

Johnston, Charles

From: David Morris [REDACTED]
Sent: 03 March 2014 15:33
To: localplan
Subject: Proposed Plan Representation
Attachments: The Scottish Borders PROPOSED LDP.docx

Dear Sir/Madam,

Please find attached a Proposed Plan representation from Coriolis Energy.

Please confirm receipt by way of reply.


Kind regards,
David.

David Morris
Development Manager

[REDACTED]
Address: Suite 406-407 Baltic Chambers, 50 Wellington Chambers, Glasgow, G2 6HJ
Website: www.coriolis-energy.com

 Please consider the environment before printing this e-mail

Coriolis Energy Limited is a limited company registered in England and Wales with registered number 8446711. Registered Office:
22-24 King Street, Maidenhead, Berkshire, SL6 1EF.



Scottish Borders Council – Proposed Plan

Coriolis Energy Representation

Coriolis Energy welcomes the support contained in the Scottish Borders Council Proposed (Local Development) Plan for renewable energy generation. Likewise, we welcome the Council's recognition of the serious environmental, economic and social implications of unaddressed climate change and the key role the planning system has to play in supporting sustainable development and the transition to a low carbon society.

The displacement of fossil fuels with energy derived from renewable sources is recognised by the Scottish Government as a primary way of helping to mitigate climate change. It is a strategic national priority, and an essential part of the transition to a low carbon economy. It therefore falls that an increase in the production of energy from renewable sources needs significant support and positive policy frameworks within local authority Development Plans.

The Proposed Plan's vision accords with national planning policy statements, setting out the important role for local authority Development Plans in supporting development that helps tackle climate change, increase energy security and reduce carbon emissions.

In light of the above, it is disappointing to read in the FOREWORD of the Proposed Plan a negative statement on the future of onshore wind energy generation in the Scottish Borders. Councillor Ron Smith highlights limits on the further harnessing of wind energy development within the area by setting out that the Proposed LDP includes *'an updated policy on wind energy that seeks to limit development according to landscape capacity'*.

The Proposed Plan's negativity continues in 2.13 'Environment' stating that, *'A particular challenge to the continued attractiveness of the area for residents, visitors, tourists and visitors is the potential for wind energy generation, which, if not carefully managed and controlled, could have an adverse impact on this fundamental attribute.'*

While general aims, themes and Plan vision focus on the importance of renewable energy generation to help fight climate change, in policy terms this positivity doesn't transfer through to the key wording for renewables, and specifically onshore wind energy.

Policy Analysis

A primary economic aim of the Proposed Plan is to aid the transition to a low carbon economy. Scottish Borders Council must do more to support this transition through revisions to Proposed Plan policy prior to Plan Examination by Scottish Ministers. At the macro level one of the key ways to support the transition is to diversify our energy generation base away from fossil fuel use to renewable energy generation. While the Proposed Plan Vision clearly recognises the value that renewable energy developments deliver, the detailed policy guidance caveats this by promoting a precautionary position. In light of the fact that the *'rate of petrol or diesel consumption per head for the Scottish Borders population is some 46 per cent higher than the Scottish average (2006 figures)'*, the Scottish Borders area should be striving to offset this poor low carbon indicator through increased policy support for sustainable development and renewable energy developments.

Scottish Borders Council has, over the past couple of years, commissioned a number of supplementary planning guidance documents to influence spatial policy for renewable energy generation: - SPG for wind, local landscape designations, etc. As part of the Proposed Plan, the recently commissioned landscape capacity study, coupled with information on operational wind within the local authority area, has sought to identify – in landscape terms – where further wind energy generation, with regard to scale and form, should be located.

The use of the words - sustainable locations/sustainable - as a preface to renewable energy production in the Proposed LDP is confusing. What does this really mean? What merits a sustainable location? What factors must a renewable energy generator demonstrate to be considered sustainable? This statement requires to be justified by Scottish Borders Council. If the statement is intended to mean a 'sustainable location' in terms of landscape capacity then this needs to be detailed. The relationship of this wording to national planning policy guidance is unclear.

If the Proposed Plan seeks to pursue sustainable development, meet the challenges of a changing climate and support a low carbon economy it needs to recognise, and therefore detail explicitly, that landscape capacity does not automatically rule out the acceptability of wind energy development. In order to meet national targets there is growing pressure on local authorities to build upon current search areas for wind farm developments and identify further areas of search. This will inevitably mean pressure on local landscapes which are not afforded the same degree of protection as nationally and internationally protected areas.

The Council's decision to undertake a landscape capacity study to help inform its spatial policy framework accords with national planning policy guidance. However, the use of the landscape capacity study findings as the basis for identifying 'Wind Turbine Development Opportunities and Constraints' does not accord with the spatial framework methodology set out in the approved Scottish Planning Policy (SPP) or the 2013 Draft SPP.

Policy ED9 'Renewable Energy Development' and the spatial policy context it sets out is fundamentally flawed and skewed towards landscape as the main factor in the determination of wind turbine/farm impact and effect.

The reliance on landscape capacity conclusions in reference to turbine typologies, as put forward by the Ironside Farrar study, inevitably rules out the suitability of huge swathes of the Scottish Borders area for wind turbine/farm development. A spatial strategy that relies so heavily on landscape, without an appreciation of where this then pushes the industry to look for suitable sites – i.e. towards people and settlements for example – doesn't take into account the fact that the Draft SPP now requires 2.5kms stand offs from settlements. Neither does it take into account the fact that large areas of the Scottish Borders are currently sterilised in terms of developing onshore wind development because of the physical constraint of MOD infrastructure at Eskdalemuir and RAF Spadeadam. A consequence of the reliance on landscape capacity as a tool for directing the industry towards suitable areas is the identification of areas which will inevitably prove unsuitable for other reasons not factored into the spatial framework.

Landscape capacity studies make broad assumptions regarding the suitability of an area to host onshore wind turbine/farm development of different scales. Individual site landscape capabilities and sensitivities can only be addressed through site and area specific Landscape and Visual Impact

(LVIA) assessment, as directed by SPP, i.e. *each proposal should be determined on its individual merits.*

The spatial framework's reliance on the landscape study, which in general terms finds that the underlying capacity of the different landscape character areas in the Scottish Borders is heavily constrained, is fundamentally flawed. The spatial framework makes no concession for the fact that Scottish Government renewable energy and carbon emission targets and spatial policy for broad areas of search need to be taken into consideration, as directed by national guidance. There is no allowance within the spatial framework, or compromise offered, in terms of the areas identified as having low or no capacity, which might be suitable for further wind energy development in the context of national policy and targets.

The majority of people, as commonly found in national polls, do not find wind turbines inappropriate within a rural landscape setting in direct comparison with fossil fuel stations, pylon lines, new roads and aggregate mining. The landscape study makes a judgement on an area's visual sensitivity and landscape value and the assumed position within the landscape capacity study is that turbines are unwelcome and detract from the landscape. This is a subjective professional judgement. At no point does the study refer to the fact that turbines are not an element of development form that the vast majority of the population find unjust or unacceptable. The Study in general lacks neutrality and this therefore casts doubt on the validity of the spatial framework found within the Proposed Plan.

Similarly, the landscape capacity study makes no allowance for the fact that wind farms are a temporary development proposal. Wind farms and turbines can be dismantled and their foundations removed at the end of their operational period with no lasting visual impact or contamination. The landscape effect and visual impact is therefore only consequential in the timeframe of one generation. In the context of the pressing need to shift to a low carbon economic base and away from fossil fuel burning more recognition has to be made of the fact that these elements of form in the landscape are temporary.

The Council's wording in policy ED9 infers that it is not just planning reasons that need to be taken into account in the appraisal of wind energy schemes. 'Economic efficiency' and whether turbines do or do not make meaningful contributions to renewable energy targets are not valid planning policy considerations. These issues should have no bearing on the Scottish Borders spatial planning policy for onshore wind or the detailed criteria against which applications are assessed. ED9 policy wording sets out that the policy seeks to 'create a balance between all these conflicting issues'. The inclusion of economic efficiency and the acceptability (or not) of a development proposal's contribution towards energy targets in this 'balancing mix' does not accord with national planning policy guidance and should be removed. In addition to the conflict with national planning policy the setting of height limits does not accord with the current range of turbine products available on the market and would thereby lead to capacity limitations. SPP directs local authorities to ensure an area's renewable energy potential is realised and optimised.

In the ED9 policy box the use of '*accommodated without unacceptable impacts on the environment*' in the first paragraph should be changed to read *significant adverse impact* which is the terminology more often used by national government and local authority onshore wind spatial policy documents. This ED9 wording is inconsistent with national planning policy guidance and the general recognition that it is 'significant adverse impacts' that must seek to be avoided or mitigated through the further

growth of renewable energy development. Elsewhere in the Proposed Plan reference is made to 'significant adverse impacts'. It is important in policy interpretation terms that there is a consistent policy approach for assessing levels of impacts or effects introduced through wind energy development.

Likewise, the use of *fully mitigated* in '1' is unworkable. It is unrealistic to think that in landscape terms, for example, that a wind turbine or farm could be fully mitigated to make the impact level acceptable. This would be very difficult to achieve in light of the current scale and height of modern wind turbines, which are of the scale they are to increase energy generation. '1' should read the same as '2' whereby *satisfactorily* is used instead of *fully*. SPP details that issues should be satisfactory addressed. Clear development management guidance for officers tasked with determining wind farm and wind turbine planning applications is required in terms of what quantifies harmful and/or significant adverse impacts.

The spatial policy criteria set out in ED9 is not consistent with national planning policy guidance and will restrict development opportunities and the expansion of renewable energy generation within the Scottish Borders. Fundamentally, the spatial framework does not comply with the process for identifying broad areas of search as set out in SPP and other national planning policy guidance. The national planning policy for the, 'process for preparing spatial frameworks for wind farms', details that, 'areas of search ought not be reduced in extent by factors beyond those identified in the SPP three-stage approach'.

The Proposed Plan policy 'test' for onshore wind should follow the guidance set out within national planning policy guidance, which details that 'onshore wind turbine/farm development will be considered acceptable where environmental and cumulative impacts can be satisfactorily addressed' (SPP paragraph 187).

As set out with the Council's Low Carbon Strategy 'Clean, secure and affordable sources of energy' are one of the main characteristic of a low carbon economy. The Strategy details that "*the Scottish Borders cannot delay in preparing for the inevitable move towards less carbon intensive activity, and must position itself to take advantage of this as an early adopter*", going on to say that, "*an outcome of this approach is the Borders is a location of choice for renewable energy businesses and contribute to the low carbon economy of the area*" and "*businesses locate in the Borders because all electricity is generated from local renewable sources*". The aspirations within the Low Carbon Strategy are admirable but unattainable in the context of the Proposed Plan policy framework for renewables, and specifically onshore wind.

The Proposed Plan infers that wind turbines/farms damage the landscape. The use of this word is very negative. A wind turbine or wind farm through environmental construction plans and monitoring at the time of construction ensures that physical damage to ground and watercourses is avoided, mitigated or offset. 'Damage' to the landscape setting is a subjective and emotive opinion. There is no doubt wind turbines/farms alter the landscape within which they sit, depending on scale and form. It is important to note, and the Proposed Plan should do so, that Polls continue to find that the vast majority of people support the expansion of onshore wind farms as part of the transition to a low carbon society. Equally, just as many people view modern day turbines as meaningful necessitates, unobtrusive and appropriate within a rural landscape setting, compared with those that see them as the industrialisation of the countryside.