# Supporting Statement

## Performance Meteorological Mast Application

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# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Planning Statement

This planning statement has been prepared to support a planning application for a wind monitoring (meteorological) mast at the prospective Beinn Bheag Wind Farm site. Situated within the Highlands, approximately 22 kilometres (km) west of Invergarry, the proposed operations land use implications, adherence to national and local planning policies, and other pertinent considerations are thoroughly examined within this document to effectively inform the decision-making process.

RES is the world's largest independent renewable energy company, working across 24 countries and active in wind, solar, energy storage, green hydrogen, transmission and distribution. As an industry innovator for over 40 years, RES has delivered more than 24GW of renewable energy projects across the globe and supports an operational asset portfolio exceeding 12GW worldwide for a large client base.

Drawing on decades of experience in the renewable energy and construction industries, RES has the expertise to develop, construct and operate projects of outstanding quality which contribute to a low-carbon future by providing a secure supply of sustainable, low-cost, clean green energy. RES is committed to finding effective and appropriate ways of engaging with all its stakeholders, including local residents and businesses, and believes that the views of local people are an integral part of the development process. RES is also committed to developing long-term relationships with the communities around its projects, proactively seeking ways in which it can support and encourage community involvement in social and environmental projects near its developments.

The document should be read in conjunction with the following drawings which have been submitted as part of this planning application:

- Drawing 1 – 05019-RES-LAY-XX-002 – Location Plan
- Drawing 2 – 05019-RES-LAY-DR-LE-010 – Application Boundary
- Drawing 3 – 05019-RES-INS-DR-IN-001 – 70m Met Mast Elevation

The associated Beinn Bheag Wind Farm application is in the pre-application stage and will be submitted to the Scottish Government Energy Consents Unit (ECU) under Section 36 of the Electricity Act 1989. The proposed operations will record and monitor local meteorological conditions for a period of three years to support the wider Beinn Bheag Wind Farm.

Although this is a part of the process of a wind farm development, this is a standalone planning application. A decision on the application for a temporary meteorological met mast would have no weight in any decision for the site to be developed in future and does not prejudice any future decision of the Highland Council in relation to wind farm development on the site. It should be made clear that approval of monitoring equipment is not an indication that any subsequent wind farm application would be considered acceptable.

## 1.2 Application Description

The application seeks planning permission for a tubular-style performance meteorological mast secured by guy wires of 70m in vertical height. The mast will be situated within the Beinn Bheag Wind Farm study area.

Permission for the mast is being sought for a maximum period of three years from the date the mast is erected to allow for a valid wind measurement campaign. RES will liaise with The Highland Council (THC) throughout the process and submit in writing to the planning authority when the mast is erected. It is proposed that the mast will be erected within one year of consent. At the end of the three years, the mast will be dismantled and removed.

The erection of the proposed mast will require plant to access the site. Installation of the ground anchors will require a semi-LGP excavator. No additional construction will be required as part of this met-mast application. These vehicles can safely access the site via the existing forestry tracks.

## 1.3 Need for the Development

The science behind the climate emergency is well established and demonstrates the need to phase out fossil fuels in order to avoid negative economic, environmental, and social effects. International, European and United Kingdom (UK) commitments to reducing CO2 and tackling the climate crisis have been made by all major economies. In response to these issues the UK has made significant, legally binding commitments to increase the use of renewable energy. The Proposed operations relates directly to those commitments.

The Scottish Government published the Onshore Wind Policy Statement (OWPS) in December 2022. The OWPS states that with nearly 9 gigawatts (GW) currently operational in Scotland, onshore wind is a cheap and reliable source of zero-carbon electricity. The Statement, which is the culmination of an extensive consultative process with industry, statutory consultees and the public, then sets an overall ambition of 20GW of installed onshore wind capacity in Scotland by 2030.

To meet the OWPS targets, new renewable energy projects must be developed where resources are present, environmental effects can be satisfactorily mitigated and social and economic contributions to local communities and/or regional programmes can be secured.

The proposed operations will allow the wind resource to be accurately measured at the prospective wind farm site, providing critical data to determine the potential energy production and viability of the site. It will also allow turbine performance to be predicted more accurately to increase the efficiency of the design and layout to maximise energy production.

# 2 Development Design and Details

## 2.1 The Site Location

The proposed operations will involve the construction and operation of a 70m met mast on an area of land located within the Highlands approximately 13km from Invergarry. The proposed operations are located with the National Grid Reference (NGR) of NN 06995 99961 as shown on Drawing 1 - 05019-RES-LAY-XX-002. The site is located entirely within The Highland Council (THC).

Topography ranges between 140 and 510m Above Ordnance Data (AOD) throughout the wider potential wind farm site. Landcover predominantly covers moorland vegetation in the northern section of the potential wind farm site with forestry in the southern half. In the north, minor watercourses drain into Loch Quoich, and to the south, the River Kingie.

The planning application boundary of the Met Mast is shown on Drawing 2 - 05019-RES-LAY-DR-LE-010 being approximately 0.146 ha in area allowing for a small micro-siting buffer around the mast.

The mast is in an area of open moorland. Therefore, no felling operations are required as part of this application.

## 2.2 Design Details

The mast's structure is tubular, fixed in position at the base with supporting tensioned guy wires. It has a vertical height of 70m and a total maximum width of 194mm. The supporting high-tensile guy wires are made of galvanised steel at various intervals along the mast. The furthest guy wire anchor point is fixed at a distance of 35m from the mast. The guy wire and anchor orientations are separated by 90° with orientations of 45°,135°,225° & 315°. This is in order to take advantage of the prevailing SW wind direction. Details can be seen in Drawing 3 – 05019-RES-INS-DR-IN-001.

At several levels, including the top of the mast, booms (also steel) are installed for the mounting of anemometry which records the wind resource at different heights. The locations of the booms and anemometry are indicative at the current time and may vary according to wind resource measurement requirements.

The data received from the mast will be recorded and stored in a data logger, a secure box attached near the bottom of the mast which also houses telecommunications equipment and batteries.

Aviation lighting will be fitted to the top of the mast and elsewhere as required, as is required on all masts over 50m. The lighting will be Ministry of Defence Specification Infra-red with low-intensity vertical observation lighting.

Measures will be put in place to secure the mast site. Tamper-proof shackles will be used on the anchors which require a special tool to remove. As such, this prevents the mast from being cut down via the anchors. Signage will also be displayed at the anchors.

## 2.3 Access

The proposed operations will be accessed from the A87. The Site can be accessed via existing Forestry Land Scotland tracks that are suitable for 4x4 vehicle movements, therefore no new access construction will be undertaken as part of the planning application, minimising ground disturbance.

## 2.4 Installation Procedure

The mast is supported by a steel baseplate, which sits atop timber sleepers secured by 4 anchor points. All anchors are designed as 'deadman anchors' with a protruding metal rod for attaching the guys, eliminating the need for concrete.

Delivery of the mast components will be handled by all-terrain vehicles and trailers with installation expected to take 5 days.

Following installation, essential maintenance will occur annually, with one vehicle accessing the mast site per year. Access to the sites will be via the A87, using an existing entrance into the site boundary, followed by access along estate forestry tracks to reach the mast locations.

## 2.5 Community Safety

The proposed mast is located within open moorland and is not therefore subject to access restrictions. Accordingly, site signage will be erected to warn public users during installation and operation advising on the need for safety around the mast and the guy wires. Met masts are designed and constructed to withstand high wind speeds and, therefore do not present any safety concerns once erected.

There are no core paths through the wider Beinn Bheag wind farm site, but there is a footpath nearby to a Munro (Gairich). However, the location has been chosen to give a suitable stand-off to this path.

## 2.6 Maintenance

An annual site visit will be conducted by a qualified site engineer using a 4x4 vehicle. During the visit, the engineer will perform instrument checks, visually inspect the mast, guy wires, and anchors, and ensure that site signage remains intact. Additionally, the instruments will be monitored remotely, and in the event of any instrumentation failure, further site visits will be scheduled as necessary.

## 2.7 Decommissioning

At the conclusion of a period of up to 3 years, the met mast will undergo decommissioning, and the reinstatement of the sites to their original condition.

# 3 Planning Policy

The relevant development plan applicable in this instance consists of: Scottish Government National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) and The Highland Wide Local Development Plan (HwLDP).

## 3.1 National Planning Framework 4

NPF4 was adopted and published in February 2023 and it sets out the spatial strategy for Scotland to 2045. Overall, the framework acknowledges and supports the expansion of renewable, low-carbon and zero-emission technologies as shown in Policy 11.

Paragraph a), sub paragraph ii) of this policy includes enabling works to achieve renewable technologies, therefore the proposed application is supported under this policy. The table below assesses the proposed operations against the relevant NPF4 policies.

*Table 3-1 - NPF4 Actions*

| Policy Number | Policy Guidance | Actions take to meet Guidance |
|---|---|---|
| Policy 1 | Tackling the climate and nature crisis | The proposed operations supports this policy through enabling the works for renewable technologies. |
| Policy 3 | Biodiversity | The proposed operations are not located within any ecological designations. In addition, the proposed operations are temporary in nature due to the limited time period for which consent is being applied for. The utilisation of good practice construction methods combined with the minor scale of the works are unlikely to result in any measurable impact on ecology, hydrology or geology receptors. |
| Policy 4 | Natural Places | The proposed operations are not located within any ecological, hydrological or ornithological designations. In addition, the proposed operations are outwith the Wild Land Area to the south of the site. |
| Policy 5 | Soils | The proposed operations are located within an area of shooting moorland. They are therefore not sited on prime agricultural land. Areas of deep peat (>1m) will be avoided where possible and any peat disturbed during any excavation works shall be reinstated. |
| Policy 6 | Forestry, woodlands and trees | The proposed operations will not result in the loss of ancient woodland, ancient or veteran trees, native woodlands, hedgerows or individual trees of high biodiversity value. No tree felling is required. |
| Policy 7 | Historic assets and places | The proposed operations are not located near or within any historic assets or places therefore will not have any impact on historic assets. |
| Policy 11 | Energy | The proposed operations will support this policy through enabling woks for renewable energy technologies |
| Policy 22 | Flood risk and water management | Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) Flood Maps indicates that the operations are out with any designated flooding zones. |

## 3.2 Highland Wide Local Development Plan

The Highland Wide Local Development Plan (HwLDP), adopted in 2012, outlines various planning policies applicable to the entire Highland Council area and serves as the current adopted Development Plan against which planning applications are evaluated and decided upon.

One of the key policies within the HwLDP relevant to the proposed operations is Policy 67 – Renewable Energy Developments. This policy emphasizes that renewable energy development proposals should be closely associated with the primary renewable resources required for their operation.

The following table illustrates actions undertaken to align with the highlighted policies within the HwLDP:

*Table 3-2 - HwLDP Actions*

| Policy Number | Policy Guidance | Actions taken to meet Guidance |
|---|---|---|
| Policy 28 | Sustainable Design | The proposed operations are sited at least 50m from watercourse and outwith any ecological or cultural designations. The utilisation of good practice construction methods combined with the minor scale of the works are unlikely to result in any measurable impact on ecology, hydrology or geology receptors. |
| Policy 57 | Natural, Built and Cultural Heritage | The proposed operations are not located near or within any historic assets or places therefore will not have any impact on historic assets. |
| Policy 58 | Protected Species and Other Important Species | The proposed operations are not located within an area designated for ecological importance |
| Policy 61 | Landscape | The slender and unobtrusive design, along with the temporary and reversible nature of the installation, means there will be no significant adverse effects on landscape and visual amenity. |
| Policy 64 | Flood Risk | Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) Flood Maps indicates that the operations are out with any designated flooding zones. |
| Policy 77 | Public Access | There are no core paths in the vicinity of the proposed operations. Site signage will be erected to warn public users during installation and operation advising on the need for safety around the mast and the guy wires |
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# 4 Conclusion

In summary, the proposed operations form part of the early stages of wind farm development, aiming to gather crucial wind data to ensure the suitability of the broader Beinn Bheag wind farm site. Furthermore,

the installation of the met mast is pivotal for optimising design to effectively contribute to renewable energy targets and maximise the wind farm's contribution to environmental and socio-economic factors.

The temporary nature of the met mast, set to be in place for a maximum of 36 months, ensures minimal disruption, with the mast to be decommissioned afterwards and the site restored to its original condition. Given the slender and unobtrusive design, along with the temporary and reversible nature of the installation, there will be no significant adverse effects on landscape and visual amenity, nearby nature conservation sites, or cultural heritage assets.

This development aligns with relevant planning policies outlined in NPF4 and HwLDP, thus justifying the approval of planning permission for the specified duration from the erection date.