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By e-mail to: ldp@stirling.gov.uk

Our ref: A23117059
10th January 2019

Dear Emma,

RE: Stirling Council – Supplementary Guidance – Biodiversity and Landscape

I refer to your correspondence of 16 November 2018, inviting comments on the above document. The following comments are provided:

1. Section 2.1 - Key Principles

Comment - The principles set out in Section 2.1 go beyond Scottish Planning Policy (SPP), particularly:

- Principle 1 - Development should result in **no net loss** and should actively seek to enhance the biodiversity interest. This includes biodiversity interest that may be outside the boundaries of the development site. The preferred solution for new developments is to avoid damage to biodiversity interest by careful layout of built development and the protection of habitat areas within the selected site.
- Principle 2 - In any situation where loss of, or damage to, biodiversity interest is unavoidable **then the loss or damage will always be minimised** as far as possible.

Scottish Planning policy sets out:

- Paragraph 194: that the planning system should seek benefits for biodiversity where possible, including the restoration of degraded habitats and the avoidance of further fragmentation or isolation of habitats; and
- Paragraph 195: Planning authorities, and all public bodies, have a duty under the nature conservation (Scotland) Act 2004 to further the conservation of biodiversity this must be reflected in development plans and development management decisions.

2. The document should be clearer as to whether it expects this guidance to be used in relation to wind energy developments in any situation.



Comment - The document is not sufficiently clear how it is to be used in relation to wind energy developments. Paragraph 1.3 (Section B) indicates that the emphasis for wind energy applications goes to the Wind Energy Development Supplementary Guidance in the first instance. However that means that there is room for influence of those applications from other sources. Further clarity about the relationship between the Supplementary Guidance - Wind Energy Developments and the Supplementary Guidance - Biodiversity and Landscape for application preparation and development management purposes is required.

The impact of wind farms is noted time and again in the supplementary guidance, with a range of degrees of sensitivity to wind turbines or large or tall structures noted throughout the document. For some areas, such as Uamh Bheg, the strong implication is that there is no further capacity for further wind turbines

3. Further narrative on landscape character is needed

Comment – Almost all of the landscape character summaries include sensitivity to tall structures or wind turbines otherwise. It may assist decision making if the guidance also included some narrative around what a sensitivity means for applicants and project design. Is this something that the council thinks can often be designed out, or is it something which is less likely to find a satisfactory resolution?

The Western Ochils, for example there is concern that large-man-made structures outwith the local landscape area 'could encroach on panoramic views or affect the perception of scale and/or remoteness of the landscape. It is not clear how this is to be remedied through assessment of applications outwith the local landscape area – the applicants for which may not even be aware they need to factor this point into the design process. The effect could be a buffering of the local landscape area. Scottish planning Policy paragraph 197 is clear that buffer zones should not be established around areas designated for their natural heritage importance. The council should be clear how it intends this type of statement to be applied in decision making to avoid a buffer zone being formed.

Yours Faithfully

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