

Reference No: 17/02484/PP

Planning Hierarchy: Major

Applicant: EDF Energy Renewables Ltd (via Scottish Government Consents Unit)

Proposal: Section 36 Consultation for proposed wind farm

Site Address: Airigh Wind Farm, south west of Tarbert, Argyll and Bute

SUPPLEMENTARY REPORT NO. 2

1.0 BACKGROUND

Since completion of the original PPSL report (22nd December 2017) and Supplementary Report 1 (22nd January 2018), further correspondence has been received from the agent by Members, also copied to Officers dated 29th January 2018. This letter seeks to address a number of points raised during the committee meeting ahead of the agreed site visit scheduled for the 9th February. The purpose of this Supplementary Report is to provide Members with the Officers' view on these matters.

2.0 VISUALISATIONS

The visualisation packs were requested by Officers to assist Members in their deliberation of the proposal, as they are easier to handle than the large format fold out versions. It is the duty of Officers to highlight that these are not produced to SNH standards. The Environmental Report with the full suite of fully compliant visualisations was also available at committee.

3.0 CUMULATIVE MAP

During the PPSL meeting Councillors were shown a map which illustrated the cumulative picture of wind farm sites in the area. Officers acknowledge that the map chosen to illustrate the cumulative landscape and visual points related to the ornithological assessment. Officers would confirm that the correct map for use in the cumulative landscape and visual assessment is available in the Environmental Statement (Figure 6.7). The map used did however show the locations of the other wind farms.

4.0 LANDSCAPE & VISUAL IMPACT

Officers would reiterate that they concur with the advice of Scottish Natural Heritage (10th November 2017) that the proposal is contrary to the guidance set out in the Argyll and Bute Landscape Wind Energy Capacity Study (LWECS) commissioned jointly by SNH and Argyll and Bute Council in 2017 in terms of significant landscape, visual and cumulative effects. It is considered that the nature and scale of the proposal cannot be accommodated in this location without significant adverse landscape and visual effects, including:

- Significant adverse landscape effects on parts of the Upland Forest Moor Mosaic (6b) and the small scale settled 'Rocky Mosaic' (20) landscape character types and associated seascapes;
- Significant adverse visual effects from key viewpoints in particular coastal views and views from the sea where key routes, scattered settlement and recreation areas are concentrated;
- Significant adverse strategic cumulative landscape effect;
- Significant adverse cumulative landscape and visual effects; and
- Adverse effect upon the character, qualities and experience of the landscape.

5.0 MITIGATION – TURBINE HEIGHT & COLOUR

- 5.1 Officers wish to make it clear that the 14 turbines are already at varying heights of 'up to 149.5m – comprised of eight at 149.5m, two at 138.5 and four at 131m. The proposal as presented in the LVIA already takes these varying heights into consideration, the purpose of which was to provide a degree of mitigation, undertaken as part of the design of the proposal. Also, that as confirmed by Force 9, they are not in control of the forestry which currently offers some screening of the wind farm from viewpoint 8 (A83 Whitehouse). At present from this viewpoint there is a collection of blades and blade tips flicking over the horizon, the visibility of which would increase should the forestry be felled.
- 5.2 In their most recent correspondence Force 9 highlight that VP 12 Gigha Ferry Terminal was agreed at the Scoping stage. Officers would highlight that, in SNH's most recent consultee response to the Energy Consents Unit (10th November 2017) they state that: *"The visualisation (VP 12, Gigha ferry terminal) provided to represent views from the Isle of Gigha is screened by landform (contrary to SNH's guidance). This makes it difficult to draw conclusions regarding the overall effects from Gigha. It is considered that the views from northern Gigha could potentially be significant. Further visualisations and assessment to represent the effect on views from Gigha would be helpful"*.
- 5.3 Officers disagree with Force 9's statement that there are few receptors (people) in the north of Gigha, it is a popular recreational destination accessed via Core Path C096 .
- 5.4 The turbines proposed currently for the development are a non-reflective pale grey colour, consistent with other existing and proposed wind farms and the visualisations supporting the proposal have been prepared on this basis. In regard to mitigation, Officer's would confirm that darker turbine models than typical are proposed as a **mitigation option** within the EIA, the purpose of which would be to better integrate the turbines into the landscape where they are seen backclothed against the land (e.g. viewpoints 9, 10, 11).
- 5.5 Coloured turbines, darker than the non-reflective pale grey normally used for turbines can help to mitigate visual effects in situations where the turbines are generally seen against the backdrop of land beyond. Against a coloured (usually moor or forest) background, darker turbines can blend in with the back ground better than pale grey turbines. However, they will also appear darker in views where they are seen against the sky. The benefits of darker colours in views with turbines seen against a land backdrop must therefore be weighed against the effects of having darker turbines against the sky in other views.

5.6 This would be a matter for the Energy Consents Unit to consider in the event that they were minded to support the proposal.

6.0 TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT PLAN

6.1 The Airigh Wind Farm EIA Report states that: *“The anticipated route for abnormal load vehicles is indicated in **Figure 12.1**. It is anticipated that the turbine components will be delivered to the Port of Campbeltown, however, there is potential for the tower components to be sourced from CS Wind in Machrihanish subject to an agreement between EDF Energy and CS Wind. The source of the turbine components will be finalised post planning consent”*. Figure 12.1 Abnormal Loads Route, shows the abnormal load route going through Tarbert.

6.2 Transport Scotland’s response provided to the Energy Consents Unit (10th October 2017) and summarised in the PPSL Report was based on the information contained in the EIA Report. Transport Scotland note that: *“The EIA assessment predicts that, prior to mitigation measures, the effect of severance and pedestrian delay and amenity because of increased levels of traffic associated with the development will be significant within the village of Tarbert. Furthermore, the effect of dust and dirt will have a significant effect throughout the study area if not managed appropriately. A Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) is proposed, which comprises measures intended to mitigate the identified effects e.g. designated construction routes; restricted hours for HGV movements; warning signs; construction traffic speed limit of 20mph; a wheel washing facility etc., and these are deemed to be acceptable. However, it is noted that the CTMP is proposed to be fully developed at the detailed design stage”*.

6.3 *“In terms of severance, pedestrian delay and pedestrian amenity, the EIA concludes that the residual effects after implementation of the CTMP and the mitigation measures it comprises, are minor and not significant. Given the temporary nature of the estimated increase in traffic volumes and the presumed effective implementation of a Construction Traffic Management Plan, this conclusion is deemed to be appropriate”*.

6.4 Consequently, included in the suite of conditions recommended by Transport Scotland (as detailed in PPSL Report) is the requirement that a Traffic Management Plan (TMP) be prepared and agreed in consultation with the local roads authority. The reason is to minimise interference with the safety and free flow of the traffic on the trunk road; to ensure that material from the site is not deposited on the trunk road to the detriment of road safety; and to ensure the safety of pedestrians and cyclists using the trunk road and adjacent facilities.

6.5 It is noted that Force 9 Energy has recently entered agreement with the Stonefield Estate to use its land to take access from the A83, onto the Strategic Timber Haul Route (the B8024) and back to the A83. This way construction traffic associated with the wind farm can bypass Tarbert, including abnormal load deliveries. This position will need to be formalised with the Scottish Government by the submission of Supplementary Environmental Information detailing the proposed change to the transport route.

7.0 CONCLUSION

The above represents a summary of the issues raised. Full details of the correspondence is available on the Council’s Public Access System by clicking on the following link <http://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/content/planning/publicaccess>.

8.0 RECOMMENDATION:

In light of the above, there is no change to the recommendation to object to the proposal for the reasons detailed in the main report dated 22nd December 2017.

Angus Gilmour
Head of Planning, Housing and Regulatory Services

Author of Report:
Contact Point:

Arlene Knox 6th February 2018
Sandra Davies 01436 658884