity
Policy LP ENV 6: Development Impact on Habitats and Species
Policy LP ENV 8: Development Impact upon Local Nature Conservation Sites
Policy LP ENV 9: Development Impact on National Scenic Areas (NSAs)
Policy LP ENV 10: Development Impact on Areas of Panoramic Quality
Policy LP ENV 12: Water Quality and Environment
Policy LP ENV 13a: Development Impact on Listed Buildings
Policy LP ENV 17: Development Impact on Sites of Archaeological Importance
Policy LP ENV 19: Development Setting, Layout and Design
Policy LP BAD 1: Bad Neighbour Development
Policy LP REN 1: Commercial Wind Farm and Wind Turbine Development
Policy LP SERV 4: Water Supply
Policy LP SERV 6: Waste Related Development and Waste Management in Developments
Policy LP TRAN 4: New and Existing, Public Roads and Private Access Regimes
Policy LP TRAN 7: Safeguarding of Airports

Note: The Full Policies are available to view on the Council's Web Site at www.argyll-bute.gov.uk

(ii) **List of all other material planning considerations taken into account in the assessment of the application, having due regard to Annex A of Circular 4/2009.**

- Scottish Planning Policy (2009)
- Scottish Government Advice Note on Onshore Turbines (2012)
- 'Argyll and Bute Landscape Wind Energy Capacity Study' (2012)

(K) **Is the proposal a Schedule 2 Development not requiring an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA):** This proposal is a Schedule 2 EIA Development; it was considered that EIA was necessary, due to the potential for significant environmental impact.

(L) **Has the application been the subject of statutory pre-application consultation (PAC):** No.

(M) **Has a sustainability check list been submitted:** No, separate consideration of the proposal's degree of sustainability has been required as the concept is implicit within the EIA process.

(N) **Does the Council have an interest in the site:** No.

(O) **Requirement for a Hearing:** There is a requirement to hold a Discretionary Hearing given the extent of representation received.

(P) **Assessment and summary of determining issues and material considerations**

- The proposal seeks the construction of wind farm comprising five turbines on the western side of the Rosneath peninsula. The development is being promoted by a local development trust which has aspirations of being able to support various social and environmental projects in the surrounding area with income derived from the operation of the windfarm. This development is not of a size which renders it subject to the local plan spatial strategy for windfarms (only applicable to projects over 20MW), so it falls to be assessed against the criteria set out in local plan policy LP REN 1 along with other relevant development plan policies.
- Formal objections to the proposal have been lodged by the Loch Lomond & the Trossachs National Park Authority, Inverclyde Council and by telecommunications interests. Further serious concerns have been expressed by Scottish Natural Heritage. Four community councils have objected to the

proposal and two have expressed support. Remaining consultees are content with the proposal.

- 2,467 parties have made representations, comprising 1,050 objections and 1,408 expressions of support, plus 9 parties raising matters but not expressing a view either way. This level of representation is such as to warrant the holding of a pre-determination hearing.
- The principal issue in this case is the acceptability of the scale of the turbines proposed relative to the characteristics of their landscape setting, including in particular, the consequences of the presence of the turbines for views across Loch Long from within the National Park, for the marine gateway approach to the National Park by sea; and to a lesser degree, in terms of the panoramic views available from the Clyde coast northwards towards the Arrochar Alps and the Cowal Hills. Rosneath assumes importance in terms of views from both coastal and elevated locations eastwards from Cowal, north from Inverclyde and also from ferry routes, where it constitutes a low lying foreground feature against more distant and impressive backdrops. Whilst the landscape of Rosneath is not itself particularly distinguished, its location between Loch Long and the Gare Loch and projecting towards the Clyde Estuary is such that the proposal would cast an influence in all directions. The 'large scale' of the turbines proposed in this low lying landscape is not consistent with the recommendations of the 'Argyll & Bute Landscape Wind Energy Capacity Study' (2012) nor with SNH landscape advice on the Siting and Design of Windfarms. At 92.5m, despite the linearity and simplicity of the layout selected, the turbines would be disproportionate to the low lying landform, would diminish the apparent scale of the peninsula and intrude in key views, to the detriment of landscape character and visual amenity.
- A further issue has arisen in respect of anticipated interference with telecommunications links across the peninsula. This has prompted objections on behalf of two existing operators in the absence of technically feasible solution(s) having been identified to safeguard such links, in a manner which could prove capable of implementation at the developer's expense and to the operators' satisfaction, in terms of both finance and timescale. A holding objection has also been received from the Council's Roads Engineers on the grounds that the submitted traffic plan fails to quantify all construction movements associated with the development which does not allow a proper assessment to be concluded.
- SNH has raised concerns about the appropriateness of erecting turbines in an area which frequented by a wide diversity of bird species, but in the absence of identified adverse impacts on particular protected species, or a means of quantifying more general consequences for the wild bird population as a whole, it is not considered that a reason for refusal can be sustained on ornithological grounds. Other material aspects of the development are acceptable or could be addressed by way of planning conditions.
- The proposal is considered to give rise to significantly adverse landscape and visual impacts, along with unresolved interference with existing telecommunications links, contrary to Scottish Planning Policy, the Scottish

Government's Advice Sheet on Onshore Wind Farms; Policies STRAT SI 1: Sustainable Development; STRAT RE 1 Wind Farm Development; and STRAT DC 6 Development in Very Sensitive Countryside; of the 'Argyll & Bute Structure Plan' (2002); and Policies LP ENV 1: Development Impact on the General Environment; and LP REN 1: Commercial Wind Farm and Wind Turbine Development; of the 'Argyll & Bute Local Plan' (2009).

- Notwithstanding firstly, the contribution that this proposal could make towards combating climate change, and secondly, the community based nature of the proposal with its attendant potential to fund projects in the locality, development giving rise to locally inappropriate environmental consequences cannot be regarded as being sustainable, and consequently, the proposal is recommended for refusal.

(Q) Is the proposal consistent with the Development Plan: No.

(R) Reasons why planning permission should be refused:

This proposal is inconsistent with the provisions of the Development Plan due to its adverse impact upon landscape character, upon the wider sensitivities of the coast, on views across Loch Long from the Argyll Forest section of Loch Lomond & the Trossachs National Park, from the approach to the National Park by sea, and in terms of its intrusion in longer distance views towards the National Park from Inverclyde. All other material issues have been taken into account, including the contribution the project could make to addressing the consequences of climate change, and the extensive support expressed for the proposal given its community development aspirations, but these are not of such weight as to overcome the adverse landscape and visual impacts of turbines, which are out of scale with their receiving environment, and which by virtue of their geographical situation would exert a particularly wide influence over the appreciation of surrounding seascapes and landscapes. The identified shortcomings of the proposal cannot be overcome by the imposition of planning conditions or by way of S75 legal agreement.

(S) Reasoned justification for a departure to the provisions of the Development Plan: There is no justifiable reason for a departure to be made from the provisions of the Development Plan in this case.

(T) Need for notification to Scottish Ministers or Historic Scotland: None.

Author of Report: Richard Kerr

Date: 2nd June 2013

Reviewing Officer: Angus Gilmour
Head of Planning and Regulatory Services

REASONS FOR REFUSAL RELATIVE TO APPLICATION: 12/020695/PP

1. The proposal is located on the western side of the Rosneath peninsula overlooking Loch Long and the Argyll Forest section of the Loch Lomond & the Trossachs National Park. It lies within the 'Open Ridgeland' landscape character type (ref 'Argyll & Bute Landscape Wind Energy Capacity Study (LWECS) – Final main report and appendix March 2012' - SNH/Argyll & Bute Council) which is intended to guide SNH and the Council on the strategic implications of further wind farm developments in the landscape. Although the peninsula itself is undistinguished in landscape terms, its location between Loch Long and the Gare Loch and projecting towards the Clyde Estuary is such that the proposal would cast an influence in all directions and over adjacent more sensitive landscape character types, including parts of the National Park, the upper Firth of Clyde and adjacent coasts. The 'large scale' of the turbines proposed in this low lying landscape is not consistent with the recommendations of the 'Argyll & Bute Landscape Wind Energy Capacity Study' (2012) nor with published SNH landscape advice on the Siting and Design of Windfarms. With a turbine height of 92.5m, despite the linearity and simplicity of the layout selected, the size of the turbines would appear disproportionate to the low lying landform, would diminish the apparent scale of the peninsula, and would impinge upon setting of surrounding landscape character types. In particular, the development proposed would erode the character of a highly sensitive coastal landscape by the introduction of prominent large scale structures with rotating components which would form an unwelcome focal point detracting from the experience of surrounding landscape character types, including land within the Loch Lomond & the Trossachs National Park to the west of Loch Long, which is especially valued for its scenic and recreational qualities. At present, the 'Open Ridgeland landscape character type is free of wind turbine development of the scale proposed. If approved, this development would establish a precedent for large-medium scale coastal edge wind farm developments in circumstances where the LWECS considers that sensitive coastal landscapes do not have the capacity to absorb developments on this scale satisfactorily. The proposal would introduce an inappropriately located wind farm into the sensitive and valued coastal landscapes of the upper Firth of Clyde and would impose itself upon its wider landscape setting to the detriment of landscape character of its surroundings. Approval of the proposal would represent an unwelcome move away from the established location of approved wind farm developments in upland areas inland, where they do not exert such a degree of influence over the appreciation of the coast and those landscapes which are characterised by the interplay between the land and the sea.

The foregoing environmental considerations are of such magnitude that they cannot be reasonably offset by the projected benefits which a development of this scale would make to the achievement of climate change related commitments.

Having due regard to the above, it is considered that this proposal would have a significant adverse impact on landscape character and would degrade the value of assets within the National Park. It is therefore inconsistent with the provisions of the Scottish Planning Policy and Scottish Government's Specific Advice Sheet on Onshore Wind Farms; Policies STRAT SI 1: Sustainable Development; Policy STRAT DC 5: Development in Sensitive Countryside; STRAT DC 6: Development in Very Sensitive Countryside, Policy STRAT DC 8: Landscape & Development Control; Policy STRAT RE 1: Wind Farm/Wind Turbine Development of the 'Argyll & Bute Structure Plan' (approved 2009) and Policy LP REN 1: Commercial Wind Farm and Wind Turbine Development of the 'Argyll & Bute Local

Plan' (adopted 2009).

2. The Zone of Theoretical Visibility maps indicate widespread visibility to the west and the south of the site over Loch Long and the Firth of Clyde with more limited visibility over the Gare Loch to the east. Whilst visibility from settled areas and transport routes within Rosneath is relatively well contained, the geographical location of the peninsula is such that it assumes importance in the overall composition of the wider landscape and seascape. The imposition of wind turbines of the scale proposed, in both short range views from the National Park coast to the west, and in longer range views from the areas around Dunoon and Inverclyde, would impinge on communities, recreational assets and transport routes, including views from the important gateway access by ferry to the National Park. This visual impact would significantly affect the landscape experience of the approach to the highlands from the developed lowlands, particularly given the pivotal location of the site, where the development will be exposed to large numbers of people for prolonged periods of time. The proposal secures a poor fit with the landscape in terms of its domination of scale, coupled with the effect of blade rotation, which will exacerbate the visual intrusion upon key views across Upper Firth of Clyde and Loch Long, including areas within the National Park, which are particularly valued as a tourism and recreational resource.

The foregoing environmental considerations are of such magnitude that they cannot be reasonably offset by the projected benefits which a development of this scale would make to the achievement of climate change related commitments.

Having due regard to the above, the proposal conflicts with the provisions of the Scottish Planning Policy and Scottish Government's Specific Advice Sheet on Onshore Wind Farms; Policies STRAT SI 1: Sustainable Development; STRAT DC 5: Development in Sensitive Countryside; Policy STRAT DC 5: Development in Very Sensitive Countryside; Policy STRAT DC 8: Landscape & Development Control; Policy STRAT RE 1: Wind Farm/Wind Turbine Development of the 'Argyll & Bute Structure Plan' (approved 2009) and Policies LP ENV 10: Development Impact on Areas of Panoramic Quality and LP REN 1: Commercial Wind Farm and Wind Turbine Development of the 'Argyll & Bute Local Plan' (adopted 2009).

3. The location of the proposed development is such that the siting of the turbines would interfere with existing UHF Radio Scanning Telemetry on the basis that they would cause interference to communications between multiple outstations and a scanning base station operated by Scottish Water and to links operated by Denbridge Marine who provide the Vessel Traffic Service for HMNB Clyde on behalf of the MoD. In the absence to date of the operators of the system expressing satisfaction that there has been a technically feasible solution(s) identified to safeguard such links, in a manner which could prove capable of implementation at the developer's expense and to the operator's satisfaction in terms of both finance and timescale, both operators have requested that objection on their part be sustained. In such circumstances, the proposal fails to satisfy Policy LP REN 1: Commercial Wind Farm and Wind Turbine Development of the 'Argyll & Bute Local Plan' (adopted 2009), insofar as it threatens the integrity of existing telecommunications links in circumstances where mitigation measures to the satisfaction of the operator of those links and to the developer have not been identified and agreed between the parties involved.

4. The Council's Roads Engineer has issued a holding objection on the basis that whilst the submitted Traffic Plan provides an assessment with regard to component delivery, it does not account for the vehicles movements associated with either ready mixed concrete or primary materials to produce concrete on site, nor movements associated with the removal of any excavated spoil from the site. In the absence of being able to take into account the full range of vehicle movements associated with the project, it is not possible for the roads engineer to conclusively assesses the traffic implications of the proposal, which in the absence of the required information, renders it contrary to the provisions of Policies LP TRAN 4: New and Existing, Public Roads and Private Access Regimes and LP TRAN 5: Off-Site Highway Improvements of the 'Argyll & Bute Local Plan'.

APPENDIX A – RELATIVE TO APPLICATION NUMBER: 12/020695/PP

PLANNING LAND USE AND POLICY ASSESSMENT

A. SETTLEMENT STRATEGY & WIND FARM PROPOSALS MAP

The site is not subject to any spatial zoning for windfarm development by local plan Wind Farm Proposals Map, as this is restricted to proposals over 20MW whereas this scheme is 11.5MW. Consideration is therefore by way of a criteria based approach established by local plan policy LP REN 1.

The turbines, access track, crane hardstandings, construction compound and control building straddle the boundary between 'Sensitive Countryside' and 'Very Sensitive Countryside' which is subject to the effect of Structure Plan Policies STRAT DC 5 and 6: respectively. These policies establish a general presumption against development in the open countryside other than in the case of specific categories of development detailed in the policies. This provides for renewable energy developments in countryside locations provided that the form of development is consistent with local plan Policies LP REN 1 or LP REN 2. In this case, as the development is not considered consistent with Policy LP REN 1 (for the landscape and visual reasons explained below) the proposal does not satisfy the exceptions identified in these policies.

Having due regard to the above it is considered that the proposal is inconsistent with the provisions of the SPP (2009); Scottish Government's Specific Advice Sheet on Onshore Wind Farms (2012); Policy STRAT DC 5: Development in Sensitive Countryside; Policy STRAT DC 6: Development in Very Sensitive Countryside; and STRAT RE 1: Wind Farm/Wind Turbine Development of the 'Argyll & Bute Structure Plan' (2002) and Policy LP REN 1: Wind Farms & Wind Turbines of the 'Argyll & Bute Local Plan' (2009).

B. LOCATION, NATURE & DESIGN OF PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

The application site lies on the Rosneath peninsula which is a long and relatively low lying finger of land which projects southwards into the Firth of Clyde, with the Gare Loch to the east and Loch Long to the west. Rosneath is characterised by its almost continuously developed coastal fringe, the significant presence of RNAD Cullinstown on Loch Long and the relative absence of development at higher levels, other than for the telecommunications mast at the southern end at Gallowhill. In landscape terms it is relatively undistinguished, although its geographical position is such that it often assumes importance in foreground views across open water towards more impressive hills and mountains beyond, which accords it sensitivity insofar as inappropriately scaled or sited intervening development could impinge significantly upon the appreciation of the wider landscape.

The proposal is for the erection of a 5 turbine wind farm and ancillary development on open moorland between the settlements of Cove and Clynder some 4.5km south of Garelochhead. The site lies above Barbour Road to the west of the north-south aligned crest of the peninsula on sloping land facing out across Loch Long, which constitutes a transitional area between the developed coastal margin and the open but partly forested ridge which reaches 200m AOD. The proposed turbines would be 57m high to the hub plus a rotor diameter of

71m, giving an overall height to the vertical blade tip of 92.5m. The site would have a total maximum generating capacity of 11.5MW. The turbines would be sited in a line roughly along the 130m contour and equally spaced in order to produce a regular uncluttered layout, which would benefit from an element of topographical screening from the populated areas on the opposite side of the Gare Loch. Principal visibility would therefore be from the coastal margin of the National Park on the opposite side of Loch Long between Strone Point and Ardentinn, and from ferry routes to Dunoon and from Inverclyde to the south.

The application is submitted by a local community development trust which seeks to further social, community, economic and recreational interests in the area encompassing Kilcreggan, Cove, Portkill, Ardpeaton and Peaton. Whilst their stated intention is to benefit the area surrounding the site whilst also providing an element of community benefit for other locations affected by the presence of the development, community benefit does not constitute a material consideration capable of off-setting otherwise unacceptable environmental implications of development.

The following elements are included in the planning application: 5 wind turbines; crane hardstandings adjacent to each turbine; upgrading of an existing forest access and the construction of a new on-site access track including two watercourse crossings in order to link the forest access to the turbine locations, a temporary construction compound, a laydown area and a control building. Should the proposal be successful, it is anticipated that construction aggregate could be sourced locally which would prompt the requirement for separate mineral planning applications for borrow pit workings. Connection of the development to the grid would be by way of a new post-mounted overhead line to the substation at Whistlefield. This would be consented by the Scottish Government under the provisions of the Electricity Act so the grid connection does not form part of this application.

Access to the site would be via the A817/A814 and thence via the MoD road from Whistlefield to Peaton, where an existing forest road would be improved to afford access to the location of the control building and site compound within the forest margins at the north end of the row of turbines. This access would then be extended out onto the open moorland to serve successive turbine locations. The general design of the turbines and ancillary structures follows current wind energy practice. In view of the close quarter views available from the National Park to the west, and to help screen the site from Helensburgh to the east, the turbines have been set in locations as far down the west facing hill slope as practicable in order to benefit from the backdrop of the crest of the peninsula to the east. Likewise, the layout has been deliberately designed to be as regular and compact as possible, in the knowledge that relatively close quarter views across Loch Long from sensitive National Park locations are unavoidable.

Whilst the general design of the components of the development are appropriate, the scale of the turbines is not suited to this location or the landscape interests of its surroundings for the reasons considered in the Landscape and Visual Impact sections of the report below. At 92.5m these constitute turbines of the largest of the four typologies identified in the 'Argyll & Bute Wind Energy Capacity Study' ('Large Scale' 90m – 130m). These are generally only suited to the more remote upland areas of Argyll and Bute where they benefit from the elevation of the landscape, separation distance from communities, transport routes and sensitive receptors, and where they can take advantage of locations where they will not exert an inappropriate influence upon more sensitive coastal landscapes. Inappropriately

scaled turbines in landscapes of lesser elevation, sited in locations where they are more readily appreciated at reduced distances, have the potential to diminish the apparent scale of landscapes to the detriment of landscape character, and also to impinge upon the appreciation of the landscape from viewpoints valued for their scenic qualities.

Having due regard to the above it is considered that the proposal is inconsistent with the provisions of the SPP (2009); Scottish Government's Specific Advice Sheet on Onshore Wind Farms (2012); Policy STRAT SI 1: Sustainable Development of the Argyll & Bute Structure Plan; and, Policies LP ENV 1: Development Impact on the General Environment and LP ENV 19: Development Setting, Layout & Design of the 'Argyll & Bute Local Plan' (2009).

C. LANDSCAPE CHARACTER & LANDSCAPE IMPACT

The site lies within the SNH defined 'Open Ridgeland' Landscape Character Type, which comprises gentle hill slopes and smooth ridges with semi-improved grassland, moorland and forest plantations. It occurs in both the Roseneath peninsula and the hills behind Helensburgh and Cardross. Rosneath is an area of generally low relief with built development being primarily restricted to the coastal edge. It contrasts with the more dramatic 'Steep Ridgeland and Mountains' LCT on the opposite side of Loch Long and with the more urban character of Inverclyde on the opposite side of the Clyde estuary. It has a sensitivity to the larger scale typology of turbines in part due to the limited extent of this character type, but also because of the low relief of the Rosneath hills.

The proposed turbines at 92.5m fall within the largest typology (80 -130m) identified by 'Argyll and Bute Landscape Wind Energy Capacity Study' 2012. This identifies capacity in this LCT for turbine development but only if it can be sited lower down in the landscape away from ridges and hill tops, where it could benefit from rising ground as a backdrop. It does not identify capacity for the large typology of turbine within this LCT.

The proposed turbines would exert a visual influence over a wide area, including many areas of the Clyde basin, including Inverclyde, ferry routes to Dunoon and the National Park, and the Stone peninsula and Loch Long. The route by sea to Dunoon is regarded as the Marine Gateway to the National Park, whilst the seaside architecture of Kilmun and Blairmore with its aspect over Loch Long to Rosneath is cited as one of the special qualities of the National Park.

The applicants contend that whilst the Landscape Capacity Study should be regarded as guidance, it does not benefit from the more fine-grained design iteration process which has led to this particular scheme being derived. The design process for the site has been primarily driven by landscape considerations and the prospect of larger turbines and a greater number of turbines have been discounted as a consequence. It has sought to achieve a balance of composition, an avoidance of the ridgeline to reduce dominance and the extent of visual influence, the limitation of views from across the Gare Loch and the avoidance of visibility from the Rosneath Designed Landscape and the Rolling Farmland and Estates LCT at the south end of the peninsula. Whilst visibility is unavoidable from the Cowal side of Loch Long, the layout of the site has been designed to be compact and regular within

a landscape of expansive horizontal scale, which is already influenced by settlement, MoD installations and forestry.

The Zone of Theoretical Visibility mapping included in the ES demonstrates that locally the influence of the site upon Rosneath is mainly to the west and south of the site with coastal settlement largely shielded by landform, other than for parts of Cove village. The development would exert influence over the west side of Loch Long from Strone Point to Ardentinnay at relatively close quarters (3 - 5km) plus the hills above Glen Fruin. Some visibility would also be achievable from the coastal edge between Dunoon and Inellan at between 7 -10km.

From the south visibility would be achievable from the Clyde coast in the vicinity of Gourrock and Greenock at around 7km, plus elevated areas above these settlements in the Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park. From across the Gare Loch the development would be mainly shielded by the effect of topography, with some blade tip visibility from the coastal edge and with more extensive visibility largely restricted to the less populated and frequented areas above Helensburgh, Shandon and Rhu. There would be extensive visibility across the Firth of Clyde including ferry routes to Rosneath to Dunoon and to Rothesay, extending at over 25km far as the east coast of the islands of Bute and Great Cumbrae.

In the first instance it is appropriate to consider the implications of the proposal for following designations:

a) The Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park

Rosneath contributes to the landscape setting of the National Park, appearing as a foreground feature in views from Inverclyde towards the hills and the mountains in the north, in terms of short range views out from the Park across Loch Long, and in terms of the Marine Gateway ferry routes into the Park. The principal concern would be the open views across water at around 3km from the Kilmun/Blairmore area where the seaside resort architecture and the orientation of buildings to take advantage of sea views is cited in the special qualities of the Argyll Forest area of the Park. The applicants response to this has been to produce a linear and balanced layout of turbines with equal spacing located so as to take advantage of backclothing so as to reduce skylining. The ES accepts that this new prominent feature would compromise the character and quality of views currently available and concludes that the effect on the settlements on the Cowal side of Loch Long would be '*moderate adverse*' and of significance. Elsewhere within the Park the development would not be visible from Loch Lomond or Ben Lomond although there would be some visibility at 5km from the hills above Rhu with the blades backdropped by Cowal. The ES notes the absence of cumulative impacts from multiple sites and considers that overall the 'special qualities' of the Park would not be the subject of effects of significance.

For reasons set out below, officers have concluded that the proposal would give rise to issues of significance for that part of the Park on the west side of Loch Long, for the National Park Marine Gateway ferry route to Dunoon, and for the setting of the National Park as appreciated from the Inverclyde coast. The Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park Authority are objectors to the proposal on landscape impact grounds.

b) National Scenic Areas

Neither the Loch Lomond nor the Kyles of Bute NSA are affected by the development.

c) Regional Landscape Designations

There are no significant effects upon the local plan designated Areas Of Panoramic Quality which cover the eastern side of upper Loch Long and much of the Isle of Bute.

d) Historic Garden & Designed Landscapes

There are no significant effects upon those of SE Rosneath or further afield.

Secondly, it is necessary to consider the landscape implications of the development for the site, the remainder of the landscape character type within which it is located, and for surrounding LCT's:

a) The Application Site

The site lies on a west facing slope between the settled coastal margin and the open ridge of the peninsula where it is influenced by both agriculture and forestry. Most of the access route lies within forestry and where the track extends out onto open ground it is able to follow the contour. Whilst the compound and control building would be contained within the forestry the turbines would site out in the open where they exert a high magnitude of change which the ES identifies as a '*substantial adverse*' impact.

b) 'Open Ridgeland' Landscape Character Type

The site lies within the Open Ridgeland LCT the incidence of which is confined to Rosneath and areas above Rhu and Helensburgh. These are areas which are subject to influence from development focused on the coast, forestry and large scale MoD installations. The applicant's ES concludes that a compact evenly spaced development along a single contour line will produce a small scale element within a LCT with dominant horizontal scale. This is considered to produce '*moderate adverse*' impact upon the LCT.

c) 'Rolling Farmland & Estates' LCT

This occurs at the south end of the Rosneath peninsula and also around Helensburgh and Cardross. Due to limited visibility consequences from the proposal are rated as '*slight adverse*'.

d) 'Forested Glen' LCT

This occurs above the coast on the Cowal side of Loch Long plus some inland areas such as the margins of Loch Eck. It is highly influenced by dense afforestation and will only experience '*slight adverse*' consequences.

e) 'Rugged Moorland Hills' LCT

Found south of Gourock and Greenock with limited areas with visibility of the turbines hence only a '*slight adverse*' effect.

f) 'Settled Loch Shore' LCT

This relates to the coastal margin on the west side of Loch Long from Strone to north of Blairmore. It is a location of high sensitivity due to its inclusion in the National Park. There would be open views across water to the turbines at around 3km which the ES assesses as giving rise to '*moderate adverse*' impacts, a position contested by officers, some consultees and objectors to the proposal who consider that the presence of the turbines at relatively short range in focused views will exert a greater and less acceptable magnitude of change.

g) 'Steep Ridgeland and Mountains' LCT

This occurs both inland and south of Dunoon and also north-east of Garelochhead. In view of limited visibility from above Dunoon and Glen Fruin it will be subject to '*slight adverse*' effects.

h) Firth of Clyde Seascape

Most views from land and ferry routes across water tend to be panoramic in nature and subject to influence by development fringing the coast including MoD installations. The ES concludes that this area will be subject to '*slight adverse*' effects.

Thirdly, it is necessary to have regard to the views on the landscape implications of the proposal from consultees. The National Park Authority has objected to the application as it does not agree with the conclusions of the applicant's ES and considers that the proposal will give rise to significant adverse visual impact on the landscape setting of the southern aspects of the National Park from the Firth of Clyde, Loch Long, the communities of the Cowal Peninsula and the southern marine gateway to the National Park. It is also their view that the proposal will have a significant impact on the residents and recreational/visitor enjoyment and landscape experience of the southern and western areas of the National Park. Inverclyde Council is of the opinion that the development will be an unwelcome intrusion in the foreground of longer distance views over the peninsula to the more mountainous landscapes beyond, to the detriment of the scenic qualities of the landscape. Objections on landscape grounds are raised by Community Councils representing areas which look out on Rosneath, including Kilmun CC, Dunoon CC, Hunters Quay CC and Cardwell Bay & Greenock West CC (Inverclyde), although the two most local community councils Cove and Kilcreggan CC and Rosneath & Clynder CC have both expressed support for the proposal, whilst neither Ardentinnay nor Inveraray CC's have expressed landscape concerns.

Scottish Natural Heritage has not objected to the application, despite their concerns about the scale and location of the proposal, as it does not impinge upon national landscape designations. However, the absence of an objection ought not to be regarded as indication that the proposal in any way finds favour with SNH, as their current policy is only to deploy formal objections in circumstances where national landscape designations are significantly prejudiced. In all other cases they restrict themselves to advice to Planning Authorities.

Indeed, it is evident from their response that they have serious landscape concerns about the proposal.

They point out that Rosneath Peninsula marks the point where the River Clyde and the Firth of Clyde merge, where the juxtaposition of mountains, peaks, lochs and peninsulas create a dramatic and scenic composition. The low lying peninsula is therefore visible from a range of surrounding landscape character types. The scale and coastal location of the development is such that it will affect the experience of the distinct combination of character types in the wider landscape. The turbines proposed are disproportionate to the receiving environment being 92.5m high (at around 130mAOD) whereas the peninsula is around 200m AOD along the ridge. This is contrary to the Landscape Capacity Study recommendations and to SNH published Siting and Design advice. Turbines of such size would diminish the apparent scale of the landscape and the grandeur of its mountain backdrop to the detriment of landscape character.

In terms of policy and guidance, it is necessary to have regard to the advice given in Scottish Planning Policy the accompanying Advice Note on Wind Turbines, to the sustainability landscape and renewable energy policies of the Development Plan, and to the advice given in the 'Argyll and Bute Landscape Wind Energy Capacity Study' (2012). In accordance with national policy, the Development Plan seeks to preclude proposals which do not satisfy the principles of sustainable development, including those which impinge inappropriately on landscapes valued for their intrinsic attributes and their scenic qualities. The Council has sought to address landscape capacity for wind energy by means of a study which identifies landscape sensitivities and provides guidance on the scale of development which could be appropriate in particular landscape character types without significantly compromising landscape character. In the case of the 'Open Ridgeland' LCT, it is noted that there are currently no consented windfarms in this LCT, which is sensitive to windfarm development because on the one hand of its limited incidence, and on the other due to its low relief. Its sensitivity is also heightened by its relationship with the adjoining National Park, with adjacent and more sensitive LCT's and due to the contrast which it has with the more populated areas on the other side of the Clyde. Landscape sensitivity of this LCT is judged by the study to be 'high' for large scale turbines (over 80m high) and there is considered to be no scope for the large typology turbines to be located within this landscape character type without incurring significant impacts on a number of sensitivity criteria. Identified capacity is restricted to some 'limited' opportunities for small - medium turbines (up to 50m) on lower slopes away from ridges, with better prospects for small turbines (under 35m).

Whilst the proposal has been configured by the applicants in an attempt to respond to the topographic and landscape pattern of the peninsula, and whilst its influence within the peninsula would be relatively contained, its position relative to the Clyde and Loch Long in particular is such that it would inevitably exert longer distance influence over surrounding landscape character types and communities, including sensitive locations such as the National Park and the approach to the National Park by sea. At 92.5m the turbines proposed would be disproportionate to the elevation of the landscape on which they are situated and to the overall height of what is a relatively low-lying peninsula. Whilst they are proposed to be located off the ridge to avoid unnecessary sky-lining, their position on the western slope of the peninsula is such that it would exert unwelcome influence over National Park interests. This relationship has led to objection being lodged by the National Park Authority.

The type of turbines proposed is such that despite the presence of existing features in the landscape, such as the MoD installation at Coulport, forestry plantation and a transmitter mast; their height, rotor diameter and rotation would constitute inappropriately scaled elements in the landscape, to the detriment of the landscape character of the peninsula and its appreciation from adjoining landscape character types. Whilst there might be potential for wind turbines of a lesser scale in this location, the applicants are clear that a scheme with a lesser generation capacity would not in their view be economically viable, hence their decision to pursue the application as it stands.

Having due regard to the above it is considered that this proposal is inconsistent with the provisions of SPP and Scottish Government's Specific Advice Sheet on Onshore Wind Farms; Policies STRAT SI 1: Sustainable Development; Policy STRAT DC 8: Landscape & Development Control; Policy STRAT RE 1: Wind Farm/Wind Turbine Development of the Argyll & Bute Structure Plan and Policy LP REN 1: Commercial Wind Farm and Wind Turbine Development of the Argyll & Bute Local Plan.

D. VISUAL IMPACT

Informed by the 'Zone of Theoretical Visibility' mapping produced for the proposal, and in consultation with SNH and Council officers, the applicants have assessed 16 representative viewpoints and have produced photomontages showing the anticipated consequences of the development as viewed from the selected locations. Members should be aware that ZTV mapping presents a worst case picture being based upon ground contours without the presence of buildings, structures and trees being taken into account. The ES concludes as follows:

Cove - '*moderate*' adverse impact travelling north on coast road out of the village with all five turbines visible along the ridge at 2km.

Locations to the west of Loch Long

Shepherd's Point (Ardentinny) (5km)

Gairletter Point (3km)

Blairmore Pier (4km)

Strone Point (4.5km)

Stronachullin Hill (elevated SW of Ardentinnny) (5.5km)

– all subject to '*moderate*' adverse impact on sensitive coastal locations in the National Park, with skylining or an element of backclothing against the crest of the peninsula dependent on the particular view.

Castle Hill, Dunoon - '*slight*' adverse impact on high sensitivity elevated viewpoint with development backclothed in an expansive view at 9.5km.

Locations in Inverclyde

Gourock ferry terminal (7km)

Lyle Hill, Greenock (7km)

Greenock Cut footpath (Clyde Muirsheil Regional Park) (9.5km)

Dunrod Hill (Clyde Muirsheil Regional Park) (11km)

– all subject to '*slight*' adverse impact on either sensitive coastal or elevated locations, with backdopping by distant hills in the case of Gourock, Craigs Top and Dunrod Hill and extensive foreground development in the case of Greenock Cut.

Locations east of the Gare Loch

Helensburgh Esplanade (6.5km)

Hill ground above Helensburgh (5.5km)

A817 (layby overlooking Faslane) (6.5km)

– all subject to '*slight*' adverse impact with only blade tips visible in the case of the Esplanade and the A817 and rotors visible against a Cowal backdrop in the case of land above Helensburgh.

Beinn Tharsuinn (above Glen Fruin) – '*slight*' adverse impact on sensitive panoramic viewpoint in the National Park and Loch Lomond NSA at 9km

The Cobbler – '*slight*' adverse impact on sensitive elevated viewpoint in the National Park at 21km.

The ES concludes that visual impacts within Rosneath itself will be largely restricted to land west and south of the site, with visibility from the road leaving Cove and from the margins of the village, but with no effects on the settlements of Kilchreggan, Roseneath or Clynder. Visual impact on the opposite side of the Gare Loch will be limited to blade tips from low viewpoints, with Helensburgh, Rhu and Garelochhead being little affected, and only greater visibility being obtainable from more elevated, less populated and less frequented locations further east. Some visual impact is acknowledged upon the Inverclyde Coast and on coastal locations in and around Dunoon in excess of 6km from the site. The most significant visual impact is anticipated on the west side of Loch Long around Strone and Blairmore, where the coast road and sea view orientated property affords views of all five turbines at around 3km to the detriment of the character and qualities of the views presently available.

In terms of property close to the site there are six dwellings on Barbour Road approximately 1km from the turbines. Whilst there are not orientated to take views across the windfarm and benefit from some screening by vegetation, the curtilages and environs of these dwellings will be affected visually by the presence of the turbines, probably to a greater degree than the '*slight*' adverse impact ascribed by the applicant's ES.

In terms of transport routes '*moderate*' adverse impacts are anticipated on the coast road north of Strone Point for 5km with some relatively close quarter and open views across water at around 3km. Some '*minor*' adverse impact is also anticipated on the A770 road access into Greenock/Gourock but at a greater distance of around 7km. There are no significant impacts on footpaths identified in the ES.

'*Moderate*' adverse impacts are identified in the ES in respect of the Gourock to Dunoon/Hunter's Quay ferry routes and also upon the PS '*Waverley*' route to Blairmore Pier and Loch Long. In the case of the former, views will be available from slow moving vessels to the detriment of the approach by sea to Cowal and the Marine Gateway to the National Park. In the case of the latter, close quarter views at less than 3km will be available.

SNH consider that the applicant's photomontages under-estimate the likely visual consequences of the development and they have reached their own conclusions in the matter. They point out that the ZTV mapping indicates that the turbines will be visible from a wide area and for prolonged periods of time by a large number of receptors, affecting sensitive coastal panoramas, important views of the dramatic hills to the north, the National Park coast of Loch Long, and ferry routes and other water users. In some views the turbines would be significant foreground features, which by virtue of their height and rotation would become focal points in the landscape, interrupting more longer distance panoramic backdrops. Their proximity to the National Park is such that they would involve circa 9km continuous visibility from the coast road and communities along the west side of Loch Long (between Strone Point and Ardentinn), would entail prolonged visibility from the gateway approach to the National Park by sea, and would impinge upon views available from more distant high points within the park. The Loch Lomond & the Trossachs National Park Authority has adopted a similar stance to SNH, having objected on visual grounds.

The Environmental Statement LVIA itself accepts that turbine development cannot take place on this site without visual impacts arising over a large area and with some relatively close quarter impacts, particularly on views currently available over Loch Long. It accepts that the scale of turbines proposed would exert '*moderate*' adverse impacts on a range of locations to the west within the National Park, and from the ferry route to Dunoon, and from boats such as the PS 'Waverley' using Loch Long. Given the unavoidability of such effects, the response of the proposal has been to locate the turbines down from the skyline where they can benefit from topographical shielding in views from the east and some back-dropping in views from the west, and to achieve regular spacing to secure a layout which is as aesthetically pleasing as the circumstances allow. However, such an approach in design cannot redress the fact that the height of the turbines remains disproportionate to the scale of the receiving environment and that accordingly they will be over-dominant in more close quarter views, and of a size that they will still constitute prominent focal point in more longer distance views interrupting coastal panoramas and views towards more dramatic and more distant backdrops.

Having due regard to the above, it is considered that the proposal conflicts with the provisions of SPP and Scottish Government's Specific Advice Sheet on Onshore Wind Farms; Policies STRAT SI 1: Sustainable Development; STRAT DC 5: Development in Sensitive Countryside Policy STRAT DC 8: Landscape & Development Control; Policy STRAT RE 1: Wind Farm/Wind Turbine Development of the Argyll & Bute Structure Plan and Policies LP ENV 9: Development Impact on National Scenic Areas; LP ENV 10: Development Impact on Areas of Panoramic Quality; LP REN 1: Commercial Wind Farm and Wind Turbine Development of the Argyll & Bute Local Plan.

E. CUMULATIVE IMPACT

This proposal is the first windfarm development intended to be located within the 'Open Ridgeland' Landscape Character Type, so no cumulative impacts arise in that regard. The nearest consented or proposed sites lie over 15km away with most over 30km away, so the site is physically and visually well separated from other large scale wind turbine

developments. Overall, no cumulative change of significance is identified in the ES in respect of the National Park, although the proposal does have some cumulative consequences for the encircling of the Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park by wind turbine developments.

No concerns have been raised by any of the Consultees in respect to the proposal having any adverse cumulative impact. It is therefore concluded that the proposal is acceptable in this regard.

Having due regard to the above it is considered that in terms of cumulative effects the proposal is consistent with the provisions of the SPP and Scottish Government's Specific Advice Sheet on Onshore Wind Farms; Policies STRAT SI 1: Sustainable Development; STRAT DC 4: Development in Rural Opportunity Areas; STRAT DC 5: Development in Sensitive Countryside Policy; STRAT DC 6: Development in Very Sensitive Countryside; STRAT DC 8: Landscape & Development Control; Policy STRAT RE 1: Wind Farm/Wind Turbine Development of the Argyll & Bute Structure Plan and Policies LP ENV 10: Development Impact on Areas of Panoramic Quality; LP REN 1: Commercial Wind Farm and Wind Turbine Development of the Argyll & Bute Local Plan.

F. ECOLOGICAL IMPACT

There are no statutory nature conservation designations within the site and only one non-statutory wet heathland designation at the southern end. A Phase 1 habitat survey plus a full NVC survey have been undertaken. These conclude that the site is mostly modified blanket bog and wet heath at higher levels and acid marshy grassland below with some wet flush habitat. The west end of the site and the access route is through commercial forestry. No plant species of conservation concern have been identified. Habitats have been degraded by framing, forestry and drainage so they are heavily modified and only of local importance. In terms of species the site is considered of local conservation importance for bats, otter, lizard and adder, and of regional importance for butterflies and moths.

Identified design mitigation includes maintaining buffers to watercourses and avoidance of areas of more value as local habitats. Construction mitigation includes avoidance of disturbance in response to survey results, timing and management practices and reinstatement measures. A Habitat Management Plan is proposed to address the decline of habitats on the site. Residual impacts after mitigation are assessed to be minor and not of significance.

The site is however designated in the local plan as part of a wider Local Nature Conservation Site where development with significant adverse consequences for nature conservation interests would be resisted in terms of Policy LP ENV 8. However, Scottish Natural Heritage are content with the conclusions of the Environmental Statement in terms of likely effects upon habitats and terrestrial species, subject to the identified mitigation, and therefore agree that the effects of development upon these interests will be negligible.

Having due regard to the above, it is considered that the proposal is inconsistent with the provisions of Policies STRAT RE 1: Wind Farm/Wind Turbine Development and

STRAT DC 7: Nature Conservation & Development Control of the Argyll & Bute Structure Plan and Policies LP REN 1 – Wind Farms and Wind Turbines, LP ENV 2: Development Impact on Biodiversity and LP ENV 6: Development Impact on Habitats and Species; and LP ENV 8 Development Impact on Nature Conservation Sites of the ‘Argyll & Bute Local Plan’.

G. ORNITHOLOGICAL IMPACT

The site has been the subject of 12 month flight activity and walkover surveys. There are no statutory designations for birds within 2km but there are nine designations within 20km. No significant affects have been identified upon off site European Special Protection Areas for Birds, hence the Council is not required to carry out a Habitats Regulations ‘appropriate assessment’ as part of the determination of this application. The site is subject to breeding birds and wintering species of significance, particularly black grouse and hen harrier.

The development poses risks to bird activity in terms of habitat loss, collision and disturbance, but the ES concludes that this will be of low significance in all cases for all identified species. Design mitigation is principally achieved by the avoidance of black grouse leks and construction mitigation by the avoidance of bird breeding areas and times and the employment of an Ecological Clerk of Works to oversee construction. In terms of operational mitigation a Habitat Enhancement Plan in the interests of improving black grouse breeding success is proposed. No significant residual effects after mitigation are identified.

Scottish Natural Heritage note the significance of the locality for a large number of bird species and point out that the RSPB’s ‘Bird Sensitivity Map to provide locational guidance for onshore wind farms in Scotland’ rates the site as the highest sensitivity out of nine categories identified in their guidance. Whilst, subject to conditions, no residual adverse impacts upon the conservation status of particular species have been identified, there is still concern expressed that, by way of attrition, the development could have consequences of significance for the wild bird population as a whole. In that regard, reference is made to the Council’s general obligation under the Habitats Regulations to avoid deterioration of wild bird habitats. SNH has been advised of concerns raised by objectors concerning reports of hen harriers frequenting the locality, but have not modified or added to their original response in the light of this.

The RSPB does not object to the proposal, subject to mitigation measures for black grouse and other species of conservation importance via a Habitat Management Plan along with a programme of monitoring being required as part of any consent, and with a condition to restrict the type and timing of construction activities during the grouse lekking season.

Whilst the position of Scottish Natural Heritage that on a precautionary basis it would be preferable to avoid wind turbine developments in areas of significant wild bird interest is understandable, and notwithstanding the nature conservation status of the site established by designation as a Local Nature Conservation Site, there is a lack of evidence to be able to demonstrate the likely scale of that effect upon particular species, some of which may be affected by the development to a greater or lesser degree depending upon their characteristics. In the absence of being able to quantify the extent of likely impacts and given the lack of objection from the RSPB, it is concluded that although there must be concerns

about the appropriateness of turbine development in an area frequented by a wide range of bird species, there is insufficient evidence available either from the Environmental Statement or from the consultee responses to be able to sustain a reason for refusal based on these grounds. SNH are content for the Council to reach its own conclusions in the matter.

Having due regard to the above it is considered that the proposal is consistent, from the point of view of ornithological interests, with the provisions of Policies STRAT RE 1: Wind Farm/Wind Turbine Development and STRAT DC 7: Nature Conservation & Development Control of the Argyll & Bute Structure Plan and Policies LP ENV 2: Development Impact on Biodiversity, LP ENV 6: Development Impact on Habitats and Species; LP ENV 8 Development Impact on Nature Conservation Sites and LP REN 1 Wind Farms and Wind Turbines of the 'Argyll & Bute Local Plan'.

H. HYDROLOGICAL & HYDROGEOLOGICAL IMPACT

The site lies within one water catchment area draining west towards the coast and there are a number of small watercourses and flushes across it. There are no private water supplies affected. Two new watercourse crossings are required for construction purposes. Good working practice mitigation is identified to avoid pollution and sedimentation of the water environment. The Scottish Environment Protection Agency do not object to the proposal, provided that in the event of an approval, conditions requiring groundwater investigation and groundwater permeable access tracks in areas of groundwater dependant terrestrial ecosystems on the site. In the absence of the imposition of such conditions their position would be one of objection.

Having due regard to the above, it is considered that in terms of hydrology the proposal is consistent with the provisions of: Policy STRAT RE 1: Wind Farm/Wind Turbine Development of the Argyll & Bute Structure Plan and Policy LP REN 1 – Wind Farms and Wind Turbines of the Argyll & Bute Local Plan.

I. MANAGEMENT OF PEAT/SOIL

The site is not one which is subject to the presence of deep peat and there are therefore no issues of concern regarding the disturbance of peatlands or the stability of peat deposits.

Having due regard to the above it is considered that in terms of ground conditions the proposal is consistent with the requirements of Policy STRAT RE 1: Wind Farm/Wind Turbine Development of the Argyll & Bute Structure Plan and Policy LP REN 1 – Wind Farms and Wind Turbines of the Argyll and Bute Local Plan.

J. BORROW PITS

The working of borrow pits to supply construction aggregates and material for access track construction, crane pads, laydown areas and so on is anticipated. These are likely to be located within the forested area on the approach to the site. Such workings would be the subject of a requirement for separate planning application(s). SEPA has noted this and would expect further consultation at that time.

K. HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT IMPACTS

Twelve sites of some archaeological interest have been identified by the applicants, all of which are of local importance and are to be avoided during development. No significant impacts from construction or operation are therefore anticipated. There will be indirect impacts upon historic environment assets in terms of effects upon their settings, notably part of Cove Conservation Area (assessed as moderate effects upon some limited views out of the conservation area), and in terms of the Grade A listed Knockderry Castle (again moderate in limited views out of the grounds). Historic Scotland have not identified adverse impacts of concern.

The West of Scotland Archaeology Service (WoSAS) do not have concerns about archaeological interests either on or surrounding the site.

Having due regard to the above, it is considered that the proposal is consistent with the provisions of Policies STRAT RE 1: Wind Farm/Wind Turbine Development and STRAT DC 9: Historic Environment & Development Control of the Argyll & Bute Structure Plan and LP ENV 13a: Development Impact on Listed Buildings LP ENV 14; LP ENV 16: Development Impact on Scheduled Ancient Monuments; LP ENV 17: Development Impact on Sites of Archaeological Importance of the Argyll & Bute Local Plan.

L. TOURISM IMPACT

The degree to which wind turbines influence the decision as to whether tourists should visit or return to an area, is open to debate. In dismissing an appeal for a windfarm at Corlarach in Cowal, the Reporter was persuaded that resource based tourism founded partly on landscape and scenery was important to Argyll and Bute, in the context of a local economy which is heavily dependent upon the tourism sector and its associated employment. Accordingly, development with significantly adverse landscape impacts has been recognised as having potential to devalue the attraction of Argyll as a tourism destination. Conversely, Visit Scotland research published in 2011 indicates that less than 20% of survey respondents agreed that they would tend to avoid parts of the country with windfarms.

What is clear, is that appropriately sited and scaled developments with limited consequences for landscape character, scenic quality and tourism assets have less potential to influence the decisions of those who might prove sensitive to developments which are more prominently sited and of larger scale, such that they are less readily capable of assimilation in their landscape setting.

The applicant's Environmental Statement does not identify impacts of significance on scenic designations or recreational activities. It does, however, accept that there would be a localised '*significant adverse*' impact upon the west side of Loch Long within the National Park, and a '*moderately adverse*' impact upon Clyde ferry routes to Dunoon and upon tourist users of Loch Long itself. The National Park Authority, Inverclyde Council and certain community councils are of the view that this development will impinge upon views across the Clyde and across Loch Long, to the extent to which it will have significant adverse effects

upon the scenic qualities of the seascape and landscape, to the detriment of the recreational and tourism value of the wider area.

Whilst it is not possible to be conclusive about the extent of these impacts, or to quantify them in a manner which would warrant a specific reason for refusal based upon conflict with tourism economy interests, it is reasonable to conclude that the scenic value of the wider area around Rosneath, including the Clyde Estuary, Loch Long, the approach to the National Park by water, the Argyll Forest coast of the National Park, and views to and from the Arrochar Alps across the peninsula, accord it undoubted significance in terms of scenic value and tourism importance. Insofar as the development impinges upon landscape character and intrudes on key views to the extent that it ought not to be regarded as being acceptable from a landscape and visual perspective, then it is to be expected that there will be some implications for the tourism value of the surrounding area, given that most visitors are attracted to Argyll and the National Park by the scenic value of the interplay between landscape and seascape. Accordingly, inappropriately scaled development in a wider panoramic landscape/seascape is not considered to be in the interests of tourism and ought to be resisted.

Having due regard to the above it is considered that the proposal is inconsistent with the provisions of SPP and Policies STRAT SI 1: Sustainable Development; Policy STRAT RE 1: Wind Farm/Wind Turbine Development of the Argyll & Bute Structure Plan and Policies LP ENV 10: Development Impact on Areas of Panoramic Quality; LP REN 1: Commercial Wind Farm and Wind Turbine Development of the Argyll & Bute Local Plan.

M. NOISE & AIR QUALITY

Technically, there are two quite distinct types of noise sources within a wind turbine – the mechanical noise produced by the machine and the aerodynamic noise produced by the passage of the blades through the air. The Report, “The Assessment and Rating of Noise from Wind Farms” (Final Report, Sept 1996, DTI), (ETSU-R-97) describes a framework for the measurement of wind farm noise, which should be followed to assess and rate noise from wind energy developments, until such time as an update is available. This gives indicative noise levels thought to offer a reasonable degree of protection to wind farm neighbours, without placing unreasonable burdens on wind farm developers, and suggests appropriate noise conditions.

A further report produced by Hayes McKenzie for DECC entitled “An Analysis of How Noise Impacts are Considered in the Determination of Wind Farm Planning Applications” suggested that best practice guidance is required to confirm and, where necessary, clarify and add to the way ETSU-R-97 should be implemented in practice. This report also concludes that there is no evidence of health affects arising from infrasound or low frequency noise generated by turbines.

The most conclusive summary of the implications of low frequency wind farm noise for planning policy following on from the Hayes McKenzie report is given by the UK Government’s statement regarding the finding of the Salford University Report into Aerodynamic Modulation of Wind Turbine Noise (September 2011). This study concluded that although Aerodynamic Modulation cannot be fully predicted, the incidence of

Aerodynamic Modulation resulting from wind farms in the UK is low. Out of the 133 wind farms in operation at the time of the study, there were four cases where Aerodynamic Modulation appeared to be a factor. Complaints have subsided for three out of these four sites, in one case as a result of remedial treatment in the form of a wind turbine control system. In the remaining case, which is a recent installation, investigations are ongoing.

The applicants have carried out background monitoring in respect of locations along Barbour Road representative of the three nearest dwellings and have predicted noise emissions based on the anticipated turbine model. This has demonstrated that the operation of the windfarm is capable of meeting ETSU-R-97 standards at these properties, the closest of which is 875m from the nearest proposed turbine location. Construction noise has been assessed in terms of BS5228 (2009) and appropriate working hours determined.

Public Protection have accepted the applicant's noise assessment methodology and conclusions, and recommend conditions to control the emission of noise from the development in the event of permission being granted.

Having due regard to the above, it is considered that in terms of noise and air quality the proposal is consistent with the provisions of Policy STRAT RE 1: Wind Farm/Wind Turbine Development of the Argyll & Bute Structure Plan and Policies LP REN 1: Wind Farms & Wind Turbines and LP BAD 1: Bad Neighbour Development of the Argyll & Bute Local Plan.

N. SHADOW FLICKER & ICE THROW (EQUIPMENT SAFETY)

Government guidance advises that if separation is provided between turbines and nearby dwellings "shadow flicker" should not be a problem. The closest dwelling in this case is 875m. Public Protection has no objection in this regard. Ice throw is not a matter which falls under the auspices of Planning or Public Protection. This said, companies supplying products and services to the wind energy industry are required to operate to a series of international, European and British Standards and the operator has a duty of care not to prejudice the health and safety of site operatives or other persons frequenting the site. .

Having due regard to the above it is considered that in terms of shadow flicker the proposal is consistent with the provisions of Policy STRAT RE 1: Wind Farm/Wind Turbine Development of the Argyll & Bute Structure Plan and Policies LP REN 1: Wind Farms & Wind Turbines and LP BAD 1: Bad Neighbour Development of the Argyll & Bute Local Plan.

O. TELEVISION RECEPTION

Television reception can be affected by the presence of turbines although this has become less of a problem since the switchover from analogue to digital broadcasting. In the event that reception is impaired then it is the developer's responsibility to rectify the problem. This would need to be secured by condition in the event that planning permission is granted.

Having due regard to the above it is considered that the proposal is acceptable in terms of any potential impact on television reception and is therefore consistent with

the Provisions of Policy STRAT RE 1: Wind Farm/Wind Turbine Development of the 'Argyll & Bute Structure Plan' (2002) and Policy LP REN 1: Wind Farms & Wind Turbines of the 'Argyll & Bute Local Plan' (2009).

P. AVIATION MATTERS

The Ministry of Defence (MoD), Civil Aviation Authority, NATS En Route Plc ("NERL"); and Glasgow and Prestwick Airports have been consulted in relation to any potential impacts on aviation. No objections are raised in terms of airport safeguarding, military low flying or radar interference.

Having due regard to the above it is considered that in terms of aviation interests the proposal is consistent with the provisions of Policy STRAT RE 1: Policy STRAT RE 1: Wind Farm/Wind Turbine Development 'Argyll & Bute Structure Plan' (2002) and Policies LP REN 1: Commercial Wind Farm and Wind Turbine Development and Policy LP TRAN 7: Safeguarding of Airports of the 'Argyll & Bute Local Plan' (2009).

Q. ELECTRO-MAGNETIC INTERFERENCE TO COMMUNICATION SYSTEMS

Telecommunications operators have been consulted to determine whether their systems would be affected by electro-magnetic radiation associated with electricity generation. Scottish Planning Policy and local plan policy highlights telecommunications interference as a material consideration in considering the acceptability of wind turbines.

W S Atkins as agents acting on behalf of Scottish Water have objected to the location of all 5 turbines (within a 300m radius) in terms of UHF Radio Scanning Telemetry on the basis that the locations would cause interference to communications between outstations and a scanning base station. The applicants are aware of this and have entered into discussions with Scottish Water. Officers have sought to establish whether Scottish Water's holding objection could be addressed by means of a planning condition preventing development from being commenced until written confirmation had been provided to the Council by Scottish Water that existing telemetry links crossing the application site had been re-routed, or that an agreement had been concluded as to their re-routing at the developer's expense, to Scottish Water's satisfaction. However, in response, Scottish Water have stated that they require assurance in advance of any permission being granted that they can provide a solution, or range of feasible solutions that the applicants are willing to commit to, both in terms of costs and timescales. They have indicated that at a systems level, their telemetry telecommunications is very much integrated both with the site systems used and with the master Telemetry computer system, so the solution may entail a wider systems change-out much beyond that of just re-aligning the communication links.

Denbridge Marine operate the Vessel Traffic Service for HMNB Clyde on behalf of the MoD and consider that at least one and possibly more of their links would be impacted upon. They too have submitted a holding objection in the absence of path calculation analysis to demonstrate the integrity of their links or agreed developer funded mitigation.

Although these matters may ultimately prove resolvable to the satisfaction of the systems operators, in the absence of an identified solution and agreement over the matter thus far,

their objection to the application is sustained and according a reason for refusal based upon telecommunications interference is warranted.

Having due regard to the above it is considered that in terms of communications systems the proposal is not consistent with the provisions of Policy STRAT RE 1: Wind Farm/Wind Turbine Development of the 'Argyll & Bute Structure Plan' (2002) and Policy LP REN 1: Commercial Wind Farm and Wind Turbine Development of the 'Argyll & Bute Local Plan' (2009).

R. ROAD TRAFFIC IMPACT

The ES states that turbine components would be landed at a nearby port which would be confirmed by the turbine manufacturer nearer delivery time. It is envisaged that road delivery would be via the A82(T) thence via the A817 and the A814. From Whistlefield roundabout, the route would be via the Coulport MoD road to Peaton and then along a short stretch of local road to the site entrance. No alterations would be necessary to the public road or the MoD road, and access improvements would be limited to an upgrade of the existing bellmouth at the junction of the existing forestry access route and the public road. Construction would take place over 12 months and would involve 44 abnormal load deliveries about 500 HGV deliveries and 3600 LGV visits. The estimated peak would be during turbine foundation construction with around 10 HGV deliveries per day for two months. Traffic mitigation identified during the construction period includes the preparation of a Traffic Management Plan, liaison with the MoD, escorted deliveries and warning signage.

Transport Scotland has no objection to the proposal subject to agreement over delivery practices. The Area Roads Manager has no objection to the development in principle but has issued a holding objection on the basis that whilst the submitted Traffic Plan provides an assessment with regard to component delivery, it does not account for the vehicles movements associated with either ready mixed concrete or primary materials to produce concrete on site, nor movements associated with the removal of any excavated spoil from the site. That holding objection could be removed upon receipt of a satisfactory updated assessment. It is also pointed out that to assist with the timber transport movements on the peninsula there is an agreement between Argyll & Bute Council and Ministry of Defence to maintain the link road between the North Access Road and Peaton Road. This section of road will require to be inspected prior to and after completion of wind turbine construction works and any damaged identified will require to be rectified by the applicant to the satisfaction of the Roads Authority and the Ministry of Defence.

Having due regard to the above and in the absence of being able to take into account the full range of vehicle movements associated with the project, it is not possible for the roads engineer to conclusively assesses the traffic implications of the proposal which in the absence of the required information renders it contrary to the provisions of Policies LP TRAN 4: New and Existing, Public Roads and Private Access Regimes and LP TRAN 5: Off-Site Highway Improvements of the Argyll & Bute Local Plan.

S. INFRASTRUCTURE

No requirement for public water or foul drainage connection is identified. Should Members determine to grant planning permission a condition to secure a sustainable drainage strategy for the roads, turbine hardstanding areas, and the construction yard to ensure adequate protection of the water environment from surface water run-off would be required. There are no private water supplies affected by the proposal. .

Neither Public Protection nor Scottish Water have objections to this proposal.

Having due regard to the above it is concluded that in terms of drainage and water supply the proposal is consistent with the provisions of Policies LP SERV 1: Private Sewage Treatment Plants and Wastewater (i.e. Drainage) Systems, LP SERV 2: Incorporation of Natural Features/Sustainable Drainage Systems and LP SERV 4: Water Supply of the Argyll & Bute Local Plan.

T. WIND REGIME

In order to more accurately gauge the wind speed and direction, permission was sought for the erection of a 60m anemometer mast which was consented in 2011 for a three year period. This has been erected on site and is operational. Data from the anemometer mast is not included in the ES and there is no requirement for it to be provided in support of the planning application.

Having due regard to the above it is considered that the proposal is consistent with the Scottish Government's Specific Advice Sheet on Onshore Wind Farms.

U. GRID NETWORK & CABLES

Connection to the National Grid is not a matter of land use policy, however, it should be considered 'in the round' as part of the planning application process. The turbines will be connected to the on-site control building by means of underground cable. The distribution connection will involve new a section of the 33kV line overhead line carried on wooden poles between the site and Whistlefield substation. This connection will be the subject of an application under Section 37 of the Electricity Act 1989 to the Scottish Government, which will be the subject of consultation with the Council as planning authority.

Having due regard to the above it is considered that the proposal is consistent with the Scottish Government's Specific Advice Sheet on Onshore Wind Farms.

V. COMMUNITY BENEFIT

This application is submitted by a local community development trust which is a registered charity with 410 members. Their aspiration is to operate a 100% community owned windfarm with income being used to facilitate delivery of a Community Action Plan for west Rosneath, the stated intentions of which are to advance the interests of education, health, community development, culture and the environment in the local area. It is also intended that there

would be a lesser element of community benefit for surrounding communities affected by the presence of the windfarm.

The applicant's point out that their proposal is supported by the Government's most recent position set out in 'Scotland's Third National Planning Framework' has now been issued for consultation. Its Main Issues Report and Draft Framework report include policy positions which are relevant to the application in relation to local ownership, and community led development regeneration. The report sets the context of a long-term target to achieve "*at least 500MW of renewable energy in community and local ownership by 2020*" which reflects "*the objective of greater community and local ownership of renewable energy*". The report notes that, "*community renewable energy projects can empower people, providing social and financial benefits which in turn contribute to the broader objectives of supporting rural communities in particular, and making sustainable use of our natural assets.*" Finally, the report connects with the Scottish Government's Regeneration Strategy, which "*promotes community-led regeneration that aims to ensure that our communities can grasp opportunities to define their own futures based on a recognition and understanding of their assets.*"

Neither the identity of an applicant nor the prospects of financial benefit to the community are material considerations in the determination of planning applications. That said, given the well-publicised community development intentions of this scheme as a whole, and the level of public support which it has attracted, it becomes difficult to disaggregate the planning merits of the development from the wider community interests stemming from the income which it would be capable of producing, so it would be naïve to expect Members to necessarily approach this community project in absolutely the same manner it would address a conventional commercial scheme.

What is important is that the application should be assessed in terms of its land use planning merits and be judged in terms of the primacy development plan, that irrelevancies are disregarded, and disproportionate weight is not accorded to other considerations which are material, but which are not of such magnitude that they could be regarded as being reasonably capable of offsetting identified environmental and policy shortcomings. The community based nature of the proposal with its attendant potential to fund projects in the locality, should not be regarded as reason to offset locally inappropriate environmental consequences, as such an approach would be at odds with the concept of sustainable development, which is at the core of the underlying philosophy of the adopted development plan.

W. DECOMMISSIONING

Should Members determine to grant planning permission for this proposal a requirement for decommissioning and site restoration should be included in the planning condition(s) and/or legal agreement, which will be triggered by either the expiry of the permission or if the project ceases to operate for a specific period. This would ensure that at the end of the proposal's operational life: the turbines would be decommissioned and principal elements removed; the site would be restored to its former use leaving little if any visible trace of the turbines; the foundations, new tracks and hardstandings would be covered over with topsoil and reseeded; the cables would be de-energised and left in place, and any cables marker

signs removed; and, the electrical substation building would be demolished to ground level with the foundation covered with topsoil and reseeded.

Having due regard to the above, as decommissioning could be controlled by condition/Section 75 Legal Agreement it is considered that the proposal is acceptable in that regard in terms of Policy STRAT RE 1: Wind Farm/Wind Turbine Development of the 'Argyll & Bute Structure Plan' (2002) and Policy LP REN 1: Wind Farms & Wind Turbines of the 'Argyll & Bute Local Plan' (2009), SPP and the Scottish Government's Specific Advice Sheet on Onshore Wind Farms.

X. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Scottish Natural Heritage have been critical of the graphics contained within the submitted Environmental Statement in view of their failure to accord with SNH published good practice guidance. In response, the applicants have provided further graphics produced at the larger scale necessary to help inform the assessment of the proposal in the field. In order enable third parties to avail themselves of the same information, this has been construed to be 'Additional Information' in terms of Part 6 of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2011. Accordingly, further advertisement of the proposal in the light of the additional information has been carried out and a paper copy made available at the Helensburgh Area Office, with the advertising period having expired on 9th May 2013.

Y. SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT POLICY & ADVICE

The commitment to increase the amount of electricity generated from renewable sources is a vital part of the response to climate change. Renewable energy generation will contribute to more secure and diverse energy supplies and support sustainable economic growth (SPP). The current target is for 100% of Scotland's electricity and 11% of heat demand to be generated from renewable sourced by 2020 (2020 Routemap for Renewable Energy in Scotland).

SPP advises that wind farms should only be supported in locations where the technology can operate efficiently and environmental and cumulative impacts can be satisfactorily addressed. Furthermore, that the criteria for determining wind farm proposals varies depending on the scale of proposal and its relationship to the characteristics of the surrounding area, but usually includes: landscape and visual impact, effects on the natural heritage and historic environment, contribution of the development to renewable energy generation targets, effect on the local and national economy and tourism and recreation interests, benefits and disbenefits for communities, aviation and telecommunications, noise and shadow flicker, and cumulative impact. Finally, that the design and location of any wind farm should reflect the scale and character of the landscape and the location of turbines should be considered carefully to ensure that the landscape and visual impact is minimised.

For the reasons given above, the turbines proposed are out of scale with the receiving environment to the detriment of landscape and visual amenity interests, both of which which are cited in SPP as valid material considerations in the assessment of the acceptability of wind farms.

Having due regard to the above it is considered that the proposal is inconsistent with the provisions of SPP and the Scottish Government's Specific Advice Sheet on Onshore Wind Farms.

Z. SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT RENEWABLE ENERGY TARGETS & ARGYLL & BUTE'S CONTRIBUTION

In assessing the acceptability of wind farm proposals, it is necessary to have regard to the macro-environmental aspects of renewable energy (reduction in reliance on fossil fuels and contribution to reduction in global warming) as well as to the micro-environmental consequences of the proposal (in terms of its impact on its receiving environment).

Installed onshore wind energy generation capacity in Scotland in 2012 was 5.8GW and is expected to continue to grow in response to the Scottish Government target of meeting 100% of demand from renewable sources by 2020. As a consequence, planning authorities have to consider more frequently turbines within lower-lying more populated areas, where design elements and cumulative impacts need to be managed (Scottish Government's Specific Advice Sheet on Onshore Wind Farms).

Whilst the 11.5MW maximum capacity of the proposal would add to Argyll & Bute's contribution to Scotland's renewable energy commitments, it is not considered that the macro-environmental benefits of the proposal in terms of renewable generating capacity are such as to warrant the setting aside of the other development plan policy considerations identified above which have prompted the recommendation for refusal.