



26 September 2012

Suzanne Bagnall
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Dear Suzanne,

Irrelevant information redacted by the RHI Inquiry

- Wind Turbine -

Personal information redacted by the RHI Inquiry

Personal information redacted by the RHI Inquiry

When the UFU met with yourself and the Environment Minister on 10 July in Goodwood House, we raised the fact that small scale 850 wind turbine planning applications were awaiting a decision throughout Northern Ireland.

It was at the meeting you said that if a case study came to light which exemplified an inconsistent policy scenario, we could bring it to you attention. This is such a case and i would be grateful if you could give it due consideration.

The application for a Irrelevant information redacted by the RHI Inquiry wind turbine was made by;

Personal information redacted by the RHI Inquiry

Since the initial planning application was submitted on 23 June 2011, there have been no objections from any external consultees, Irrelevant information redacted by the RHI Inquiry MOD/NIE/utility companies (microwave links) and Road Service. Personal information redacted by the RHI Inquiry has submitted a comprehensive list of supporting information including expensive laser photographs to enhance his application. As far as the Planning Service is concerned, the Strategic Planning Division could not foresee any problems with the application.

However, the problems have occurred with NIEA Historical Buildings Unit. In their most recent letter (3 August) they base their concerns on two points;

1. The proposal will affect closer/smaller listed buildings in the Irrelevant information redacted by the RHI Inquiry area.

Personal information redacted by the RHI Inquiry has submitted letters of support from the inhabitants of these buildings, including Irrelevant information redacted by the RHI Inquiry and they have clearly stated that they have no objection to neither the presence nor the citing of the turbine. In order to support his application, Personal information redacted by the RHI Inquiry employed the services of a laser imagery company which clearly demonstrated that the proposed turbine will have no visual impact in its current location. By way of further support, Personal information redacted by the RHI Inquiry attained a letter of support from a local historian, Irrelevant information redacted by the RHI Inquiry who confirmed the age of the mentioned buildings and highlighted that once, an old-fashioned windmill stood nearby, confirming the ideal location for a modern generator.

It should also be noted that the strictness of their "listed" status would be queried when you consider that one of the buildings has a UPVC conservatory added to its structure.

Our member has gone beyond what has been asked of him, meeting all stipulated deadlines for submission, yet it was himself who had to chase the relevant staff in the Historical Buildings Unit to seek answers and track progress.

Each time he was informed by the Historical Buildings Unit that it was the proximity to the "closer/smaller listed buildings" that was creating a query on their part and it was on this basis that he made the extensive representations. Yet, it was only at the 11th hour that the same department within NIEA raised the issue of "the wider setting of [redacted]".

2. The proposal will affect the wider setting of [redacted]

There are at least 6 other wind turbines which have been passed within a 10 mile radius of [redacted]. It should be noted that these are visible from [redacted] itself, including a cluster of 3 turbines 2 miles to the West of the [redacted] and another on at [redacted] nearby [redacted]. [redacted] proposed turbines is 3 times this distance away and will be barely visible from [redacted] when compared to these recently erected turbines.

In order to highlight the lack of consistency in this case and indeed a lack of understanding of the application and its location, I need to draw your attention to the final paragraph of the NIEA letter to [redacted] dated 3 August 2012;

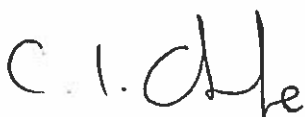
"It is our understanding that the [redacted] area does not offer the wind conditions required to justify the erection of a wind turbine of this inappropriate magnitude, in such a sensitive location for the built and natural heritage".

When in fact, contrary to what it says, [redacted] has many wind turbines, you only have to consider the areas on the edge of the [redacted] which, since it is an ASSI, is a more sensitive ecological area. The concern from the Historical Buildings Unit is based upon supplementary guidance (in other words only an opinion) and not a strict legislative stature such as the ASSI and the points made above illustrate this planning application meets all the necessary criteria.

The UFU would urge that this case is given wider consideration and be passed for approval. When [redacted] initially made the application, it was done in the interests of Farm Diversification. Many farm businesses are barely breaking even financially, or as is the case increasingly, they are making a loss. A wind turbine such as this will benefit the wider rural community in that it would be able to provide a source of renewable electricity to the town of [redacted].

This application has a deadline of 16 October and hence the urgency of our communication. Whilst the UFU asks that the Planners give this case due consideration, in light of the inconsistent decisions experienced by [redacted] we would request a meeting with the DoE Minister to discuss this matter further and ensure that the decision-making departments (in particular the Historical Buildings Unit) are fully aware of all the actual facts and background information.

Yours sincerely,



Chris Osborne
Senior Policy Officer