

Agenda Item	5.5
Report No	PLS-06-25

HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Committee: South Planning Applications Committee
Date: 06 February 2025
Report Title: 24/05191/PAN: Fearna PSH Ltd
Land 4390M NW Of Kingie Lodge, Invergarry
Report By: Area Planning Manager – South

Purpose/Executive Summary

Description: Loch Fearna Pumped Storage Hydro Scheme - construction and operation of a pumped storage hydro scheme at Glen Garry with a generating capacity of 2000MW
Ward: 11 – Caol and Mallaig

Recommendation

Members are asked to note the submission of the voluntary PAN and highlight any material issues they wish to be brought to the attention of the applicant before the submission of an application for consent under the Electricity Act.

1.0 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 This report informs the Planning Applications Committee of the submission of the attached Proposal of Application Notice (PAN).
- 1.2 The submission of the PAN is voluntary and best practice for forthcoming applications for national developments where an application is to be made under Section 36 of the Electricity Act. Any forthcoming application would be determined by Scottish Ministers with the Highland Council being a consultee. The consultation arrangements proposed also broadly in line with the provisions of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 (as amended), albeit that the PAN was served on 10 December 2024 and postdates the first consultation event. Members are asked to note this PAN may form the basis of a subsequent application.
- 1.3 The submitted information attached includes:
- Proposal of Application Notice (Application Form)
 - Location / Site Layout Plan
- 1.4 Two in-person consultation events have taken place. The first took place on 6 December 2023 between 12pm and 7pm at Glengarry Community Hall, and the second on Tuesday 10 December 2024 between 12pm and 7pm at Glengarry Community Hall. The first event was advertised on 21 November 2023 and the second event was advertised on 28 November 2024, as well as on 5 December 2024 in the Oban Times (incorporating Lochaber Times), 12 days prior to the public consultation dates.
- 1.5 Details of all notified parties are contained / appended to the PAN form and include Invergarry Community Council, Member of the Scottish Parliament and Members of Parliament as well as local Elected Members.
- 1.6 Any forthcoming application will be accompanied by a Pre-Application Consultation (PAC) report explaining the consultation undertaken, feedback received, and any resultant amendments made to the planning application.

2.0 DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

- 2.1 The proposal is for the Loch Fearnha pumped storage hydro scheme including the construction and operation of a pumped storage hydro scheme at Glen Garry with a generating capacity of 2000MW. The main pumped storage hydro scheme site comprises of upper and lower reservoirs and associated works situated in close proximity to the west of the Quoich Dam. Access to the site would be via forest roads on the southern side of Glen Garry. A 4x4 operational track would be constructed above the maximum water level of the upper reservoir, to allow access for maintenance. Construction and operation of a substantial pumped storage hydro plant

are included in the proposed development. The Proposed Development would use Loch Quoich as its lower reservoir, which is already used for hydropower generation and is the largest storage reservoir in the UK. A powerhouse on the banks of Loch Quoich will house the pump-turbine units and ancillary equipment.

- 2.2 Two rockfill dams (referred to as Fearna Dam and Coire Dubh Dam) would be constructed to allow the reservoir to store water between the levels of 538m AOD and 600m AOD. This would provide storage of approximately 40 Mm³ of water. It is anticipated that the dams would be constructed from rock which has been excavated from borrow pits located around the site and from other project related excavation works. The dams would be of similar appearance and construction to the existing Quoich Dam. The powerhouse would be located on the shores of Loch Quoich within a disused former quarry and would comprise deep vertical shafts which would house the pump-turbine units, with a superstructure above.
- 2.3 The developer sought formal pre-application advice from the Planning Authority through the Pre-Application Advice Service for Major Developments in May 2023 (23/01810/PREMAJ).

3.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

- 3.1 The PAN boundary covers approximately of 54.3 hectares taking in the existing substation at the Quoich Hydro conventional hydro generation scheme and running at the western end of Glengarry around 20km west of Invergarry. From the main site area, the proposal would connect via forest roads on the southern side of Glen Garry, thereby minimising disruption to the local community by avoiding the use of the C1144.
- 3.2 The main pumped Hydro Storage site comprises south and southwest-facing slopes and corries of upland blanket mire, heathland, and flush habitat; burns with associated riparian woodland; acid grassland, bracken, mire, and heath habitats in the lower-lying ground and a rock shingle beach along Loch Quoich's shoreline. There are a number of designations and natural environment constraints and built heritage features in proximity to the site.

National Designations / Wild Land

- The development lies within 10km of the West Inverness-shire Lochs Special Protection Area (SPA) and Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) designated for black-throated diver and common scoter.
- The development lies 6km north west of the Knoydart National Scenic Area (NSA).
- The proposal sits almost entirely within Kinlochhourn-Knoydart-Morar Wild Land Area (WLA 18).

Regional Designations / Other Constraints

- The proposed development lies within the Moidart, Morar and Glenshiel Special Landscape Area (SLA), which includes upper Glen Kingie and the long-established hydro landscape of Loch Quoich, dating from 1955.
 - Glen Affric National Nature Reserve lies approximately 19km from the proposed development.
 - The battlefield of Glenshiel which is of significant historical importance lies 6km to the north.
- 3.3 The area within the site boundary does not appear to contain any trees or woodland, with the exception of a small area adjacent to the Allt Fearnà watercourse below Loch Fearnà.
- 3.4 The development will result in the disturbance of carbon rich soils and peatland.
- 3.5 The site falls wholly within the Interlocking Sweeping Peaks – Lochaber Landscape Character Type as defined by NatureScot's Landscape Character Assessment.
- 3.6 There are several recreational receptors within the site boundary including: a Core Path, candidate Core Path, several recorded public rights of way, two popular mountain paths, and a canoeing river. There are no Listed Buildings or Scheduled Monuments in the vicinity of the site.
- 3.7 The proximity of the site to the River Garry means a part of the development area for the main substation compound is within the river flood plain and consequently at 1:200 year plus climate risk of flooding, according to SEPA's Flood Risk Mapping.
- 3.8 There are other major / national developments proposed in proximity to this site, including but not limited to the Skye Reinforcement Overhead Line, giving rise to cumulative effects.

4.0 DEVELOPMENT PLAN

The following policies are relevant to the assessment of the proposal:

4.1 National Planning Framework 4 (2023) (NPF4)

National Development 2 (NAD2) – Pumped Hydro Storage

National Development 3 (NAD3) Strategic Renewable Electricity Generation and Transmission Infrastructure

1 - Tackling the climate and nature crisis.

2 - Climate mitigation and adaptation

3 - Biodiversity

- 4 - Natural places
- 5 - Soils
- 6 - Forestry, Woodland and Trees
- 7 - Historic assets and places
- 11 - Energy
- 12 - Zero waste
- 13 - Sustainable transport
- 18 - Infrastructure first
- 20 - Blue and green infrastructure
- 22 - Flood risk and water management
- 23 - Health and safety
- 25 - Community wealth benefits
- 26 - Business and industry
- 29 - Rural development
- 33 - Minerals

4.2 **Highland Wide Local Development Plan (2012) (HwLDP)**

- 28 - Sustainable Design
- 29 - Design Quality and Place-making
- 30 - Physical Constraints
- 31 - Developer Contributions
- 36 - Wider Countryside
- 51 - Trees and Development
- 52 - Principle of Development in Woodland
- 53 - Minerals
- 55 - Peat and Soils
- 56 - Travel
- 57 - Natural, Built and Cultural Heritage
- 58 - Protected Species
- 59 - Other important Species
- 60 - Other Importance Habitats
- 61 - Landscape
- 62 - Geodiversity
- 63 - Water Environment
- 64 - Flood Risk

- 65 – Waste Water Treatment
- 66 - Surface Water Drainage
- 67 - Renewable Energy Developments
- 69 - Electricity Transmission Infrastructure
- 72 - Pollution
- 73 - Air Quality
- 74 - Green Networks
- 77 - Public Access
- 78 - Long Distance Routes

West Highland and Islands Local Development Plan (WestPlan) (2019)

4.3 There are no direct relevant policies or allocations to this proposed development however, WestPlan defines boundaries (including any refinements) of the Special Landscape Areas (SLAs) across the plan area.

4.4 Highland Council Supplementary Guidance

- Biodiversity Enhancement Planning Guidance (May 2024)
- Developer Contributions (Mar 2018)
- Flood Risk and Drainage Impact Assessment (Jan 2013)
- Green Networks (Jan 2013)
- Highland Historic Environment Strategy (Jan 2013)
- Highland's Statutorily Protected Species (Mar 2013)
- Physical Constraints (Mar 2013)
- Roads and Transport Guidelines for New Developments (May 2013)
- Sustainable Design Guide (Jan 2013)
- Trees, Woodland and Development (Jan 2013)
- Special Landscape Area Citations (Jun 2011)
- Highland Renewable Energy Strategy and Planning Guidelines (May 2006)

4.6 Scottish Government Policy and Other Guidance

- Draft Energy Strategy and Just Transition Plan (2023)
- Draft Scottish Biodiversity strategy to 2045: tackling the nature emergency (2023)
- Scottish Energy Strategy (2017)
- 2020 Routemap for Renewable Energy (2011)
- Energy Efficient Scotland Route Map, Scottish Government (2018)

- Siting and Designing Wind Farms in the Landscape, SNH (2017)
- Assessing Impacts on Wild Land Areas, Technical Guidance, NatureScot (2020)
- Wind Farm Developments on Peat Lands, Scottish Government (2011)
- Historic Environment Policy for Scotland, HES (2019)
- PAN 1/2011 - Planning and Noise (2011)
- PAN 60 – Planning for Natural Heritage (2008)
- Circular 1/2017: Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations (2017)

5.0 POTENTIAL MATERIAL PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

- a) Compliance with the Development Plan / Other Planning Policy
- b) Energy and Economic Benefits
- c) Design, Landscape and Visual Impacts (including on Wild Land Areas)
- d) Construction
- e) Noise and Vibration
- f) Roads, Transport and Access
- g) Water, Flood Risk, Drainage and Peat
- h) Natural Heritage (including ornithology)
- i) Forestry
- j) Built and Cultural Heritage
- k) Any other material considerations raised within representations.

6.0 CONCLUSION

- 6.1 The report presents the information submitted to date as part of the PAN. The policy considerations against which any future application will be considered have been summarised as well as the potential material considerations and key issues based on the information available to date. The list is not exhaustive, and further matters may arise as and when a planning application is received and in the light of public representations and consultation responses.

7.0 IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 Not applicable.

8.0 RECOMMENDATION

- 8.1 It is recommended the Committee notes the submission of the PAN and advises of any material issues it wishes to be brought to the applicant's attention.

Signature: David Mudie
Designation: Area Planning Manager – South
Author(s): Ikram Ullah
Background Papers: Documents referred to in report and in case file.
Relevant Plans: Plan 1 - Proposal of Application Notice (Application Form)
Plan 2 - Location Plan

The Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 as amended by the Planning Etc. (Scotland) Act 2006 and Planning (Scotland) Act 2019

Town and Country Planning (Pre-Application Consultation) (Scotland) Regulations 2021

The Council will respond within 21 days of validation the Notice. It will advise whether the proposed Pre-application Consultation is satisfactory or if additional notification and consultation above the statutory minimum is required.

Please note that a planning application for this proposed development cannot be submitted less than 12 weeks from the date the Proposal of Application Notice is received by the Council and without the statutory consultation requirements having been undertaken. The planning application must be accompanied by a Pre-application consultation report.

The Proposal of Application Notice will be valid for a period of 18 months from the date of validation of the notice by the Council

<u>Contact Details</u>			
Applicant	Fearna PSH Ltd.	Agent	Gilkes Energy Ltd
Address	Canal Head North Kendal Cumbria LA9 7BZ	Address	Canal Head North Kendal Cumbria LA9 7BZ
Phone	01539 720028	Phone	07876 860 981
Email	fearna@gilkesenergy.com	Email	Fraser.allison@gilkesenergy.com
<u>Address or Location of Proposed Development</u>			
Please state the postal address of the prospective development site. If there is no postal address, please describe its location. Please outline the site in red on a base plan to a recognised metric scale and attach it to this completed Notice			
The site is located Land 4390M NW Of Kingie Lodge, Invergarry. The site boundary is outlined in red in the attached plan FEA/FC4/001/P4-Location Plan Figure 2.1.			
<u>Description of Development</u>			
Please include detail where appropriate – e.g. the number of residential units; the gross floorspace in m ² of any buildings not for residential use; the capacity of any electricity generation or waste management facility; and the length of any infrastructure project. Please attach any additional supporting information.			
The Proposed Development comprises the construction and operation of a large-scale pumped storage hydro project. The Proposed Development would utilise Loch Quoich as its lower reservoir, which is already used for hydropower generation and is the largest storage reservoir in the UK. Loch Quoich requires no modification to its storage volume or operating regime to accommodate the Proposed Development, thereby maximizing the potential of an existing asset. The upper reservoir would be created by the construction of			

dams at Loch Fearn and the adjacent Coire Dubh. The rock for these dams will be won from site and no export of rock from the site is required.

Water will be transferred between the lower and upper reservoirs via underground pressure tunnels. A powerhouse on the banks of Loch Quoich will house the pump-turbine units and ancillary equipment. The compact nature of the site with short tunnels and high head, positive ground conditions and an existing lower reservoir make this site a favourable candidate for pumped storage hydro. Access to the site would be via forest roads on the southern side of Glen Garry, thereby minimising disruption to the local community by avoiding the use of the C1144.

The Proposed Development would create storage of approximately 36GWh of renewable energy and an operating capacity of up to 2000MW, which will have a nationally significant impact on the ability to balance the intermittency of other renewable energy sources and reduce the requirement for fossil fuels. It may also offer the National Grid a range of other ancillary services, such as black-start, frequency regulation and inertia.

Further details of the Proposed Development are available on the project website <https://fearnastorage.co.uk/>

Pre-application Screening Notice

Has a Screening Opinion been issued on the need for a Proposal of Application notice by the Highland Council in respect of the proposed development?

Yes

No

X

If yes, please provide a copy of this Opinion.

Community Consultation

State which other parties have received a copy of this Proposal of Application Notice.

Community Council/s

Date Notice Served

Invergarry Community Council

4 December 2024

Local Elected Members

Date Notice Served

Andrew Baldrey – Caol and Mallaig

4 December 2024

John Grafton – Caol and Mallaig

4 December 2024

Liz Saggars – Caol and Mallaig

4 December 2024

Members of Scottish Parliament and Members of Parliament

Date Notice Served

Kate Forbes MSP – Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch

4 December 2024

Ariane Burgess MSP – Highlands and Islands

4 December 2024

Tim Eagle MSP – Highlands and Islands	4 December 2024
Rhoda Grant MSP – Highlands and Islands	4 December 2024
Jamie Halcro Johnston MSP – Highlands and Islands	4 December 2024
Edward Mountain MSP – Highlands and Islands	4 December 2024
Emma Roddick MSP – Highlands and Islands	4 December 2024
Douglas Ross MSP – Highlands and Islands	4 December 2024
Angus MacDonald MP – Inverness, Skye and West Ross-shire	4 December 2024

Names / details of other parties	Date Notice Served

Details of Proposed Consultation

Proposed Public Event 1	Venue	Date and Time
	Glengarry Community Hall	12:00 to 19:00, 6 th December 2023
Proposed Public Event 2	Venue	Date and Time (provisional)
	Glengarry Community Hall	12:00 to 19:00, 10 th December 2024

Publication of Event

Newspaper Advert	Name of Newspaper	Advert Date
Public Event 1	The Oban Times (incorporating Lochaber Times)	21.11.2023
Public Event 2	The Oban Times (incorporating Lochaber Times)	28.11.2024 and 05.12.2024

Details of any other consultation methods (date, time and with whom)

Attendance at Glen Garry Community Council meetings on the following dates:
12 August 2024

Signed F. Allison

Date
04.12.2024