

Paper by Fiona Hill for the Open Meeting at Glass Hall, 18th November 2004

I have been asked to present a short paper on the upgrading of access routes to and from the Clashindarroch windfarm site and the impact of building and constructing new roads needed. My interest arises from the fact that I live on one of the proposed construction routes.

There is an overall assumption by AMEC that the area which will be dominated by the Clashindarroch development is **not** one of great natural beauty. They state that the site is located within Aberdeenshire Council's Tier 4 area of least sensitivity with a small part in a tier 3 area - visual impact would be minimised due to the complex topography. AMEC claim that 'the Clashindarroch site has the potential to be an excellent wind farm location' However, In AMEC's application a large area to the west and south-west of the proposed site is marked as an "Area of Great Landscape Value" and areas to the north, north-west, south and east are 'Areas of Regional Landscape Significance'

In addition, the proposed site adjoins a Site of Special Scientific Interest, and a Special Area of Conservation.

Part of the proposed access routes actually crosses a Site of Special Scientific Interest at the Craigs of Succoth.

If planning is given we understand that it will be necessary to improve, extend and create new access roads.

With regard to the upgrading of existing public roads I spoke to Jim Craig of Aberdeenshire Council, Stonehaven (the Marr committee):

He has met with AMEC to discuss necessary upgrading of existing roads. As he see it there are three main issues:

Haulage
Routing
and Traffic management

He said that **No** information has been presented to the Marr Roads and Infrastructure Department since the initial planning application in 2003.

Aberdeenshire Council is only a consultee - the Scottish Executive will be the body which sanctions final plans due to the size of this particular development.

Aberdeen Council have put forward observations of development of the roads network - one of those at the moment is that the inconvenience is spread as equally as possible over three different roads. Two will come off the A97 - the Huntly-Rhynie road - these will have the heaviest use bringing in steel, concretes and aggregates to build new on-site roads and the turbine foundations.

I will add that these vehicle movements would be hugely affected by how much aggregate AMEC can quarry on site. They *could* just dig an on-site quarry. This would significantly reduce the number of aggregate movements for road and concrete construction.

The Edinglassie road off the A920 is AMEC's most direct route from the A96 - this is the preferred route for the turbines as it is fairly straight with few bends. At the moment the Council have no proposals to alter the existing roads -- they say that they are not at a stage to do so until planning is approved. AMEC have produced a 'swept path' plan... which is basically a simulated programme which illustrates how a large vehicle would progress and cope on the current roads. It could be that some straightening is necessary. We know that an 800-tonne crane needs to be located on-site to lift the turbines into position - we have not had any information of how this crane will be transported.

At the moment there is a choice of which port to bring the turbines into - the choices currently are: Inverness, Buckie or Aberdeen and until a decision is made on which port will be used a route cannot be decided upon. These decisions will not be made until the application is given consent.

To put the number traffic movements along the Edinglassie road into perspective - the delivery of 47 turbines would require 376 lorries to the site. Therefore, a gigantic lorry will pass our homes on 752 occasions - an average of 6 trips a day, 6 days a week for an estimated 8 months.

With regard to traffic management - the postie and schoolbuses would be given access each morning and then from a certain time in the morning to a certain time in the afternoon there would be police managing access on the road... it could be one way for one part of the day and the other way for the second. However, I have been assured that full access would be maintained but we all might have to drive further.

In terms of any upgrading required: AMEC are obliged to maintain the fabric of the road . If there is any upgrading required, and it's within the existing road layout, then AMEC would have the authority from the Council to undertake upgrading, using traffic lights and speed restrictions. If AMEC have to acquire land from landowners, Jim Craig assumes there are two scenarios: one, that AMEC liaise directly with landowners or more likely that the Scottish Executive use powers under the Roads Act 1984 which will mean compulsory purchases.

Where the road is straight it is unlikely that any widening will be necessary. Some trees may have to felled... vehicles are going to be large, articulated lorries and their length will matter - not their width... perhaps our rep from AMEC could clarify.

All residents on the Edinglassie road have private water supplies. All of us on that side of the hill are concerned for the purity of our water and the possible pollution caused by construction work and the passage of very heavy traffic. Also the physical integrity of the pipelines - some of which pass under the proposed route - they could become damaged or broken. There is also the issue of overhead powerlines and telephone cables. The utility companies such as Hydro Electric and BT will hold information on the cables affected.

I assume that AMEC is unaware of private water supplies which cross roads or are adjacent to roads - this information is **not** held in the public domain. Aberdeenshire Council say that AMEC should discuss any implications on **all** private properties owners individually - can we assume this?

When the access route leaves the public road then AMEC can negotiate the most appropriate route for their requirements with the landowner - obviously utilising existing tracks. Current plans are for the road to continue up through the Grummack Forest - cutting off the corner at Malach. This land is owned by Broadland Properties and is managed by Bidwells of Perth. I have tried to contact them without luck.

The impact of this new access road was not in the original plan.

The main problem of the new access road is that it goes through a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) at the Craigs of Succoth. It would be an offense to undertake management works on an SSSI.

However, It can be allowed in certain circumstances:

A formal letter has to be sent to Scottish Natural Heritage asking for permission to undertake works - this would detail the types of potentially damaging operations, the timing of such operations and the avoidance and mitigation measures proposed.

A formal letter of consent for the proposed works then has to be received from SNH.

We don't know whether these have been obtained.

The impact assessment report on the access road details its possible effect on various ecological items:

For example: there would be a loss of around 40 old, slow-growing Junipers next to the access track within the SSSI. AMEC propose to replace these with new cuttings when work has been completed.

BUT is this satisfactory for a SSSI?

The report says that where possible the Scots Pines should be left next to the track...

The report suggests fencing off the access road area within the SSSI boundary 100 metres in length and 10 metres wide on a substantial side slope - construction activities would not be allowed outside this corridor. Topsoil from the working corridor would be taken and stored - to be replaced after construction.

BUT is this good enough?

As a result of the construction of this track there is the probability that soil erosion would occur with soil being washed down slopes during heavy rainfall. This has implications on private water supplies which rise on that part of the hill - Succoth, Howe Mill, Netherton, Auchinhandoch to name a few - and which would also affect important burns which feed the Deveron.

To finish I have one important question to ask AMEC:

The Clashindarroch Forest is one of the largest and most productive commercial, man-made forests in Scotland - It has, and needs, roads for Heavy Goods Vehicles - and these timber-haulage roads already exist. The windfarm is predominantly planned for the east-side of the Grummack.

Why improve, extend and create new access roads through the Glass Community, the Grummack Hill and through a Site of Special Scientific Interest which will prominently scar the hillside and which will have little or no benefit to the Deveron side in the future?

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