

APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT BY ARGYLL AND BUTE COUNCIL

THE CONSERVATION (NATURAL HABITATS AND C.) REGULATIONS 1994 AS AMENDED

CONSTRUCTION OF 1 X 750KW WIND TURBINE (77M TO BLADE TIP), CRANE HARDSTANDING, CONTROL BUILDING, TEMPORARY CONSTRUCTION COMPOUND AND FORMATION OF VEHICULAR ACCESS LAND AT GALLANACH FARM, ISLE OF COLL

It is considered by Scottish Natural Heritage that the above proposal (our reference 11/01915/PP) has the potential to have a significant effect on the qualifying interests of the North East Coll Lochs and Moors SSSI and Coll Special Protection Area (SPA). As a consequence Argyll and Bute Council is required to carry out an appropriate assessment in view of the sites conservation objectives for the sites qualifying species.

This assessment is detailed below.

Characteristics of the development

The proposal involves the erection of a 77m (tip height) wind turbine on land at Gallanach Farm, Isle of Coll. The proposed turbine is 'medium' scale in terms of the current industry standards, and the number of turbines is small compared with mainstream commercial schemes.

The turbine itself will measure 77m to blade tip and 55m to hub. It will have an output generating capacity of 750Kw and will be commercial enterprise selling electricity to the national grid. The proposal will sit to the west of Gallanach Farm within a rocky ridge and set within this area of rocks.

Location of the development

The proposal is located at Gallanach Farm on the Isle of Coll. The turbine will be to the west of the farm within a grouping of rocks and north of the B8072. The surrounding land is characterised by large rocks and agricultural uses. To the north is a beach and ocean. The nearest property is the applicants at Gallanach Farm approximately 500m to the east. The nearest third party residential property is to the south east approximately 760m away. The site is not designated for landscape, archaeological or nature conservation purposes but is adjacent to a Local Nature Conservation Site and the SSSI and Coll SPA is located to the east. The Argyll and Firth of Clyde Landscape Character Assessment 1996 describes the land as 'marginal farmland mosaic'.

Potential impacts on the qualifying interests

The proposed site is close (approximately 850m) to the North East Coll Loch and Moors SSSI designated form wintering Greenland Whitefronted Geese, breeding bird assemblage, habitats and plants. The SSSI forms the basis for the Coll SPA designated for its internationally important numbers of wintering Greenland Whitefronted and Barnacle Geese. Both of these species are listed as Annex 1 species within the EC Birds Directive.

It is known that the fields to the south of the site are regularly hold feeding Whitefronted Geese. The majority of the surrounding fields at Arnabost have entered into management agreements with RSPB for corncrakes and hold good numbers of breeding waders and provide good grazing for geese in winter. The Coll corncrake SPA is approximately 6km from the turbine location. The whole of Coll held 121 birds (calling males) in 2011 representing approximately 9.6% of the UK population.

Affect upon integrity of the site

The survey work informing the ornithological assessment within the ES is thorough. RSPB confirm that Greenland Whitefronted and Greenland Barnacle Geese were recorded adjacent,



and on limited, within the application footprint, and this must confirm that the development could have a likely significant effect upon the SPA interests. However, having scrutinised the Environment Statement, RSPB agree with the conclusion of the assessment, and confirm that the development will not have an adverse impact upon the integrity of the site.

In terms of all birds species, including the Greenland Whitefronted and Greenland Barnacle Geese only, RSPB and SNH are satisfied that the development will not increase the risk of mortality via turbine collision, or direct and indirect habitat loss. The Council supports these conclusions provided that construction work is undertaken outwith the winder period, October to April.

It is therefore concluded that the proposal will not have a significant adverse impact upon the integrity of the SPA.

SF

25 July 2012

..... Date

Stephen Fair
Area Team Leader

