



Biggar & District Community Heritage

Grayside Windfarm Proposals - BDCH response to public consultation

Background

Biggar and District Community Heritage is a local charity involved in landscape conservation and improving public access. We support onshore wind farms as a valuable contribution to reducing CO2 emissions, but have concerns about this specific development. Should the development go ahead, we would hope to work constructively with the developers to bring the maximum benefit to our local community.

Concerns

Our main concern is the cumulative impact and incursion into areas that SLC planning had not identified for further windfarm development. The application sites lie outwith the area preferred for windfarm developments in the adopted local plan and would set an unwelcome precedent for further similar applications. South Lanarkshire has already hosted a considerable share of Scotland's windfarm development. The cumulative landscape impact would lead to further industrialisation of the previously rural landscape of the southern uplands to the detriment of nature-based tourism and biodiversity.

If the development does go ahead, a major concern is **the construction of new access roads.** The driving of two 15 m wide metalled roads up from Lamington and Coulter would be an unacceptable transformation to an area that is highly valued by local people. Construction access to the Grayside development from Glenkerrie or Clyde Windfarms would greatly reduce overall impact on the area, making the development much more acceptable.

We would look for reassurance regarding continuing **recreational access to the area during construction.** There has been some previous experience of blanket exclusion from large areas during wind farm construction, rather than a sensible approach of ensuring safety in specific locations and at specific times.

We understand that an environmental impact assessment will be undertaken, but emphasise the need for this to take account in particular of :-

- impact on peatland deposits
- opportunities to improve biodiversity
- impact on the water catchment of Coulter and Cowgill reservoirs.

Opportunities

The change in the area offers the potential to increase **biodiversity and possibly for some degree of rewilding.**

The development will also provide the opportunity for enhanced **recreational access arrangements when the work is completed.** An obvious example would be the provision of visitor car parking at access points.

We recognise the potential for local employment, and hope that the developers will ensure local businesses and workers benefit as far as possible.

Grayside WF Ltd. are proposing to make 25% of the development community owned, which could provide a significant revenue income stream for environmental and other socially beneficial work.

Conclusion

Based on the information currently available the costs of the scheme as a precedent of developing areas already over-developed and excluded from the local plan outweighs the potential benefits. We believe off-shore wind probably offers a better sustainable alternative energy route. If the scheme does go ahead, however, there are a range of opportunities to bring compensating advantages to the local community. We would welcome the opportunity to discuss these opportunities further.