

Objecting To Balmeanach Wind Farm - 23/04194/FUL

KEY ISSUE:

A proposal to build a new wind farm - 10 turbines of 150m height on the hills above Edinbane/Balmeanach.

These turbines will be immediately adjacent to the existing Edinbane wind farm, although much taller. If consented, this wind farm would “close the gap” between Edinbane wind farm and the already consented Ben Sca wind farm...resulting in a continuous line of visible turbines from behind Edinbane all the way to the 200m giant turbines proposed for repowering Ben Aketil.

Combined with the proposed Waternish wind farm (actually situated in Greshornish forest) then Loch Greshornish could be surrounded by 59 wind turbines, a “ring of steel” which would overwhelmingly change the environment for residents and visitors alike.

Planning decisions need to be made with consideration to the cumulative impact of all the proposed wind farms, and not on a piecemeal or “salami sliced” basis.

What will be the cumulative noise levels? How many eagles will be killed by all of the wind farms if consented? How much peat will need to be excavated across Skye? How will Skye cope with the road traffic chaos caused by hundreds of slow moving abnormal load convoys blocking roads for the years that the construction will take...

As the proposal result in a wind farm of less than 50MW capacity the planning application will be determined by the Highland Council.

The advertised cut off date for objections/representations is 28th October.

To The Highland Council

The planning application can be viewed here:

<https://wam.highland.gov.uk/wam/applicationDetails.do?keyVal=S07Q0IHK9200&activeTab=summary>

Please either register on the Council website to make an objection or email eplanning@highland.gov.uk or write to The Highland Council Eplanning, Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness. IV3 5NX.

Email is the easiest way.....

Need to quote reference 23/04194/FUL

Then copy in our Councillors and maybe the planning officer: email addresses:

drew.millar.cllr@highland.gov.uk (Chair of North Area Planning Committee and Skye Councillor)
john.Finlayson.cllr@highland.gov.uk
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ruraidh.Stewart.cllr@highland.gov.uk
dafydd.jones@highland.gov.uk (Planning officer - Area Manager North Highland)

Key Points (Suggest you concentrate on the issues of most concern to you).

1. The proposed Balmeanach wind farm will dominate the skyline above Edinbane, and would together with the other planned and consented wind farms overwhelm the landscape around

Loch Greshornish causing massive changes for both residents and visitors alike. If all the planned wind farms are consented there will be 59 turbines around the loch.

2. There is no need for the electricity that Balmeanach wind farm would produce. Three of the existing turbines at Ben Aketil or Edinbane provide enough power for the whole of Skye. Skye already produces ten times the power it needs from its existing wind turbines. Moreover, Scotland will meet its renewable energy targets for onshore wind (20GW by 2030) without more wind farms on Skye. The target of 20GW is four times Scotland's total electricity consumption. The existing grid network does not have the capacity to export any more electricity to the rest of the UK.
3. Noise assessments rely on outdated background measurements from previous wind farm applications. Balmeanach wind farm would be situated directly to the south west of Upper Edinbane, and will cause a massive increase of wind farm noise nuisance to residents there and at other nearby properties. The developers only consider cumulative noise levels from existing wind farms and those with planning consent...so no account is taken of the proposed Edinbane and Ben Aketil repowerings (both of which propose new turbines, double the height at 200m tall), or of the massive proposed Glen Ullinish 2 wind farm (47 turbines, 200m high), that would also be adjacent to Balmeanach. Current background noise levels from Ben Aketil and Edinbane wind farms have not actually been measured. No assessment of the impact of amplitude modulation from the proposed wind farm is made, although this is known to be the major cause of noise complaints from wind farms.
4. Massive visual impact for those who live near the proposed wind farm which will damage quality of life and devalue property. The developers' own EIA states the impact will be "major/moderate adverse and significant" for residents in Upper Edinbane, Roag, Lonmore and Greshornish. The tips of the highest turbine proposed will be 390m above sea level. These turbines will also be clearly visible from the Cuillin ridge, from the coastal waters around Skye and from the Outer Hebrides.
5. Will cause traffic chaos as 70m long blades, towers, concrete etc transported across Skye on slow moving convoys. The current transport route proposed by the Balmeanach developers would bring the abnormal load convoys through the middle of Portree. At the Portree High School junction (A87/A855) the developers propose to remove pedestrian safety railings, road signs and traffic islands making this busy road junction unsafe for school children, other pedestrians and road users. Many other road signs and safety barriers will have to be removed from Kyle all the way to the construction site. The Balmeanach developers do not quantify how many abnormal load convoys will be needed, and have no proposals assessing the road situation on Skye when all the new wind farms proposed are being constructed at the same time..
6. Nearly 100,000m³ of peat will need to be excavated for Balmeanach wind farm. How can damaging or destroying our most valuable source of carbon storage be justified in pursuit of "net zero" goals?
7. Other environmental damage will be huge. Four massive "borrow pits" will be excavated on site to provide aggregate for the concrete bases of the turbines and all the associated infrastructure, hard standings, tracks etc. 9.4km of new roads will be needed. Each turbine base will be 25m wide and require thousands of tonnes of concrete and steel that will be left in the ground at the end of the wind farm's life. 77 hectares of forest will be felled. 27 hectares of blanket bog will be destroyed having "a significant negative effect at a regional level" (Wind2 EIA 8.191).
8. The Balmeanach developers acknowledge that birds will be killed through collision with the turbine blades at their wind farm. They estimate 1.38 white tailed eagles will be killed each year by their proposed wind farm alone. There is no cumulative assessment of the impact on bird populations if all the proposed wind farms are built....only the cumulative impact of those farms already built or consented are considered. For example, Glen Ullinish 2 plans acknowledge 3.3 white tailed eagles will be killed each year by their 47 turbines but this figure is not included in the assessments for Balmeanach. How many birds can be killed each year before the population collapses?
9. There will be unquantifiable damage to tourist industry...just around Edinbane, businesses such as Edinbane Lodge, Edinbane Inn, the campsite, holiday lets, Redwood House Hotel and Greshornish Hotel will all be impacted.
10. Community benefit payments from the developers are tiny - £5000 per MW - where figures show community owned turbines can return £170,000 per MW (and sometimes much more).

The plans do nothing to address significant social problems faced by residents of Skye...lack of affordable housing, low wage employment, poverty etc.

11. Community "Consultation" events are a box ticking exercise. Poorly advertised and attended. People are unaware of the scale and number of proposals for wind farms on Skye and for this development in particular, where the exhibitions were badly timed and publicised and therefore poorly attended.
12. There is urgent need for a planning inquiry commission to take a strategic overview of all proposals for wind farms and the Skye Reinforcement Power Line based on need for electricity generation and the and impact on Skye's world renowned landscape, residents and businesses.