

Larger wind turbines given approval despite opposition

Six wind turbines are to be built on the fringe of the Pentlands National Park, despite fears it will hit tourism and disrupt vital broadband signals for local residents.

Plans had already been approved for the six turbines being built by French Energy giant EDF, but a new application was submitted after they decided to increase the height of the turbines from 455ft to a new tip height of 491ft – more than twice the height of Edinburgh’s Scott Monument and almost the height of the Blackpool Tower.

A total of 23 objections were lodged to the proposed wind farm at Camilty plantation, just south of Harburn, with the disruption to local broadband and TV signals and the impact on the landscape the major issues.

EDF promised to mitigate any disruption to broadband signals, and said research it had carried out found disruption would be minimal.

One objector, Geraldine Hamilton of Crosswoodhill Farm, West Calder who owns holiday cottages, wrote that the majority of guests she catered for “were horrified” at how many turbines there are both in our area and in Scotland.

“An occasional guest said they were acceptable in the right places, but the Pentlands was not the right place. This is a

typical response pattern. I feel I know my visitors better than a researcher stopping someone in the street.”

Marie Harkness told a meeting of West Lothian’s Development Management Committee: “Our home is about a mile from the nearest proposed turbine. It’s disappointing that despite engaging with EDF during the consultation period the reports don’t properly investigate the points we raised.

“The reports on 4G are quite limited and there’s no investigation to disruption to our TV signal via satellite.”

She added: “4G via home router is the only option for internet connection. The report specifically notes that this may be impacted by the turbines. The report was desk based and was commissioned by developers, and written in their interest.

“Broadband isn’t a luxury. It’s an essential utility, and the way that we use the internet has changed since the application was first considered about six years ago.”

Ms Harkness asked that all reports of interference with broadband and satellite signals be investigated as part of a condition already attached to the plans.

The site is on the north side of the A70 “Lang Whang” road on land owned by Forestry and Land Scotland.

Planning Officer Wendy McCorrison told West Lothian’s Development Management Committee: “There will be significant impact, and it will be highly visible. These impacts have already been assessed and accepted through appeal decisions.”

She added that, in the context of the climate emergency, and the fact that wind farm would be in a landscape that is characterised by similar development, approval was recommended.

There are several wind farms visible from the Lang Whang

stretching from just north of Carnwath to beyond the Harburn road end.

Planners had attached lengthy conditions governing construction and maintenance of the site which would be commissioned for a 30 year life span – a five year extension on the initial proposal.



What the wind farm could look like looking north from Crossword Fishery

Sarah Dooley, speaking for EDF, said the wind farm could provide a year's power for 19,000 homes. The proposal was a "moderate increase" in height from the original application in 2016 proposal to optimise operation and help the country meet challenging net zero carbon emission targets.

Mrs Dooley said "One of main concerns was potential to impact TV radio satellite signals. Whilst impacts are unlikely, technical mitigation could be called up should issues arrive. We have listened to the local community and we are happy to incorporate mitigation into our proposals."



Cllr Pauline Clark

Cllr Pauline Clark questioned the carbon neutral claims given the amount of peat which would have to be removed to build the six turbines and associated service roads.

Mrs Dooley said the chosen sites for the turbines were on areas which would not need large amounts of peat removed because that would add to construction costs.

Addressing the offer of technical mitigation Mrs Dooley said EDF was comfortable to extend the boundary for properties potentially affected from just under two miles to over three miles. She said the firm would do a baseline assessment that would reveal any changes once the wind farm was operational.

Councillor Clark put forward an amendment calling for the application to be rejected on the grounds the extension to the height would have an adverse effect on local people.

She added: "We do not have figures to prove it will be a carbon neutral development. The removal of the peat could have a much worse impact."

This was voted down by six to two as councillors accepted the offer by EDF of baseline study of properties with an extended boundary and a commitment to mitigate technical problems. The plans were passed with conditions.

by Stuart Somerville Local Democracy Reporter

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