

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 2013 relative to applications for Planning Permission or Planning Permission in Principle

Reference No: 19/02544/PP

Planning Hierarchy: Major Application

Applicant: Creag Dhubh Renewables LLP

Proposal: Construction of wind farm comprising of 9 wind turbines (maximum blade tip height 145m), formation of 5.6km new access track, erection of substation building, welfare building, temporary construction compound and 2 borrow pits

Site Address: Creag Dhubh Windfarm, Creag Dubh, North East of Strachur Village, Argyll

DECISION ROUTE

Local Government Scotland Act 1973

(A) THE APPLICATION

i) Development Requiring Express Planning Permission

- 9 wind turbines up to 145m to blade tip and each with a rated output of up to 4MW, giving a total output of up to 36MW
- 9 crane hardstandings with dimensions of 45m x 23m
- 9 wind turbine foundations
- Approximately 5.6km of new permanent access tracks, including 1 turning area, and upgrades to 5.9km of existing forestry tracks
- Electrical and communication underground cables running along sections of the access track
- A substation and control building
- Temporary construction compound with storage facilities and welfare facilities.
- Formation of two 'borrow pits' i.e. temporary mineral workings
- Formation of watercourse crossings

ii) Other Specified Operations

- **Grid connection (subject to separate Section 37 application).**
-

RECOMMENDATION: This proposal is recommended for REFUSAL for the reasons detailed in this report.

Note: In the event that Members are minded to GRANT planning permission against the recommendation of Officers the proposal will be required to be notified to Scottish Ministers due to the fact that NatureScot has objected.

(C) HISTORY:

04/01551/DET - Erection of a 50 Metre Anemometer Mast (Temporary), Site 2 Kilometres North East of The Summit of Creagan An Eich, Strachur, Argyll & Bute - Application Approved 11.11.2004

13/01063/PREAPP - Erection of wind turbine, Land to South East of Creagan an Eich Strachur, Argyll & Bute – Closed

17/02309/SCOPE - Scoping opinion for the proposed erection of 9 wind turbines (139m high to blade tip), Creag Dhubh Windfarm, Strathlachlan, Cairndow, Argyll & Bute – Opinion Issued 19.12.2017

19/00599/PAN - Proposal of application notice for proposed wind farm and associated infrastructure, Creag Dhubh Windfarm, Upper Succoth, Strachur, Argyll & Bute, PA27 8DW – Closed 13.06.2019

20/00167/PNFOR - Formation of forest track, Ardno, South East of St Catherines Strachur, Argyll & Bute – Prior Notification, no objection 07.02.2020

(D) CONSULTATIONS:

NatureScot (18th February 2020) – requested Supplementary Information in the form of satellite tag data for golden eagle G/LG3 to help validate the EIAR and allow them to comment fully on the likely significant impacts on the NHZ14 population as well as any appropriate mitigation measures.

NatureScot (25th September 2020) – requested Supplementary Information in the form of additional viewpoints to enable them to reach a reasoned conclusion on the significant effects of the proposal on the environment. These included: Inveraray Castle ground, from the Garden Bridge area; Inveraray Castle Estate, Aray Bridge; southern approach to Inveraray, south of Furnace (A83 Tourist route); and the northern approach to Loch Fyne/Inveraray from the A83 Tourist route.

NatureScot (9th July 2021) – objects given the significant adverse effects the proposal will have on the Special Landscape Qualities (SLQs) of the Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park (LLTNP). These effects cannot be mitigated to a level that would remove NatureScot's objection to this proposal. NatureScot also provide detailed advice on ornithology and peatland.

Historic Environment Scotland (HES) (13th March 2020) – No objection. The predicted impacts on nationally important heritage assets would not be of such a magnitude as to warrant an objection to the proposal.

HES (8th March 2021) (Comments on the Supplementary Environmental Information (SEI)) – No objection. The predicted impacts on nationally important

heritage assets would not be of such a magnitude as to warrant an objection to the proposal. The SEI does not alter their view.

Transport Scotland (7th February 2020) – no objection subject to conditions to: secure approval of the proposed route for any abnormal loads on the trunk road network prior to the commencement of deliveries to site; to secure approval of any accommodation measures required including the removal of street furniture, and traffic management; and to ensure acceptable additional signing or temporary traffic control is undertaken by a recognised Quality Assured traffic management consultant.

SEPA - Scottish Environmental Protection Agency (12th March 2020) – object on the grounds of lack of information on peat management. A comprehensive Peat Management Plan (PMP), which provides full details on peat excavation, management and restoration as appropriate is required. SEPA will review this objection if their concerns are adequately addressed. Advice is also provided on Flood Risk and their Regulatory Requirements.

SEPA (21st April 2020) (updated response following review of outline Peat Management Plan (PMP) (Additional Information) - Objection maintained. In summary, in order for the objection to be removed, the planning application would need to be modified to achieve the following: Re-siting of the construction compound away from areas of deep peat, or adoption of a different design which would not result in deep peat excavation; Removal of proposals to place peat in areas without appropriate hydrological connectivity, or provision of evidence which confirm suitable hydrology; and Removal of proposals to fill drains with excavated peat. Installation of suitable dams to block drains and allow peat to re-form naturally would be acceptable.

SEPA (1st June 2020) – No Objection. SEPA have subsequently received a copy of a revised Outline Peat Management Plan (Creag Dhubh Windfarm Supplementary Information, Appendix 13.4), (dated May 2020). SEPA have reviewed the document and are able to confirm that the proposed revisions will meet their requirements. SEPA therefore withdraw their objection, provided the revisions will be accommodated exactly as described. A copy of the revised OPMP to be sent to ABC.

Scottish Water (11th February 2020) – No objection. Applicant to be aware that this does not confirm the proposal can currently be serviced. Advise that the proposal is within a drinking water catchment where a Scottish Water abstraction is located and it is essential that water quality and water quantity in the area are protected. Advise that they will not accept any surface water connections into their combined sewer system.

Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) (12th March 2020) – object until further golden eagle satellite tag data is provided and will review their position if data is made available.

Marine Scotland Science (MSS) (30th January 2020) – no comment as the proposal has a capacity of less than 50MW.

Scottish Rights of Way and Access Society (ScotWays) (3rd March 2020) – No objection. Requests that right of way SA32 remains open and free from obstruction during and after any proposed works.

Ministry of Defence (MoD) (14th February 2020) – no objection to the proposal subject to conditions to ensure that: the development is fitted with MOD accredited

aviation safety lighting and that prior to the commencement of construction they are provided with: the date construction starts and ends; the maximum height of construction equipment; and the latitude and longitude of every turbine (this information is vital as it will be plotted on flying charts to make sure that military aircraft avoid this area).

National Air Traffic Services (NATS) (3rd February 2020) – no safeguarding objection.

Ofcom (10th February 2020) – no comment. Information provided via the Spectrum Information System.

Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park (LLTNP) (2nd September 2020) – object to the proposal for the following reasons: the proposal will result in a significant adverse effect on the Special Landscape Qualities of the Argyll Forest area of the National Park by introducing a new built landscape feature to the Landscape Character Type (LCT) of Steep Ridges and Mountains; and the proposed development will have a significant adverse effect on visual amenity affecting views from the Arrochar Alps, Ben Donich and Beinn Bheula and the Cowal Way Long Distance Route approaching this gateway into the Park.

Argyll District Salmon Fishery Board (ADSFB) (7th February 2020) – No Objection subject to condition that robust pre and post development surveys are carried out to demonstrate that there has been no damage to salmon populations or their habitat caused by the construction of the project.

Argyll & Bute Council (ABC), Consultant Landscape Architect (November 2020) - recommends refusal on the grounds of significant landscape and visual effects.

ABC Consultant Landscape Architect (1st March 2021) – reissue of advice following review of additional Supplementary Information (received December 2020) comprising 4 additional visualisations from the Inveraray designed landscape and the A83 near Furnace. ABC's Consultant Landscape Architect continues to recommend refusal on the grounds of significant landscape and visual effects.

ABC Local Biodiversity Officer (26th February 2020) – No objection. Advice provided in regard to: fish monitoring (Species Monitoring Plan); Peat survey; bats (Site Monitoring Plan); Otter (Species Action Plan – CEMP); Pine Marten (Watching Brief); badger; Red Squirrel (watching brief and Species Plan); Fresh Water Pearl Mussel; Salmonid fish (pollution protection plan); Ornithology (RSPB); treatment of excavations (Soil & Peat Management Plan and restoration); Borrow Pits (further details, restoration plan to be included in CMS); and provisions of a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP)

ABC Environmental Health (Bute & Cowal) (27th February 2020) – no objection subject to conditions: to restrict noise immissions; report to demonstrate compliance with noise limits; following a noise complaint the employment of independent consultant to assess noise immissions; provision of all calculations, audio recordings and raw data following complaint; continuous logging of wind speed, wind direction and power generation data; and submission of details of nominated representative to act as a point of contact for local residents in regard to noise complaints.

ABC Flood Risk Assessor (21st February 2020) – no objection subject to conditions to ensure that: Watercourse crossings are designed to pass the 1 in 200 year plus climate change (56% allowance) flood event; and Surface water drainage is designed in accordance with CIRIA C753 and is in operation prior to the start of construction.

ABC Roads (30th March 2020) – No objection, subject to conditions relating to: improvement of the existing access; agreement of the design & construction of the access; access surfacing; surface water drainage; carriageway width across bellmouth; video record of road corridor (A815 to site including junction); route for abnormal loads; accommodation measures – traffic management consultant; signs etc. to be removed and replaced after each movement to maintain road safety; programming of deliveries; verge and carriageway reinstatement; and Transportation of abnormal loads not to coincide with peak travel times. ABC Roads also advise that a Road Opening Permit will be required for work on or adjacent to the road corridor.

ABC - West of Scotland Archaeologist Service (4th February 2020) – raised no objection to the proposal.

Strachur Community Council (SCC) (3rd March 2020) – make the following comments: the development will have an advantage to the local area in the form of income derived from any Community Benefit Scheme; it is possible that the development could disadvantage the local economy, through loss of income to the hospitality sector, if, due to the partial industrialisation of its landscape setting, Strachur becomes less attractive as a destination for hotel guests, holiday lets and day tourists (including users of the Loch Lomond & Cowal Way); and the visibility of the development from the Strachur area is due mainly to the southernmost two turbines. For example, the visualisation show that these, and no others, will be clearly visible from Stachurmore, Balliemeanoch Cottage and Glen Sluain. If these turbines were omitted from the development, the visual impact of the whole wind farm on the local Strachur area would be significantly reduced.

Strachur Community Council (27th April 2021) – have looked at the Supplementary Information, December 2020 and have no further comments, to add their original comments.

RSPB – further response on Supplementary Information outstanding.

Scottish Forestry (reconsulted) – no response at time of writing

Civil Aviation Authority– no response at time of writing

Infratil Airports Europe Limited (Prestwick Airport) – no response at time of writing

CSS Spectrum Management Services – no response at time of writing

The Joint Radio Company Limited – no response at time of writing

ABC Core Paths – no response at time of writing

Cairndow Community Council – no response at time of writing

Furnace Community Council – no response at time of writing

Inveraray Community Council – no response at time of writing

Lochgoil Community Council – no response at time of writing

(E) PUBLICITY:

Advert Type:	Expiry Date:
ENVASA - ENVASA Addendum EA Advert	14.03.2021
ENVASA - ENVASA Addendum EA Advert	11.10.2020
ENVASA - ENVASA Addendum EA Advert	24.05.2020
ENVASS - Environmental Assessment	06.03.2020
MREG20 - Regulation 20 Advert Major Application	28.02.2020

(F) REPRESENTATIONS:

At time of writing a total of 16 letters of representation have been received, comprising: 14 objections and 2 in support. These include objections from Mountaineering Scotland; the Argyll Raptor Study Group and a letter of support from Lochgoil Community Trust. In summary the objections raised the following issues:

- Adverse Landscape & Visual Impact (including cumulative) with unacceptable scale, height, siting and overtopping. Specific locations which will be affected include: Cowal, Beinn Bheula, Ben Donich, Loch Fyne, A815, Strachlachlan, Inveraray, Lochgilphead, Beinn Cruachan, central Arrochar Alps (The Cobbler), Beinn Ime, Beinn Luibhean, Beinn Narnain, Beinn an Lochain, Binnean, Strachurmore, Fhidleir, Bealach a'Mhaim Balliemeanoch Cottage, Glen Sluain, Loch Lomond and the Cowal Way, and Strachur.
- Access track will scar the landscape
- Adverse Impact on Area of Significant Protection
- Adverse Impact on North Argyll Area of Panoramic Quality
- Adverse impact on Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park
- Contrary to SPP, SNH Policy, Scottish Energy Strategy, Onshore Wind Policy Statement; Local Development Plan, Spatial Framework for wind farms and ABC's Landscape Wind Energy Capacity Study 2017;
- Adverse Ornithological Impact – Golden Eagle, White-Tailed Eagle, Hen Harrier & Merlin.
- Adverse Ecological Impact
- Adverse Noise & Shadow Flicker Impact
- Adverse Impact on Property Values
- Adverse Impact on Tourism & Recreation – natural scenery, walking, cycling, hill walking, mountaineering
- Tourism is one of the main sources of Scotland's income
- Efficiency of Technology
- Community Benefit does not outweigh adverse environmental impacts

- Climate Change benefits must be balanced against environmental costs
- 36MW capacity is not so vital to Scotland's climate ambitions that its adverse impact should be dismissed
- Adverse Cumulative Impact on Loch Lomond & the Trossachs National Park
- Socio-economic benefits do not outweigh environmental considerations
- Adverse Impact on Local Road Infrastructure - disruption; road safety for school children

In summary, the letters of support raise the following issues:

- Renewable energy produces minimal environmental impact
- Increase electricity demand
- All forms of energy production involve a cost
- Long-term environmental benefit
- Potential for financial community benefit
- Trust that transportation plans will be put in place so to minimise the impact on residents and holidaymakers.
- The proposal seeks to minimise the view of the turbines from most perspectives.
- Significant effort has been made to assess and minimise the likely effects of the development on local wildlife.
- Trust that concerns relating to Golden Eagle and peatland will be addressed to the satisfaction of the relevant regulatory/advisory bodies before work progresses.
- Energy production in Scotland should be centred on renewables, communities have a part to play in supporting and driving that change.
- Proposal provides opportunity for communities to invest and benefit from sustainable energy generation.

Comment: The material planning issues raised by Objectors and Supporters are addressed in Appendix A of this report.

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 representation are available for viewing on the Council web site at www.argyll-bute.gov.uk

(G) SUPPORTING INFORMATION

i) Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR): Yes

EIAR (October 2019) comprising:

Volume 1 – Non-technical Summary

Volume 2 – Written Statement

Volume 3 – Figures (A3) & Visualisations (large format)

Volume 4 – Appendices

Confidential Annex, Ornithology,

Supplementary Information

Peat Management Plan, March 2020

Confidential, Ornithology, March 2020
Peat Management Plan, May 2020
Confidential, Ornithology, May 2020
Viewpoint 19, Inveraray Castle Garden Bridge, September 2020
Landscape & Visual, December 2020 Part 1
Landscape & Visual, December 2020 Part 2

- ii) An appropriate assessment under the Conservation (Natural Habitats) Regulations 1994: Not required
- iii) A design or design/access statement: Yes
- iv) A report on the impact of the proposed development e.g. Retail impact, transport impact, noise impact, flood risk, drainage impact etc.: Yes - Design and Access Statement, Flood Risk Assessment, Drainage Impact Assessment, Drainage/SUDS layout, Transport Assessment, and Habitat Survey

(H) PLANNING OBLIGATIONS

Is a Section 75 (S75) agreement required: No

-
- (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.**

Local Development Plan Policies

LDP STRAT 1 – Sustainable Development
LDP DM1 – Development within the Development Management Zone
LDP 3 – Supporting the Protection, Conservation and Enhancement of our Environment
LDP 5 – Supporting the Sustainable Growth of Our Economy
LDP 6 - Supporting the Sustainable Growth of Renewables
LDP 9 – Development Setting, Layout and Design
LDP 10 – Maximising our Resources and Reducing our Consumption
LDP 11 – Improving our Connectivity and Infrastructure

Local Development Plan – Supplementary Guidance Policies

SG LDP ENV 1 – Development Impact on Habitats, Species and Our Biodiversity (i.e. biological diversity)
SG LDP ENV 6 – Development Impact on Trees / Woodland
SG LDP ENV 7 – Water Quality and the Environment
SG LDP ENV 11 – Protection of Soil and Peat Resources
SG LDP ENV 13 –Development Impact on Areas of Panoramic Quality (APQs)
SG LDP ENV 14 –Landscape

SG LDP ENV 15 –Development Impact on Historic Gardens and Designed Landscapes
 SG LDP ENV 16(a) – Development Impact on Listed Buildings
 SG LDP ENV 19 –Development Impact on Scheduled Ancient Monuments
 SG LDP ENV 20 – Development Impact on Sites of Archaeological Importance
 SG LDP SERV 1 – Private Sewerage Treatment Plants and Wastewater (i.e. drainage) systems
 SG LDP SERV 2 – Incorporation of Natural Features / Sustainable Systems (SUDS)
 SG LDP SERV 3 – Drainage Impact Assessment (DIA)
 SG LDP SERV 5 – Waste Related Development and Waste Management
 SG LDP SERV 5(b) – Provision of Waste Storage and Collection Facilities within New Development
 SG LDP SERV 6 – Private Water Supplies and Water Conservation
 SG LDP SERV 7 – Flooding and Land Erosion – The Risk Framework for Development
 SG LDP MIN 2 – Mineral Extraction
 SG LDP TRAN 1 – Access to the Outdoors
 SG LDP TRAN 4 – New and Existing, Public Roads and Private Access Regimes
 SG LDP TRAN 6 –Vehicle Parking Provision
 SG LDP TRAN 7 –Safeguarding of Airports
 Supplementary Guidance 2 (December 2016)
[Supplementary Guidance 2 - Windfarm map 1](#)
[Supplementary Guidance 2 - Windfarm map 2](#)

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

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

- National Planning Policy Framework 3 (NPF3), Scottish Government (June 2014)
- Draft National Planning Policy Framework 4 (NPF4), (November 2021)
- Scottish Planning Policy (SPP), Scottish Government (June 2014)
- The future of energy in Scotland: Scottish Energy Strategy, Scottish Government (December 2017)
- Onshore Wind Policy Statement, Scottish Government (January 2017)
- Onshore wind - policy statement refresh 2021: consultative draft
- SNH Siting and Designing Wind Farms in the Landscape Guidance, (August 2017)
- Argyll & Bute Landscape Wind Energy Capacity Study, SNH and ABC (2017)
- United Kingdom Forestry Standard, Forestry Commission (December 2017)
- Policy on Control of Woodland Removal, Forestry Commission Scotland (2009)
- Historic Environment Policy for Scotland (HEPS 2019)
- Managing Change in the Historic Environment Guidance Notes.
- Planning Advice Note 1/2011 'Planning and Noise'
- Views of statutory and other consultees
- Legitimate public concern or support expressed on relevant planning matters
- Argyll and Bute proposed Local Development Plan 2 (November 2019) – The unchallenged policies and proposals within pLDP2 may be afforded significant material weighting in the determination of planning applications at this time as the

settled and unopposed view of the Council. Elements of the pLDP2 which have been identified as being subject to unresolved objections still require to be subject of Examination by a Scottish Government appointed Reporter and cannot be afforded significant material weighting at this time. The provisions of pLDP2 that may be afforded significant weighting in the determination of this application are listed below:

Policy 14 – Bad Neighbour Development

Policy 19 – Schedule Monuments

Policy 35 – Design of New and Existing, Public Roads and Private Access Regimes

Policy 36 – New Private Accesses

Policy 38 – Construction Standards for Public Roads

Policy 39 – Construction Standards for Private Access

Policy 43 – Safeguarding of Aerodromes

Policy 58 – Private Water Supplies and Water Conservation

Policy 63 – Waste Related Development and Waste Management

(K) Is the proposal a Schedule 2 Development not requiring an Environmental Impact Assessment: This proposal is a Schedule 2 EIA Development and EIA is required.

(L) Has the application been subject of statutory pre-application consultation (PAC): Yes

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

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

(O) Requirement for hearing (PAN41 or other): No.

Sixteen letters of representation have been received comprising 14 objection and two support.

The reasons for refusal relate to landscape and visual issues and at the time of the committee, in addition to this report, Members will be provide with paper copies of key viewpoints and visualisations from the LVIA which will allow for an informed decision to be reached.

On the basis of the above, and having regard to the approved guidelines for hearings, it is considered that a hearing would not add value to this assessment.

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

The site is situated over 1km to the northeast of the village of Strachur, with the proposed wind turbines located approximately 3km from the village. The wind farm would be located on the slopes of Creag Dhubh, 484m AOD at its summit, and partially below Creag an t-Suidheachain, across an area of commercial forestry and open moorland.

Permission is sought for 25 years and the proposal would comprise: 9 turbines of various heights up to 145m to blade tip and each with a rated output of up to 4MW, giving a total output of up to 36MW; 9 crane hardstandings with dimensions of 45m x 23m; approximately 5.6km of new permanent access tracks, including 1 turning area, and upgrades to 5.9km of existing forestry tracks; electrical and communication underground cables running along sections of the access track; a substation and control building. In addition to these components that will be there for the operational life of the development there will be a temporary construction compound with storage facilities and welfare facilities.

In terms of the SPP's requirement for spatial frameworks for onshore wind energy proposals and the Spatial Framework for Argyll & Bute as set out in SG2 (December 2016) the site is located within a Group 2 area (Areas of significant protection) due to the mapped presence of Class 2 nationally important carbon-rich soils, potentially of high conservation value and restoration potential.

Noise, Shadow Flicker and other potential residential amenity impacts during construction and operation phases are not a concern in this case.

NatureScot & Loch Lomond & the Trossachs National Park have objected to the proposal on the grounds that it would have an adverse effect on the special qualities and that the objectives of the designation and the overall integrity of the area would be compromised. NatureScot considers that these effects cannot be mitigated.

RSPB object to the proposal on the grounds of insufficient Golden Eagle data (it should be noted that this has been provided and a further response is outstanding)

No objections have been raised by any other consultees, subject to appropriate conditions.

At time of writing a total of 16 letters of representations have been received, comprising: 14 objections and 2 letters of support.

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

(R) Reasons why Planning Permission should be REFUSED

In summary, the proposal is considered contrary to National & Local Policy and Guidance expressed in: NPF3, SPP; Onshore Wind Policy Statement; Energy Strategy; the adopted Local Development Plan and associated Supplementary Guidance; and guidance published by the Council in the 'Argyll & Bute Landscape Wind Energy Capacity Study'; insofar as it will have an adverse effect on special qualities of Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park and the objectives of the designation and the overall integrity of the area would be compromised and it is not considered that these adverse impacts can be mitigated. It is also considered that the proposal will have significant adverse landscape and visual impacts. Furthermore, that as a consequence of the proposals significant adverse landscape and visual impacts, the proposed development may influence public attitudes to a point where tourists might become dissuaded from visiting. The full recommended reasons for refusal appear on the following page.

(S) Reasoned justification for a departure to the provisions of the Development Plan: N/A

(T) Need for notification to Scottish Ministers or Historic Scotland: In the event that Members are minded to GRANT planning permission against the recommendation of Officers the proposal will be required to be notified to Scottish Ministers due to the fact that NatureScot has objected.

Author of Report: Arlene Knox **Date:** 10th February 2022

Reviewing Officer: Sandra Davies **Date:** 11th February 2022

Fergus Murray
Head of Development and Economic Growth

REASONS FOR REFUSAL RELATIVE TO APPLICATION: 19/02544/PP

1. Loch Lomond & the Trossachs National Park (LLTNP)

The location and scale of the proposal represents a step change in the proximity, prominence and visual intrusion of wind farms on this western part of the Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park giving rise to significant effects on some of the National Parks Special Landscape Qualities. The scale and location of the proposal will result in a significant adverse effect on four Special Landscape Qualities of the National Park – Arrochar’s Mountainous and Distinctive Peaks; A Remote Area of High Hills and Deep Glens; Tranquility; and The Easily Accessible Landscape Splendour. Significant effects will result in relation to two sets of qualities:

- Specific effects on the Argyll Forest area and in particular to the views west from the distinctive hilltops, ridges and glens closest to the proposed turbines and the general experience of remoteness, isolation and stillness experienced in these locations.
- General qualities of tranquillity and landscape splendour applicable to the LLTNP as a whole, but which are also well expressed in the study area on its western edge.

Consequently, the proposal would result in a significant adverse effect on some of the Special Landscape Qualities of Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park, and the objectives of the designation and the overall integrity of the area would be compromised.

Taking into account that NatureScot and the National Park Authority have both objected to this proposal and having due regard to the above it is considered that the proposal is contrary to the provisions of SG LDP ENV 14 – Landscape; Supplementary Guidance 2: Renewable Energy; LDP STRAT 1 – Sustainable Development; LDP DM1 – Development within the Development Management Zone; LDP 3 – Supporting the Protection, Conservation and Enhancement of our Environment; and LDP 6 - Supporting the Sustainable Growth of Renewables of the Argyll & Bute Local Development Plan; SPP; The future of energy in Scotland: Scottish Energy Strategy (December 2017); Onshore Wind Policy Statement; SNH Siting and Designing Wind Farms in the Landscape Guidance, (August 2017); and ‘Argyll & Bute Landscape Wind Energy Capacity Study’ SNH and ABC (2017);

2. Landscape Effects

The proposal would have significant adverse effects on part of the Steep Ridges and Mountains Landscape Character Type principally extending up to 4km from the development site. The proposal would introduce new large-scale infrastructure to this unit of the Landscape Character Type and would detract from the sharp ridges and open tops which are key characteristics of the Landscape Character Type. The proposed turbines would dominate the narrow extent and intimate scale of Succoth Glen.

The Rocky Coastland Landscape Character Type comprises a narrow intermittent coastal fringe on both the north-west and south-east coasts of Loch Fyne. This a small-scale, settled landscape which is highly sensitive to large wind turbines. The proposal would not be located in the Landscape Character Type but would lie in close proximity to unit LCT53 (1) and within approximately 6km from unit LCT53 (2) which

covers the Inveraray area. Argyll & Bute Council consider that there would be significant adverse effects on LCT53 (1) in the Strachur area. These effects would principally relate to the effects of the introduction of new large-scale infrastructural features which would dominate the scale of settlement and detract from the setting of this small part of the *Rocky Coastland* LCT.

Having due regard to the above it is considered that the proposal is contrary to the provisions of SG LDP ENV 14 – Landscape; Supplementary Guidance 2: Renewable Energy; LDP STRAT 1 – Sustainable Development; LDP DM1 – Development within the Development Management Zone; LDP 3 – Supporting the Protection, Conservation and Enhancement of our Environment; and LDP 6 - Supporting the Sustainable Growth of Renewables of the Argyll & Bute Local Development Plan; SPP; The future of energy in Scotland: Scottish Energy Strategy (December 2017); Onshore Wind Policy Statement; SNH Siting and Designing Wind Farms in the Landscape Guidance, (August 2017); and ‘Argyll & Bute Landscape Wind Energy Capacity Study’ SNH and A&BC (2017);

3. Visual Effects

Visibility of the proposed wind farm would be focussed at the head and middle sections of Upper Loch Fyne within Argyll & Bute (but with views also from the summits and elevated slopes and ridges of the Arrochar Alps and other mountains within the Loch Lomond & the Trossachs National Park). The wooded nature of the shores and slopes above Loch Fyne will restrict visibility of the proposal with more open views occurring in the Strachur, Inveraray areas, from the open waters of the loch and intermittently from the A83 and the adjacent north-western fringes of Loch Fyne within Argyll & Bute. Argyll & Bute Council consider that the following significant adverse effects would occur on visual amenity within the Council area:

- ***On sections of the important tourist route of the A83.*** While woodland screens views from much of the A83, there would be intermittent open views between Minard and Furnace, from Dalchenna to Inveraray and on elevated shoulders around VP10 and above Minard Castle in the Tullochgorm area which offer expansive views along Loch Fyne when travelling north-eastwards. The full vertical extent of turbines would not be seen although the proposal would introduce built features on the presently open skyline of hills and ridges which backdrop and frame views along Loch Fyne to its dramatic head and in an area where very little obvious large built infrastructure is currently present this increasing the focus provided by the proposed turbines. Additional Viewpoint 23 from near Furnace further demonstrates these effects.
- ***Views from settlement on the north-western shores of Loch Fyne*** Representative VPs 4, 12 and 16 are located in Inveraray, Furnace and Minard. It is accepted that effects on Furnace would not be significant due to screening by landform and woodland. The Cultural Heritage section of the EIAR found no significant effects on the Inveraray Conservation Area with reference to key views. This appraisal additionally considers views from the Shore Walk which is popular with visitors and concludes that effects would be significant taking into account the high susceptibility and value (and therefore sensitivity) of VP4, the magnitude of change would be medium (taking into account the proximity of the development, the extent and composition of the view and its horizontal spread but also the relatively limited vertical extent of turbines visible) resulting in a significant effect. In Minard while many residential properties within this settlement face directly across the loch towards Lachlan Bay and therefore away from the proposal, views would be more direct and open for walkers and

watercraft users on the loch itself. The turbines would interrupt views to the Arrochar Alps within the Loch Lomond & the Trossachs National Park, with some highlighted against the darker backdrop of these mountains increasing visibility in certain lighting conditions.

- **Strachur area** Views from in and around Strachur including from the A886 on the approach to the core of this settlement and from the open waters of Strachur Bay where there are moorings. The southern-most (up to two) turbines would be intrusive and would appear visually precarious in some close views (for example EIAR VP3) due to their location on very steep slopes and in views from the A815 and from the Cowal Way where it is aligned in Glen Succoth.
- **Views from within the Inveraray Castle GDL** including from the popular walk to Dun na Cuaiche on the approach to and from the watch tower and its surrounds. Although the wind farm would be seen in the least dramatic part of the view from Dun na Cuaiche (away from Inveraray town and the mountains of the Loch Lomond & the Trossachs National Park) it would be distracting, with some turbines visible above hub height and with the movement of blades clearly seen over the skyline of the long and relatively low Creag Dhubh ridge. The Watch Tower has two window openings facing south-west towards Inveraray and down Loch Fyne and south-east directly towards the Creag Dhubh ridge and the proposal.

Having due regard to the above it is considered that the proposal is contrary to the provisions of SG LDP ENV 14 – Landscape; Supplementary Guidance 2: Renewable Energy; LDP STRAT 1 – Sustainable Development; LDP DM1 – Development within the Development Management Zone; LDP 3 – Supporting the Protection, Conservation and Enhancement of our Environment; and LDP 6 - Supporting the Sustainable Growth of Renewables of the Argyll & Bute Local Development Plan; SPP; The future of energy in Scotland: Scottish Energy Strategy (December 2017); Onshore Wind Policy Statement; SNH Siting and Designing Wind Farms in the Landscape Guidance, (August 2017); and ‘Argyll & Bute Landscape Wind Energy Capacity Study’ SNH and ABC (2017).

4. Effects on valued landscapes

There would be visibility of the proposal from parts of the Area of Panoramic Quality (APQ) designated area around Loch Fyne. While the APQ is mapped as a terrestrial designation, Loch Fyne is an essential part of the panoramic quality of this part of the designation. The proposal would not be located in the APQ designated area around Loch Fyne but would have indirect effects on some of its special qualities. These comprise significant adverse effects on the dramatic head of Loch Fyne, experienced in more distant intermittent views from the north-western side of Loch Fyne and from the open waters of Loch Fyne (VPs 10, 11 and 16 demonstrate these views although it should be noted that no viewpoint has been produced in the EIAR from the loch itself). Significant cumulative effects would occur with the operational Clachan Flats on some of these long views along Loch Fyne where both wind farms would interrupt and distract from the dramatic mountains of the LLTNP. The proposal would significantly adversely affect the presently open and uncluttered hills which provide a backdrop and frame views across and along Loch Fyne seen from the elevated views from within APQ such as Dun na Cuaiche summit.

Having due regard to the above it is considered that the proposal is contrary to the provisions of SG LDP ENV 13 –Development Impact on Areas of Panoramic Quality (APQs); SG LDP ENV 14 – Landscape; Supplementary Guidance 2:

Renewable Energy; LDP STRAT 1 – Sustainable Development; LDP DM1 – Development within the Development Management Zone; LDP 3 – Supporting the Protection, Conservation and Enhancement of our Environment; and LDP 6 – Supporting the Sustainable Growth of Renewables of the Argyll & Bute Local Development Plan; SPP; The future of energy in Scotland: Scottish Energy Strategy (December 2017); Onshore Wind Policy Statement; SNH Siting and Designing Wind Farms in the Landscape Guidance, (August 2017); and ‘Argyll & Bute Landscape Wind Energy Capacity Study’ SNH and ABC (2017).

5. Tourism and Recreation Effects

As detailed in reason for refusal no.1, the proposal would result in a significant adverse effect on some of the Special Landscape Qualities of Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park and consequently, the objectives of the designation and the overall integrity of the area would be compromised. The presence of adverse landscape and visual impacts on Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park would suggest that the development may influence public attitudes to a point where tourists might become dissuaded from visiting. Whilst the proposed wind farm is not within the Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park, it will be visible from within the National Park and an inappropriately scaled and sited development will raise issues in relation to scenic sensitivity and capacity to absorb large scale development.

Having due regard to the above, the proposal poses adverse impacts on tourism and recreation and is therefore inconsistent with the provisions of: SG LDP TRAN 1 – Access to the Outdoors; LDP STRAT 1 – Sustainable Development; LDP DM1 – Development within the Development Management Zone; LDP 3 – Supporting the Protection, Conservation and Enhancement of our Environment; Policy LDP 6 – Supporting the Sustainable Growth of Renewables; SG LDP ENV 13 –Development Impact on Areas of Panoramic Quality (APQs); SG LDP ENV 14 –Landscape; and SG 2 Renewable Energy of the Argyll & Bute Local Development Plan, SPP (2014) and the Onshore Wind Policy Statement in this respect.

APPENDIX A – RELATIVE TO APPLICATION NUMBER: 19/02544/PP

PLANNING LAND USE AND POLICY ASSESSMENT

A. Settlement Strategy

The site is located within the Development Management Zone 'Very Sensitive Countryside' as defined by the Local Development Plan. Within 'Very Sensitive Countryside', Policy LDP DM 1 – Development within the Development Management Zones, encourages sustainable forms of renewable energy related developments on appropriate sites. It is considered that the proposal is contrary to the provisions of Policy LDP DM1 – Development within the Development Management Zones, as the site is not considered to be 'appropriate' for the proposed wind farm due to the significant adverse landscape and visual effects the proposal will have. Furthermore, it is considered that due to these adverse effects the proposal cannot be considered to be sustainable. The proposal must also be considered in relation to all other policies of the Local Development Plan and Supplementary Guidance where these are relevant. This assessment is detailed below.

Having due regard to the above it is considered that the proposal is contrary to the provisions of LDP DM1 – Development within the Development Management Zones; SPP; and NPF3

B. SUPPORTING THE SUSTAINABLE GROWTH OF RENEWABLES

ABC is keen to ensure that Argyll & Bute continues to make a positive contribution to meeting the Scottish Government's targets for renewable energy generation. These targets are important given the compelling need to reduce our carbon footprint and reduce our reliance on fossil fuels. The Council will support renewable energy developments where these are consistent with the principles of sustainable development and it can be adequately demonstrated that there would be no unacceptable significant adverse effects.

C. LOCATION, NATURE AND DESIGN OF PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

The site is situated over 1km to the northeast of the village of Strachur, with the proposed wind turbines located approximately 3km from the village. The wind farm would be located on the slopes of Creag Dhubh, 484m AOD at its summit, and partially below Creag an t-Suidheachain, across an area of commercial forestry and open moorland.

Permission is sought for 25 years and the proposal would comprise: 9 turbines of various heights up to 145m to blade tip and each with a rated output of up to 4MW, giving a total output of up to 36MW; 9 crane hardstandings with dimensions of 45m x 23m; approximately 5.6km of new permanent access tracks, including 1 turning area, and upgrades to 5.9km of existing forestry tracks; electrical and communication underground cables running along sections of the access track; a substation and control building. In addition to these components that will be there for the operational life of the development there will be a temporary construction compound with storage facilities and welfare facilities.

Battery Storage - The proposal does not include a battery storage facility.

Borrow Pits - to minimise the volume of stone brought onto site, it is proposed that on-site borrow pits are excavated at two locations as the sole source of aggregate for

access tracks, hardstandings, and as structural fill for the substation, construction compound and beneath each foundation as required. The borrow pit search areas are proposed to be subject to further and more detailed site investigation prior to construction, to confirm the available stone yield and its quality. Details, confirming these parameters, will be contained within a site-specific Construction Method Statement (CMS), agreed with ABC as local planning authority, prior to commencement of development. This would need to be secured by planning condition in the event that the proposal receives planning permission.

Infrastructure

Scottish Water has no objection, however, the applicant should be aware that this does not confirm that the proposal can currently be serviced. A review of Scottish Water's records indicates that the proposed activity falls within a drinking water catchment where a Scottish Water abstraction is located. Loch Eck supplies Loch Eck Water Treatment Works (WTW) and it is essential that water quality and water quantity in the area are protected. In the event that planning permission is granted an informative will be required to highlight Scottish Water's requirements in this regard. Scottish Water also advise that no surface water connection are accepted into their combined sewer system.

Grid Network & Cables - The grid connection will be considered separate from the planning process by means of an Electricity Act Section 37 application to the Scottish Government (upon which the Council would be consulted in its capacity as Planning Authority).

D. SPATIAL FRAMEWORK FOR WIND FARMS

Supplementary Guidance has been prepared in accordance with SPP which provides a Spatial Framework for wind farms and wind turbine developments over 50 metres high, which identifies: Areas where wind farms will not be acceptable; Areas of significant protection; and Areas which may have potential for wind farm development. The Spatial Framework as set out in the SG demonstrates that the site is located in a Group 2 area 'Areas of Significant Protection' where wind farms may be acceptable and proposals will need to demonstrate that any significant effects on the qualities of these areas can be substantially overcome by siting, design or other mitigation.

E. NET ECONOMIC IMPACT, INCLUDING LOCAL AND COMMUNITY SOCIO-ECONOMIC BENEFITS SUCH AS EMPLOYMENT, ASSOCIATED BUSINESS AND SUPPLY CHAIN OPPORTUNITIES

Policy LDP 6 – Supporting the Sustainable Growth of Renewables, SG 2 Renewables and SPP (2014) require applications for wind turbine developments to be assessed against net economic impact, including local and community socio-economic benefits such as employment, associated business and supply chain opportunities.

During the construction stage, 91 man year equivalent jobs will be created within the Argyll & Bute region and 36 man year equivalent jobs in Scotland. The construction period will provide the greatest potential for employment and economic activity at a local scale. During the operational stage, eight man year equivalent jobs will be created within the Argyll & Bute region and seven man year equivalent jobs in Scotland. There will also be potential supply chain benefits during the construction phase with workers making use of local accommodation and other facilities. If taken up, the offer of a 10% stake in the proposed development could also have material benefits for the local community. An annual community fund for the local community

equal to £5000 per MW would generate annual income of up to £180,000. The fund would be managed with long-term goals in mind to deliver meaningful benefits to the community.

Strachur Community Council have commented that the development will have an advantage to the local area in the form of income derived from any Community Benefit Scheme.

It should be noted that Community Benefit is not considered to be a 'material planning consideration' in the determination of planning applications. In the event that permission were to be granted, the negotiation of any community benefit, either directly with the local community or under the auspices of the Council, would take place outside the application process. It is understood from the ES that the applicant is proposing to follow Scottish Government guidance on best practice for community benefit associated with onshore renewable energy developments in this regard.

Having due regard to the above the proposals net economic impact, including local and community socio-economic benefits such as employment, associated business and supply chain opportunities has been assessed and it is concluded that the proposal is consistent with the provisions of Supplementary Guidance 2 (December 2016); LDP DM1 – Development within the Development Management Zones; LDP 3 – Supporting the Protection, Conservation and Enhancement of our Environment; LDP 6 - Supporting the Sustainable Growth of Renewables; SPP and the Onshore Wind Policy Statement in this regard.

F. THE SCALE OF CONTRIBUTION TO RENEWABLE ENERGY GENERATION TARGETS

Policy LDP 6 – Supporting the Sustainable Growth of Renewables, SG 2 Renewable Energy and SPP require applications for wind turbine developments to be assessed against the scale of contribution to renewable energy generation targets. This proposal could generate up to 36MW of renewable electrical energy which would contribute towards the Scottish Government's updated renewable energy targets.

Having due regard to the above the proposals scale of contribution to renewable energy generation targets has been assessed and it is concluded that the proposal is consistent with the provisions of SG 2; Supplementary LDP STRAT 1 – Sustainable Development; LDP DM1 – Development within the Development Management Zone; LDP 3 – Supporting the Protection, Conservation and Enhancement of our Environment; LDP 6 - Supporting the Sustainable Growth of Renewables; SPP; and the Onshore Wind Policy Statement (2017) in this regard.

G. EFFECT ON GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS

Policy LDP 6 – Supporting the Sustainable Growth of Renewables, SG 2 Renewable Energy and SPP require applications for wind turbine developments to be assessed against their effect on greenhouse gas emissions. The proposed development could prevent the emission CO₂ by generating electricity from renewable sources over its proposed 25 year operational life, when compared to grid mix electricity generation;

Having due regard to the above the proposals effect on greenhouse gas emissions has been assessed and it is concluded that the proposal is therefore consistent with the provisions of SG 2 Renewable Energy; LDP STRAT 1 – Sustainable Development; LDP DM1 – Development within the Development

Management Zone; LDP 3 – Supporting the Protection, Conservation and Enhancement of our Environment; LDP 6 - Supporting the Sustainable Growth of Renewables; SPP and the Onshore Wind Policy Statement in this regard.

H. IMPACTS ON COMMUNITIES AND INDIVIDUAL DWELLINGS, INCLUDING VISUAL IMPACT, RESIDENTIAL AMENITY, NOISE AND SHADOW FLICKER (INCLUDING CUMULATIVE IMPACTS).

Policy LDP 6 – Supporting the Sustainable Growth of Renewables, SG 2 Renewable Energy and SPP require applications for wind turbine developments to be assessed against impacts on communities and individual dwellings, including visual impact, residential amenity, noise and shadow flicker.

The Environment Protection Officer notes that the wind farm is planned for a rural partially afforested on the slopes of Creag Dubh. The nearest occupied residential properties include: Islay Cottage, Succothmore H1, Succothmore (Fernoch) H2, Succothmore Cottage H3, Ardchylne Farm, and Laglingarten. The main issues of concern to Environmental Health are: noise, air quality, lighting and private water supplies.

Construction Noise – An assessment of predicted construction noise was undertaken in accordance with BS5228:2009 and the results reported in the ES. It is anticipated that the impact of construction activities on nearest residential properties will not be significant outwith the limited time period that the access track is being upgraded. It is requested that a condition requiring the submission of a construction or environmental management plan should include details of measures to ensure the occurrence of noise or vibration nuisance during the construction phase including operational hours.

Air Quality - The Environment Protection Officer has confirmed that there are no matters associated with the proposal that are considered to pose a threat to ambient air quality objectives. The main potential risk to air quality nuisance during the construction phase, including dust from vehicles travelling along access tracks. The applicant has stated that a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) will be prepared and this should include control of dust etc. and a condition to require compliance with this should be considered.

Lighting - The Environmental Protection Officer has confirmed that the wind farm development itself is unlikely to require significant lighting and given that there are no known sensitive receptors within a reasonable distance of the proposed construction activities, it is not anticipated that light pollution will be a matter to control via planning condition.

Private Water Supplies - The Environmental Protection Officer notes that the ES has determined that there are no active private water supplies in the area that may be impacted by the development and therefore no further investigation or mitigation measures are deemed necessary.

The Environment Protection Officer recommends that conditions are also attached to the planning permission to restrict noise immissions; report to demonstrate compliance with noise limits; following a noise complaint the employment of independent consultant to assess noise immissions; provision of all calculations, audio recordings and raw data following complaint; continuous logging of wind speed, wind direction and power generation data; and submission of details of nominated representative to act as a point of contact for local residents in regard to noise complaints.

Shadow Flicker

Under certain combinations of geographical position and time of day, the sun may pass behind the rotors of a wind turbine and cast a shadow over neighbouring properties. Government guidance advises that if separation (10 x rotor diameters) is provided between turbines and nearby dwellings 'shadow flicker' should not generally result in adverse effects. Under accepted good practice and guidance, this will ensure that shadow flicker will not present a problem. The Shadow Flicker Assessment undertaken has confirmed that there are no residential properties within 11 rotor diameters (1012m) of the proposed turbines. There is therefore no potential for shadow flicker to affect the amenity of residential properties.

Visual Impact is addressed in the Landscape and Visual Impact section of this report below.

Having due regard to the above it is concluded that subject to the recommended conditions the proposal will not have any adverse impacts on communities and individual dwellings, including, residential amenity, noise and shadow flicker and is therefore consistent with the provisions of SG 2 Renewable Energy; LDP STRAT 1 – Sustainable Development; LDP DM1 – Development within the Development Management Zone; LDP 3 – Supporting the Protection, Conservation and Enhancement of our Environment; LDP 6 - Supporting the Sustainable Growth of Renewables; LDP 9 – Development Setting, Layout and Design; SPP (2014); and the Onshore Wind Policy Statement (2017) in this regard.

I. LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL IMPACTS (INCLUDING CUMULATIVE IMPACTS)

Policy LDP 6 – Supporting the Sustainable Growth of Renewables, SG 2 Renewable Energy and SPP require applications for wind turbine developments to be assessed against any landscape and visual impacts including wild land.

NatureScot initially requested Supplementary Information in the form of additional viewpoints to enable them to reach a reasoned conclusion on the significant effects of the proposal on the environment. These included: Inveraray Castle ground, from the Garden Bridge area; Inveraray Castle Estate, Aray Bridge; southern approach to Inveraray, south of Furnace (A83 Tourist route); and the northern approach to Loch Fyne/Inveraray from the A83 Tourist route. Having considered these NatureScot has advised that this proposal will have significant adverse effects on the Special Landscape Qualities (SLQs) of the Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park (LLTNP) and they object to the proposal. NatureScot further advise that these effects cannot be mitigated to a level that would remove their objection

Landscape - The location and scale of Creag Dhubh wind farm represents a step change in the proximity, prominence and visual intrusion of wind farms on this western part of the Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park (LLTNP) giving rise to significant adverse effects on the Special Landscape Qualities (SLQs). Notably there would be significant effects from the upper slopes and summits of some of the LLTNP's most distinctive and rugged mountain peaks in the very popular Arrochar Alps area, and from areas on the edge of the LLTNP near Strachur. The proposal is located in the uplands immediately west of the Arrochar Alps on the east side of Loch Fyne. The turbines lie in very close proximity to the LLTNP boundary (1.5km) arranged in an evenly spaced line below the ridge of Creag Dhubh. The Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) indicates the location of the proposed turbines, the extent of visibility and the

viewpoint locations (EIAR Volume 3: Figures, Figure 7.2, ZTV to blade tip height with LVIA viewpoints).

Appraisal of effects on Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park - LLTNP is one of only two National Parks in Scotland identified in SPP as a nationally important designation that merits the highest level of protection. Under the National Park (Scotland) Act 2000 and SPP, the LLTNP is recognised to have SLQs that are of outstanding national importance and expressed in the character of the area being distinctive and coherent. The LLTNP places the protection and enhancement of these SLQs at the centre of the National Park Partnership Plan 2018 – 2023.

Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park Special Landscape Qualities - The LLTNP is celebrated for the scenic quality of its landscape, a product of its highly diverse landscape character (Landscape character assessment Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park). The Landscape Character Areas (LCAs) identified in this report, inform the SLQs of the LLTNP, which can go beyond the boundaries of each LCA and the LLTNP, as they seek to capture the experiential qualities of the LLTNP and the contribution of its component parts and surroundings. The LLTNP's SLQs relate primarily to its physical, natural and cultural heritage attributes and perceptions, including the experience of its mountains, lochs and glens. In particular, the "Cobbler and the Arrochar Alps are distinctive landmark summits which [...] signify a dramatic transition between the Park landscape and the Argyll area beyond" (Special Qualities of Argyll Forest). These mountains are highly valued and extremely popular with hill walkers and mountaineers who enjoy their remoteness, wildness, physical challenge and visual drama within easy access of Central Scotland. In addition, the areas on the edge of the LLTNP near Strachur include the promoted Cowal Way Long Distance Route (LDR) and a key route (A815). As such, the key areas affected include the popular visitor destination and form an important part of the LLTNP's identity.

Creag Dhubh wind farm and the assessment baseline - At present, in views west, from the distinctive hills and summits (as represented by the viewpoints EIAR Volume 3: Visualisations, Viewpoints (VPs) 5, 8 and 13), operational wind farms are perceived as much more distant, beyond Loch Fyne and Glen Fyne hills. Most are only noticeable on a clear day in good visibility primarily due to distance. Clachan Flats (9 turbines c 100m to tip) is more noticeable (as represented by VP5 and 8). In marked contrast, Creag Dhubh wind farm due to its larger turbines (c145m to tip) and closer proximity, clearly on the same side of Loch Fyne as the LLTNP, appears much more visually intrusive and more prominent on a close ridgeline that marks the edge of this upland area.

Special Landscape Qualities affected by the proposal - Significant effects will result in relation to two sets of qualities:

- Specific effects on the Argyll Forest area and in particular to the views west from the distinctive hilltops, ridges and glens closest to the proposed turbines and the general experience of remoteness, isolation and stillness experienced from these locations.
- General qualities of tranquillity and landscape splendour applicable to the LLTNP as a whole, but which are also well expressed in the study area on its western edge.

The following SLQs are those which NatureScot consider are most relevant and at risk from significant effects: Arrochar's mountainous and distinctive peaks; a remote area of high hills and deep glens; Tranquillity; and the easily accessible landscape splendour.

Arrochar's mountainous and distinctive peaks - A distinctive mountain group, popularly called the Arrochar Alps. These hills are visually striking, curiously Y-shaped and rocky with craggy peaks and crests. Each is distinctive and recognisable. They are highly visible from the shores and open waters of Loch Long and Loch Lomond and offer spectacular panoramas from their summits. Although popular with climbers, nevertheless the tops harbour a sense of remoteness and stillness. Creag Dhubh wind farm would significantly adversely affect the spectacular panoramic views from the central Arrochar peaks – The Cobbler, Ben lme (Munro) and Ben Narnain (Munro) – as represented by the Cobbler VP13. There would also be significant visual effects from some hillviews across the Arrochar Alps area within the LLTNP, where many of the closest summits and ridges would have views of the turbines as represented by for example Beinn Bheula VP5 and Ben Donich VP8. The combination of the scale, linear extent and vertical form of the development, its location on the edge of the dramatic open upland landscape and the framing of views by the landform, all contribute to the adverse effects. Effects are exacerbated where the turbines and the movement of their blades are intervisible with, and compete with, the visual drama of the distinctive peaks. The sense of remoteness and stillness will be significantly compromised, detracting from the experience of the panorama. As part of a spectacular panorama, there is merit in the ridge that marks the edge of the upland area being maintained as an open and simple horizon with an undeveloped and remote character. At present, the exact extent of the LLTNP is unclear when experienced from the upper slopes and summits, such as the Cobbler, where the experience of expansive dramatic panoramas borrows from the wider landscape context. However, the location of these turbines, so close to the LLTNP boundary, would accentuate the north western extent of the LLTNP, interrupting the expansive panorama and significantly compromising the experience of these spectacular panoramic views to the west at distances of around 3 – 15km. This proposal will appear incongruous intruding into this distinctive and highly sensitive landscape context. These effects are considered to be significant on the appreciation of this SLQ in relation to key hill summits and associated slopes and ridges in the west of the LLTNP.

A remote area of high hills and deep glens - A mountainous area of distinctive summits rising above forested slopes and steep-sided, glacially carved troughs filled with sea lochs, lochs or flat-bottomed glens. The uplands are rugged and wild, especially in the north, and the whole area has a sense of remoteness and isolation. At present, the predominance of nature/natural processes and the general abundance of obvious built development is well expressed across the Arrochar Alps. The slopes and summits provide a high degree of physical challenge and sense of remoteness due to their elevation and the experience of climbing slowly for several hours, gradually leaving behind the relatively developed areas below. However, this proposal will introduce very large structures into the uplands that form the edge horizon to these hills/mountains; bringing development into areas where it is currently minimal. This will erode the current sense of wildness, remoteness and isolation, and diminish the sense of achievement gained from the physical challenge of climbing the rugged terrain. The turbines would be seen in outward looking views, at times intervisible with the distinctive peaks of the LLTNP, detracting from the wildness of these hills and distinctive summits. The sense of wildness, remoteness and isolation would therefore be significantly adversely affected in relation to rugged peaks and ridges close to the proposed turbines (as represented by VPs 5, 8 and 13) and in parts of glens (as represented by VP3). This adverse effect will be exacerbated where the turbines appear to be within the LLTNP. These effects are considered to be significant on the appreciation of this SLQ in relation to high hills in the west of the LLTNP and in parts of glens.

Tranquility - Relating to the uncrowded places, where there is a predominance of natural sounds and sights experienced with the many settings of the LLTNP. This sense of peacefulness is enhanced by the small scale of human settlement within the expansive landforms, and by the general absence of large-scale development. Currently activity and movement is focussed in some of the glens/lower lying areas; while the uplands are generally quiet with a strong sense of naturalness. The proposal would introduce prominent built structures, into the open uplands with the movement of blades distracting from this otherwise still and quiet landscape. At present, tranquillity is generally well expressed in the areas affected by this proposal, as existing developments are not having a notable influence on how this quality is experienced. This quality would be adversely affected in areas close to the proposed wind farm with views of the turbines: including several accessible hilltops within 3 – 15km (including significant effects at VPs 5, 8 and 13) and small sections of the Cowal Way within the LLTNP, (for example VP3). These effects are considered to be significant on the appreciation of this SLQ.

The easily accessible landscape splendour - Relating to the LLTNP and its hills' accessibility from major centres of population in central Scotland (half of Scotland's population within one hour's easy travel). It is also a major draw for visitors from all over the world and as such a tourist destination. Hills such as the Cobbler (VP13) are very well known and much visited. Large numbers of people visit the Arrochar Alps to enjoy the scenic panoramas and experience the sense of expansiveness and space created by the juxtaposition of hills and lochs, and receding layers of hills. The introduction of a scaleable element into this part of the panorama where there are no other built scale indicators detracts from the grandeur and splendour of the mountain landscape. Visitors would experience views of the proposed turbines and significant effects when looking west, as part of a dramatic panorama, from many hilltops and ridges in the distinctive Arrochar Alps area within the LLTNP and when looking east towards the LLTNP from higher ground in the west. These effects are considered to be significant on the appreciation of the SLQ.

Cumulative - The proposed wind farm would, due to its location, larger turbines and closer proximity, appear as a much more prominent addition to operational wind energy schemes. This proposal is significantly closer to the LLTNP boundary (1.5km) and will relate to neither the pattern of existing wind farm development nor the character of the landscape. At present, wind farms are limited to western Loch Fyne, with the separation of Loch Fyne between the wind farms and the LLTNP. However, this proposal spreads development across the loch into uplands of east Loch Fyne where it is much more closely associated with the LLTNP's popular western hills/Arrochar Alps (EIAR Volume 3: Figures, Figure 7.13, Cumulative wind farms in LVIA study area).

Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park - the National Park Authority objects to the proposal for the following reasons: the proposal will result in a significant adverse effect on the Special Landscape Qualities of the Argyll Forest area of the National Park by introducing a new built landscape feature to the Landscape Character Type (LCT) of Steep Ridges and Mountains; and the proposed development will have a significant adverse effect on visual amenity affecting views from the Arrochar Alps, Ben Donich and Beinn Bheula and the Cowal Way Long Distance Route approaching this gateway into the Park.

ABC Consultant Landscape Architect's most up-to-date advice which takes into account all Supplementary Information (comprising 4 additional visualisations from the Inveraray designed landscape and the A83 near Furnace) provided by the applicant is as follows:

The proposal and its design – the proposal comprises 9 turbines, up to 145m high to blade tip, located on the steep forested south-eastern slopes of the narrow ridge of Creag Dhubh. The proposal includes 5.6km of new access track, substation building and other ancillary development. The linear layout of the turbines responds to the landform of the narrow ridge of Creag Dhubh but while the turbines have a gently curving arrangement, the strong geometric alignment of the development is pronounced and contributes to adverse effects from elevated views (particularly from the hill summits within the LLTNP). The proposal is also commonly seen ‘end-on’ from the Strachur area and turbines appear visually unbalanced because of their location on very steep slopes. This effect is demonstrated in EIAR VP3.

The Wind Farm Felling and Restocking Plans (Figures 6.5 and 6.6) appear identical to the Forest Baseline Felling and Restocking Plans (Figures 6.3 and 6.4). Both plans perpetuate the poor design and limited species diversity of the existing woodland within Succoth Glen and do not conform to best practice design set out in the UK Forestry Standard.

2017 Argyll & Bute Landscape Wind Capacity Study - The proposed wind farm lies within the Steep Ridgeland and Mountains Landscape Character Type (LCT) as identified in the 2017 Argyll & Bute Landscape Wind Energy Capacity Study (LWECS). The proposed turbines, which would be up to 145m high to blade tip, would fall within the ‘Very Large’ typology considered in the LWECS. The LWECS concludes that the combined landscape and visual sensitivity of this LCT is high to wind turbines of this size and that the value of this landscape is also high. Key constraints to wind energy development include the proximity of the LCT to the Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park (LLTNP) and the Ben Lui Wild Land Area, elevated views from hills in the LLTNP and potential effects on the dramatic head of Loch Fyne and on the setting of the designed landscape and planned settlement of Inveraray. The proposed wind farm also lies close to the boundary of the *Rocky Mosaic* LCT which covers the north-western and south-eastern shores of Loch Fyne. The LWECS finds that this small scale, settled and diverse LCT would have a high sensitivity to larger wind turbines. Key constraints identified in the LWECS include the strong contrast which occurs between these intricate settled sea and loch fringes with adjacent simple and more expansive uplands, which makes an important contribution to the rich scenic composition characteristic of Argyll.

Landscape effects

ABC’s Consultant Landscape Architect is in agreement with the LVIA that the proposal would have significant adverse effects on part of the Steep Ridges and Mountains LCT principally extending up to 4km from the development site. The proposal would introduce new large-scale infrastructure to this unit of the LCT and would detract from the sharp ridges and open tops which are key characteristics of the LCT. The proposed turbines would dominate the narrow extent and intimate scale of Succoth Glen. The Rocky Coastland LCT comprises a narrow intermittent coastal fringe on both the north-west and south-east coasts of Loch Fyne. This a small-scale, settled landscape which is highly sensitive to large wind turbines. The proposal would not be located in the LCT but would lie in close proximity to unit LCT53 (1) and within approximately 6km from unit LCT53 (2) which covers the Inveraray area. The Council’s Consultant Landscape Architect considers that there would be significant adverse effects on LCT53 (1) in the Strachur area. These effects would principally relate to the effects of the introduction of new large-scale infrastructural features which would dominate the scale of settlement and detract from the setting of this small part of the *Rocky Coastland* LCT.

Effects on valued landscapes

The proposed development site is not covered by any landscape designations or other recognised landscape interests. It would however lie within 1km of the **Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park (LLTNP)** where it would be principally visible from higher hill slopes and summits in the western part of the Park. Effects on the LLTNP are not considered in detail in this review as it lies outside Argyll & Bute. However, it should be noted that significant adverse effects would be likely to occur on views from key hill summits on the western edge of the Park, including from Beinn an Lochain, Ben Donich, Ben Arthur and Beinn Bheula. This proposal would be likely to adversely affect some of the SLQs of the LLTNP including *Arrochar's mountainous and distinctive peaks* which are important because of their popularity with climbers and the spectacular panoramas and the sense of remoteness and stillness experienced from their summits. This proposal would also be likely to contribute to significant cumulative effects on views and on LLTNP SLQs experienced from some of these hills when seen together with the operational Clachan Flats wind farm.

There would be visibility of the proposal from parts of the Area of Panoramic Quality (APQ) designated area around Loch Fyne. The APQ is not defined as separate named areas and there are no citations setting out the reasons for designation/special qualities of the designated area. Policy LDP 3 applies to the locally designated natural and built environment and seeks to avoid developments with significant adverse effects on the special qualities or integrity of these designations. This appraisal considers the APQ covering both the eastern and western shores and the mountainous head of Loch Fyne as a whole. While the APQ is mapped as a terrestrial designation, Loch Fyne is an essential part of the panoramic quality of this part of the designation.

Special qualities are likely to focus on views to the dramatic head of Loch Fyne which is backdropped by the Arrochar Alps (located within the LLTNP) and the steep-sided narrow ridges and hills which contain the upper loch, the rich diversity of the shores of the loch, which feature a number of GDLs, farmland and settlement and which contrast with the open hills which backdrop and frame views across and along the loch.

Operational wind farms are seen from parts of the APQ around Loch Fyne but these appear distant from the loch and are set well back from immediately containing upland skylines. The proposal would not be located in the APQ designated area around Loch Fyne but would have indirect effects on some of its special qualities. These comprise significant adverse effects on the dramatic head of Loch Fyne, experienced in more distant intermittent views from the north-western side of Loch Fyne and from the open waters of Loch Fyne (VPs 10, 11 and 16 demonstrate these views although it should be noted that no viewpoint has been produced in the EIA from the loch itself). Significant cumulative effects would occur with the operational Clachan Flats on some of these long views along Loch Fyne where both wind farms would interrupt and distract from the dramatic mountains of the LLTNP. The proposal would significantly adversely affect the presently open and uncluttered hills which provide a backdrop and frame views across and along Loch Fyne seen from the elevated views from within APQ such as Dun na Cuaiche summit. Effects from lower elevation views would be unlikely to be significant (provided turbine locations are not radically altered during any micro-siting) due to the limited vertical extent of turbines visible on containing upland skylines, for example, from Inveraray Shore Walk (VP4). The scenic diverse fringes of Loch Fyne would not be significantly affected by the proposal.

The **Inveraray Castle GDL** is an important landscape feature integral to the special character of Upper Loch Fyne. Historic Environment Scotland have not objected to the proposal but comment that they consider the assessment set out in EIA under-

estimates the level of effect on the more sensitive areas of the GDL and the Castle and therefore on the GDL as a whole. The proposal would be visible from parts of the GDL notably from the Garden Bridge, to the east and south-east of the castle and from the approach to, and from, the summit area of Dun Na Cruaiche and the 18th Century Category A-listed Watch Tower. This appraisal does not consider effects on the cultural importance of this GDL. It does however evaluate effects on views from the GDL as it comprises a popular destination for visitors/walkers in the Loch Fyne area.

Visual effects

Visibility of the proposed wind farm would be focussed at the head and middle sections of Upper Loch Fyne within Argyll & Bute (but with views also from the summits and elevated slopes and ridges of the Arrochar Alps and other mountains within the LLTNP). The wooded nature of the shores and slopes above Loch Fyne will restrict visibility of the proposal with more open views occurring in the Strachur, Inveraray areas, from the open waters of the loch and intermittently from the A83 and the adjacent north-western fringes of Loch Fyne within Argyll & Bute.

The LVIA under-estimates sensitivity and the magnitude of change for some representative viewpoints lying within Argyll & Bute. ABC's Consultant Landscape Architect considers that the following significant adverse effects would occur on visual amenity within the Council area:

- ***On sections of the important tourist route of the A83.*** While woodland screens views from much of the A83, there would be intermittent open views between Minard and Furnace, from Dalchenna to Inveraray and on elevated shoulders around VP10 and above Minard Castle in the Tullochgorm area which offer expansive views along Loch Fyne when travelling north-eastwards. The full vertical extent of turbines would not be seen although the proposal would introduce built features on the presently open skyline of hills and ridges which backdrop and frame views along Loch Fyne to its dramatic head and in an area where very little obvious large built infrastructure is currently present this increasing the focus provided by the proposed turbines. Additional Viewpoint 23 from near Furnace further demonstrates these effects.
- ***Views from settlement on the north-western shores of Loch Fyne*** Representative VPs 4, 12 and 16 are located in Inveraray, Furnace and Minard. It is accepted that effects on Furnace would not be significant due to screening by landform and woodland. The Cultural Heritage section of the EIAR found no significant effects on the Inveraray Conservation Area with reference to key views. This appraisal additionally considers views from the Shore Walk which is popular with visitors and concludes that effects would be significant taking into account the high susceptibility and value (and therefore sensitivity) of VP4, the magnitude of change would be medium (taking into account the proximity of the development, the extent and composition of the view and its horizontal spread but also the relatively limited vertical extent of turbines visible) resulting in a significant effect. In Minard while many residential properties within this settlement face directly across the loch towards Lachlan Bay and therefore away from the proposal, views would be more direct and open for walkers and watercraft users on the loch itself. The turbines would interrupt views to the Arrochar Alps within the LLTNP, with some highlighted against the darker backdrop of these mountains increasing visibility in certain lighting conditions.
- ***Strachur area*** Views from in and around Strachur including from the A886 on the approach to the core of this settlement and from the open waters of Strachur Bay

where there are moorings. The southern-most (up to two) turbines would be intrusive and would appear visually precarious in some close views (for example EIAR VP3) due to their location on very steep slopes and in views from the A815 and from the Cowal Way where it is aligned in Glen Succoth.

- **Views from within the Inveraray Castle GDL** including from the popular walk to Dun na Cuaiche on the approach to and from the watch tower and its surrounds. Although the wind farm would be seen in the least dramatic part of the view from Dun na Cuaiche (away from Inveraray town and the mountains of the LLTNP) it would be distracting, with some turbines visible above hub height and with the movement of blades clearly seen over the skyline of the long and relatively low Creag Dhubh ridge. The Watch Tower has two window openings facing south-west towards Inveraray and down Loch Fyne and south-east directly towards the Creag Dhubh ridge and the proposal.

There would also be views from the grounds and gravel terrace immediately around Inveraray Castle (EIA-R VP6) and from the Garden Bridge (SI VP19). Additional visualisations provided in December 2020 in this area include Viewpoint 20 from the road between the castle and the Garden Bridge, Viewpoint 21 from Kilmalieu Cemetery and Viewpoint 22 from the Aray Bridge. While a lesser vertical and horizontal extent of the turbines would be visible in these lower elevation views than from Dun na Cuaiche, moving turbine blades seen on the presently open skyline of Creag Dhubh would be visually distracting. Effects would be adverse but no significant.

Cumulative landscape and visual effects - The operational Clachan Flats and An Suidhe wind farms would be variously seen together and sequentially with this proposal from the Loch Fyne area. The wide spacing between these existing wind farms and this proposal, and the generally limited extent of visibility, would be unlikely to result in significant adverse cumulative effects experienced within Argyll & Bute. This proposal is likely, however, to have significant combined cumulative effects with the operational Clachan Flats wind farm on views from some of the Arrochar Alps within the LLTNP (in particular from Beinn an Lochain and Beinn Ime).

Conclusions - This proposal would occupy a highly sensitive location at the head of Loch Fyne and close to the LLTNP. Sensitivity is also increased due to its proximity to Inveraray and the Inveraray Castle GDL. ABC advised the applicant that the proposed location of the wind farm was highly sensitive in their scoping consultation.

While the ridge of Creag Dhubh provides screening, limiting the vertical extent of turbines visible from the shores and open waters of Upper Loch Fyne, greater visibility of turbines would be experienced from more elevated views from Dun na Cuaiche within the Inveraray Castle GDL and also in views from the high slopes, ridges and summits of the Arrochar Alps within the LLTNP. Effects on some of the SLQs of the LLTNP are likely to be significantly affected by this proposal. Within Argyll & Bute, the proposal would be likely to incur significant adverse effects on parts of the *Steep Ridges and Mountains* and *Rocky Coastland* LCTs in the vicinity of Strachur, on some of the special qualities of the APQ which is designated around Loch Fyne and on views from the Strachur area, Inveraray town and Inveraray Castle GDL, on short sections of the A83 and areas of settlement on the north-western side of Loch Fyne and also from the open waters of upper Loch Fyne. It is recommended that this proposal should be refused on the basis of these significant landscape and visual effects.

Mitigation

NatureScot, ABC Landscape Consultant & Strachur Community Council have all referred to mitigation in their responses.

NatureScot - The Creag Dhubh wind farm proposal is significantly taller and closer to the LLTNP, resulting in significant effects on the SLQs of the LLTNP, notwithstanding that the development is located outside of its administrative boundary. The location, scale, proximity, prominence, visual intrusion and linear arrangement in the upland landscape are all determining factors in influencing the degree of impact upon the LLTNP's SLQs. Significant effects have been identified, including to the immediate south near Strachur, from the LLTNP's western hills and from the west side of Loch Fyne in views across the loch to the LLTNP. Mitigation capable of reducing some of these effects would be likely to involve some significant changes to the proposal, including for example, removing turbines 1 and 2 at the southern end of the scheme would eliminate most effects on the section of Cowal Way, properties and roads to the southeast of Strachur. While reducing the size of turbines or positioning them lower on the eastern slope may reduce effects on views from the west side of Loch Fyne and from within the LLTNP, NatureScot advise that significant adverse effects are likely to remain in relation to the distinctive and landmark summits, connecting ridges and hill slopes of the western hills in the LLTNP as detailed above.

ABC Consultant Landscape Architect has advised that mitigation of significant adverse visual effects could potentially be achieved by reducing the height of turbines. Although this measure alone would be unlikely to mitigate effects from Dun na Cuaiche, it could negate impacts from lower parts of the Inveraray Castle GDL and from the shore walk within Inveraray town. Moving turbines to a lower elevation on the slopes of Succoth Glen, in combination with a reduction in the height of turbines, could avoid visibility from Dun Na Cuaiche but may make the proposal unviable in terms of wind capture. Significant adverse effects from the popular summits, ridges and upper slopes of the LLTNP Mountains would persist even if this mitigation could be implemented. In addition, significant adverse effects on views from the Strachur area, including views from the A886, should be mitigated by omission of the two southernmost turbines. These turbines are particularly prominent and appear dislocated and unbalanced because of their location on steep slopes.

Strachur Community Council have commented that the visibility of the development from the Strachur area is due mainly to the southernmost two turbines. For example, the visualisation show that these, and no others, will be clearly visible from Stachurmore, Balliemeanoch Cottage and Glen Sluain. If these turbines were omitted from the development, the visual impact of the whole wind farm on the local Strachur area would be significantly reduced.

Forestry

ABC Consultant Landscape Architect has advised that the proposal could also be the catalyst for speedier enhancement of forestry in the Succoth Glen and it is recommended that, should the Council be minded to grant permission, this should be on the condition that an improved Wind Farm Forest Design Plan is agreed with significant increases in broadleaved planting and open space within the glen floor and side valleys, along tributary burns and upper margins.

In the event that Members are minded to grant planning permission it is recommended that the mitigation detailed above is explored with the applicant prior to a decision being issued and conditions are attached to secure any agreed mitigation (e.g. removal of turbines 1 and 2) and an improved Wind Farm Forest Design Plan.

Having due regard to the above it is concluded that the proposal will have a significant adverse Landscape and Visual impact on National and Local designations and is therefore contrary to the provisions of SG LDP ENV 13 –

Development Impact on Areas of Panoramic Quality (APQs); SG LDP ENV 14 – Landscape; SG 2 Renewable Energy; LDP STRAT 1 – Sustainable Development; LDP DM1 – Development within the Development Management Zone; LDP 3 – Supporting the Protection, Conservation and Enhancement of our Environment; Policy LDP 6 – Supporting the Sustainable Growth of Renewables; LDP 9 – Development Setting, Layout and Design; of the Argyll & Bute Local Development Plan; SPP; Onshore Wind Policy Statement, (2017); SNH Siting and Designing Wind Farms in the Landscape Guidance, (August 2017); and the ‘Argyll & Bute Landscape Wind Energy Capacity Study’ SNH and ABC (2017)

J. EFFECTS ON NATURAL HERITAGE INCLUDING BIRDS (INCLUDING CUMULATIVE IMPACTS)

Policy LDP 6 – Supporting the Sustainable Growth of Renewables, SG 2 Renewable Energy and SPP (2014) require applications for wind turbine developments to be assessed against any impact they may have on natural heritage including birds.

General Ecology

ABC Local Biodiversity Officer has no objection to the proposal and provides the following advice: highlights discrepancy in Peat survey (deep peat should be considered as >50cm not 1.0m; bats should be included in the Site Monitoring Plan; Otter to be included in the Species Action Plan in the CEMP; keep a watching brief for Pine Marten; keep a watching brief for Red Squirrel and include it in the Species Plan; further details on the treatment of excavations to be provided in a Soil & Peat Management Plan (including restoration); Borrow Pits - further details, restoration plan to be included in CMS; and provision of a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP)

Fish

Argyll District Salmon Fishery Board (ADSFB) – Eachaig and Argyll DSFB request that if the development is given planning permission, that robust pre and post development surveys are carried out to demonstrate that there has been no damage to salmon populations or their habitat caused by the construction of the project.

ABC Local Biodiversity Officer has no objection to the proposal and provides the following advice in respect to fish: fish monitoring should be included in the Species Monitoring Plan; Fresh Water Pearl Mussel – no action required; and in the interests of protecting Salmonid fish – a pollution protection plan should be provided for the River Cur;

Ornithology

NatureScot requested Supplementary Information in the form of satellite tag data for golden eagle G/LG3 to help validate the EIAR and allow them to comment fully on the likely significant impacts on the NHZ14 population as well as any appropriate mitigation measures. Having been provided with this data they advise that the G/LG3 golden eagle satellite tag data suggests the Predicting Aquila Territories (PAT) model does not accurately reflect eagle activity and the predicted areas of higher activity. Whilst NatureScot recognise that the proposal may have an adverse localised impact on a number of protected bird species, it is unlikely to create a Natural Heritage Zone (NHZ) population level risk. However, it should be noted that the potential impacts in the EIAR are underestimated. The G/LG3 range is constrained by topography, neighbouring ranges, forestry etc. and is noted as having poor productivity in recent years, all of

which makes it potentially more vulnerable to abandonment as acknowledged in the EIAR. NatureScot strongly advise that, should planning permission be granted, a Habitat Management Plan should be developed to improve the condition of the G/LG3 range and NatureScot support the post construction monitoring as proposed in EIAR Chapter 11 Ornithology section 11.12.2 Mitigation During Operation Phase. NatureScot request further information is provided regarding the Identiflight aerial detection system in terms of effecting shutdown and practicality.

The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds noted in their scoping response in 2017 that this wind farm falls within the core (3km) range of an occupied eagle territory, territory LG3. They welcomed the inclusion of the satellite tag data for the eagle territory A22 as well as the NHZ14 population model. They also note the inclusion of PAT modelling of the LG3 eagle territory, however this is no longer thought to be an adequate method to predict golden eagle use of a site. One of the LG3 birds was satellite tagged last year, this data is available to the applicants and is essential for them to make a fully informed evaluation of the impact the wind farm will have on the pair in this territory. RSPB asked that ABC request the applicants provide this satellite tag information and until this is made available they object to this application but will review their position if the data is made available. This information has been provided to the RSPB. At time of writing no response has been received.

The Argyll Raptor Study Group have also written a letter of representation objecting to the proposal. It should be noted that the satellite tag data was also sent to them to afford them the opportunity to comment further. However, at time of writing no further response has been received.

ABC Local Biodiversity Officer has no objection to the proposal and defers to the RSPB for provision of Ornithological advice

In light of the fact that NatureScot are satisfied with the proposal in terms of Ornithological impact, subject to the aforementioned conditions. It is considered that the proposal is acceptable in this regard.

Trees/Woodland

Scottish Forestry – no response at time of writing. Should Members be minded to approve this application. It is recommended that the response from Scottish Forestry is secured prior to making any decision.

In light of the fact that no response has been received from Scottish Forestry it is not possible to conclude whether or not the proposal is consistent with policy in this regard. Specifically: SG LDP ENV 1 – Development Impact on Habitats, Species and Our Biodiversity (i.e. biological diversity); SG LDP ENV 6 – Development Impact on Trees/Woodland; SG 2 Renewable Energy; LDP STRAT 1 – Sustainable Development; LDP 3 – Supporting the Protection, Conservation and Enhancement of our Environment; Policy LDP 6 – Supporting the Sustainable Growth of Renewables of the Argyll & Bute Local Development Plan; SPP (2014); Onshore Wind Policy Statement; and the Scottish Government's Policy on 'Control of Woodland Removal' (Forestry Commission Scotland 2009).

Having due regard to the above it is concluded that subject to the recommended conditions the proposal will not have any adverse impacts on any of the other relevant natural heritage interests including birds and is therefore consistent

with the provisions of: SG LDP ENV 1 – Development Impact on Habitats, Species and Our Biodiversity (i.e. biological diversity); SG LDP ENV 7 – Water Quality and the Environment; SG LDP ENV 11 – Protection of Soil and Peat Resources; SG 2 Renewable Energy; LDP STRAT 1 – Sustainable Development; LDP DM1 – Development within the Development Management Zone; LDP 3 – Supporting the Protection, Conservation and Enhancement of our Environment; Policy LDP 6 – Supporting the Sustainable Growth of Renewables of the Argyll & Bute Local Development Plan; SPP (2014); Onshore Wind Policy Statement; and the Scottish Government’s Policy on ‘Control of Woodland Removal’ (Forestry Commission Scotland 2009);

K. IMPACTS ON CARBON RICH SOILS, USING THE CARBON CALCULATOR (INCLUDING CUMULATIVE IMPACTS)

Policy LDP 6 – Supporting the Sustainable Growth of Renewables, Supplementary Guidance 2 and SPP (2014) require applications for wind turbine developments to be assessed against any impact they may have on carbon rich soils, using the carbon calculator

Peatland

NatureScot note that the applicant identifies areas of peatland and effort has been made to site most of the construction and infrastructure to reduce impacts with further investigation and micro-siting proposed to reduce the magnitude of effect on peat. As a result, the area which may be affected by the proposed wind farm is not considered by NatureScot to be of National Interest for its peatland habitat.

Given that the development will result in a net loss of peatland habitat and some loss of peat, NatureScot advise that a Peat Landslide Hazard Risk Assessment should be carried out prior to construction. In addition, NatureScot strongly advise that, should planning permission be granted, the current peat restoration plans are developed into an integrated Peat Habitat Restoration or Management Plan to ensure maximum benefit and minimum risk from the reuse of excavated peat.

Deep peat

Both NatureScot and the ABC’s Local Biodiversity Officer note a discrepancy in the applicants description of deep peat (>1.0) and advise that in accordance with current guidance (Scottish Government, Scottish Natural Heritage, SEPA (2017) Peatland Survey. Guidance on Developments on Peatland, on-line version only) deep peat is all peat over 0.5 in depth.

The Scottish Environmental Protection Agency originally objected on the grounds of lack of information on peat management, and requested a comprehensive Peat Management Plan (PMP), providing full details on peat excavation, management and restoration as appropriate. SEPA advised that they would review this objection if their concerns were adequately addressed. In response to this, an Outline Peat Management Plan was submitted by the applicant as additional information. SEPA maintained their objection, and advised that in order for the objection to be removed, the planning application would need to be modified to achieve the following: re-siting of the construction compound away from areas of deep peat, or adoption of a different design which would not result in deep peat excavation; removal of proposals to place peat in areas without appropriate hydrological connectivity, or provision of evidence which confirm suitable hydrology; and removal of proposals to fill drains with excavated peat. Installation of suitable dams to block drains and allow peat to re-form naturally

would be acceptable. A further revised Outline Peat Management Plan was submitted by the applicant which SEPA reviewed and have confirmed that the proposed revisions meet their requirements. SEPA have therefore withdrawn their objection, provided the revisions will be accommodated exactly as described.

Spatial Strategy (SPP & SG2) - The site is located within a Group 2 area as defined by SPP and Supplementary Guidance due to the mapped presence of Class 2 nationally important carbon-rich soils, potentially of high conservation value and restoration potential. According to SNH's narrative accompanying the Carbon and Peatland 2016 map, the map "*can only indicate that carbon-rich soils, deep peat and priority peatland habitat are likely to be present and that the presence, or potential presence, of such resources is not a ban on development*". Following the advice of SNH and SEPA, it is not considered that this status would be an impediment to the proposal being permitted subject to conditions to secure a Peat Management Plan and a Peat Landslide Hazard Risk Assessment.

Having due regard to the above it is concluded that subject to the recommended conditions the proposal will not have any adverse impacts on carbon rich soils, using the carbon calculator and is therefore consistent with the provisions of it therefore consistent with the provisions of SG LDP ENV 1 – Development Impact on Habitats, Species and Our Biodiversity(i.e. biological diversity); SG LDP ENV 11 – Protection of Soil and Peat Resources; SG 2 Renewable Energy; LDP STRAT 1 – Sustainable Development; LDP DM1 – Development within the Development Management Zone; LDP 3 – Supporting the Protection, Conservation and Enhancement of our Environment; Policy LDP 6 – Supporting the Sustainable Growth of Renewables of the Argyll & Bute Local Development Plan; SPP; Onshore Wind Policy statement.

L. PUBLIC ACCESS, INCLUDING IMPACT ON LONG DISTANCE WALKING AND CYCLING ROUTES AND THOSE SCENIC ROUTES IDENTIFIED IN THE NPF (INCLUDING CUMULATIVE IMPACTS)

Policy LDP 6 – Supporting the Sustainable Growth of Renewables, SG 2 Renewable Energy and SPP (2014) require applications for wind turbine developments to be assessed against any impact they may have on public access, including impact on long distance walking and cycling routes and those scenic routes identified in NPF3.

The Scottish Rights of Way and Access Society (ScotWays) has advised that the National Catalogue of Rights of Way (CROW) shows that right of way SA32 is affected by the area outlined in red on the site layout with turbine IDs plan. It appears that access will be taken from the right of way on to the proposed site. As there is no definitive record of rights of way in Scotland, there may be other routes that meet the criteria to be rights of way but have not been recorded as they have not yet come to ScotWays notice. Additionally, it may be of interest to note that this route is promoted in Scotways popular book Scottish Hill Tracks. The long distance route the Cowal Way uses part of the above noted right of way. The Society requests that right of way SA32 remains open and free from obstruction during and after any proposed works. There may now be general access rights over any property under the terms of the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003. Scotways would strongly recommend also consulting the Core Paths Plan, prepared by the Council's own access team as part of their duties under this Act.

The Council's Access Officer – at time of writing no response has been received.

Having due regard to the above it is concluded that subject to the recommended conditions the proposal will not have any adverse physical impacts on public access, including impact on long distance walking and cycling routes and those scenic routes identified in the NPF and is therefore consistent with the provisions of SG 2 Renewable Energy, SG LDP TRAN 1 – Access to the Outdoors; LDP STRAT 1 – Sustainable Development; LDP DM1 – Development within the Development Management Zone; LDP 3 – Supporting the Protection, Conservation and Enhancement of our Environment; Policy LDP 6 – Supporting the Sustainable Growth of Renewables of the Argyll & Bute Local Development Plan; SPP; Onshore Wind Policy statement.

M. IMPACTS ON THE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT, INCLUDING SCHEDULED MONUMENTS, LISTED BUILDINGS AND THEIR SETTINGS (INCLUDING CUMULATIVE IMPACTS)

Policy LDP 6 – Supporting the Sustainable Growth of Renewables, SG 2 Renewable Energy and SPP require applications for wind turbine developments to be assessed against any impact they may have on the historic environment, including scheduled monuments, listed buildings and their settings.

Historic Environment Scotland – initial view was that the proposals do not raise historic environment issues of national significance and therefore they did not object. Upon receipt they reviewed the Supplementary Environmental Information (SEI), which consisted of a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) report with additional visualisations and assessment of impacts in response to the request from ABC and NatureScot. HES note that some of the additional viewpoints are taken from within the Inveraray Castle Inventory Garden and Designed Landscape (GDL 00223) and the category A listed Aray Bridge (LB 11545). The additional visualisations from these assets confirm HES's views that the proposal would have an adverse impact on the setting of the designated assets, but that these would not be so adverse as to raise issues of national interest. HES are therefore content that the SEI does not demonstrate any change to the assessed effects on the historic environment. HES are satisfied that the SEI does not demonstrate an impact that raises issues of national interest for their remit and confirm that they have no additional comments to add to their previous response. HES note that the assessment of impacts on the historic environment has not been revised and confirm that it does not object to the proposal.

The West of Scotland Archaeology Service (WOSAS) raised no objection to the proposal, it has advised that it agrees with the cultural heritage section of the EIAR and that the proposal raises no significant direct or indirect archaeological issues. This is mainly due to the location, rugged topography, high altitude and the lack of finds when the area was surveyed archaeologically.

Having due regard to the above it is concluded that the proposal will not have any adverse impacts on the historic environment, including scheduled monuments, listed buildings and their settings and is therefore consistent with the provisions of SG LDP ENV 15 – Development Impact on Historic Gardens and Designed Landscapes; SG LDP ENV 16(a) – Development Impact on Listed Buildings; SG LDP ENV 19 – Development Impact on Scheduled Ancient Monuments; SG LDP ENV 20 – Development Impact on Sites of Archaeological Importance; LDP 3 – Supporting the Protection, Conservation and Enhancement of our Environment; Policy LDP 6 – Supporting the Sustainable Growth of Renewables; and SG 2 Renewable Energy of the Argyll & Bute Local

Development Plan; SPP; the Onshore Wind: Policy Statement and the Historic Environment Policy for Scotland 2019 (HEPS) in this respect.

N. IMPACTS ON TOURISM AND RECREATION (INCLUDING CUMULATIVE IMPACTS)

Policy LDP 6 – Supporting the Sustainable Growth of Renewables, SG 2 Renewable Energy and SPP require applications for wind turbine developments to be assessed against any impact they may have on tourism and recreation.

Strachur Community Council – comment that it is possible that the development could disadvantage the local economy, through loss of income to the hospitality sector, if, due to the partial industrialisation of its landscape setting, Strachur becomes less attractive as a destination for hotel guests, holiday lets and day tourists (including users of the Loch Lomond & Cowal Way).

Mountaineering Scotland have also written a letter of representation objecting to this proposal. Concerns of particular relevance are raised in paragraphs: 14, 18, 26, 28 and 29 of their representation which may be summarised as follows:

- the important context within which the proposal is located – just outside the National Park (1km) and within 13km of the Arrochar Alps, an immensely important area for Scottish mountaineering and hill-walking;
- the National Park and North Argyll APQ follow fairly arbitrary boundaries in the vicinity of the proposal – these designations recognise the quality of the landscape in the immediate vicinity of the proposal and such recognition is not consistent with approving a wind farm the size and altitude proposed in this location;
- the proposal lies partly within the North Argyll APQ, just outside the National Park and close to the Arrochar Alps, a major draw for mountaineering recreation and tourism – while the site itself may be unexceptional, it is set within a high quality and valued mountain landscape;
- As far as mountaineering tourism and recreation is considered, the benign conclusion of the EIAR is unwarranted and greater caution regarding potential adverse tourism and recreation impacts is merited when faced with application set within high quality landscapes;
- The proposal would materially change the perceived character of the presently largely recessive landscape as seen from the Arrochar Alps. This is an area of substantial mountaineering significance, highly accessible from the Central Belt yet a true Highland landscape. Wind farms are not absent in the wider view but, with the regrettable exception of Clachan Flats, their impact is muted by distance and good siting. The proposal does not offer these mitigations and manages to be visible from all the summits from which Clachan Flats is not visible. It would have an impact wholly disproportionate to the climate benefits to be gained from such a small development in the wrong location.

It is likely that the hill walkers accessing the Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park western hills who will be most affected by this proposal and it is this group of people who may be put off making repeat visits to the hills.

ABC also regards landscape as being a particularly valued asset both in terms of its intrinsic qualities and in terms of its value to the tourism economy. For all types of development the maintenance of landscape character is an important facet of decision-making in the countryside in Argyll & Bute, regardless of the scale of development proposed. The Council's Local Development Plan Policy LDP 6 identifies impacts on tourism and recreation as a material consideration in the assessment of wind turbine developments on the basis that inappropriate developments with significant adverse effects which contribute to the degradation of landscape character are unlikely to be in the interests of the Argyll tourism economy.

It is considered that current research on the impact of wind farms on tourism is based upon the existing situation where approved wind farms are generally well sited and scaled. Officers are of the view that the outcome of such research may be different if it were to consider and encompass wind farms which are inappropriately sited and scaled (such as is considered to be the case here). It is considered that the proposal would result in a significant adverse effect on some special qualities of the Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park and the objectives of the designation and the overall integrity of the area would be compromised.

The presence of these adverse landscape and visual impacts in the the Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park would suggest that the development may influence public attitudes to a point where tourists might become dissuaded from visiting. This protection of the National Park in regard to recreation is supported by SPP, Para 84.

Whilst the proposed windfarm is not within the Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park, it will be visible from within these areas and an inappropriately scaled and sited development will raise similar issues in relation scenic sensitivity and capacity to absorb large scale development.

Having due regard to the above, it is considered that the proposal will have an adverse impact on tourism and recreation and is therefore inconsistent with the provisions of: SG LDP TRAN 1 – Access to the Outdoors; LDP STRAT 1 – Sustainable Development; LDP DM1 – Development within the Development Management Zone; LDP 3 – Supporting the Protection, Conservation and Enhancement of our Environment; Policy LDP 6 – Supporting the Sustainable Growth of Renewables; SG LDP ENV 13 –Development Impact on Areas of Panoramic Quality (APQs); SG LDP ENV 14 –Landscape; and SG 2 Renewable Energy of the Argyll & Bute Local Development Plan, SPP and the Onshore Wind Policy Statement in this respect.

O. AVIATION, DEFENCE AND SEISMOLOGICAL RECORDING (INCLUDING CUMULATIVE IMPACTS)

Policy LDP 6 – Supporting the Sustainable Growth of Renewables, SG 2 Renewable Energy and SPP require applications for wind turbine developments to be assessed against any impact they may have on Aviation, Defence and Seismological Recording.

The Ministry of Defence has no objection to the proposal subject to conditions to ensure that: the development is fitted with MOD accredited aviation safety lighting and that prior to the commencement of construction they are provided with: the date construction starts and ends; the maximum height of construction equipment; and the latitude and longitude of every turbine (this information is vital as it will be plotted on flying charts to make sure that military aircraft avoid this area).

National Air Traffic Services (NATS) has no safeguarding objection to this proposal.

Having due regard to the above it is concluded that subject to the recommended conditions the proposal will not have any adverse impacts on aviation and defence interests and seismological recording and is therefore consistent with the provisions of: Policy LDP 6 – Supporting the Sustainable Growth of Renewables; SG LDP TRAN 7 –Safeguarding of Airports and SG 2 Renewable Energy of the Argyll & Bute Local Development Plan, SPP and the Onshore Wind: Policy Statement in this respect.

P. IMPACTS ON TELECOMMUNICATIONS, BROADCASTING INSTALLATIONS AND TRANSMISSION LINKS (INCLUDING CUMULATIVE IMPACTS)

Policy LDP 6 – Supporting the Sustainable Growth of Renewables, SG 2 Renewable Energy and SPP require applications for wind turbine developments to be assessed against any impact they may have on telecommunications, broadcasting installations and transmission links.

Ofcom have no comment and advised that information is provided via the Spectrum Information System (SIS). CSS Spectrum Management and the Joint Radio Company have not responded. No significant environmental effects on any such receptors are identified in ES.

Having due regard to the above it is concluded that the proposal will not have any adverse impacts on telecommunications, broadcasting installations and transmission links (including cumulative impacts) and is therefore consistent with the provisions of SG 2, Renewable Energy, Policy LDP 6 – Supporting the Sustainable Growth of Renewables of the Argyll & Bute Local Development Plan, SPP (2014) and the Onshore Wind Policy Statement in this respect.

Q. IMPACTS ON ROAD TRAFFIC AND ADJACENT TRUNK ROADS (INCLUDING CUMULATIVE IMPACTS)

Policy LDP 6 – Supporting the Sustainable Growth of Renewables, SG 2 Renewable Energy and SPP require applications for wind turbine developments to be assessed against any impact they may have on road traffic and adjacent trunk roads.

Transport Scotland has no objection to the proposal subject to conditions to: secure approval of the proposed route for any abnormal loads on the trunk road network prior to the commencement of deliveries to site; to secure approval of any accommodation measures required including the removal of street furniture, and traffic management; and to ensure acceptable additional signing or temporary traffic control is undertaken by a recognised Quality Assured traffic management consultant. The reasoning for these conditions is to ensure that the transportation of abnormal loads will not have any detrimental effect on the trunk road network.

ABC Roads have no objection, subject to conditions relating to: improvement of the existing access; agreement of the design & construction of the access; access surfacing; surface water drainage; carriageway width across bellmouth; video record of road corridor (A815 to site including junction); route for abnormal loads; accommodation measures – traffic management consultant; signs etc. to be removed and replaced after each movement to maintain road safety; programming of deliveries; verge and carriageway reinstatement; and Transportation of abnormal loads not to coincide with peak travel times. ABC Roads also advise that a Road Opening Permit will be required for work on or adjacent to the road corridor.

Having due regard to the above it is concluded that subject to the recommended conditions the proposal will not have any adverse impacts on road traffic and adjacent trunk roads and is therefore consistent with the provisions of SG2 Renewable Energy, Policy LDP 6 – Supporting the Sustainable Growth of Renewables; SG LDP TRAN 4 – New and Existing, Public Roads and Private Access Regimes of the Argyll & Bute Local Development Plan, SPP (2014) and the Onshore Wind Policy Statement in this respect.

R. EFFECTS ON HYDROLOGY, THE WATER ENVIRONMENT AND FLOOD RISK (INCLUDING CUMULATIVE IMPACTS)

Policy LDP 6 – Supporting the Sustainable Growth of Renewables, Supplementary Guidance 2: Renewable Energy and SPP require applications for wind turbine developments to be assessed against effects on hydrology, the water environment and flood risk.

The Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) - Flood risk – advise that although the site appears to lie outwith the SEPA Flood Map, they have identified a number of small watercourses within the site boundary for which they do not hold flood risk information and recommend that advice is sought from ABC's Flood Risk Management Authority, who may have local knowledge and/or possess flood records.

SEPA further advise that the removal of trees to enable the construction of wind farms can have a variety of hydrological impacts. Therefore, careful consideration should be given to the extent of deforestation and proposed flood risk mitigation measures. Given that the proposed land use is 'essential infrastructure' and the turbines would be outwith the SEPA Flood Hazard Maps, they have no objection on flood risk grounds.

ABC's Flood Risk Assessor – Flood Risk - has no objection to the proposal and recommends that planning conditions to the effect of the following should be attached to any planning permission granted for this application: watercourse crossings to be designed to pass the 1 in 200 year plus climate change (56% allowance) flood event; and Surface water drainage should be designed in accordance with CIRIA C753 and be in operation prior to the start of construction.

Having due regard to the above it is concluded that effects on hydrology, the water environment and flood risk have been considered and subject to the recommended conditions the proposal is therefore consistent with the provisions of SG 2 Renewable Energy, Policy LDP 6 – Supporting the Sustainable Growth of Renewables of the Argyll & Bute Local Development Plan, SPP and the Onshore Wind Policy Statement in this respect.

S. THE NEED FOR CONDITIONS RELATING TO THE DECOMMISSIONING OF DEVELOPMENTS, INCLUDING ANCILLARY INFRASTRUCTURE, AND SITE RESTORATION (INCLUDING CUMULATIVE IMPACTS)

Policy LDP 6 – Supporting the Sustainable Growth of Renewables, Supplementary Guidance 2: Renewable Energy and SPP (2014) require applications for wind turbine developments to be assessed against the need for conditions relating to the decommissioning of developments, including ancillary infrastructure, and site restoration.

The proposal has been designed with an operational life of 25 years. At the end of the operational period it would be decommissioned and the turbines dismantled and

removed. Any alternative to this action would require permission from ABC and so is not considered in the ES. Policy LDP 6 requires conditions relating to the decommissioning of developments, including ancillary infrastructure, and site restoration. Should planning permission be granted conditions will be required to ensure the decommissioning and removal of the development in an appropriate and environmentally acceptable manner and the restoration and aftercare of the site, in the interests of safety, amenity and environmental protection.

Having due regard to the above it is concluded that subject to the recommended conditions the need for conditions relating to the decommissioning of developments, including ancillary infrastructure, and site restoration has been considered and the proposal is therefore consistent with the provisions of SG 2 Renewable Energy, Policy LDP 6 – Supporting the Sustainable Growth of Renewables of the Argyll & Bute Local Development Plan, SPP and the Onshore Wind Policy Statement in this respect.

T. OPPORTUNITIES FOR ENERGY STORAGE (INCLUDING CUMULATIVE IMPACTS)

Policy LDP 6 – Supporting the Sustainable Growth of Renewables, Supplementary Guidance 2: Renewable Energy and SPP (2014) require applications for wind turbine developments to be assessed against any opportunities for energy storage which exist. There is no provision for battery energy storage in this scheme.

Having due regard to the above it is concluded that opportunities for energy storage have been considered and the proposal is therefore consistent with the provisions of SG 2 Renewable Energy, Policy LDP 6 – Supporting the Sustainable Growth of Renewables of the Argyll & Bute Local Development Plan, SPP and the Onshore Wind Policy Statement in this respect.

U. THE NEED FOR A ROBUST PLANNING OBLIGATION TO ENSURE THAT OPERATORS ACHIEVE SITE RESTORATION (INCLUDING CUMULATIVE IMPACTS)

Policy LDP 6 – Supporting the Sustainable Growth of Renewables, Supplementary Guidance 2: Renewable Energy and SPP (2014) require applications for wind turbine developments to be assessed against the need for a robust planning obligation to ensure that operators achieve site restoration. This matter can be covered by planning conditions or a legal agreement consistent with other projects across Argyll & Bute in the event that the proposal obtains planning permission.

Having due regard to the above it is concluded that subject to the recommended conditions the need for a robust planning obligation to ensure that operators achieve site restoration (including cumulative impacts) has been considered and the proposal is therefore consistent with the provisions of SG 2 Renewable Energy, Policy LDP 6 – Supporting the Sustainable Growth of Renewables of the Argyll & Bute Local Development Plan, SPP (2014) and the Onshore Wind Policy Statement in this respect.

V. Scottish Planning Policy, The Scottish Energy Strategy, Onshore Wind Policy Statement 2017

SPP – National Parks

Para 212, SPP 2014 states that: *“Development that affects a National Park ... should only be permitted where: the objectives of designation and the overall integrity of the area will not be compromised; or any significant adverse effects on the qualities for which the area has been designated are clearly outweighed by social, environmental or economic benefits of national importance”*.

Para 213, SPP 2014 states that: *“Planning decisions for development within National Parks must be consistent with paragraphs 84 – 85”*.

Paras 84 & 85, SPP 2014 National Parks state that: *“National Parks are designated under the National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000 because they are areas of national importance for their natural and cultural heritage. The four aims of national parks are to: • conserve and enhance the natural and cultural heritage of the area; • promote sustainable use of the natural resources of the area; • promote understanding and enjoyment (including enjoyment in the form of recreation) of the special qualities of the area by the public; and • promote sustainable economic and social development of the area’s communities”*.

And ...85. *“These aims are to be pursued collectively. However if there is a conflict between the first aim and any of the others then greater weight must be given to the first aim. Planning decisions should reflect this weighting”*. Paragraph 213 also applies to development outwith a National Park that affects the Park

The Scottish Energy Strategy (SES) 2017 - The SES was published in December 2017 and sets out the Scottish Government’s strategy through to 2050, marking a ‘*major transition*’ over the next three decades in terms of energy management, demand reduction and generation. The SES sets two new targets for the Scottish energy system by 2030: The equivalent of 50% of the energy for Scotland’s heat, transport and electricity consumption to be supplied from renewable sources; and, an increase by 30% in the productivity of energy use across the Scottish economy. The SES recognises that reaching the 50% target by 2030 ‘will be challenging’ but the target demonstrates ‘the Scottish Government’s commitment to a low carbon energy system and to the continued growth of the renewable energy sector in Scotland’.

These energy and climate change goals mean that onshore wind must continue to play a vital role in Scotland’s future – helping to decarbonise our electricity, heat and transport systems, boosting our economy, and meeting local and national demand.

The Statement goes on to state that: *‘This means that Scotland will continue to need more onshore wind development and capacity, in locations across our landscapes **“where it can be accommodated”**’*.

‘Onshore Wind: Policy Statement’ (December 2017) – The onshore wind policy statement sets out the Scottish Government’s position on onshore wind and supports the aims of the Scottish Energy Strategy:

*“25. The Scottish Government acknowledges the way in which wind turbine technology and design is evolving, and fully supports the delivery of large wind turbines in landscapes judged to be capable of accommodating them **without significant adverse impacts**”*.

Having due regard to the above it is considered that the proposal is contrary to the provisions of SPP, the Scottish Energy Strategy 2017 and Onshore Wind Policy Statement 2017, in that it cannot constitute ‘sustainable development’, as it is considered that it cannot be accommodated on the chosen site without

significant adverse landscape and visual impacts on nationally and locally designated landscapes (Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park and Area of Panoramic Quality) contrary to the provisions of these documents, which represent the Scottish Governments most up to date position on this type of development.

Appendix - Representations Received for: 19/02544/PP

Objection

1. Iain MacPhillimy, 2 Swedish Houses, Strachur, Cairndow, Argyll, PA27 8DJ - 25th February 2020
2. Hugh Gilbert, Cladach, Strachur, PA27 8BY, 25th February 2020
3. Argyll Raptor Study Group, David C Jardine, The Old Schoolhouse, 26 Kilmartin, Lochgilphead, Argyll, PA318RN, 27th February 2020
4. Margaret Paterson, Achnamara, Strachur, Argyll, PA27 8DP 25TH February 2020;
5. Norman C Mack, Stonefield, Letters Way, Strachur, PA27 8DP 25th February 2020;
6. Morag Blunt, Tigh An Struan, Midletters, Strachur, Argyll, PA27 8DP, 25th February 2020
7. E Mack, Stonefield, Mid-Letters, Strachur, PA27 8DP
8. Ishbel Fraser, Ardfracoch, Strachur, PA278BY 26th February 2020
9. Lorna McLean, Cladach Strachur Cairndow Argyll & Bute, PA27 8BY 25th February 2020
10. Ian Hopkins, Flat 1/2 179 High Street Rothesay Isle of Bute Argyll & Bute, PA20 9BS 25th February 2020
11. Mountaineering Scotland (24th February 2020) –
12. E A Campbell, Crossaig, Strachur, Cairndow, Argyll & Bute, PA27 8BY 21st February 2020
13. Mr David Campbell, Crossaig Strachur Cairndow Argyll & Bute, PA27 8BY, 22nd February 2020
14. Graham Clark, 2 Ferrybank Cottages Colintrave Argyll & Bute, PA22 3AR 26th February 2020

Support

1. (15) Mr Leslie Earle, Glendarg Letters Way, Strachur, Cairndow, Argyll & Bute PA27 8DP, 23rd February 2020
2. (16) Tim King, Lochgoil Community Trust, The Village Hall Lochgoilhead, PA24 8AQ 4th May 2020