

**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**

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**Reference No:** 13/02835/PP

**Planning Hierarchy:** Major

**Applicant:** RWE Innogy UK Limited

**Proposal:** Erection of 15 wind turbines of up to 111m in height to blade tip, including permanent foundations, associated hardstanding and electrical transformer buildings; construction of approximately 12.5km of new track and widening and upgrading of access tracks and road junction; erection of electrical substation and control building and temporary construction compound; erection of one permanent and two temporary anemometry masts up to 80m in height; and associated ancillary development.

**Site Address:** Ardchnonnel Windfarm, approx 6.5km north-west of Inveraray and 1.5km east of Loch Awe.

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**SUPPLEMENTARY REPORT No. 1**

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**(A) BACKGROUND**

This report updates Members on additional representations which have been received since the matter was last reported to Committee

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**(B) ADDITIONAL REPRESENTATIONS**

**Supporters**

Mike Mackenzie MSP has written in support of the application for the following summarised reasons:

- The site lies in a Broad Area of Search for wind farms as identified in the proposed Local Development Plan. Although this has not been adopted it is indicative of the Council's latest think on the matter;

*Comment: Pending the Examination into the impending plan it cannot be given any significant weight as a material consideration at this stage in the plan-making process given that renewables policy is the subject of objection from a range of interests,*

*including the renewables sector, and there is no guarantee that that content of the proposed plan will survive in its current form into the adopted version of the plan.*

- The proposal is not the subject of objections from consultees;

*Comment: Although not the subject of formal objection given the lack of any national interest considerations, Scottish Natural Heritage's advice is that the application should be rejected on landscape visual and cumulative impact grounds. The RSPB and the Avich and Kilchrennan Community Council have both objected.*

- It lies adjacent to an operational wind farm and outside any national or regional designations;

*Comment: The juxtaposition of turbines of different scale and with different speeds of rotation is in itself an issue, particularly given the location of the proposed larger turbines in the foreground when the two developments would be viewed in conjunction from Loch Awe.*

- The proposal has the potential to contribute to the local economy the health of which is vital in efforts to stem population decline;

*Comment: Experience with other wind farm projects is that there can be varying degrees of local input at the construction stage, dependent upon the origins of the principal contractor and their chosen sub-contractors. None the less a project of this type would provide an element of local employment and a demand for services during the construction phase. It would not be expected that the longer-term operational phase would be likely to provide any significant input into the local economy, which would however be likely to benefit again from decommissioning operations at the end of the life of the wind farm.*

- There is increasing evidence that wind turbines have little or no impact upon tourism

*Comment: Given the conflicting evidence from research into public attitudes to wind farm development no grounds for refusal founded around tourism considerations are being advanced in this case; although it is fair to assume that development with adverse implications for landscape character will be likely to have some negative implications for tourism, which in Argyll is founded largely upon the scenic qualities and the historic and natural heritage interests of the area. In a recent appeal decision, the Reporter took the view that attitude surveys should be regarded as inconclusive given that research to date has been conducted in response to a pattern of wind farm development controlled by the planning system. If that system were to be operated less carefully by permitting less appropriate development, then the views of tourists surveyed might be very different.*

Mr S MacDonald, Gorstain, Taynuilt has also written in support of the proposal as follows:

- There is a need to address climate change to meet our national energy commitments and the needs of our descendants;

- In 1997 those opposing Beinn Ghlas wind farm expressed the view that it would contribute to the collapse of tourism. Now hundreds of visitors walk to the site each year to marvel that such projects can be constructed in a wilderness that absorbs their scale so calmly.

*Comment: It should be noted that Beinn Ghlas was smaller in extent and equipped with smaller turbines than those now proposed, and as a pioneering project was not subject to the cumulative impact implications which are now associated with multiple wind farm development.*

### **Objector**

Mr J Treasurer, 9 Zetland Avenue, Fort William has written to object in his capacity as a freshwater fish specialist as follows:

- Loch Awe is an important fishery and a loch of international significance in terms of freshwater resource and habitat. It is surrounded by a landscape of quality and beauty. The development is out of character with this setting and will be to the detriment of locals and tourists alike and a blow to the image attraction and beauty of Argyll.

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### **(C) CONCLUSION**

Notwithstanding the above, it is recommended that the application be refused for the reasons stated in the original report.

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**Author of Report:** Richard Kerr

**Date:** 14<sup>th</sup> May 2014

**Angus Gilmour**  
**Head of Planning and Regulatory Services**