

Proposal for a new Windfarm at Fauch Hill

Pentland Hills Regional Park Joint Committee

16th December 2011

Purpose of report

- 1 To update the Joint Committee about the current proposals for a wind farm at Fauch Hill, near Crosswood Reservoir, West Lothian.

Main report

- 2 Fauch Hill Sustainable Energy (FSHE) propose to develop a new wind farm consisting of 23 turbines with a generating capacity of 69MW at Fauch Hill
- 3 The site boundary sits either directly on, or is close to the Regional Park boundary. The development site area is however entirely outwith the Regional Park.
- 4 An original proposal for 33 turbines with a generating capacity of 99MW, has now been reduced to 23 turbines and 69MW. Individual turbines would have a tower height of 80m, a blade diameter of 90m and a tip height of 125m. Proposals include approximately 62 hectares of new woodland planting.
- 5 FSHE proposes to provide an annual community benefit contribution of £4,000 per MW of installed capacity (£276,000). It is likely that the funds would be administered by the existing West Lothian Development Trust (WLDT).
- 6 FSHE have carried out two rounds of public consultation; the first in March 2011 and the second in October 2011.
- 7 Under the Electricity Act 1989, applications for schemes in excess of 50MW are made directly to the Scottish Government rather than the local planning authority. It is anticipated that FSHE will be submitting an application in the early part of 2012 and if successful propose to commence construction in 2013.
- 8 An Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) has been carried out and will form the basis of an Environmental Statement (ES). The ES is a statutory requirement as part of the application process.
- 9 As an extension of the consultation process, FSHE have asked to make a presentation to the Regional Park Joint Committee on the 16th December 2011. Given that the application will be determined by the Scottish Government rather than the local authority, Members of the Regional Park Joint Committee are able to comment freely on the proposal.

Financial Implications

- 10 Approximately £276,000 would be made available annually for community benefit within a 10km radius of the site. This may therefore benefit communities within the Regional Park. FHSE will be seeking to reach a Community Benefit Agreement with West Lothian Council and thereafter to establish a Community Benefit Working Group to guide discussion about future funding allocation. The Regional Park has not entered into any formal discussions about the community benefits fund and future funding of the Regional Park.

Equalities Impact

- 11 There is no equalities impact arising from this report.

Environmental Impact

- 12 The Pentland Hills is designated as an Area of Great Landscape Value (AGLV). West Lothian Local Plan Policy ENV19 states that with respect to AGLV's "*.....there is a presumption against development which would undermine the landscape and visual qualities for which these areas were designated*".

Policy NWR 22 states:

"The Council will resist any proposals for renewable energy development that will affect the character, visual integrity or recreational qualities of both the Pentland Hills Regional Park and the wider area of the Pentland Hills within West Lothian. Proposals that are located outwith the Regional Park or the wider Pentland Hills but nevertheless undermine the landscape and outdoor recreational qualities of those areas will not normally be supported unless it can be conclusively demonstrated that the integrity of the landscape and outdoor recreational qualities are not adversely affected"

The first two Aims of the Regional Park are:

- *To retain the essential character of the Hills as a place for the peaceful enjoyment of the countryside; and*
- *Caring for the hills, so that the landscape and the habitat is protected and enhanced.*

Construction of a windfarm at Fauch Hill has the potential to adversely affect landscape quality of the Pentland Hills and can be considered therefore as conflicting with local planning policy and the aims of the Regional Park.

- 13 The scheme would support Scotland's Contribution towards international commitments to tackle global climate change.
- 14 Planting of 62 hectares of new woodland may enhance local wildlife habitat and provide new recreational opportunities.
- 15 Community projects that might be delivered by the community benefit contribution may deliver environmental improvements within a 10km area from the wind farm.

- 16 EFGR's application the Scottish Government under Section 36 of the Electricity Act 1989 will be accompanied by an Environmental Statement (ES) setting out how potential adverse environmental impacts would be addressed. The ES will include consideration of landscape, ecological, hydrological and geological impacts.

Recommendations

- 17 It is recommended that the Joint Committee:
- a) notes the proposal for a new wind farm at Fauch Hill as summarised in this report; and
 - b) receives a presentation from Fauch Hill Sustainable Energy.

David Jamieson
Parks & Greenspace Manager

Appendices	None
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Wards affected	All
Single Outcome Agreement	<ul style="list-style-type: none">1 We live in a Scotland that is the most attractive place for doing business in Europe.2 We realise our full economic potential with more and better employment opportunities for our people.6 We live longer, healthier lives.10 We live in well-designed, sustainable places where we are able to access the amenities and services we need.11 We have strong, resilient and supportive communities where people take responsibility for their own actions and how they affect others.12 We value and enjoy our built and natural environment and protect it and enhance it for future generations13 We take pride in a strong, fair and inclusive national identity.14 We reduce the local and global environmental impact of our consumption and production.15 Our public services are high quality, continually improving, efficient and responsive to local people's needs.
Background Papers	None