



CAITHNESS WIND ENERGY NEWS

An opportunity to make your views known

JUNE 2006

Spittal Hill Windfarm Ltd



WIND FARM PROPOSAL FOR SPITTAL HILL

Spittal Windfarm Ltd advances its plans for a windfarm at Spittal Hill.

Background

For over a decade now Spittal Hill has been identified as a good site for a wind farm and tests carried out during the 1990s, gathering wind speed data from an anemometer mast, confirmed the true potential of the site. In an effort to realise this potential, Tom and Steven Pottinger, who own Banniskirk Mains, set up Spittal Hill Windfarm Ltd to undertake the development. Further investigations into the original site, and consultation with key stakeholders such as Scottish Natural Heritage and Highland Council, has led to the proposed location being reduced in size and moved in an easterly direction. This has also meant that more of Tom and Steven's neighbours have become involved and the project currently includes eight different farmers and crofters with turbines proposed on their land. Thus a successful project will have a direct benefit to quite a few local families.

Getting Involved

As local developers, Spittal Hill Windfarm Ltd are keen to explore how the benefits from the proposed development can be maximised for the wider Caithness community. For this reason they wish to involve residents of the area in their plans.

As a first step, this newsletter provides you with information about the proposal and tells you more about wind energy. It also lets you know how you will be able to get involved and influence the development in the future. This starts with the enclosed questionnaire. Please do take the time to fill this in and return it in the pre-paid envelope. Your views are important.

Depending on the progress of the planning application, future editions of the newsletter will keep you informed of the outcome of discussions with the community and provide details in relation to other possible opportunities for you to get involved in Spittal Hill's wind farm.

The Wind Farm

As a local Scottish wind energy developer Spittal Hill Windfarm Ltd is committed to investing in the future of wind power in the region. The

company aims to exploit the potential of emerging renewable energy technologies to develop socially responsible renewable energy projects in Scotland. **This includes looking at sustainable models of community benefit. One such proposal is the establishment of a Caithness wide "single-pot" which all renewable developers in the region could contribute to. We would appreciate your views on this and on other proposals – so please complete the enclosed questionnaire and look out for other opportunities to have your say.**

The Spittal Hill wind farm proposal would have 31 turbines with an installed capacity of up to 85

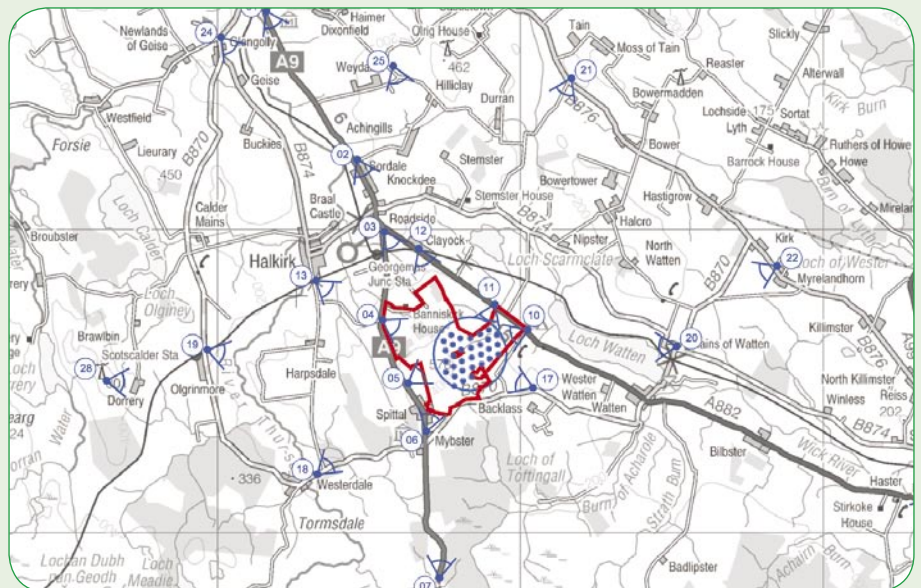
megawatts (MW) of renewable electricity. With a capacity of this size in such a windy part of Scotland, the project would meet the average needs of some 46,000 households.


The Spittal Hill wind farm would offset the annual release of over 190,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide, the main greenhouse gas contributing to climate change, which would otherwise come from power stations burning fossil fuels.


The full Environmental Assessment will be completed shortly and will be available for viewing at a number of convenient locations.

COMMUNITY BENEFITS

Spittal Hill Windfarm Ltd will ensure that the wind farm development also benefits the local area, by establishing a community trust. The community trust would help to determine how over £150,000 of annual index linked income from the development could be used for the benefit of the local community. Your views on how best to invest this fund and how it should take shape are important to the project.



 Planning Application Boundary

 Viewpoint & reference no.

FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE VISIT WWW.SPITTALWINDFARM.CO.UK

WHY WIND POWER?

Fundamentally, by using more renewable energy sources, like wind, the threat of climate change on future generations can be tackled. Recently, this threat has been re-emphasised, with the government's Chief Scientific Officer warning that its impact may be more serious than previously thought. A new government report on global warming was published in January 2006, which raised fears that both the Antarctic and Greenland ice sheets are likely to melt, leading to a devastating rise in sea levels.

"It is clear from the work presented that the risks of climate change may well be greater than we thought," its foreword states, adding "it is now plain that the emission of greenhouse gases, associated with industrialisation and economic growth from a world population that has increased six-fold in 200 years, is causing global warming at a rate that is unsustainable."

This concern is also shared by the general public. A recent survey (UAE/ MORI November 05) designed to represent the broader UK population, shows that 82% of people are very or fairly concerned about climate change/global warming.

In response to growing concerns, the UK is committed to a 12.5% cut in the six main greenhouse gas emissions by 2012. In addition, the British Government has set a target to achieve a 60% reduction of UK carbon dioxide emissions (CO₂) by 2050 as compared to 1990 levels.

In Scotland the Executive also has targets of generating 18% of Scotland's electricity from renewable sources by 2010, with this target increasing to 40% by 2020. The Scottish Climate Change Programme, published in November 2000, also sets out a range of policies that will deliver Scotland's commitment to make an equitable contribution to the UK Kyoto obligation. One such policy is the promotion of carbon-free renewable energy. The Scottish Programme will also contribute to the UK domestic goal of reducing emissions of carbon dioxide to 20% below 1990 levels by 2010.

Wind energy is currently the only viable renewable technology that can make significant progress towards these targets and as stated recently by Barbara Young, the chief executive of the Environment Agency, "we are running out of road on decision-making - unless we dramatically change the use of fossil fuels then we will be committing future generations to the most severe impacts of climate change." (Environment Agency & Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research Report – Climate Change on the Millennial Timescale, February 06).

Wind energy also has more public support as a future source of energy, with a recent UK-wide study by the University of East Anglia (November 2005), showing that people favour renewable energy sources over fossil fuels and nuclear power. Furthermore, when asked about the future contribution of energy sources to reliable and secure electricity supplies renewables are also most favoured. The same report also shows that when compared to other electricity generation sources people perceive wind power as clean, safe, good for the economy and cheap. In their survey 90% of people tended to agree or strongly agree that wind power is clean, 87% as being safe, 67% good for the economy and 58% cheap.

Wind power is a proven and viable renewable source of energy capable of generating significant levels of electricity for the Grid and its use is spreading rapidly on a world wide basis as its effectiveness is recognised.

If you would like to know more about climate change and how it affects you and Scotland the following websites may be of interest to you:

- www.Ltsotland.org.uk/climatechange
- www.bbc.co.uk/climatechange
- www.tyndall.ac.uk
- www.met-office.gov.uk
- www.scotland.gov.uk/topics/environment/climate-change
- www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Business-Industry/infrastructure/19185/17611

HOW DO I GET INVOLVED?

Spittal Hill Windfarm Ltd has employed the services of Holyrood Consultations, an independent company who specialise in community involvement in planning, to run and manage its community dialogue programme. Holyrood Consultations will help ensure that all communications between the developer and the community are open and transparent and that a diverse set of opinions are sought and listened to. Holyrood Consultations is involved to help both the developer and the community understand the needs of each other. If you wish to contact the organisation please call Jonathan Bradley or Philip Eisenhart on 0131 550 3736.

Here's how you can get involved

Over the course of developing this site we will be providing local people with a range of opportunities to find out more about wind power and to share their views with us. This will provide you with the opportunity to comment on and influence the proposed development.

A short questionnaire has been enclosed with this newsletter, which asks various questions about your views on wind farms and the proposed development. Please take some time to complete this and return it to us in the freepost envelope provided.

A public "open" exhibition will be held from 2.30pm to 8pm on 28th June at Watten Hall. This will help to ensure that all local residents have the opportunity to find out more and are able to comment on our proposal.

Furthermore, we want to encourage people from across the community to get involved and have their say. For this reason some residents will be invited to attend a residents' workshop. These residents will be randomly recruited from across the community to ensure that a broadly representative group of people is present. The event will be run by Holyrood Consultations and will give residents the opportunity to discuss the proposal in some depth. If you are approached to join the group we hope that you will be able to attend.

Throughout the planning process Spittal Hill Windfarm Ltd will be working with Holyrood Consultations to ensure that your views and opinions are appropriately considered.

Discussions have taken place with various local people and Community Council representatives. Spittal Hill Windfarm Ltd will also be discussing the development, on an on-going basis, with the local council, local businesses, local people and community representatives. They want to include all those groups and individuals who should be involved in order to ensure that their views are considered.

Your comments are important to us and your views will be used to inform the proposed wind farm development. We are particularly interested in your views on the community trust. Findings from the community consultation will be used to inform our decision-making process.

A website www.spittalwindfarm.co.uk has also been created. This will provide you with ongoing information about the development and give you the opportunity to have your say throughout.

Please do take the time to have your say and find out more about wind farms. In the meantime if you have any questions or would like further information please contact us. Our contact details are provided on the back page under further information.



THE WIND DEBATE – SOME FAQs

Here are some of the most frequently asked questions about wind farm developments and wind power. If you want to find out more about wind power there are some useful links to websites for further information on the back page.

Are wind farms noisy? Changes to wind farm technology mean that mechanical noise from turbines has been reduced over the years despite the much larger capacity machines which have evolved. In close proximity to a turbine, the main sound is the swoosh of the blades passing the tower, but this effect lessens with distance. Outside the dwellings nearest to the proposed wind farm the sound of the turbines generating electricity will be within strict limits to guidelines set down by the World Health Organisation and explained in detail in our Application. World Health Organisation guidelines on wind turbines and noise emissions are designed to ensure the protection of people living nearby. However, the best way to find out is to go and visit a development, which many operators encourage.

Wind farms are ugly and unpopular? Beauty is in the eye of the beholder, and whether you think a wind turbine is attractive or not will always be your personal opinion. However, studies regularly show that most people find turbines an interesting feature of the landscape. On average 80% of the public support wind energy, less than 10% are against it, with the remainder undecided. Surveys conducted since the early 1990's across the country near existing wind farms have consistently found that most people are in favour of wind energy, with support increasing among those living closer to the wind farms.

Do wind farms negatively affect tourism? There is no evidence to suggest this. The UK's first commercial wind farm at Delabole received 350,000 visitors in its first ten years of operation, while 10,000 visitors a year come to take the turbine tour at the EcoTech Centre in Swaffham, Norfolk. A MORI poll (MORI, October 2002) in Scotland showed that 80% of tourists would be interested in visiting a wind farm. Wind farm developers are often asked to provide visitor centres, viewing platforms and rights of way across their sites.

Do wind farms harm property prices? There is currently no evidence in the UK showing that wind farms impact long term house prices, and there is some local evidence (RICS survey November, 2004) to suggest that the presence of a wind farm has no real effect on prices. In fact, there is evidence following a comprehensive study by the Scottish Executive that those living nearest to wind farms become their strongest advocates.

Do wind farms kill birds? The RSPB stated in its 2004 information leaflet Wind farms and birds, that "in the UK, we have not so far witnessed any major

adverse effects on birds associated with wind farms". Wind farms are always subject to an Environmental Impact Assessment and developers follow the industry's Best Practice Guidelines and work closely with organisations such as Scottish National Heritage and the RSPB to ensure that wind farm design and layout does not interfere with sensitive species or wildlife designated sites. Moreover, a recent report published in the journal Nature confirmed that the greatest threat to bird populations in the UK is climate change.

Are wind farms safe? According to the British Wind Energy Association (the trade and professional body for the UK wind and marine renewables industries) no member of the public has ever been injured by wind energy or wind turbines anywhere in the UK, despite the fact that there are now over **1578** operational wind turbines.

What about alternatives to onshore wind energy? There are alternative sources of renewable energy. These include off-shore wind farms, solar power, and wave and tidal power. However, the government is clear that both on-shore and off-shore wind farms are required to achieve agreed targets for renewable energy – by 2010 Scotland is committed to obtaining 18% of its electricity from renewable sources. The viability of off-shore wind is as yet unproven although the Beatrice Field development with two turbines being erected this summer will help. Solar power is not yet considered to be a viable alternative on its own and wave and tidal are still in early stage development. Clearly, nuclear power is an important option and a new generation of reactors is actively being considered as part of the Government's current Energy Review. Most experts agree that a mix of types of environmentally friendly generation is required to reduce reliance on imported fossil fuels and to address climate change.

Why not just save energy? To tackle climate change we need to save more energy and generate more energy from renewable sources. The short answer is that both actions are necessary.

Energy Balance? The average windfarm in the UK will pay back the energy used in manufacturing within three to five months. These are answers to some of the most common questions about wind power. However, it is up to you to make up your own mind about wind power – its benefits and its drawbacks. So in order to find out more about wind energy, please refer to the links.



Location: A9 near Spittal.

Distance to nearest turbine - 1.3km



Location: Junction A9 A882.

Distance to nearest turbine - 3.3km

**DON'T FORGET
TO COMPLETE THE ENCLOSED QUESTIONNAIRE
– YOUR VIEWS MATTER!**

WHY A WIND FARM AT SPITTAL HILL?

The site has been selected by Spittal Hill Windfarm Ltd as suitable for a wind energy development because it has a number of attributes which have allowed the design of a wind farm within environmental constraints and with a high energy output.

Site selection is an extremely important element of developing a wind farm and Spittal Hill Windfarm Ltd have taken extreme care in ensuring the site meets a number of criteria. Indeed, investigations on bird activity and landscape have combined to move the proposed site Eastwards from the original site and to reduce the number of turbines from 47, as proposed in the Scoping Report of July 2004, to 31 turbines. This has also meant that more neighbours have become involved and the project currently includes eight different farmers and crofters with turbines proposed on their land.

The site itself has been identified as a potential site for a wind farm for over 10 years. For the last two years the developers have undertaken a more detailed study of its potential with the site emerging as having excellent possibilities because it has:

- Good wind resource
- Local quarries to source road materials
- No significant environmental impact
- Nearby grid connection
- Good access

As Tom Pottinger points out: "As an industry, farming is under constant pressure to diversify production due to increasing competition from world markets. As an example, at Banniskirk, we have planted some 200 acres of trees on the farm and recently have encouraged a local quarry operator to re-open the old quarry for the production of flagstone. Currently farmers are looking at growing crops for energy or biomass production, which are becoming more viable. Another resource we can harvest, which is commercially viable, is the wind."



RECENT WIND NEWS

Westmill Wind Farm Co-op is Blown Away by Share Success. Directors of Westmill Wind Farm Co-operative were overwhelmed by the response to the share offer which closed yesterday, the 28th February with over £4 million sent in by members of the public wishing to support what will be the UK's largest community-owned wind farm in Watchfield, Oxfordshire.

Due to the overwhelming popularity of the co-operative it will be necessary to scale back some applications. Westmill Wind Farm Co-operative has promised that people living within a 50-mile radius of the site will have priority.

Co-operative Financial Services has become the first business to install the largest-ever commercial application of small wind turbines in the UK by launching a project at its Cooperative Insurance (CIS) offices. The building will eventually see the installation of 19 small wind rooftop turbines, each 1kW in size.

A wind farm hailed as the biggest in the UK has been officially switched on at a special ceremony in South Lanarkshire. As many as 42 turbines at Scottish Power's Black Law site will provide enough power for 70,000 homes - or a town bigger than Paisley.

Highland Council have welcomed recent changes to European planning/procurement rules which allow planning conditions ensuring increased sourcing of domestic manufacture and construction which should provide a significant jobs boost.

Scottish Power has received the go-ahead to build Europe's largest land-based wind farm. The £300million scheme will see 140 giant turbines providing enough electricity for 200,000 homes. It is expected to be operational by 2009.

Hadyard Hill, owned and operated by Scottish and Southern Energy, has become the first wind farm in the UK to generate over 100 megawatts of power. The 120 MW, 52 turbine wind farm in South Ayrshire reached the milestone as it nears completion of its commissioning phase.

Caithness Recently within Caithness both the Stroupster planning application and the Lieurary Appeal have been turned down. On the 15th May the Forss extension, for another four turbines, was narrowly approved.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

- www.bwea.co.uk
- www.sd-commission.org.uk
- www.dti.gov.uk/energy/sources/renewables
- www.snh.org.uk
- www.rspb.org.uk

HAVE YOUR SAY:

Below are some useful links where you can find out more information about wind power and renewable energy. As well as completing the enclosed questionnaire and attending the open day you can also make comments by emailing info@holyroodconsultations.com Or by writing to: Tom Pottinger, Spittal Hill Windfarm Ltd, Baillie Farm, Bridge of Westfield, Thurso KW14 7QW

- Scottish Renewables Forum: www.srf.co.uk
- The British Wind Energy Association: www.bwea.com and www.embracetherevolution.com
- For the more technical aspects of wind energy: www.windpower.org
- The Government's independent advisory body on sustainable development: www.sd-commission.org.uk
- The Department of Trade and Industry renewables site: www.dti.gov.uk/energy/sources/renewables
- Information for primary and secondary schools and teaching resources: www.dti.gov.uk/energy/source/renewables/renewables-schools
- Scottish Natural Heritage: www.snh.org.uk
- The Royals Society for the Protection of Birds: www.rspb.org.uk/policy/windfarms/index.asp