

Charles Clover is a long-standing environmental author, journalist and co-founder of the charity Blue Marine Foundation and has written about planning issues for the Sunday Times and the Daily Telegraph. Charles and his wife Pamela own a property in the Ross of Mull.

To whom it may concern,

We would like to register the strongest possible objection to the proposed MachairWind farm, which would turn some of the most iconic views on the west coast of Scotland into an industrial landscape. In our opinion this area of inshore waters should never have been selected by the Scottish government as a candidate for wind farm development because of the quality and cultural importance of the landscapes and seascapes around Iona, Mull, Staffa, Colonsay, Islay and Coll – which stretch as far as Ireland on a clear day. This area has landscapes and seascapes of the highest natural and cultural significance which have historically been, and still are, visited by travellers from all over Britain and Europe for their association with Gaelic folklore and the birth of the Romantic movement and for their part in the history of Christianity. We believe that building an enormous windfarm with blades higher than the Eiffel tower in this timeless and unspoiled seascape associated with St Columba, his sea voyages, his founding of a monastery on Iona and his bringing of Christianity to Scotland, would amount quite literally to sacrilege. The visual impact of these absolutely huge turbines in a seascape that is one of the - literally - holiest of holies in the west of Scotland is the absolutely unacceptable thing.

We write as the owners of a holiday cottage at Ardtun on the Ross of Mull where almost all our guests come to visit Iona, Staffa and the beaches on Mull with a view of this seascape. Pamela has a long-standing family connection with Iona. Her great, great grandfather was the schoolmaster on the island and lived at Greenbank, a house that still exists potentially in direct sight of the turbines. Her last surviving close relatives on Iona have their graves in the churchyard close by the Abbey. Charles is a long-standing environmental author, journalist and co-founder of the charity Blue Marine Foundation and wrote about planning issues for the Sunday Times and the Daily Telegraph.

In planning terms we support the compelling objections that we understand are to be made by the National Trust for Scotland and the Iona Community Council.

We, like the Trust, are strongly in support of the transition to renewable energy to fight climate change, but we agree with the Trust that the Machair proposal involves **"unacceptable environmental, social, and economic risks."** To us, this development promised to bring cultural and environmental vandalism on an epic scale. Such developments should be guided towards already-altered locations – by

motorways, degraded pasture, or the marine equivalent: developed coasts. There are more suitable sites elsewhere in Scotland and closer to where the energy is needed.

Our objections in full are:

- **Industrialisation of Heritage Landscapes:** The scale of the 340-metre tall turbines would heavily industrialise an otherwise undeveloped, internationally significant cultural and natural heritage landscape. Nobody seems to have had the nerve to say it but this is a sacred landscape for many people of faith, which compels visitors to contemplate geological time, mortality and their own spirituality. It is our belief that the desecration of this landscape would tarnish something of immense eternal value to Scotland which also brings visitors to the area.
- **Extreme Proximity to Land:** Unlike other large UK wind farms (such as Dogger Bank, located 78–124 miles offshore), MachairWind's massive turbines would sit as close as 7.7 miles from Colonsay and roughly 13 miles from Iona.
- **Threats to Wildlife:** We share the Trust's severe concern over the anticipated long-term, destructive impacts on local marine life and vulnerable bird populations.
- **Light pollution:** the wind farm would need lights to alert low-flying aircraft. These would be an unforgivable intrusion into a dark sky place, one of the area's greatest assets.
- **Socio-Economic Concerns:** Local community groups note that despite the heavy visual and environmental impact on the "host communities," none of the electricity generated is due to be distributed directly to the islands. Scotland cannot presently use as much renewable energy as it produces. The community benefits are unclear.

We contributed to the consultation by Scottish Renewables but we would like to object to the framing of that consultation, which suggested, wrongly and unfairly, that this frightening scheme was somehow inevitable and which gave little or no scope for respondents to reflect the view that it should not happen at all because of the heritage significance of landscapes and seascapes such as these.

We fully accept the need to tackle climate change - Charles has been writing about that since the 1980s and went to many COPs and is disgusted by how little has been done. It is about how and there are many options. There is a case for putting wind turbines truly offshore - on rafts - which is now possible and also it is sensible to zone them away from the west coast where the views are what define Scotland and people do indeed "eat the view." Arguably the North Sea is already an industrial landscape so we should just go northwards into deeper water with anchored farms and leave the west coast alone - like

we leave the East Coast's salmon rivers free of salmon farms. It just needs cultural and aesthetic values - which drive tourism of course - to be properly taken into account which in this case they have clearly not been. Instead, a multinational giant has just been allocated an area of sea apparently without thought or joined-up governmental consideration. Must this happen? Really? If the power cannot be used in Scotland and goes to Wales which already produces more than it needs, then the need for such a sacrifice of all that we hold dear on the west coast is not demonstrated.

Yours sincerely,

Pamela and Charles Clover