

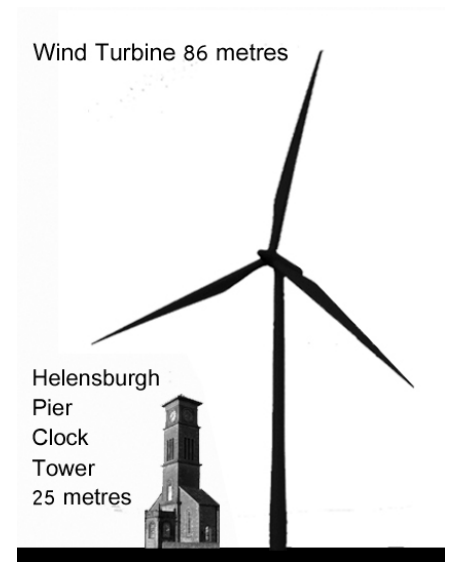
# TEG-H

## Turbines Evaluation Group – Helensburgh and Area

To : Planning Department,  
Argyll and Bute Council,  
Blairvadach, Shandon,  
Helensburgh, G84 8ND

From : Turbines Evaluation Group – Helensburgh and area  
c/o TEG-H Secretary, 40 West Montrose Street, Helensburgh, G84 9PF

Date : 26th. October 2014



### Planning application 14/01674/PP : wind farm north of Helensburgh

#### Supplementary objection : **PLANNING SOURCES**

TEG-H is submitting four topic-related objections to the above planning application. They are :

1. Landscape
2. Visual impact
3. Economic impacts
4. Other aspects

The present objection is supplementary to the above and considers specific sections of :

- A. Scottish Planning Policy (2014)
- B. The Argyll and Bute Council's current development plan
- C. Relevant material considerations

### Introduction

TEG-H is aware that in both the Scottish Planning Policy (2014) and the current development plan there is general support for renewable energy with which TEG-H concurs. TEG-H also supports the right sorts of wind farms in the right places, but holds strongly that the current proposal is not appropriate.

TEG-H further notes that Third National Planning Framework (2014, paragraph 3.9) anticipates that the pace of onshore wind farm development will be overtaken by other forms of renewable energy.

## Abbreviations used in this objection

|             |   |   |
|-------------|---|---|
| A&B         | = | Argyll and Bute   |
| A&BC        | = | Argyll and Bute Council   |
| TEG-H       | = | The Turbines Evaluation Group – Helensburgh and area  |
| SPP         | = | The Scottish Planning Policy published June 2014  |
| DP          | = | A&BC development plan   |
| SP          | = | A&BC Structure Plan 2002  |
| LP          | = | A&BC Local Plan 2009  |
| PLDP        | = | A&BC Proposed Local Development Plan 2013<br>(but not operational until finalised by the Scottish Government) |
| Scot. Govt. | = | Scottish Government   |
| LWECS       | = | A&BC Landscape Wind Energy Capacity Study 2012  |
| WF          | = | wind farm   |
| SNH         | = | Scottish Natural Heritage   |

## A. Scottish Planning Policy (2014)

### Aspects of Scottish Planning Policy (2014) which appear to be inconsistent with the proposed Helensburgh wind farm

#### PROCEDURAL

TEG-H notes the following.

**"Status" (page 2, item ii)** includes the statement that the SPP is guidance to which planning authorities *must* have regard. (*TEG-H emphasis.*)

**Para. 4 (page 4)** "The service should . . . be plan-led . . . and be inclusive, engaging all interests." (*"plan-led" refers to the DP*)

#### SEEMING INCONSISTENCIES WITH THE HELENSBURGH WIND FARM PROPOSAL

**Para. 161 (page 38)** "Planning authorities should set out . . . those areas that are likely to be most appropriate for onshore wind farms." A&BC has done so and this application does not conform to the LP, the detailed guidance incorporated in the LWECS or the A&BC advice given in its Scoping Opinion dated 22nd. August 2013.

**Para. 162** requires authorities to consider cross-boundary constraints. Objections from the Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park Authority, The Friends of Loch Lomond and The Trossachs and other national park bodies indicate that this guidance has not been followed regarding the National Park. The same applies to objections from organisations across the Clyde, or (as in the SNH objection) concerned about the Firth of Clyde.

**Para. 163 (page 38)** "the merits of an individual proposal will be carefully considered against a full range of environmental, community and cumulative impacts." Again, this is something that A&BC must do, but the TEG-H assessment is that several of these impacts are seriously adverse.

**Para. 166, Table 1 (page 39)** suggests 2 km as guidance (not an absolute rule) for separation between the wind farm and settlement boundary. This case is less than 2 km from turbine to boundary. Since there are no hills between the wind farm site and Helensburgh, that makes the turbines highly conspicuous.

Further, Table 1 refers to wind farms, not to the turbines. The building the developers plan to construct beside Drumfad Wood could be about 1.1 km from the Helensburgh boundary, and the road across the moorland less than 1 km at its closest point. Part of the wind farm area where the cable reaches the sub-station is only the other side of the railway track from Paterson Drive in Helensburgh – i.e. just a few metres. These are matters for the planning authority to determine and TEG-H suggests that they require attention.

**Para. 169 (page 40)** lists 19 considerations relevant to a wind farm application. For several of the considerations TEG-H does not have the data to comment (e.g. hydrology), and for others we must rely on technical information from external sources. An example of the latter is the objection from NATS Safeguarding in relation to airfields which states in its 12.8.14 objection, “A technical impact is anticipated from 2 of the turbines; this has been deemed **unacceptable**.” (Their emphasis.) In the TEG-H assessment this application is inconsistent with at least 8 of the 19 considerations and possibly more. Those eight re-appear in section C. below under “material considerations”.

**Para. 170 (page 41)** “Areas identified for wind farms should be suitable for use in perpetuity.” Use of the words “in perpetuity appears to mean that the Council would have to consider more than just the particular planning application, but also whether that site is suitable for a wind farm long after the present proposal has expired.

**Para. 173 (page 41)** says authorities “may wish to engage in negotiations to secure community benefit” AFTER a proposal is acceptable and consent given. Thus discussion of compensatory cash (called “community benefit”) is not a planning matter and should not have any place in the planning process.

**Para. 174 (page 41)** allows for expansion on a wind farm site which has been granted consent. TEG-H has checked with the Scottish Government and that can either be sideways or upwards expansion, but only within the site identified. It may be recalled that Green Cat stated “The final turbine selection will be determined by the findings of a wind assessment which will be undertaken on site.” TEG-H does not know how significant that statement is. But what seems clear from the SPP para. 174 is that if use of the site as a wind farm gets approved, that could be a material consideration in favour of later expansion.

## B. Argyll and Bute Council's current development plan

Aspects of Argyll and Bute Council's current development plan which appear to be inconsistent with the proposed Helensburgh wind farm.

### A&BC Structure Plan

**Policy STRAT SI 1** • avoid the loss of recreational and amenity open space  
• conserve the natural and built environment and avoid significant adverse impacts on biodiversity, natural and built heritage resources

The proposed wind farm would be incompatible with these conditions.

**Policy STRAT SI 4** • . . . securing a viable and managed Greenbelt

By the current development plan, green belt would only be an issue directly to the north of the town where the power line would be carried to the sub-station at Paterson Drive, Helensburgh. Green belt could be a bigger issue if the Scottish Government approves the PLDP since A&BC has supported extension of the Green Belt northwards in the PLDP.

**Policy STRAT DC 3** This lists the limited developments that ARE permitted in the green belt. There is no mention of wind farms.

**Policy STRAT RE 1** encourages wind farms where there is no significant adverse effect on local communities / natural environment / landscape and visual amenity / historic environment. TEG-H considers that the proposed wind farm would have significant adverse effects in these categories.

**Policy STRAT DC 5** Constrains development in SENSITIVE COUNTRYSIDE. No mention of wind farms or renewables. Most of the wind farm area (e.g. road) would be in Sensitive Countryside EXCEPT most of the turbines. So see STRAT DC 6 below.

**Policy STRAT DC 6** refers to VERY SENSITIVE COUNTRYSIDE which does allow "renewable energy related development which is supported by policies STRAT RE 1 . . ." Oddly, very sensitive countryside does allow wind farms to be considered, whereas sensitive does not. But see the reservation about policy STRAT RE 1 quoted above which, in our view, seems to rule out a wind farm on that site.

**Policies STRAT DV 7** (nature conservation), **STRAT DC 8** (landscape) and **STRAT DC 9** (historic environment) are mostly about designated areas, but do have some more general statements which might restrict this development.

### Local Plan (2009)

*[ The Local Plan and Structure Plan will be replaced by the Local Development Plan (LDP) in early 2015. But in this objection we work with what is approved. The Proposed LDP is a material consideration, but it will be up to A&BC to decide how much weight to give to it. ]*

**Policy LP ENV 1** reflects the Structure Plan but has additional material considerations about cumulative impact, access to the countryside, character of the landscape, external appearance, open space. These seem to TEG-H to be incompatible with the proposed wind farm.

**Policy LP ENV 2** concerns biodiversity. The developer must provide a specialist survey. Green Cat did so. SNH and RSPB were not satisfied with the bird survey submitted. A result was the bird flight path maps recently put on the A&BC website. This was limited to 8 species, 6 of which were raptors. The maps show that hen harriers fly into the turbines area. A weakness of the bird evidence provided by the developers is that it is insufficient with regard to other birds. In the view of TEG-H it is not sufficient to limit the bird life quality to those most likely to collide with turbines. As the RSPB made clear in its representation, this area (which would be disturbed by road and other construction work) is extraordinarily rich in a wide range of species, including "red list" birds not on the bird flight maps, as demonstrated by the TEG-H survey over a full year. (See the fourth TEG-H objection.)

**Policy LP ENV 6** Mentions Local Biodiversity Action Plan. This could have relevance to rarer birds.

**Policy LP ENV 8** "Development that would have a significant adverse effect on Local Nature Conservation Sites or other nature conservation interests, including sites, habitats or species at risk as identified in the Local Biodiversity Action Plan will be refused unless the developer proves . . ." All rather vague, but in its submission RSPB (3.9.14) noted that the site is surrounded by Local Nature Conservation sites and is, itself, "of high amenity value". RSPB mentioned specifically Hen Harrier, Short-eared owl and Black Grouse. So this could be relevant.

**Policy LP ENV 11** : Historic Garden and Designed Landscapes. Fiona Baker's work on the Designed Landscape is highly relevant. She has submitted her extensive professional study as a separate objection and TEG-H supports it. This is a major objection.

**Policy LP ENV 19 section (A)** "Development shall be sited and positioned so as to pay regard to the context within which it is located." Here the context is close to the largest settlement in A&B; is a few metres from the boundary of the National Park; and is overlooking the Clyde Estuary. It would be difficult to identify a worse context for a wind farm.

**Policy LP BUS 2.** This weighs against an industrial undertaking in this sensitive area.

**Policy LP BAD 1** : This would be a bad neighbour development according to the policy.

**Policy LP TRAN 1** : Safeguards public rights of way, core paths and important access routes. We have core paths and two long-distance routes on three sides of the wind farm area. These are material considerations.

**Policy LP REN 1** – wind farms and wind turbines. These are supported where "the proposed development will not have an unacceptable adverse impact directly or indirectly or cumulatively on the economic, social or physical aspects of sustainable development." Clearly this would have such adverse effect. The policy goes on to list 8 material considerations which overlap with the 19 in the new Scottish Planning Policy. [It may be noted that the Supplementary Guidance of the Proposed Local Development Plan, section SG LDP REN 1 contains 14 such considerations of which at least six are adverse to this proposed wind farm.]

### **C. Relevant material considerations**

Material considerations are explained in Circular 4 2009. The range of issues which might be regarded as material is considerable. The following list is therefore preliminary only.

- Proposed Local Development Plan (under Scottish Government scrutiny)
- Argyll and Bute Landscape Wind Energy Capacity Study
- A&BC Scoping Opinion (especially height and location of turbines)
- Argyll and Bute Council Landscape Study (Ironsides Farrar Report,)
- Aspects of Scottish Government Circular 4 2009, Annex A.
- Helensburgh Community Council Landscape Statement (2009)
- European Landscape Convention (2000)
- Scottish Landscape Forum Report to Ministers (2007)
- Objection by the National Park Local Plan Authority
- Scottish Natural Heritage objection to this wind farm
- Objections by the APRS and other organisations
- Objections by some Community Councils
- Letter from RSPB about the wind farm development impact on birds
- Expressions of public concern
- Research evidence concerning adverse effects on house purchase
- Research evidence concerning adverse effects on tourism
- Research evidence concerning unreliability of wind power
- The Zones of Theoretical Visibility
- Evidence that residents dislike living near wind turbines
- Evidence that wind turbines deter some tourists
- Emerging evidence of health impacts of turbines, especially infrasound

Others can be added. TEG-H considers that the above all have a bearing on the Helensburgh wind farm application and are adverse to the proposal. Some are discussed in other TEG-H objections. It will be up to A&BC to determine the weight of each.