

## **'Keep Rannoch Wild' Opposition to Talladh a Bheithe (TaB) Windfarm Application**

### **Analysis and Briefing**

**Origins:** The TaB Scheme had its roots in an earlier joint proposal by Craiganour and TaB Estates for 20 turbines of 110m height in a 'Rannoch Wind Farm' (EH00303) about four kilometres east of the current proposal. That earlier application was withdrawn for reasons of '*landscape and other technical issues*' (a Defence Estates holding objection was recorded at that time and may also have had a bearing). The last entry on the Government website in respect of the earlier scheme was in June 2010 but from 2007 TaB had instead turned its attention to the current proposed site. It is, in our opinion, significant and very welcome that Craiganour Estate has now joined eight other local estates in objecting to the current application.

**Finance:** This application is lodged in the name of Talladh a Bheithe Wind Farm Ltd, a wholly-owned subsidiary of a Dutch firm, Eventus Duurzaam, in which the owners of Talladh a Bheithe Estate have a shareholding. That close tie between the landowner and the applicant is what – in our judgement – is keeping this entirely speculative proposal alive in the face of huge opposition. The plans and consents for a 75Mw scheme, if granted, could be sold on the open market for many millions of pounds, (Eventus has confirmed that it will indeed sell any consents) and would produce a taxpayer-subsidised income stream for a future buyer of some £18-20m *per annum*. The community is offered 2% of this for its acquiescence. If the scheme *was* built it would also generate rent of around £0.72m per annum for the landowner, on current industry averages. Applications like this are sometimes referred to as 'developments' but actually are consents speculation – for huge potential gains from public funds. Thankfully, Treasury has signalled that the current ludicrously over-generous 'ROC' subsidy regime for windfarms will be replaced by lower subsidies from 2017 onwards.

**The application** has many structural weaknesses, as KRW and others have noted. It:

- relies on Ministerial guidance which was superseded on the day of its submission;
- asks to postpone many key plans and decisions until *after* a possible consent;
- contains several inconsistencies and absences of essential information;
- fails to show that the overall scheme is logistically or commercially viable; and
- ignores costs to Rannoch but trumpets the 2% of income in 'community benefit'.

Substantively, there are very many unacceptable implications and real difficulties on landscape, habitat, economics and transport, as the KRW objection states.

**Responses:** The period for public comment on the TaB application ended on 5 August but a few organisations have been allowed to delay their responses. By law the Planning Authority has four months from the date of second advertisement to respond, and any objection by it would cause a Public Local Inquiry (PLI) at which the scheme would be examined in detail. We sincerely hope and expect that our elected members will note the weight of opinion so far, which is, on our best understanding:

- **Public representations:** well over seven hundred objections (unprecedented at this stage of s36 planning considerations) with about half of those objections from Rannoch itself, with fewer than ten persons in support;
- **Statutory consultees:** SEPA has objected and Cairngorm National Park Authority is considering a formal objection. We understand that SNH will respond by mid - September. No statutory body so far is supportive or even neutral.
- **Local organisations:** two have objected, three (including the Community Council) remain neutral, none has declared support;
- **Local estates:** eight major local estates have formally objected, others are known to oppose. No estates (other than TaB itself) have given support to the scheme;
- **Environmental and other organisations:** seven have objected, including JMT, MCoS and RSPB. None have declared support for the scheme or even neutrality.

**Current position:** The scheme has drawn an unprecedented number and quality of objections and seems to have no friends, apart from those who would gain from it and (of course) their paid agents. The Planning Authority (P&KC) will respond by early November and we believe that it should also object – and is likely to do so. The question for the applicant would then be whether to persist with this grossly insensitive and unwelcome scheme or to withdraw it, as it did the earlier joint application. A withdrawal now would save more wasted expenditure and effort on all sides and would be welcomed by most of the Rannoch community. It would also help to mend any strained relationships locally.

**Contingency planning:** *'If you want peace prepare for war'*. 'Keep Rannoch Wild' will remain vigilant and determined on this and will, if necessary, oppose this scheme in concert with like-minded bodies through any Public Inquiry which may be required. It hopes that that will not be necessary and that this application will be withdrawn now in the light of the very many objections or, if not, will be summarily dismissed by Ministers without the need for a PLI.