

PROTECT RURAL EAST FIFE

c/o 34 Reform Street
Tayport, Fife
DD6 9HX
Tel : 01382 334115
Email: enquiries@pref.org.uk
website: www.pref.org.uk

Development Services
Fife Council
Fife House
North Street
Glenrothes
Fife KY7 5LT

Tuesday, 31 July 2007

Dear Sirs,

Planning Application No. 07/01813/EEIA Erection of 5 Wind turbines at Gathercauld, Ceres

We, PREF (Protect Rural East Fife Group), hereby object, in the strongest possible terms, to the above application on grounds as follows:

1. The proposed erection of 'gigantic' wind turbines in this Area of Great Landscape Value is unwelcome and would be a departure from the approved policies of the adopted Fife Structure Plan 2002 and the adopted St Andrews Area Local Plan 1996;

Policy R7 of the 2002 Structure Plan clearly states that all development proposals must "respect the key features and character of the landscape and minimise their impact on the skyline."

Policy N1 of the 2002 Structure Plan states that any development in an Area of Great Landscape Value should maintain or enhance the character of the landscape.

The proposed development would dominate the skyline and may be visible from a wide area of Fife and Dundee, including the A91 main tourist route between Dairsie and Cupar, the B939 and A915. In our opinion, the development would be overly intrusive and the character of the area would be degraded from a natural scenic landscape to a standard 'Industrialised' landscape. Furthermore, the amenity of local residents would be degraded and drivers of road vehicles would be faced with a major distraction. Moreover, the development may have an adverse impact on the local economy.

2. With regard to the economy, the proposal does not fit with the proposed strategy of the Finalised Fife Structure Plan 2006 which seeks to grow an economy built on tourism and service. Whilst we do not agree with this particular strategy for the whole of Fife, we recognise that tourism is an important generator for the economy, particularly in Rural East Fife, and we are concerned that this development may have an adverse effect on the economy.

For example, consumer research by Visit Scotland on the "Impact of Wind Farms on Tourism" found that 25% of visitors may not return to an area where they feel a wind farm had been insensitively sited and where it detracts from the scenery that has been a major reason for their visit.

This research work, by a statutory research agency, should be taken into account in the consideration of this proposal.

3. The proposal does not fit with the recommendations of the Fife Landscape Character Assessment (FLCA 1999), a material consideration in this matter. We refer you to page 109 of the FLCA 1999, where Scottish National Heritage recommend that Fife Council should;

“Restrict the development of tall structures to those absolutely essential for operational reasons and avoid any new installation of wind turbine generators or other tall or industrial-like structures on all the distinctive, recognisable and prominent hill tops, peaks, skylines and upper slopes.”

Furthermore, SNH also recommend that;

Fife Council should “Explore the potential to steer wind farm developments away from locations where their visual influence would extend across the lowlands...and

Consider potential areas within shallow bowls and valleys, away from ridges. Maximise the amount of backclothing provided by the natural landform. Consider steering development to areas already affected by masts, roads or forestry.

We believe these recommendations should be taken into account in the consideration of this proposal.

4. The proposal will have an adverse effect on the setting of Hill of Tarvit, which is included in the Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes. Refer Structure Plan Policy B1 and St Andrews Area Local Plan Policy E6.
5. The application is premature.
 - (a) The anemometer mast has only recently been erected and it is obvious that wind measurements have not been collected from the site for sufficient time to evaluate the wind resource.
 - (b) the options have not been fully explored and exhausted. In particular, there are many brownfield sites, areas of deprivation in need of regeneration, unpopulated and bland landscapes in the UK which should be considered in the first instance prior to the development and ruin of beautiful landscape.

And finally, with regard to the number of turbines, the reader should be aware of the fact that the developer has downsized their proposal from original plans. It is therefore possible that, in due course, the applicant will seek to add further turbines.

We therefore call on you to reject this application and prevent planning precedent in an area of great landscape value.

We should be grateful if you would acknowledge receipt of this letter and give due consideration to our objections.

Yours sincerely

Paul Strachan
Chair of PREF
Protect Rural East Fife Group

Also by email