

VisitStraiton  
18 Main Street  
Straiton  
South Ayrshire KA19 7NF  
[visitstraiton.com](http://visitstraiton.com)

Attn. Paul McGillivray  
Scottish Government  
Energy Consents Unit  
4th Floor, 5 Atlantic Quay  
150 Broomielaw  
Glasgow G2 8LU

28th October 2013

Dear Mr McGillivray,

*RE: LINFAIRN WIND FARM, near Straiton, South Ayrshire*

In addition to objections which we will be making separately as concerned individuals, we (the undersigned) would like to object strongly to the proposed Linfairn Wind Farm, which we believe would have a very damaging effect on a healthy local tourist industry in Straiton. This local tourist industry is based on active and scenic tourism and we have a strong relation with the Galloway Forest Park and the Dark Sky Park. We are also located within the Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere. We are currently actively engaged with Ayrshire and Arran tourism to expand the provision which we offer to visitors.

In April, VisitStraiton asked for feedback on proposed local wind farm developments, including Linfairn, from Paula MacDonald of VisitScotland. The following is from her email response:

***“Dumfries & Galloway and South Ayrshire [...offer...] unsurpassed opportunities for top-class climbing and off-road biking, dark sky stargazing, wildlife observation along with a host of other outdoor pursuits.***

***Due to these important facts and as this area also holds various important tourism facilities, including the 7Stanes biking trails, Galloway Forest Park, Europe’s only Dark Sky Stargazing Park for example, VisitScotland would urge consideration of how any proposed development may affect the visitor experience of the area.***

***[... We ...] normally recommend that an independent Tourism Impact Assessment be made of the financial impact of the development on tourism businesses in the area, and that this be compared to any financial benefits to the local economy from the wind turbines being proposed.***

***If there have been any objections from tourism businesses within sight of the turbines, then independent studies of the area’s current visitors’ likelihood to revisit the area if turbines were to be erected at the proposed site should be also included in the assessment.”***

We regret that no such independent tourism impact study has been made – Sgurr Energy itself having taken on the role of producing a report (chapter 15 in their proposals on SOCIO-ECONOMICS, RECREATION, TOURISM AND LAND USE). We feel that this chapter is inadequate and we regret that WilloWind / Sgurr Energy have not made any study of active local businesses in and near Straiton which may be impacted by the proposed wind farm. Sgurr Energy have not made contact with local businesses: and so appear to be unaware of what those businesses are, their turnover, the type and number of visitors they attract, and where they come from, the ‘tourist spend’ which the visitors bring to the area, and the likely effect of the wind farm proposals on their business.

We are also disturbed at their use of an inadequate LVIA as source of information on tourism impact (p. 16). The LVIA, which contains many inaccuracies, does not identify which properties are tourist businesses and which are not. Nor does the LVIA list those properties which are solely for tourist accommodation. For example, Balbeg is identified as just one receptor (no. 31 in the LVIA). It should be noted that the Balbeg estate, in addition to the accommodation for the owners, consists of a further four holiday properties which sleep a total of 38. These other properties are not identified at all on the LVIA. It is impossible and inappropriate to rely only on the LVIA for assessment of which businesses will be affected.

We are perplexed at their choice of “tourism attractions”, which include Skeldon, Cloncaird Castle, Blairquhan, Craigengower Monument, Loch Doon Castle, Craigengillan, the Dark Sky Observatory and Bargany, but which

exclude the conservation village of Straiton itself, visited by thousands of walkers and cyclists annually, the conservation village of Kirkmichael, the Stinchar Falls, the Cornish Hill walk (both well-used and promoted by the Forestry Commission), the Carrick Forest Drive (complete with picnic places and a play park overlooking Loch Riecawr), Loch Doon, Loch Bradan, Auchalton Meadow, Crossraguel Abbey (Historic Scotland), Kilkerran, Shalloch-on-Minnoch, and Nick o' the Balloch. Again, it is not appropriate to try to build a discussion of socio-economic effects on an irrational selection of evidence.

VisitStraiton exists to inform the many visitors to our area about the attractions, events and facilities we offer. Our principal presence is our website, [www.visitstraiton.com](http://www.visitstraiton.com). In April 2013, we also produced a report on tourism in Straiton, *Wind Farm Development & Tourism in Straiton: a case-study of tourist provision for the Galloway Forest Park and the Galloway Forest Dark Sky Park*. The report is attached with this letter and we request that the information which it contains about the tourism in Straiton is considered as part of our objection to the Linfairn plans.

We regret that WilloWind / Sgurr Energy have made no reference to the information which the report contains, although it was sent to WilloWind in April 2013. The VisitStraiton report contains basic facts on tourism in and near Straiton, including names and details of all accommodation businesses. This would clearly have assisted Sgurr Energy in compiling their own study. Nor has Sgurr Energy referred to the report *Walking Routes in Straiton: assessing the economic impact. Final Report, November 2003*, a report prepared for Scottish Enterprise Ayrshire by Willie Miller Urban Design, Glasgow.

We believe that the failure to consult local businesses, the failure to gain any detailed picture of local tourism, and the failure to use either our report or that of Willie Miller Urban Design, reflect poorly on Sgurr Energy's methodology, and invalidate their conclusions.

We agree with the Scottish Government, with Scottish Natural Heritage, with local planning guidelines, and with all our local councillors, MSPs, our MEP and our MP, that large wind turbine developments should only be sited where they will not adversely affect landscapes which have high scenic, "wild-land", or natural value, and we accept the presumption of the Moffat report that the existing planning laws will act to prevent wind farms being approved in scenic locations. We believe Straiton and the Girvan valley to have exceptional historic and scenic value and request that the Linfairn plans be refused, as they would be extremely damaging to the community of Straiton and to its economy, and by extension, to the patrimony and economy of Scotland.

Yours sincerely,

Peter and Dorothy Hadden *The Buck*

Kate Hamilton *Rigg B&B* [www.rigghouse.co.uk](http://www.rigghouse.co.uk)

Bea Holden *Holly Tree Cottage* [www.straiton.org.uk](http://www.straiton.org.uk)

Sir Patrick & Lady Hunter Blair *Milton Blairquhan Estate*

Kathleen Good *Craigview Cottage*

Jonathan Meuli *Genoch Cottage* [www.genochcottage.com](http://www.genochcottage.com)

Irene Munro *Hazel Lodge B&B*

Andrew Sinclair *Balbeg Holidays* [www.balbeg.co.uk](http://www.balbeg.co.uk)

Nancy Smillie *Old Toll Cottage* [www.glasgowholidaylets.com/page13](http://www.glasgowholidaylets.com/page13)

Alison Stokes *Old Garden Cottage B&B* [www.oldgardencottage](http://www.oldgardencottage)

encs. *Wind Farm Development & Tourism in Straiton: a case-study of tourist provision for the Galloway Forest Park and the Galloway Forest Dark Sky Park*