

Struan Community Council Response to Scoping Report:

PROPOSED SECTION 36 APPLICATION FOR EDINBANE WIND FARM REPOWER AND EXTENSION

ECU Ref No: Ref: ECU00004668

Background

Struan is a small community of approx. 250 residents in North West of the Isle of Skye, the whole area can be fairly stated as being “fragile”, Struan particularly so, unlike its near neighbours, Struan has no school, no hotel, no pub, no community facility, no regular public transport services and extremely inadequate internet provision.

There are several developers and operators of wind farms looking to upgrade, replace or build from new within the North West of Skye, on the basis all approved this will result there being in the region of 100 wind turbines of circa 200m in height, all in a small area in and around Struan fundamentally changing the whole look and feel of the area.

The build or replacement programmes are all expected to take place around the time that the new Skye Enhancement programme from SSE is taking place, with build times in the region of 2 to 3 years.

It has to be acknowledged that during the build phase it will result in some 600+ AIL deliveries to the area (plus a further 600 empty return journeys) all starting in Kyle or thereabouts and moving at a slow speed on the only road between the Skye Bridge and Sligachan, then onward via Portree or Struan to get to the specific site, a journey of some 39 miles. The AILs will move we understand at circa 8MPH, take over 5 hours and due to the geography of the road will frequently obstruct both lanes of the highway.

The windfarms are all planned for an area of ground above various townships that have water supply dependent on burns and peat pipes in the areas proposed for development, therefore the water supply must be considered to be at risk both during development and during the on-going operation.

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The Struan Community has had and still does have an ongoing cordial relationship with the Developer from when the initial Edinbane Wind Farm was proposed, subsequently consented and constructed, it is however fair to say that not all residents within the Community will welcome the increased size of the proposed turbines and their views/opinions must be respectfully addressed. Consequently, in recognition of the national need for a substantial increase in the low carbon energy production the community is willing to consider supporting the proposed developments subject to a number of legally enforceable conditions:

1. The developer shall work with the other wind farm developers, propose a single co-ordinated schedule for the build phases of the projects that minimises the disruption to the Struan and other affected communities and agree that plan with the Struan Community. Included in the plan shall be contingency arrangements (in particular, but not limited to medical emergency) in the event of a prolonged blockage of the road (e.g breakdown or an “off-road” incident).
2. Impact of the visual effect of the proposal is all but impossible to comment on without substantially improved visualisation data. The developer is required to provide a tool that allows the proposed windfarm to be viewed on a PC or Virtual Reality platform whereby the viewer can position themselves anywhere on the map, adjust the lighting and wind direction and view the wind farm in virtual operation.
3. The developer shall contract with the Struan Community that in the event of their activity being the cause of any disruption to the Struan water supply during the build, operation or de-commissioning phases, they will make good at their cost, with time being of the essence. In addition, the developer shall pay compensation to all affected residents at a day rate (to be agreed) for the duration of the disruption and provide temporary water supply to the same for the duration.
4. The Struan Community recognises that the ECU has no mandate regarding “community benefit” however the community will expect satisfactory compensation from the developer for the use of our environmental facilities. The compensation needs to realistically reflect the value of said facilities to the developer and either be linked to the price they are paid for generated power or the wholesale price of electricity. The original Government Guideline in 2014 indicated £5,000/MW generated when wholesale electricity was £50/MW, the realistic expectation of the Community is that we should be compensated in the order of £20,000/MW (RPI Linked) generating capability, and this should be contracted as a condition of planning consent.
5. In the event that the developer sells or otherwise disposes or transfers the development all the above conditions shall still apply jointly and severally unless agreed to the contrary.