

# MILE HILL WIND FARM

## *Information for Residents and Users of the Glen*

This Leaflet has been prepared by gleninfo, an informal group of local residents of Glen Quharity. We understand and support the need to develop renewable energy as part of action against climate change. Our concern and objections about this project are caused by the siting of Mile Hill Wind farm and its likely adverse effects upon the Glen, its inhabitants, and the landscape character of the Highland Foothills where we are proud to live. We believe that the maximum production of renewable energy from the wind farm (installed capacity of 12MW but in reality less than 30% of that because of wind variability) is not of sufficient public or environmental benefit to justify the damage it will do.

We have prepared this document to put some of the issues before you – you can get further information from us at [www.gleninfo.co.uk](http://www.gleninfo.co.uk) or by email at [windfarm@gleninfo.co.uk](mailto:windfarm@gleninfo.co.uk)

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## THE BACKGROUND

Airtricity Developments (UK) Ltd (an energy company now owned by Scottish and Southern Energy – SSE) want to build a wind farm on Mile Hill, in the heart of Glen Quharity.

Their Application for Planning Permission, (reference: 08/00426/FUL), has been submitted.

*It will be decided by the Development Standards Committee (the Planning committee for Angus Council) at a meeting yet to be arranged but probably in June.*

*WE WILL PUT THIS DATE ON THE GLENINFO WEBSITE WHEN IT IS AVAILABLE.*

***BUT objections to their proposals need to be submitted much sooner than that: as soon as possible (Information from Planning Officer at Angus Council).***

## YOUR RIGHTS

*To information:* the Planning Application and some minor documents can be seen on line at [www.angus.gov.uk](http://www.angus.gov.uk) (search under Ref 08/00426/FUL)

: the full Environmental Statement that Airtricity has had to prepare because of the scale and environmental sensitivity of the proposal can be inspected at Kirriemuir Library; Glenisla Post Office ; and at Angus Council Access Office 5 Bank Street Kirriemuir

: A free Non Technical Summary can be obtained from Atkins Ltd, 200 Broomielaw, Glasgow, G1 4RU telephone 0141 220 2001 <sup>1</sup>

***To object:*** Written objections can be submitted to Neil Duthie, Angus Council,

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County Buildings, Market Street, Forfar, Angus – email  
[planning@angus.gov.uk](mailto:planning@angus.gov.uk); FAX 01307 466 183

**To be heard:** You can speak for a maximum of 5 minutes at the Committee meeting as long as you give 24 hours notice of your wish to do so. Contact Elaine Whittet, Committee Officer, on 01307 476265 or email at [whittet@angus.gov.uk](mailto:whittet@angus.gov.uk). The meetings are held at 10am or 2pm, generally on a Tuesday.

## **THE PRESENT PLANNING POSITION**

Airtricity was given planning permission with conditions to build a temporary anemometer on the site at a Development Standards Committee meeting on the 29<sup>th</sup> April 2008. This anemometer is a thin steel structure 80 metres high. Its purpose is to measure the amount and strength of wind blowing in the proposed turbine area. The planning considerations for such a mast are nowhere near as strict as for the full development – and Airtricity has been told that they *must not assume* that a wind turbine application will be granted. (5 members of the 12 strong committee voted to defer the application pending more information about the choice of this site).

## **THEY PLAN TO BUILD :**

6 wind turbines each 100.5 metres high (329 feet) stretching across the northern side of Mile Hill.

To give an idea of scale, the turbines are the same height as the steel work of the Forth Rail Bridge – and only 21 feet lower than Bass Rock.

The diameter of the turbine towers will be 4 metres at their widest – and the diameter of the moving rotor blades will be 70 metre (210 feet)

*These turbines were originally developed for off shore use: they are built to the scale of the sea and not to the scale of the Glen.*

## **NOT JUST TURBINES...**

Apart from the Turbines, Airtricity need to build an elaborate infrastructure.

- 6 crane pads each measuring 800m<sup>2</sup> adjacent to each turbine base
  - Concrete foundations for each Turbine measuring 16m by 16m by 1.5m deep, dug into a 3 metre bed.
  - 2 permanent anemometer masts: each measuring 65 metres high
  - up to 7 'borrow pits' ( *quarries*) from which an estimated 63,000 cubic metres of rock will be excavated. Blasting will be used ' as a last resort should other extraction methods prove unsuitable.' <sup>2</sup> (It appears that Airtricity are as yet unsure how to extract the stone they need) 5 of the 'borrow pits' will each measure 100m by 70 metres; 2 will measure 70 by 50 m, and one 70 by 70 metres: a total excavation area on Mile Hill of 36,900 square metres.
  - Site access tracks to the turbines - 4.3 km of track on the hill itself, minimum 13 feet wide rising to 18 feet and wider at intersections; and a further 1.6 kilometres of access track from Aucharroch farm, on the south side of Mile Hill
  - Turning circles for 'temporary' passing lanes, each measuring hardstanding of 5metres by 10 metres
  - 3 'turning areas' for construction lorries measuring 1600 m<sup>2</sup>
  - Temporary construction compound – measuring 150 metres by 40 metres, with internal space for workers' canteen, washroom, toilets.
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- Permanent Control station measuring 50m by 50m – surrounded by 2.7 high palisade fence; substation measuring 25m by 12m within its confines. Foul waste management from toilet/washrooms to be by construction of a soakaway and septic tank.
- 7 km of 33,000 V overhead cabling taking the electricity down to the Grid at Maryton ~The company have *not* produced any plans for this which will be part of a separation application: the full 'look' of the development cannot therefore be assessed. If the newly constructed poles conform to the ones used at Drumderg they will be 24 feet high with metal out-struts.
- The total area of the site is 267 hectares ~Construction is estimated to take 9 months, including weekend working.

## **WHAT WILL THIS LOOK LIKE?**

Airtricity has produced 'photomontages' which purport to show how **the turbines** will look for various selected viewpoints. These photomontages do not *show any of the associated development*. Nor do the photomontages give a realistic view of the turbines and the effect they will have on local residences.

They do not represent a fair or balanced picture of the effect upon the Glen.

## **IS THIS THE RIGHT PLACE FOR A WINDFARM?**

The proposed wind farm is in an area designated as of 'high sensitivity' because of its valued landscape. Angus Planning Policy is clear that **'proposals for large scale wind energy development will not normally be permitted in the Highland and Coast Geographic Area (Areas 1 and 3) in Angus.**

**Mile Hill is in Area 1: Highland, with High Sensitivity to the visual impact of large, man made features such as wind turbines.**

The policy is clear: *'Whilst it is possible that individual turbines may be satisfactorily accommodated in parts of these areas, locations associated with highland summits and plateaux, along the highland boundary fault line or on coastal locations are unlikely to be suitable, primarily because of the visual sensitivity . The capacity of the landscape to absorb wind energy development will also vary, and the scale and location of the turbines will be an important factor in their impact on the landscape'*.<sup>3</sup>

- ◆ This wind farm will be visible from the Cairngorm National Park - the National Park Authority have pointed out that it can be seen from 9.5 kilometre away but the nearest viewpoint produced by Airtricity is over 16km away – an example perhaps of how the massive visual effect is being downplayed?
  - ◆ The wind farm will be visually cumulative: a walker on Mile Hill will see not just these turbines but the full effect of Drumderg as well
  - ◆ Walkers on Cat Law will have a panoramic view – of the turbines and development
  - ◆ The wind farm comes into the highest category of visual impact – *it will be the defining feature of the glen.*
  - ◆ The glen is too intimate and too small scale to have any chance of 'absorbing' this development.
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## A LARGE SCALE DEVELOPMENT IN A NARROW GLEN

Airtricity's Environmental Statement attempts to downscale this development:

'Although the proposed wind farm falls within the 'Highland Area' as defined in the local plan, it is considered<sup>4</sup> that this six turbine proposal is not 'large scale' and is in fact a small – medium scale commercial wind farm' .

But according to Angus Council's *own definition* that cannot be correct: '**Large scale projects...are defined as hydro electric schemes designed to produce more than 0.5MW and wind farms of more than 2 turbines or where the hub height of any turbine or other structure exceeds 15m**'<sup>5</sup>

## WHY ELSE IS THIS SCHEME OBJECTIONABLE?

### 1. THE CHARACTER OF THIS GLEN

- The Glen is an area of extraordinary natural beauty and tranquillity.
- Although intimate and domestic in scale, it is well known to walkers, cyclists, artists and visitors who come here for rest and recreation
- It is on the precise boundary between 'the Highland foothills' and 'Highland Summits and Plateaux' <sup>6</sup> - landscape definitions by Scottish National Heritage which are adopted and respected by Angus Council and which inform planning applications<sup>7</sup>
- It is bounded to the north by Cat Law, not only the scene of a historic battle but a well known landmark with panoramic views stretching across Strathmore
- Mile Hill itself is of archaeological and historic significance: the wind farm site itself contains 33 sites of cultural heritage interest including two of 'regional importance' – Mile Hill Cairn and Saddle Hill late Bronze Age settlement

- The Glen contains Balintore Castle, a Grade A listed building recently compulsorily purchased by Angus Council who were anxious it be preserved - and who sold onto to a local resident who lives there whilst restoring it. Balintore Castle is 2 km<sup>8</sup> from the wind farm, with an uninterrupted view of the entire wind farm.
- The glen is served by a narrow road, steeply inclined on one side, from which the wind farm will be clearly – and distractingly – visible from all points. (Airtricity include NO photomontages from this road ...nor from the houses at Auldallan, positioned within 600 metres of the turbines)

## **2. THE NATURAL LIFE OF THE GLEN**

Glen Quharity is a rich and diverse habitat for animal life, including protected species and Red List/Amber List of birds. These include:

- Osprey – who nest on a secret location on Mile Hill itself
- Eagles
- Sky larks – a Red List bird which has 17 breeding territories on Mile Hill, Gairlaw Wood and Kinclune Hill
- Buzzards, kestrel , and hen harriers
- Wildfowl – grey lag and pink footed geese resident at Loch Lintrathen
- Surveys have found breeding 13 other Red List or Amber List birds in the immediate vicinity of the wind farm
- Other protected species include otters and water voles in Quarity Burn; pipistrelle bats who roost and have maternity colonies in houses and trees immediately next to the proposed site; barn and tawny owls who forage along the Glen road.

### **3. WATER COURSES**

- The Quharity Burn and the Cromie Burn are both fed by runoffs from the wind farm site. The unpolluted waters of these burns feed into rivers with the highest environmental classification – SAC (Special Areas of Conservation) protected by UK and European legislation. Quharity Burn feeds River South Esk; Cromie Burn the Tay.
- Angus Council, Scottish Natural Heritage, Esk Salmon Fishery Board are all concerned about the potential effect of pollution caused particularly by the construction phase of this wind farm – we should all be concerned about polluting the clear waters of this Glen and the effect this could have on the wider ecology.

### **4. RISKS TO WATER**

- Pollution risks include wet and dry building sediment swept into the water courses; alkali leaching from concrete pours; accident in construction e.g. fuel, oil and sanitary waste spillages; blasting effects; water removal, land erosion... however well this is theoretically 'managed' Mile Hill will be a building site for at least 9 months – on a fragile and delicately balanced ecology.

### **5. RISKS TO BIRDS AND BATS**

- These include death by collision with the moving – or stationary – turbines; displacement of habitat because of construction and operation; destruction of habitat which will be built over. Airtricity state they will 'mitigate' the 'theoretical' risks e.g. by having a buffer zone between the osprey nest and the nearest turbine; by ensuring no construction takes place within 100

metres of a bat roost.

*But we are still concerned: the theoretical mathematical modelling on which they assess the ospreys are safe relies on the osprey learning to avoid the area!*

*The 100 metre buffer zone for bats is **half** that recommended by 'Eurobats' a conservation measure to which the UK was a signatory.*

*However 'careful' theoretical studies are, the incidence of death of protected birds by wind farms is well documented.*

## **6. TOO CLOSE FOR COMFORT – HUMANKIND**

- The development will over shadow Auldallan village – the nearest turbine will be only 600 metres from Auldallan Cottage. Auldallan Steadings, the Farmhouse, and Auldallan Mill will be a mere 400 metres further away.
- The quality of life of the residents of those houses will be severely affected. They will suffer visual domination, reflected light, noise and shadow flicker,<sup>9</sup> with possible health affects from perpetual low level noise – all this in an undeveloped rural area so tranquil that you can hear the quiet voices of your neighbours and a passing tractor is an event. The visual amenity of their homes will be destroyed.
- Noise: according to Airtricity's figures, the quietest the turbines will ever be is 35 decibels, rising to 45 decibels. Rural night time quiet ranges from 20 decibels to 40 - and that noise is intermittent. The turbines will produce *continuous* noise – and the prevailing south west winds in the glen will carry it straight to the houses. The company discounts the effect of additional deep vibration noise at low levels which can be carried for miles.
- The effect of living in too close proximity to a wind farm IS seen as inadvisable – *by the wind industry itself!* BWEA ( The British Wind Energy Association ) in their Best

Practice Guide state

*Wind turbines should not be located so close to domestic dwellings that they unreasonably affect the amenity of such properties through noise, shadow flicker, visual domination or reflected light.*

BWEA does not define how close too close is: but independent experts do.

- i) The United Kingdom Noise Association (UKNA) in their 2006 report (believed to be the first such report incorporating evidence from acoustic and medical experts) concluded that

***'It would be prudent that no wind turbine should be sited closer than 1 mile away from the nearest dwelling... there may even be occasions where a mile is insufficient depending on the scale and nature of the proposed development'***

- ii) The French Academy of Medicine in a 2006 report recommended that wind turbine construction be halted within 1.5 kilometres from residences
- iii) Other independent experts – including UK and American doctors concerned about a increasing health problems including sleep deprivation in patients living near wind turbines – have concluded that they should not be sited within 1 -2 miles of human habitation.

*The closeness of the turbines to the residents of Auldallan sets an uneasy precedent for wind farm development in our community – the 3 nearest houses to Drumderg Wind Farm are set at a slightly better distance - 1.2 and 1.5 kilometres away. ~could this be the thin end of the wedge for the Angus Glens?*

***THE TIME TO OBJECT IS NOW~!!!!!!***

## Footnotes:

- 1 but note that the Non technical summary is merely a summary and does not include important data
- 2 para 2.32 of 'Environmental Statement 'Volume 1
- 3 ~Angus Local Plan p87
- 4 that is, by Airtricity!
- 5 Angus Local Plan p 85
- 6 Cat Law is Highland Summit area
- 7 See below for Planning considerations
- 8 Not 20 kilometre away from the wind farm as stated by Airtricity – Table 6.2 of Environmental Statement
- 9 Shadow flicker: the effect caused by the moving blades which split the rays of a low sun into a strobe like invasion through windows of nearby homes. Airtricity maintain this will only happen for up to 51 hours per year and they will switch the turbines off for that whole period. If their figures are wrong....?