

Brian Close
Planning Officer (Bute and Cowal)
Development Management
Planning and Regulatory Services
Argyll and Bute Council

14th June, 2013

Dear Mr Close,

Planning Application 13/00472/PP

We are writing in response to your email correspondence dated 10th June, 2013.

We acknowledge fully the concerns of landscape impact in relation to clear felling of commercial forestry within the vicinity of the proposed wind turbine development at Toward, Taynuilt Farm, but can find no significance of effect of this “negative adverse impact” in relation to the proposal.

While land-cover does indeed impact on significance of effect of development, it is the correct siting of turbine typologies in relation to landform that can be argued to be the greatest concern.

Throughout the conception and design development of this proposal, VG Energy have worked with the Council to ensure a proposal that does indeed work in scale with the topography and does not dominate over the landform in which it is located.

The greatest significant land-use change and modification to “landscape character” which will affect wide ranging receptors comes from the blanket planting of commercial forestry within this area and the resultant removal and scarring of land when these crops are felled. The introduction of the wind energy development as proposed into this constantly evolving landscape is not of an unacceptable scale and impact in relation to this other impacting land-use.

Assessment conducted against the baseline landscape, and as presented is valid. We respectfully disagree with the opinion that the land-use change in forestry will have the degree of change on the development as you foresee. Currently the proposed turbines, as shown in referenced visualisations 02/02a, 03/03a, 04/04a, 05/05a, and 06/06a are seen in combination with forestry as you correctly point out. They are also shown in context of landscape (topographic) form. The location down from the crest of hill and the relationship of the turbines to land-form as illustrated by the wireframes is suitable, and adheres to best practice in mitigating impact with topography while maintaining turbine efficiency (locating further down slope into turbulent wind counteracts the purpose of development).

The reliance on landform is actually more important to development than the “back-grounded” woodland and the removal of this forestry does not actually present a significant change to the view of turbines over the undulating “bare” skyline. Difference in impact resulting from sky-lining would be negligible.

It can be countered that the removal of the darker forestry would indeed help to reduce visual impact of development as the turbines would be viewed against the lighter hillside that will remain

after forestry operations have ceased. The Council opted for the more “standard” colour of turbine typology and as such the difference in lighter colour against dark plantation forestry would be removed for the duration of the development within the landscape.

Again it can be argued that the “natural backdrop” of commercial forestry that you allude to “softening the visual impact” of short and distant views is an incorrect statement. This commercial landscape of dark, non-native monoculture forestry, while screening some immediate short distance views, in fact provides a stark contrast in others. The removal of this forestry may assist in absorbing the development into the remaining “natural” form of the landscape.

This lighter colour of the turbine would be far more appropriate for the relatively minimal sections of turbine seen above the bare skyline within certain limited views.

A number of development factors must be considered when proposing to site a wind technology development, and all of these have to be balanced to ensure a suitable proposal that is efficient yet sensitive to local and wider area:

- Wind resource;
- Radar constraints;
- Noise buffers;
- Access;
- Grid connection; and
- Ecology, hydrology and water issues.

The development location, within property boundaries, presents the most suitable setting in relation to all constraints while adhering to guidance and best practice in setting within the landscape to minimise adverse impact and resultant effects on receptors.

We appreciate the opportunity to respond to your comments and concerns and hope that you can see the validity in the responses that have been presented.

We respect again your invitation to withdraw this application, but for the development as presented we can find no merit in doing so. Impacts as presented and with future land-use changes in forestry removal do not present a change in significance rating of adverse effects to landscape or amenity in contravention of Local or National Planning Policy.

Yours Sincerely,

Stephen Waters
Planning and Environmental Consultant