

Press release from Friends of the Clash

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Scottish Government decision challenged.

Friends of the Clash reconvened on 8th May 2009 to develop plans for opposition to new proposals from Vattenfall, the purchasers of AMEC Wind, for a windfarm in Clashindarroch Forest.

Following a long and costly Public Inquiry in 2007 the Scottish Government accepted the Reporter's recommendation and refused planning permission for a windfarm at Clashindarroch. We are therefore shocked and dismayed that a further application, for the same site, is to be considered.

The previous developer argued that less than 64 MW output would not be economically viable in the context of the costly infrastructure requirements of this particular location. Any proposal for more than a 50MW output would need approval by the Scottish Government. Since this proposal, for approximately 40MW output (18 turbines) could be approved by Aberdeenshire Council alone this would seem to be a way of circumventing the Government's previous decision. Approval of this plan would inevitably lead to applications for further increases in turbine numbers in order to justify the investment.

Clashindarroch is a site with extensive views of surrounding unspoiled countryside including the Cairngorms National Park so that huge turbines in this tourist area would have a massive visual impact.

The development of essential infrastructure, including excavation of carbon-retaining peat and replacement of some of it with thousands of tons of carbon-polluting concrete, as well as quarrying, would cause extreme noise and physical disruption of wildlife habitats - what was not killed would be dispersed.

This forest, its shelter and its wildlife rich margins are home to rare mammals such as the pine-marten, the red squirrel, the water vole and the seriously endangered Scottish wildcat. It is home to raptors of such rarity that we cannot name them and its burns are healthy and in active use by spawning salmon.

In view of the Scottish Government's commitment to windpower and in the context of the First Minister's election time promise that "our Scottish hills would not be blanketed with turbines" we urge that future developments should be offshore, where advances in technology mean that much larger turbines have potential for more effective energy generation.

For all of these reasons we continue to believe that Clashindarroch is an unsuitable location for a windfarm.

Note for Editors

1 Friends of the Clash was formed in 2002 to defend the environment of the Clashindarroch Forest, one of the largest forests in NE Scotland, which is home to many endangered and legally protected species and is an important tourist and recreational attraction.

2 Clashindarroch Forest is publicly owned and operated by Forest Enterprise, the commercial arm of the Forestry Commission.

3 The original proposal for a windfarm in the Clashindarroch Forest was made by AMEC Wind. A Public Inquiry under the Reporter Mrs Jill Moody was held in the summer of 2006. The Reporter recommended rejection of the proposal, and this recommendation was confirmed by the Scottish Government in 2007.

4 Vattenfall AB is a large company, wholly owned by the Swedish State. It bought AMEC Wind in 2008. Representatives have held public meetings in Huntly and Keith, at which they indicated their intention to

submit a revised proposal for a windfarm in Clashindarroch Forest. It is also known that Vattenfall have held private meetings with the Aberdeenshire Council Planning Department.

5 Under Section 36 of the Electricity Act, proposals for generating plant over 50MW require government approval, but smaller proposals can be determined by the local planning authority.

6 Moody report 0052853(1) pdf pages 1 - 96