

Agenda Item	5.5
Report No	PLS-020-21

HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Committee: South Planning Applications Committee

Date: 27 April 2021

Report Title: 21/01826/PAN - SSE Renewables
Glenmoriston Estate North Of Levishe, Invermoriston

Report By: Area Planning Manager – South

Purpose/Executive Summary

Description: Bhlaraidh Wind Farm Extension - Erection and Operation of a Wind Farm, comprising of 18 Wind Turbines with a maximum blade tip height 180m, access tracks, two temporary construction compounds, borrow pits, substation, and ancillary infrastructure.

Ward: 12 – Aird and Loch Ness

Recommendation

Members are asked to note the submission of the PAN and highlight any material issues they wish to be brought to the attention of the applicant before the submission of an application for planning permission.

1.0 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 This report informs the Planning Applications Committee of the submission of the attached Proposal of Application Notice (PAN).
- 1.2 The proposed application will be submitted under Section 36 of the Electricity Act 1989 where pre-application consultation and submission of a PAN is not a statutory requirement. The submitted PAN, which was received on 29 March 2021, has therefore been done on a voluntary basis. Members are asked to note this may form the basis of a subsequent Section 36 Application to the Scottish Government's Energy Consents Unit who will consult The Highland Council on the application.
- 1.3 The submitted information attached includes:
- Proposal of Application Notice (Application Form)
 - A Newsletter which has been circulated to local residents and key stakeholders;
 - Location Plan; and
 - Site Layout Plan.
- 1.4 The applicant has undertaken a range of public consultation to date including:
- Provision of a dedicated website;
 - Virtual Public Exhibition between 24 February 2021 and 12 March 2021;
 - Live chat sessions;
 - Postcards with details of the consultation sent to local residents; and
 - Newsletters circulated to local residents outlining details of the project.
- 1.7 The forthcoming application will likely be accompanied by a Pre-Application Consultation (PAC) report explaining the consultation undertaken, feedback received, and any resultant amendments made to the planning application.

2.0 DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

- 2.1 The PAN provides notice of the developer's intention to submit an application which will have the ability to generate in the region of 100MW of electricity. The proposed development is likely to comprise erection and operation of a wind farm, comprising of 18 Wind Turbines with a maximum blade tip height 180m, access tracks, two temporary construction compounds, borrow pits, substation, and ancillary infrastructure. It is anticipated that the application will utilise infrastructure installed during the construction of the adjacent Bhlaraidh Wind Farm.
- 2.3 The developer has sought pre-application advice from the Planning Authority through the Pre-Application Advice Service.

3.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

- 3.1 The application site is within an area of rocky moorland plateau approximately 6km from Invermoriston on an area of land adjacent to the operation Bhlaraidh Wind Farm. The existing wind farm comprises 32 wind turbines and has capacity to generate up to 108MW of electricity.

There are a number of residential properties located in proximity to the development, with the nearest properties located to the south of the development site in Invermoriston with further properties located to the south west at Bhlraidh. The area to the north and west is sparsely populated. There are no properties located within the boundary of the application site.

The site includes both gently sloping areas and steeper areas of rocky moorland. There are several open waterbodies and watercourses within the site. The watercourses are part of the river system that flows into the River Moriston SAC.

There are no local, national or international designations within the application site itself, although Levishie Wood SSSI and the River Moriston Special Area of Conservation (SAC) lie close to its southerly boundary. The Loch Ness and Duntelchaig Special Landscape Area lies approximately to the east of the nearest turbine, while the Glen Affric National Scenic Area, SSSI and SAC lies approximately 6km to the northwest, with the Glen Strathfarrar NSA beyond that. The site does not lie within a Wild Land Area.

There are cultural and heritage interests both within the site and close to the site.

4.0 DEVELOPMENT PLAN

The following policies are relevant to the assessment of the proposal:

4.1 Highland Wide Local Development Plan (2012)

- 28 - Sustainable Design
- 29 - Design Quality & Place-making
- 30 - Physical Constraints
- 31 - Developer Contributions
- 51 - Trees and Development
- 52 - Principle of Development in Woodland
- 55 – Peats and Soils
- 56 - Travel
- 57 - Natural, Built & Cultural Heritage
- 58 - Protected Species
- 59 - Other Protected Species
- 60 - Other Important Habitats
- 61 – Landscape
- 63 – Water Environment
- 64 - Flood Risk
- 66 - Surface Water Drainage
- 67 - Renewable Energy Developments
- 68 – Community Renewable Energy Developments
- 72 – Pollution
- 77 – Public Access

4.2 Inner Moray Firth Local Development Plan (2015)

There are no site-specific policies covering the site. However, the Inner Moray Firth Local Development Plan identifies Special Landscape Areas within the plan area.

4.3 **Highland Council Supplementary Planning Policy Guidance**

Construction Environmental Management Process for Large Scale Projects (August 2010)

Highland Historic Environment Strategy (Jan 2013)

Highland's Statutorily Protected Species (March 2013)

Highland Renewable Energy Strategy & Planning Guidelines (May 2006)

Onshore Wind Energy: Supplementary Guidance including Landscape Sensitivity Appraisals (November 2016)

Standards for Archaeological Work (March 2012)

Sustainable Design Guidance

Trees, Woodlands and Development (Jan 2013)

Scottish Government Planning Policy and Guidance

Scottish Planning Policy (December 2020)

National Planning Framework 3 (June 2014)

Onshore Wind Policy Statement (December 2017)

Scottish Energy Strategy (December 2017)

PAN 1 / 2011 – Planning and Noise;

Circular 1/2017 – Environmental Impact Assessment;

PAN 60 – Planning for Natural Heritage;

2020 Routemap for Renewable Energy;

Onshore Wind Turbines; and

Wind Farm developments on Peatlands

5.0 **POTENTIAL MATERIAL PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS**

- Development Plan;
- National Policy;
- Planning History;
- Roads and Transport;
- Water Environment (including private water supplies);
- Flood Risk and Drainage;
- Peat;
- Natural Heritage (including protected species, ornithology and designated sites);
- Trees and Forestry;
- Built and Cultural Heritage;
- Design, Landscape and Visual Impact (including Cumulative impacts and Impact on Wild Land Areas);
- Access and Recreation;
- Economic Impact and Tourism;
- Noise and Shadow Flicker;
- Telecommunications;
- Aviation; and
- Construction.

6.0 CONCLUSION

6.1 The report presents the information submitted to date as part of the PAN. Summarised are the policy considerations against which any future planning application will be considered as well as the potential material planning considerations and key issues based on the information available to date. The list is not exhaustive and further matters may arise as and when a planning application is received and in the light of public representations and consultation responses.

7.0 IMPLICATIONS

7.1 Not applicable.

8.0 RECOMMENDATION

8.1 It is recommended the Committee notes the submission of the PAN and advises of any material issues it wishes to be brought to the applicant's attention.

Designation: Area Planning Manager – South

Author: Simon Hindson

Background Papers: Documents referred to in report and in case file.

Relevant Plans: Plan 1 - Location Plan
Plan 2 – Site Layout Plan

The Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 as amended by the Planning Etc. (Scotland) Act 2006 Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (Scotland) Regulations 2008

The Council will respond within 21 days of receiving the Notice. It will advise whether the proposed Pre-application Consultation is satisfactory or if additional notification and consultation above the statutory minimum is required. Please note that a planning application for this proposed development cannot be submitted less than 12 weeks from the date the Proposal of Application Notice is received by the Council and without the statutory consultation requirements having been undertaken. The planning application must be accompanied by a Pre-application consultation report.

<p>Applicant SSE Renewables 1 Waterloo Street Glasgow G2 6AY.</p> <p>Phone 0141 224 7131 E-mail: jane.macdonald@sse.com</p>	<p>Agent n/a</p> <p>Phone E-mail</p>
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Address or Location of Proposed Development

Glenmoriston Estate, near Invermoriston, Highlands.

The proposed development is located adjacent to the operational 32 turbine Bhlaraidh Wind Farm (the 'Operational Development') also operated by the Applicant (planning reference: 12/02556/S36). The British National Grid (BNG) reference for the centre point of the Site is 238732, 821202. The location of the proposed development is shown on **Figure 1.1 (attached)**.

Description of Development

The proposed development will extend the Operational Development onto the adjoining land to the east and north and will comprise 18 wind turbines of up to a maximum 180 m height from ground to blade tip when vertical. The total installed capacity of the Proposed Development will be approximately 100.8 MW. A number of ancillary elements are also proposed, including the following: access tracks and turning heads; crane hardstandings; underground cabling; on-site substation; two temporary construction compounds; a batching plant search area; five new borrow pit search areas; three former hydro borrow pit search areas; a temporary meteorological monitoring mast; and a permanent LiDAR.

The Proposed Development site layout is shown in **Figure 1.2 (attached)** and the wider site layout in context with the Operational Development is shown in **Figure 1.3 (attached)**.

Pre-application Screening Notice

Has a Screening Opinion been issued on the need for a Proposal of Application notice by the Highland Council in respect of the proposed development?

If yes, please provide a copy of this Opinion.

No. Section 36 Scoping Opinion was obtained from Energy Consents Unit.

Community Consultation [See checklist of Statutory minimum consultation attached]

State which other parties have received a copy of this Proposal of

Application Notice.

Community Council/s	Date Notice Served
Fort Augustus and Glenmoriston CC	29/3/21
Glenurquhart CC	29/3/21
Strathglass CC	29/3/21
Names/details of any other parties	Date Notice Served
Copy sent to Energy Consents Unit	29/3/21

Please give details of proposed consultation

Proposed public event	Venue	Date and time
Website	On-line	July 2020
Virtual Public Exhibition	On-line	24 th February – 12 th March 21

Newspaper Advert – name of newspaper	Advert date(where known)
Press and Journal (advert)	24 th February 2021

Details of any other consultation methods (date, time and with whom)

2020:

- 5th March 2020 - Initial email to community councils re engagement in public events. Further correspondence in Mar-May included various follow up emails on approach to alternative digital consultation methods due to covid-19 restrictions.
- 11th June 2020 – Project webpage live: <https://www.sserenewables.com/onshore-wind/in-development/bhlaraidh-extension/>
- 12th June 2020 - Correspondence to community councils, ward councillors and mailing list, social media.
- 15th/16th June - Postcards sent to ~2,000 local residents and businesses.
- 22nd June – Social media reminders of access to website and feedback
- 30th June – Reminder correspondence to community councils, ward councillors and mailing list
- 17th July 2020 - Reminder correspondence sent to community councils and notification of extension of online feedback deadline to the 21st July 2020.
- 13th October 2020 - Email correspondence with community councils re update on project progress.

2021

- 20-22nd Feb 2021 - Newsletter distributed via mail drop to 2,213 local residents and businesses notifying of virtual public exhibition. **Newsletter copy attached.**
- Feb 2021 - Virtual exhibition link included on project website
- 17th February 2021 - Media release to local news outlets, Inverness Courier and Press and Journal (P&J) <https://www.inverness-courier.co.uk/news/virtual-exhibition-opens-on-proposals-for-more-wind-turbines-near-loch-ness-229199/>. **P&J advert attached.**
- 22nd January 2021 - Invitation to Community Councils.
- 22nd February 2021 - Second invitation to Community Councils.
- 3rd March 2021 - Notification of additional live chat session, issued to community councils.
- 3rd March 2021 - Media release to local news outlets.

Signed ...Jane MacDonald (issued by email)..... Date...29th March 2021.....