

SBC 19/00191/FUL

Wull Muir Wind Farm  
Heriot, Scottish Borders

Application to erect 8 turbines up to 130m height

Revised Proposal

Response to the  
Supplementary Environmental Information

Further Objection by Heriot Community Council

November 2019

# Wull Muir Wind Farm Application – Assessment of SEI

## Introduction

1. Heriot Community Council submitted an Objection in July 2019 to the proposed wind farm at Wull Muir. The site is close the existing Carcant wind farm, which is approximately 3kms to the west of the A7 on the edge of the escarpment marking the northern edge of the Moorfoot and Lammermuir Hills.
2. In response to adverse comments about the proposal from various consultees including the SBC Landscape Architect and other SBC Officers, as well as from local community councils, Energiekontor have decided to propose amendments to the development, as set out in Para 1.7 onwards in the Supplementary Environmental Information submitted to SBC in September 2019.
3. The SEI sets out new locations for all the turbines, set back modestly from the escarpment, in an attempt to mitigate the worst aspects of the impacts of the proposal being prominently situated on the edge of the escarpment. However, in so doing, the turbines have been brought much closer to a number of properties in the Heriot community and so have considerably worsened the impact of the turbines. As a general comment this confirms the unsuitability of the site for a large wind farm. Moving the turbines does not improve the acceptability of this scheme – indeed the newly proposed locations considerably worsen the potential impacts on the local community.
4. The comments that follow are only focused on specific matters arising from the proposed changes, and should be read in conjunction with the original CC objection which remains valid.

## Landscape & Visual Impacts

5. The SEI reviews the major aspects of the original EIA assessment, and states that in most aspects the original assessment of impacts remains unchanged. This applies to the assessment of all the local landscape types, and virtually all the key Viewpoint assessment bar the one for Viewpoint 2: Gladstone Reservoir.
6. However, it must be pointed out that moving the turbines closer to Heriot noticeably increases both the height and spread on the turbines to people observing them.
7. **Viewpoint 4: Corsehope Rings.** The turbines have been moved from a distance of 3.5km to 2.95 kms. Their appearance is noticeably more prominent, with more of the turbines visible above the intervening plantation, and even more important, spread over

a much wider arc. The right-hand turbine in the view is much further to the east and is also relatively close so appears more prominently.

8. **Viewpoint 6: Nettlingflat.** The turbines have been moved from 3.6km to 2.9km distance. This can clearly be seen comparing the two montages. Whilst from this angle the spread of turbines has not increased, their apparent height and prominence clearly has. The turbines will be much more oppressive particularly as many of the houses have a principal view directly towards them.
9. Whilst the formal EIA assessment in the SEI might attempt to assert that there has been no change in the level of classification of the visual effect, it does also concede the points being made in this paper. Looking at these together it is considered that that the proposed changes would have a noticeably worse impact on the local community than the original scheme – which any lay person can see from comparing the montages.
10. Whilst the SEI attempts to suggest that in some way some of the remaining Viewpoints are marginally improved, none of these minor changes are considered to make any difference to the comments made in the original CC objection.

## **Residential Amenity Assessment (RAA)**

11. Heriot welcomes the inclusion of this assessment – having called for one in its original objection. However, there are considerable reservations about the properties that have been included. There are some **fourteen** properties assessed in five groups. The RAA includes Shoestanes Cottages at 2.2km distance from the nearest turbine.
12. However, it does NOT include nine Falahill Cottages (on the A7 and not at Falahill Farm), eight properties on Shoestanes Road, nor any of the twenty-four properties at Heriot Station. Many of these are at a similar distance or just marginally further away, one or two are actually nearer than 2.2 km. This makes a total of some **forty-one** properties.
13. It is accepted that many of these properties do not face towards the turbines proposed location. However, residents coming and going, walking around their homes and gardens, to and fro using the Heriot Underpass will all see the turbines – with the prospective view being shown by wireline in RAA Drawing 2.33b Shoestanes, albeit slightly less intrusive.
14. Furthermore RAA Drawing 2.32 makes it clear that the seven further houses at Heriot House also have visibility of all the turbines, albeit from a slightly greater distance around 2.5km, and of course as already discussed above also the fourteen houses at Nettlingflat at 2.9km. This makes a further **twenty-one** properties.

15. This makes a total of some ~~seventy-five~~ properties in total within 3km of the turbines, and many of them with direct views across open ground, as the RAA makes clear in the section on the view from Shoestanes.
16. The RAA draws the expected conclusion that none of the properties are so close to the turbines as to preclude the development. Heriot would counter that by pointing to the major impact this scheme is going to have on a substantial proportion of the overall community and not just on the few properties assessed.

## Noise

17. Turbine noise is assessed separately to RAA – but of course it is always the same properties that are involved and means that the affected residents have to suffer the intrusion of alien noise into their lives to constantly remind them about the turbines even if they cannot see them.
18. There is a revised noise assessment contained in the SEI. However, it merely lists the same receptor properties as were listed in the original EIA noise assessment. Furthermore, it does not contain a revised noise contour drawing. It appears that the consultants Hayes Mackenzie have failed to consider that moving the turbines exposes other properties to potential noise levels at or near the minimum noise limits proposed by ETSU-R-97 guidance.
19. Whitelaw Farmhouse is one property assessed by Hayes Mackenzie. It can be noted that Shoestanes Farmhouse is at almost exactly the same distance from the nearest turbine but is also, notably, downwind of the prevailing winds. At slightly greater distances are Shoestanes Cottages, Falahill Farm and other properties easily identifiable from RAA Drawing 2.32.
20. Heriot CC has already called for the release of the raw noise data to enable independent verification of the predicted noise levels. This is now even more important in the light of the comments made above, which point to a rushed and inadequate assessment by the consultants.
21. It is further noted that the applicants for the Gilston Hill appeal are about to submit revised noise calculations to allow for the cumulative noise assessment to be updated to include the Wull Muir scheme. The clear inference is that cumulative noise for Wull Muir should be similarly updated to include Gilston Hill, which it does not.

## Core Paths & Access

22. SEI Para 2.86 states that the nearest turbine to the Heriot – Heriot Cleugh – Heriot Mill Core Path will be only 150m away – with the developers calling for a micro siting allowance of up to 100m. As the Outdoor Access Officer has pointed out, the recommended minimum distance should be turbine height x 4. This distance is recommended to protect horse riders. At 150m or less it should be considered dangerous to anyone using the track whether on foot or riding. Manufacturers guidance points to the danger inherent in close proximity to turbines, and “ice throw” is now also a well-established danger.

## Conclusions

23. The SEI was prepared in great haste and within a very short time scale for such a complicated and detailed exercise. There are minor errors, and also omissions going by the Index of the written volume. Some assessments undertaken in the original EIA have not been updated, for instance SEI Drawing 6.6 Peat Survey demonstrates that the original sites for the turbines were very closely surveyed – but the new turbine sites not at all.
24. This paper has just considered the most obvious areas where the impacts of the proposed revised scheme will directly worsen for Heriot residents – and these are very clearly demonstrated for LVIA and appear to also be true for noise. SBC may wish to look more deeply into the changes proposed as other errors and omissions may well have resulted from the extreme haste.
25. The original Heriot objection drew attention to the contentious subject of turbine heights, pointing out that the wind industry is adamant that much higher turbines up to and above 200m in height must be consented to ensure commercial viability. Since that was written, further applications have reiterated this. Indeed, Energiekontor have indicated to Heriot CC that they expect before long that turbines of “only” 130m in height will no longer be manufactured. Heriot CC considers it inevitable that if this scheme is consented, there will follow a s42 application for variation to allow much higher turbines.
26. Heriot CC objected to the original proposal, and considers that this paper amply demonstrates that the revised scheme as proposed in the SEI will have far worse impacts on the community. The minor improvement in regard to the LVIA impacts to Midlothian and further afield can in no way be regarded as a suitable “trade-off” to the major faults that have emerged from the redesign. Heriot CC urges SBC Planning Committee to refuse consent for the Wull Muir scheme.

## **Planning Grounds for Refusing Planning Consent:**

27. The issues discussed in this paper modify slightly the grounds for refusing consent to Wull Muir wind farm set out in the original CC Objection dated July 2019. These should now read:

- a) Adverse impacts on Landscape & Visual grounds, especially in relation to their effects on local residents.**
- b) Planning Policy and a Fundamental conflict with SBC Landscape Capacity Study giving rise to unacceptable cumulative impacts with existing wind farms, and also creating an unacceptable extension of the Lammermuir “cluster” into the Moorfoot Hills**
- c) The newly submitted Residential Amenity Assessment applies an arbitrary cut off to the properties assessed. As discussed above, the actual number of houses affected gives rise to unacceptable residential impact.**
- d) Noise. The revised noise assessment is partial and inadequate.**
- e) Lack of economic benefit together with failure to discuss grid constraint effects on projected output. Conflict with the developers own assertion elsewhere in the Borders that much higher turbines are required for economic viability.**