

Agenda Item	6.1
Report No	PLS-63-24

HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Committee: South Planning Applications Committee

Date: 19 November 2024

Report Title: 24/04410/PAN: AECOM
Land 2700m West of Inchtellach, Bunloit, Drumnadrochit

Report By: Area Planning Manager – South

Purpose/Executive Summary

Description: Development of pumped storage hydro with storage capacity of up to 30,000 megawatt hours with up to 2,000 megawatts installed electrical generation capacity. Water will be pumped, via proposed tunnels, into and from turbines located between Loch Ness and Loch nam Breac Dearga.

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 the application for planning permission.

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 To inform the Planning Applications Committee of the submission of the attached Proposal of Application Notice (PAN).
- 1.2 The submission of the PAN accords with the provisions of the Planning etc. (Scotland) Act 2006 and was made valid on 09 October 2024. The PAN is a statutory requirement for planning applications for major or national developments and must be lodged at least 12 weeks prior to the submission of a planning application. Members are asked to note this may form the basis of a subsequent planning application.
- 1.3 The submitted information attached includes:
- Proposal of Application Notice (Application Form)
 - Location Plan
- 1.4 In October 2022, The Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (Scotland) Regulations 2013 were amended by The Town and Country Planning (Pre-Application Consultation) (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 2021. This changed some of the consultation activities required by the applicant for PANs submitted after 01 October 2022. The previous arrangements associated with the Covid-19 public health advice and previous modifications to the regulations are now superseded. The prospective developer has so far held in-person community consultation events in Drumnadrochit, Whitebridge and Invermoriston. These were held at Craigmorie Centre Glen, Urquhart High School, Drumnadrochit on 23 October between 6pm and 8pm, Wildside Centre, Whitebridge on 24 October between 3pm and 7pm, Glenmoriston Millenium Hall, Invermoriston on 07 November between 10am and 2pm and Balnain Hall, Balnain, Drumnadrochit on 08 November between 2pm and 6pm. These events were advertised in the Inverness Courier on 15 and 29 October and the project website <https://www.glenearrach.energy/post/glen-earrach-pumped-storage-hydro-facility-consultation>. Letters with details of the consultation events were posted to all landowners within a 10km radius of the site boundary.
- 1.5 The Proposal of Application Notice has also been served on the host Glenurquhart Community Council along with neighbouring Fort Augustus and Glenmoriston Community Council and Stratherrick and Foyers Community Council. Local Ward 12 (Aird and Loch Ness) Elected Members, MSPs, MP and Energy Consents Unit have also been served notice.
- 1.6 Any forthcoming application will require to 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. DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

- 2.1 Based upon the information provided, the development is likely to comprise of a construction of a pumped storage hydroelectric scheme of up to 2000MW generation capacity and 30,000MW hours storage capacity and associated infrastructure on 4819ha of land on the north-western side of Loch Ness. Infrastructure will likely

include a headpond reservoir and embankment, access tracks, power cavern, construction compounds, power cavern, tunnels and waterways.

- 2.2 The applicant has sought pre-application advice through the Council's Pre-Application Advice Service for Major Developments in September 2024 (24/00617/PREMAJ) and Scoping Opinion with Highland Council's response issued in October 2024 (24/02045/SCOP).

3. SITE DESCRIPTION

- 3.1 Upland ground on the north western side of Loch Ness approximately 9.5km south of Drumnadrochit and 6.5km north of Invermoriston. The south western portion of the proposed site boundary is within the Loch Ness and Duntelchaig Special Landscape Area (SLA). Various designated sites are in the wider surrounding area including River Moriston Special Area of Conservation (SAC) which is located approximately 3.1km to the south west, Urquhart Bay Wood SAC which is located approximately 4.8km to the north east and Moray Firth SAC which is located approximately 27.8km to the north east.
- 3.2 Dun Scriben, fort (SM6220), Schedule Monument is located within the proposed site boundary with Dun Scriben, fort (SM6220) and Dun Deardail, Forts located approximately 410m and 520m north east of Fasnagruig (SM11884). Urquhart Castle (SM90309) and Cherry Island crannog, Inchnacardoch Bay, Loch Ness (SM9762) are in the wider surrounding area approximately 5.2km and 15.1km to the north east and south west respectively.

4. DEVELOPMENT PLAN POLICY

The following policies are relevant to the assessment of the application

4.1 National Planning Framework 4 (Adopted 2023)

National Development 2 – Pumped Hydro Storage

1 - Tackling the climate and nature crises

3 – Biodiversity

4 – Natural places

5 – Soils

6 – Forestry, woodland and trees

11 – Energy

12 – Zero Waste

13 – Sustainable transport

14 – Design, quality and place

18 – Infrastructure first

20 – Blue and green infrastructure

22 – Flood risk and water management

- 23 – Health and safety
- 25 – Community wealth building
- 29 - Rural development
- 33 – Minerals

4.2 **Highland-wide Local Development Plan (Adopted 2012)**

- 28 - Sustainable Design
- 29 - Design Quality & Place-making
- 30 - Physical Constraints
- 31 - Developer Contributions
- 36 - Wider Countryside
- 51 - Trees and Development
- 54 - Mineral Wastes
- 55 - Peat and Soils
- 56 - Travel
- 57 - Natural, Built & Cultural Heritage
- 58 - Protected Species
- 59 - Other important Species
- 60 - Other Importance Habitats
- 61 - Landscape
- 62 - Geodiversity
- 63 - Water Environment
- 64 - Flood Risk
- 65 - Waste Water Treatment
- 66 - Surface Water Drainage
- 67 - Renewable Energy Developments
- 69 - Electricity Transmission Infrastructure
- 72 - Pollution
- 77 - Public Access
- 78 - Long Distance Routes

4.3 **Inner Moray Firth Proposed Local Development Plan (IMFLDP2, 2022)**

It contains a number of general policies which are applicable including Policy 2 - Nature Protection, Preservation and Enhancement.

4.4 **Highland Council Supplementary Planning Policy Guidance**

Developer Contributions (November 2018)

Flood Risk & Drainage Impact Assessment (Jan 2013)
Green Networks (Jan 2013)
Highland Historic Environment Strategy (Jan 2013)
Highland's Statutorily Protected Species (March 2013)
Managing Waste in New Developments (March 2013)
Physical Constraints (March 2013)
Public Art Strategy (March 2013)
Roads and Transport Guidelines for New Developments (May 2013)
Special Landscape Area Citations (June 2011)
Standards for Archaeological Work (March 2012)
Sustainable Design Guide (Jan 2013)
Trees, Woodlands and Development (Jan 2013)

4.5 **Scottish Government Planning Policy and Guidance**

A range of other national planning and energy policy and guidance is also relevant, including but not limited to the following:

Scottish Energy Strategy (Dec 2017)
Historic Environment Policy for Scotland (HEPS, 2019)
PAN 1/2011 - Planning and Noise (Mar 2011)
Circular 1/2017: Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations (May 2017)
PAN 60 – Planning for Natural Heritage (Jan 2008)
2020 Routemap for Renewable Energy (Jun 2011)
Wind Farm Developments on Peat Lands, Scottish Government (Jun 2011) – while not a wind farm the document contains relevant information for other developments which may involve peat.
Energy Efficient Scotland Route Map, Scottish Government (May 2018)
Assessing Impacts on Wild Land Areas, Technical Guidance, NatureScot (Sep 2020)
Scottish Land Use Strategy 2021-2026 (2021)

5. **POTENTIAL MATERIAL PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS**

- 5.1
- a) Development Plan;
 - b) Planning History;
 - c) National Policy;
 - d) Roads and Transport;
 - e) Pedestrian and Cycle Links;
 - f) Water, Flood Risk, and Drainage;

- g) Natural Heritage;
- h) Protected Species;
- i) Built and Cultural Heritage;
- j) Design and Layout;
- k) Landscape and Visual Impact;
- l) Soils and Peat;
- m) Access and Recreation;
- n) Noise and Light Pollution;
- o) Construction Impacts;
- p) Phasing;
- q) Open Space and Landscaping;
- r) Infrastructure capacity and delivery; and
- s) Any other material considerations raised within representations.

6. CONCLUSION

- 6.1 The report sets out 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. IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 Resource: Not applicable
- 7.2 Legal: Not applicable
- 7.3 Community (Equality, Poverty and Rural): Not applicable
- 7.4 Climate Change/Carbon Clever: Not applicable
- 7.5 Risk: Not applicable
- 7.6 Gaelic: Not applicable

8. RECOMMENDATION

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.

Signature: David Mudie
Designation: Area Planning Manager – South
Author: Roddy Dowell

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

Relevant Plans: Plan 1 - Proposal of Application Notice

Plan 2 – Location Plan Figure 1-1

The Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 as amended by the Planning Etc. (Scotland) Act 2006 and Planning (Scotland) Act 2019

Town and Country Planning (Pre-Application Consultation) (Scotland) Regulations 2021

The Council will respond within 21 days of validation 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.

The Proposal of Application Notice will be valid for a period of 18 months from the date of validation of the notice by the Council.

Data Protection

Your personal data will be managed in compliance with the Data Protection legislation. You can read our privacy notice for planning related certificates on the Council's website at: https://www.highland.gov.uk/directory_record/1052173/planning_applications_consents_and_notice_of_review

I have read and understood the privacy notice.

Contact Details

Applicant	Glen Earrach Energy Ltd.	Agent	John Daly
Address	50 Lothian Road Festival Square Edinburgh EH3 9WJ	Address	AECOM 1 Tanfield Inverleith Row Edinburgh EH3 5DA
Phone		Phone	07392353834
Email	roderick@glenearrach.energy	Email	john.daly1@aecom.com

Address or Location of Proposed Development

Please state the postal address of the prospective development site. If there is no postal address, please describe its location. Please outline the site in red on a base plan to a recognised metric scale and attach it to this completed Notice.

The Development is on the Northwest side of Loch Ness, approximately 9.5 km to the south of Drumnadrochit, and 6.5 km north of Invermoriston within The Highland Council area. The Development site is shown on the attached 'Location Plan'.

Description of Development

Please include detail where appropriate – eg the number of residential units; the gross floorspace in m² of any buildings not for residential use; the capacity of any electricity generation or waste management facility; and the length of any infrastructure project. Please attach any additional supporting information.

The Development will have a storage capacity of up to 30,000 megawatt hours with up to 2,000 megawatts installed electrical generation capacity. Water will be pumped, via proposed tunnels, into and from turbines located between Loch Ness and Loch nam Breac Dearga. It will provide a flexible energy 'battery' that helps balance supply and demand on the grid system.

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.

Yes

No

Community Consultation

State which other parties have received a copy of this Proposal of Application Notice.

Community Council/s	Date Notice Served
Glenurquhart Fort Augustus and Glenmoriston Stratherrick and Foyers	09/10/2024
Local Elected Members	Date Notice Served
Cllr. Chris Balance Cllr. Helen Crawford Cllr. David Fraser Cllr. Emma Knox	09/10/2024
Members of Scottish Parliament and Members of Parliament	Date Notice Served
Kate Forbes MSP Ariane Burgess MSP Tim Eagle MSP Rhoda Grant MSP Jamie Halcro Johnston MSP Edward Mountain MSP Emma Roddick MSP Douglas Ross MSP Angus MacDonald MP	09/10/2024
Names / details of other parties	Date Notice Served

Scottish Government's Energy Consent Unit	04/10/2024
Details of the consultation will be mailed to landowners within a 10 km radius.	14/10/2024

Details of Proposed Consultation		
Proposed Public Event 1	Venue	Date and Time
	Craigmonie Centre Glen Urquhart High School, Drumnadrochit, IV63 6XA Wildside Centre, Whitebridge, IV2 6UN	Wednesday 23 October, 4:00pm-8:00pm Thursday 24 October, 3:00pm-7:00pm
Proposed Public Event 2 <i>(at least 14 days after Public Event 1)</i>	Venue	Date and Time
	Glenmoriston Millenium Hall, Invermoriston, Inverness, IV63 7YA Balnain Hall, Balnain, Drumnadrochit, IV63 6UG	Thursday 7 November, 10:00am-2:00pm Friday 8 November, 2:00pm-6:00pm

Publication of Event		
Newspaper Advert	Name of Newspaper	Advert Date
	Inverness Courier	15 October 2024 29 October 2024
Details of any other consultation methods (date, time and with whom)		
An online consultation room (www.glenearrach.energy) will be live for comments between 22 October to 15 November 2024.		

Signed		Date	08/10/2024
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