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Our ref :
Your ref:p/01400/06 –
TCP/27774

19 July 2006

Dear Mr Ashcroft

**Consultation on application for proposed wind farm, South of Wellow
West Wight - P/01400/06 – TCP/27774**

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the above application.

Following consideration of the landscape and other impacts of the proposed development on the National Park, including its maritime setting, officers' preliminary conclusions are that overall the development would not cause material harm to the National Park, nor conflict with Park purposes.

Attached is a draft report that will be considered by Members of the Development Control Committee on 15 August. I will write to you again following that meeting.

Yours sincerely

Paula Freeland
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D r a f t

NFNPA/PDCC/06

NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

PLANNING DEVELOPMENT CONTROL COMMITTEE

MEETING: 15 AUGUST 2006

CONSULTATION ON APPLICATION FOR PROPOSED WIND FARM, SOUTH OF WELLOW WEST WIGHT - P/01400/06 – TCP/27774

IMPACT OF PROPOSALS ON NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK

Report by: Paula Freeland, Head of Environmental Design

1 Introduction

- 1.1 In accordance with the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and the Town and Country Planning (General Development Procedure) Order 1995, the National Park Authority's observations on this application have been sought.
- 1.2 This report sets out the policy position and briefly summarises the proposals and the information provided, as part of the application, on the impact of the proposals on the National Park. The report then draws conclusions on the likely impact.

2 The site in relation to New Forest National Park

- 2.1 The two statutory purposes of the New Forest National Park are:
 - (a) to conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the New Forest; and
 - (b) to promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the area by the public.
- 2.2 At its closest point, the New Forest National Park lies within six kilometres of the proposed wind turbine site. Section 62 (2) of the Environment Act 1995 states:

In exercising or performing any functions in relation to, or so as to affect, land in a National Park, any relevant authority shall have regard to the purposes specified in subsection (1) of section five of this Act and, if it appears that there is a conflict between those purposes, shall attach greater weight to the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural

beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the area comprised in the National Park.

- 2.3 Given this explicit guidance stating that relevant authorities must have regard to the National Park purposes in performing their functions, the issue of visibility from the New Forest National Park is of particular importance and the issue of landscape and visual effects are of primary significance.
- 2.4 Special qualities of the New Forest National Park (NFNPA Paper 92/06 – Interim statement of special qualities for the New Forest National Park 18 May 2006) include the following:
- unspoilt seascape and long/big sky views to the Solent, Isle of Wight and Channel
 - views in and out of the Park on the coast...

3 Policy framework

3.1 Planning Policy Statement 22

- 3.1.1 Planning Policy Statement 22 (PPS22): *Renewable Energy* (2004) states that development proposals should demonstrate that any environmental impacts have been minimised through careful consideration of location, scale, design and other measures (paragraph 1 (viii)). Paragraph 11 states that, in relation to nationally recognised designations, planning permission for renewable energy projects should only be granted where it can be demonstrated that the objectives of designation of the area will not be compromised by the development, and any significant adverse effects on the qualities for which the area has been designated are clearly outweighed by the environmental, social and economic benefits. It is considered that these matters should form a central part of the assessment process.
- 3.1.2 The PPS recognises the potentially adverse effect of some renewable energy developments on the visual amenity of the landscape and acknowledges that wind turbines are likely to have the greatest visual and landscape effects. They are required to be assessed by local planning authorities on a case-by-case basis – according to the type of development, its location and landscape setting. The PPS notes that the impact of wind turbines will vary according to size and number of turbines and type of landscape involved. It also notes that long term landscape impacts can be mitigated if conditions are attached to planning permissions which require the future decommissioning of turbines and their ancillary infrastructure.
- 3.1.3 PPS22 states that potential impact on designated areas from developments outside a boundary will be a ‘material consideration’.
- 3.2 Relevant policy from the New Forest District Local Plan First Alteration Adopted August 2005

Permission for the development of renewable energy schemes will only be granted where the local planning authority is satisfied such developments will not harm interests of acknowledged importance in the local environment. In assessing proposals for renewable energy schemes the local planning authority will have particular regard to the following issues:

- a the immediate and wider impact of the proposed development on the landscape; and**
- b the need to protect features and areas of natural, cultural, historical and archaeological interest; and**
- c the measures that would be taken, both during and after construction, to minimise the impact of the development on local land use and residential amenity; and**
- d the local and any wider benefits the proposal may bring; and**
- e certain renewable energy resources can only be harnessed where the resource occurs.**

4 Summary of proposals

- 4.1 The application is for the development of wind turbine generating station comprising four turbines 59m hub height and 100m overall height (tip height) and two turbines 68.5m hub height and 109.5m overall height (tip height) (total of six turbines), with associated infrastructure to include 59m high (approximately) meteorological mast, crane pads, switching station, underground cables, temporary construction compound, parking bay and access. The turbines will be of a three bladed horizontal access design with an upwind rotor, and a tubular steel tower.
- 4.2 The site is located at grid reference 438451.1 – 87710.2. It is situated on approximately 278 hectares of agricultural land south of Wellow, West Wight.
- 4.3 It is proposed that the tip and hub heights of all six turbines should appear to be level; this is achieved by the height notes above, with two of the turbines sited in localised hollows. The proposed finish of the turbines is semi-matt light grey.
- 4.4 It is summarised in the submission that the wind turbines have a predicted installed generating capacity of between 9.9 and 12 megawatts; that this will have the potential to meet the electricity needs of over 6500 homes, representing 10% of the dwellings on the Island and approximately 10% of the Island population's electricity requirements.

5 Summary of points raised in submission in relation landscape/visual impact on New Forest National Park locations

The following notes are intended to give an indication of the issues taken into consideration by the applicant's consultants in assessing the impact of the turbines. The Environmental Statement and Technical Summary in relation to Landscape and Visual Effects should be consulted for full details of the methodology.

The magnitude of change as assessed here is a judgement based on a series of measured parameters which include:

- *Distance of the viewpoint from the development;*

- *Extent of development visible from viewpoint (number and parts of turbines visible);*
- *Field and proportion of view occupied by development;*
- *Degree of contrast with the existing landscape and built elements;*
- *Influence of latitude and direction of view, time of day and year, different weather, lighting and visibility conditions and different wind directions on visibility of turbines; and*
- *Duration and nature of effect.*

It is then judged to be from very substantial to negligible:

- *Very substantial – where the proposed development will be a dominant element in the view;*
- *Very substantial/substantial – where the proposed development will be a highly prominent element in the view;*
- *Substantial – where the proposed development will be a prominent element in the view;*
- *Substantial/moderate - where the proposed development will be a clearly visible element in the view;*
- *Moderate - where the proposed development will be a visible element in the view;*
- *Moderate/slight - where the proposed development will be a clearly noticeable element in the view;*
- *Slight - where the proposed development will be a noticeable element in the view;*
- *Slight/negligible - where the proposed development will be a discernible element in the view; and*
- *Slight/negligible - where the proposed development will be a barely discernible element in the view.*

The sensitivity of viewpoints ad receptors is also taken into consideration I reaching the conclusions drawn. In summary, for example, in relation to viewpoints from New Forest National Park:

View point	Receptors	Sensitivity of location
<i>Ferry terminal</i>	<i>Ferry users</i>	<i>Medium</i>
<i>Stone Point Lepe</i>	<i>Visitors to beach, Country Park, National Park</i>	<i>High</i>
<i>Beaulieu Heath</i>	<i>Walkers, cyclists, horse riders</i>	<i>High</i>
	<i>Model aircraft flyers</i>	<i>High/medium</i>
	<i>Motorists</i>	<i>Medium</i>
<i>New Forest, near A31</i>	<i>Walkers</i>	<i>High</i>

Fixed viewpoint receptors

- 5.1 The nearest point in the National Park to the turbines is Hurst Castle. They will be visible from the coastline (e.g. at Lepe and the Lymington

Ferry terminal) and from open areas of heathland such as Beaulieu Heath.

- 5.2 The report, at 8.133 -8.135, provides an assessment of the anticipated impact on the National Park. It is considered that, in the locations where the turbines will be visible, "...the distance of the turbines and, from the inland areas, the limited extent of the views, means that the wind turbines will not result in a significant change in landscape character or views from these locations. " It is concluded that "As a result, the development will not significantly alter the ability of the New Forest National Park to achieve its vision or statutory purposes"
- 5.3 It is noted that there will be properties in Lymington, Milford-on-Sea, Sway, East Boldre and Hythe that will be within zones of visual influence, but that very few residents will gain view of the turbines from their properties due to the screening effects of the built and natural environment and that, due to the distances of the turbines, those with views of the turbines will not experience a significant change in their views.
- 5.4 It is suggested that there are some small villages located within the zones of visibility including Keyhaven, East End and Norley Wood. There are a few properties identified at Keyhaven which will gain have fairly open views of the site. Other properties are considered likely to have views screened by vegetation and the built environment. It is further noted that where open views are gained that the turbines will be seen in the context of yacht masts in the nearby harbour. Hence within this context and at this distance the magnitude of change will be moderate to slight.
- 5.5 It is stated that open views from East End and Norleywood are likely to be significantly limited due to mature vegetation in the surrounding landscape.
- 5.6 Views from the following leisure and recreational facilities are noted as follows:
- On the mainland the closest camping and caravan site is north of Milford-on-Sea therefore visitors in camping and caravan sites are unlikely to experience a significant change in their views.
 - Hurst Castle – only the blade tips of the turbines will be visible; nature of the attraction, screening and distance are such that visitors are not likely to experience a significant change in their views.
 - Calshot Castle – surrounded by large hangers that house Calshot Activities Centre; due to distance of turbines visitors will not experience a significant change in their views.
 - Exbury Gardens – densely wooded nature and surrounding countryside means that visitors will not gain any views of the turbines.
 - Lepe Country Park – from the car park, there are low level open views across the Solent to the Isle of Wight but due to the distance of the turbines, visitors would not experience a significant

change to their views. Views from the country park itself will be more filtered or screened than the open view from the car park

- Beaulieu River– Due to the distance to the turbines visitors would not experience a significant change in their views from this location.
- Keyhaven marina is approximately 8km from the nearest turbine and, although open views of the turbines will be gained from this location, they will be seen in the context of yacht masts in the harbour and on a separate land mass, separated by the Solent. Within this context and at distance users will not experience a significant change in their views.

Linear route receptors

Motorists

- 5.7 A337, north-south direction from Cadnam, north of Lyndhurst, through Lymington then westwards through Christchurch. Sections of the road are within zones of visibility. No views from the wooded areas of the National Park. Some distant intermittent views but these will not result in significant change for users of this road.
- 5.8 A35 – connects with the A337 at Christchurch and travels north eastwards through Lyndhurst towards Totton. A326 runs down length of Southampton Water, approximately 2km west of the high water mark. Both roads enter visibility zones but both pass through densely vegetated and built up areas which will make views of turbines few and far between. Views will be partial, filtered, intermittent and at distance and will not result in significant changes.
- 5.9 A31 – views towards the site are extremely limited due to both topography and vegetation along the road and in the intervening landscape. There are only two sections between Cadnam and Ringwood where there are views of the Isle of Wight, which are side on to the direction of travel and momentary. The turbines will be very small and distant objects, visible only in excellent visibility and will not result in significant changes in views.
- 5.10 B3054 – travelling in a south westerly direction views of turbines will be generally oblique forward or side on to the direction of travel and intermittent due to the screening effects of vegetation.
- 5.11 Between Lymington and Beaulieu there are two 600m sections where a sustained view of the turbines may be available. As a result of the distance the magnitude of change is expected to be slight.
- 5.12 B3055, connects with B3054 at Hatchett Gate and travels westwards to Brockenhurst - distance and screening such that no significant change in views.
- 5.13 B3056 – connects with the B3054 at Beaulieu and travels north westwards to Lyndhurst. Short zones of visibility to the north, where motorists travelling southwards may gain views. As a result of distance and screening by intervening vegetation, motorists will not experience a significant change in their views.

Rail passengers

- 5.14 The mainline to Christchurch passing through Sway, for much of the section is in a cutting or travels through woodland, so there will be few views of the turbines, and where there are views they will be short lived and filtered and will not result in significant changes to the view for passengers.
- 5.15 There will be limited visibility on the line between Brockenhurst and Lymington. Users travelling south eastwards on the train will be travelling directly towards the site, but the nature of the train means that views immediately in front of the train will not be available to passengers. There will be view of the turbines from the ferry terminal where the magnitude of change is predicted to be moderate/slight. Passengers alighting at the final station on the Lymington line may gain a similar view although this view will be screened to some extent by the ferry terminus buildings. Other views from the line will be distant and filtered and will not result in significant change.

Cyclists, walkers and horse riders

- 5.16 The Solent Way is a long distance trail which runs along the mainland coast from Milford-on-Sea to Lymington, then crosses inland to Bucklers Hard and on towards Hythe. The most open views will be from those sections of the path which are on the coastal edge. This includes sections of the path from Milford-on-Sea to Keyhaven, around the Pennington marshes towards Lymington, but not at Hurst Castle where the topography will screen all but the blade tips of the turbines. At its closest the path comes within 7.5km of the turbines, as it skirts around Pennington Marshes but, even at this distance, the magnitude of change is unlikely to be more than moderate/slight and there will not be a significant change in the view for users of the path. As the path moves inland east of Lymington, intervening vegetation between the path and the coast will largely screen views of the turbines.
- 5.17 There are several off-road cycle routes in the New Forest from where there will be extremely limited views out towards the site as they go through forest or because nearby forest screens or minimises views. It is therefore unlikely that users will experience a significant change in their views.

Ferry Users

- 5.18 The wind farm will become a prominent new feature in the views from the Lymington and Yarmouth ferry. The crossing period is approximately half an hour, and there will be a view of the turbines for much of this period: a significant change to the view is assessed.

Representative Viewpoint Assessment

- 5.19 A number of specific viewpoints have been selected for assessment and the magnitude of change and the overall effect and significance suggested at the viewpoints in the National Park are summarised here.
- 5.20 **Isle of Wight Ferry Terminal, Lymington** The turbines will be clearly noticeable elements in the view and the magnitude of change will be moderate to slight. Overall it is assessed that there will not be a significant change in the view.

- 5.21 **Stone Point, Lepe Country Park** The distance to and narrow width of the array is considered such that the turbines will be discernable elements in the view and the magnitude of change will be slight. Overall it is assessed that there will not be a significant change in the view.
- 5.22 **Beaulieu Heath** The distance to and narrow width of the array is considered such that the turbines will be noticeable elements in the view and the magnitude of change will be slight.
- 5.23 **New Forest Near A31** It is considered that the turbines will be barely perceptible and no visual impact is assessed.

6 Nature conservation issues

- 6.1 Our comments must relate to the potential impacts of this specific application on habitats and significant species within or close to the National Park. There are likely to be impacts on the nature conservation interests of the Isle of Wight but most of these are beyond our remit as the National Park Planning Authority.
- 6.2 The location of the proposed development is around 6 kilometres from the New Forest and as such it is unlikely to have an impact on any protected or other habitats in the National Park.
- 6.3 There may be a low risk that the development could have a detrimental affect on some mobile and migratory bird species of a European interest that are also of importance for the New Forest. These species are listed in Table 6 with notes on potential risks.

Table 6: Species that may be vulnerable to collision / habitat impacts of the proposed development

Golden plover	This species is known to feed on fields in and around the site. The birds may be part of flocks that also use the New Forest coast fringe and commute across the Solent but this is unknown and probably unlikely.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Are New Forest birds using this area? ▪ Are golden plover or other species using the site at night? The assessment made may not be adequate to tell and further information may be needed. ▪ Mitigation might be quite successful for this species in drawing the birds away from risk areas ▪ Although the collision risk for these birds is possibly too low to be considered an adverse effect on the overall SPA population, without mitigation, the collision risk is likely to be moderate (worst case scenario 368-450 over 25 years; ie. 7 - 16 birds per
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		year
Honey buzzard	This species has a significant population in and around the New Forest. It may roam quite widely at certain times of the year and could be vulnerable to collision but difficult to predict and mitigate against	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Risk is probably low but cannot be discounted following experience with sea eagles in Scandanavia
Migratory species – waders and wildfowl	Flocks and individuals of overwintering species are quite likely to roam over the site – whilst commuting between SAC and SPA habitats or escaping poor weather on the coast.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Not enough information to judge the significance of this risk but passage birds should be surveyed further.

7 Conclusions on implications for New Forest National Park

- 7.1 The following conclusions are based on the information submitted in the Environmental Statement as part of the planning application.
- 7.2 There are locations in the New Forest National Park, essentially coastal, from where the wind turbines will be immediately visible. However the number of turbines and the context of the views is considered such that they will not be harmful to the special qualities of the National Park.
- 7.3 In the middle distance there are locations where the remoteness of the landscape could be affected by views of significant man-made interventions. However distance and the screening effect of vegetation and the landscape will play a significant part in mitigating the appearance of the turbines. Similarly in settled areas the distance and the built and natural environment will play a significant part in mitigating appearance.
- 7.4 In views from further distance the turbines will appear as very small distant objects and will be the subject generally of momentary and intermittent views.
- 7.5 Most nature conservation issues are specific to the locality of the site. There may be a low risk that the development could have a detrimental affect on some mobile and migratory bird species of a European interest that are also of importance for the New Forest.

8 Recommendation

- 8.1 That the Isle of Wight Council, Planning Services are advised that:

- New Forest National Park Authority do not consider that the proposed wind farm development will have a harmful effect on the landscape of the New Forest National Park.
- Further investigation is suggested in respect of the implications for mobile and migratory bird species.
- On the basis of the information provided as part of the application, it is considered that the proposed development would not cause material harm to the National Park nor conflict with Park purposes.

More information

A copy of the application, technical appendices and Environmental Statement are available in the Strategy and Planning Directorate – contact Paula Freeland (01590 64 6658).