

TIREE COMMUNITY COUNCIL MACHAIRWIND SUBMISSION

MD-00012385 / MD-00012386

MachairWind Limited

MachairWind Offshore Wind Farm

This is the response of Tiree Community Council (TCC) to the above application.

TCC has discussed this application as an agenda item at two public meetings. We agreed to reflect the full range of community views in our submission to the consultation.

We published links from the developer's website and the community group site hebrideanhorizon.co.uk on the TCC Facebook page, which has 1400 followers. We did this three times. We also contacted island marine tourism businesses and fishermen.

Tiree has its own experience with wind farm applications. Scottish Power Renewables' Argyll Array stimulated a community campaign against the proposal from 2010 to 2013.

A few islanders did support the MachairWind proposal because it represented an expansion of green energy.

By far the largest number of responses we received, however, were hostile. I have summarised the main points that have been raised:

1. Visual and Landscape Impact:

This response from one islander was typical: 'The scale of the proposal—involving up to 91 turbines standing 340 metres high—is industrialisation on an unprecedented scale. These structures will dominate the horizon, irreversibly damaging the character, tranquillity, and natural beauty of our coastlines, which are vital to our local community and tourism-based economy. The historical and heritage implications are also huge.'

Several respondents suspected that the visualisations of the turbines from Tiree presented by the applicant did not represent the true scale of the project.

1. Dark Sky Degradation:

This response summed the matter up well: 'The requirement for aviation and maritime safety lighting on these turbines will cause severe light pollution, destroying the dark-sky environment that is a precious and cherished asset of our islands.'

2. Historic and Cultural:

The island's seascape has important historical and cultural significance. Tiree has connections to the other islands of the Inner Hebrides going back to the arrival of St Columba on Iona in the 6th century AD, including the Lords of the Isles on Islay and the MacLeans of Duart on Mull.

Hynish is at the southwestern tip of the island, and will be the most affected by the development. Skerryvore Lighthouse, said by many to be the most beautiful in the world, was built from a workyard in Hynish. The trustees of the Hynish Trust, a charitable community body that owns the Skerryvore Lighthouse Shore Station, have made this point: 'Hynish is one of Scotland's most important industrial heritage sites. A defining aspect of Hynish's significance is its relationship with the surrounding seascape ... The introduction of a major industrial development on the horizon risks undermining these qualities and could have long-term consequences for tourism and the local economy.'

3. Economic:

Many correspondents made the point that the landscape industrialisation caused by MachairWind will harm the tourist economy, one of the largest sectors on Tiree. This comment was typical: 'Tourism is one of the principal economic drivers for Tiree, Iona, Mull and the wider Hebridean islands. Hotels, restaurants, guest houses, self-catering businesses, wildlife tour operators, boat trips, retail businesses and many other small enterprises depend upon the area's reputation for spectacular scenery, abundant wildlife and an unspoilt environment. Any reduction in the area's attractiveness, or the perception that its unique landscapes have become industrialised, risks having direct economic consequences for businesses, employment and investment across fragile island communities.'

The island's fixed gear fishing fleet of six boats occasionally uses the waters within the projected footprint of the wind farm. It has also been shown that brown crabs are 'mesmerised' by undersea power cables, inhibiting their movement. This subject is poorly understood. But since it is known that female crustaceans migrate hundreds of miles, it is possible that Tiree fishermen on their traditional grounds will be impacted both during the construction phase and throughout the life of the wind farm.

4. Wildlife:

Concern was expressed about the impact of the wind farm on birds flying through the development. Of particular importance is Tiree's corncrake population, currently one-third of the UK's total, and economically important to the island's crofters and visitors. Corncrake migration is nocturnal, and birds are likely to pass through the projected wind farm. These birds have poor in-flight manoeuvrability, making them more likely to suffer impacts from the rotor blades. Corncrake migration is still poorly understood, and the precautionary principle should apply in this instance.

5. Lack of Local Benefit:

Tiree has not been designated a host community—the nearest turbine would be 18 miles from Hynish. There is currently no proposed community benefit to Tiree in the application. As one of our correspondents wrote: 'Tiree, Iona, Mull and the surrounding Hebridean

islands would bear many of the consequences of this proposal through changes to their landscape, seascape, dark skies and visitor experience, yet there is little evidence that the development will deliver significant long-term employment, meaningful investment in local infrastructure or reduced electricity costs for our island communities. Most construction activity and specialist maintenance are likely to be undertaken by contractors based elsewhere, with only a limited number of permanent operational roles remaining locally.'

Conclusion

It is therefore fair to say that the overwhelming majority of opinion on MachairWind Offshore Wind Farm submitted to Tiree Community Council is strongly against the proposal.

Yours sincerely,

Dr John Holliday, Secretary, Tiree Community Council