



## Scottish Natural Heritage

All of nature for all of Scotland

Principal Planning Officer  
Development Services  
Environmental Services Department  
The Moray Council  
High Street  
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IV30 1BX

14 April 2009  
Our ref: CNS/DC/MOR  
Your ref: 09/00247/FUL

For the attention of: Jim Martin

Dear Sir

**Planning Application Consultation**  
**Planning Application reference no. 09/00247/FUL**  
**Install two 800Kw wind turbines at Myreton, Crossroads, Keith, Moray for Mr Clive Streeter.**

I refer to your letter of 27 February 2009 requesting comments from Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) on the above development proposal. I apologise for the delay in my response.

SNH did not receive a copy of the habitat survey that is referenced within the additional information submitted with the planning consultation documents. SNH requested a copy of this survey from the agent and received this on 17 March 2009.

### **Background**

The applicant already has planning permission for one 750 kilowatt turbine at this location. SNH provided comments to the Planning Authority and did not object to the single turbine in its letter dated 28 August 2007. We did however have concerns over the quality of supporting information that was submitted with that application and made the Planning Authority aware of these concerns.

The applicant's agent, Oliver Penney of Seren Energy, has sought SNH's advice over recent months with respect to this current application for an additional two turbines of 800 kilowatts each.

### **The proposal**

The proposal is to erect an additional 2 two wind turbines on a hillside at Myreton near Keith in Moray. The turbines will be capable of generating 800 kilowatts of electricity each. The blade diameter of each turbine is 48 metres and the tower heights will be 55 and 65 metres. The height of each turbine to blade tip will be 79 and 89 metres. The consented turbine is a 48 metre rotor diameter with a 50 metre tower given a height to blade tip of 74 metres.



### **SNH position**

SNH considers that the natural heritage interests affected by this proposal are of lesser importance and has no objections. However, any minor impacts could be further reduced and SNH would offer the following comments and suggestions on the proposed development.

### **SNH advice**

SNH, in line with our existing policy on renewable energy welcomes the development of small scale renewable energy projects both by community groups and commercial developers, provided they do not have significant adverse impacts on the natural heritage.

To determine whether a proposal could have significant adverse impacts on the natural heritage, SNH relies heavily on sufficient information being gathered and submitted by the developer.

The applicant has commissioned a minimal amount of survey work and this was carried out at a sub-optimal time of year – mid-December. There have been no specific surveys for birds or mammals that may use the area.

The landscape and visual impact only takes into account a zone of visual influence (ZVI) out to 7.5 kilometres. SNH's guidance, provided to the applicant, recommends that for turbines over 50 metres in height a ZTV (zone of theoretical visibility) map should be out to 30 kilometres. No cumulative impact has been assessed and this may be of particular relevance given the proximity of the existing single turbine at Balnamoon and the proposed Aultmore wind farm.

In many circumstances a lack of sufficient detail means that SNH is unable to advise the planning authority on what the potential impacts will be. To avoid this scenario, and only made possible by the small scale of the proposed development site, I made a brief site visit on 07 April 2009. I did not carry out any formal survey work.

In addition to the advice we provided in our letter dated 28 August 2007 to the proposal for a single turbine at Myreton, I have the following comments. You should refer to the advice in our previous letter that is still relevant in this case. I have attached this advice as annex A for ease of reference.

### Habitats and species

The habitats on and surrounding the site provide limited shelter for a diversity of species. The area is influenced by agriculture and forestry and there are few undisturbed areas.

The watercourses are found within small valleys and do provide some habitat for small birds. It is therefore likely that there are some species of bird that breed on or near the site but I would not consider the area to be important for this reason.

As a precaution I would still recommend that construction work takes place outwith the breeding bird season (1<sup>st</sup> April – 31<sup>st</sup> July inclusive) and this would include any road/track construction and work on the turbine areas. If this cannot be achieved, then the applicant will have to ensure that no breeding birds are disturbed. Breeding birds could be found in trees and scrub or within the fields of rough grazing or arable – depending on when these are ploughed.

I would recommend that care is taken, and SEPA's advice sought, regarding any watercourse crossings. The watercourses afford more natural habitats within the locality and are therefore of greater value to local species. It will be important to avoid sedimentation and pollution of the watercourses.

### Landscape and visual

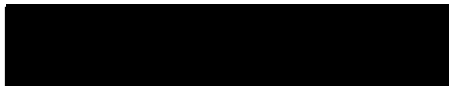
3 turbines (a further 2 turbines in addition to the consented one) can often be accommodated within the landscape without adverse impacts. Lurghill is however fairly prominent within the landscape when viewed from the south and southwest. The Balnamoon single turbine exists and if Aultmore wind farm proposal gains consent then the landscape will have to absorb 3 developments of different scale and turbine size. This may be possible without adverse impacts but there has been no assessment of this.

SNH does not recommend the use of multiple shades of green at the base of the turbine. We would advise that wind turbines, on account of the essential size and nature, cannot be hidden in the landscape. This means that any attempt to camouflage them using colour will usually be unsuccessful. Although the visibility of wind turbines will obviously be affected by their colour, this aspect is unfortunately focused upon by many developers as an easily achievable action at the expense of concentrating upon, in the first instance, good siting and design.

Generally wind turbines appear most sculpted as a single form where they are just painted one colour (without large brand names). They may appear less disconcerting where they are a matt finish to reduce reflection.

If you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact me

Yours faithfully

A solid black rectangular box used to redact the signature of Jennifer Heatley.

Jennifer Heatley  
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***Annex A - Advice provided in SNH letter dated 28 August 2007 to planning consultation ref: 07/01102/FUL (install a 750kw wind turbine with hub height of 50 m and blade diameter of 48 m at Myreton, Crossroads, Keith for Mr Clive Streeter).***

Bird interests

SNH is not aware of any specific species within the area of the turbine that could be directly affected by construction and operation of the turbine. SNH is aware, because of the work done by another wind farm developer, that geese do fly over the area. Moray has 2 Special Protection Areas (SPAs) that include greylag and pink-footed geese as migratory winter visitors as qualifying interests.

Loch Spynie and the Moray and Nairn Coast are classified SPAs under the EC Directive 79/409/EEC on the Conservation of Wild Birds (the "Birds Directive"), meaning that the Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 1994 as amended, (the "Habitats Regulations") apply.

The legislative requirements are summarised in SE Circular 6/1995 as amended June 2000.

Although the SPAs are located away from the proposed turbine site, the geese range widely in their daily search for food. SNH advises that geese associated with SPA populations are likely to cross the proposed turbine site. The collision risk assessments carried out for the other wind farm site suggest that there is the possibility of goose collisions with the wind farm. This proposed wind farm, known as Aultmore, has many turbines of a greater height than the one proposed here. It is therefore less likely that geese would collide with this turbine and would do so in significantly less numbers and less frequently than the larger wind farm.

**SNH considers that it is unlikely that the proposal will have a significant effect on any qualifying interests either directly or indirectly and in SNH's view an appropriate assessment is therefore not required.**

The area surrounding the proposed turbine and associated infrastructure is likely to be used by breeding birds. All wild birds, their nests and their eggs are protected by law. The level of this protection depends on whether the bird is rare or endangered, as listed in Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). Construction activity is likely to disturb nesting birds. **SNH would recommend that construction takes place outwith the breeding bird season. The breeding season is taken to be 1<sup>st</sup> April – 31<sup>st</sup> July inclusive but this can vary slightly depending on weather conditions.**

Landscape and visual interests

There are 2 other renewable energy proposals in the area and the assessments made by the developer do not take account of any cumulative impacts. The proposed Aultmore wind farm is in close proximity and is for a larger number of turbines and the single turbine at Balnamoon is also close to this site. **SNH would recommend that the Moray Council should consider whether the level of assessment that has been carried out, particularly in relation to any cumulative impacts, is satisfactory.**

Habitats

The developer has provided no detail of the types of habitat that will be affected. **SNH therefore recommends that the applicant should have to submit a full construction method statement prior to commencing any work on site.** This construction method statement should be sufficiently detailed to include all measures to protect the environment and wildlife and include maps showing where works will take place, timing of work, measures to protect watercourses from sediment run-off and pollution and reinstatement of disturbed vegetation. The construction method statement should have to be satisfactory to the Moray Council.