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THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT (SCOTLAND) REGULATIONS 2017

SCREENING OPINION

LOCH LOMOND & THE TROSSACHS NATIONAL PARK

Proposal: Construction of a run of river hydropower scheme
Location: Benmore Farm
Crianlarich
Stirling
FK20 8QS
Reference Number: 2017/0119/DET

This enquiry relates to a type of development described in Schedule 2 **(3. (h) energy projects)** of the Environmental Impact Assessment (Scotland) Regulations 2017. Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park is a Sensitive Area. The Regulations require that the proposal must be screened to determine whether an EIA is required.

Loch Lomond & the Trossachs National Park, as Planning Authority, hereby adopts the Screening Opinion that the proposed development will not require an Environmental Impact Assessment.

In reaching this opinion the Authority has had regard to Schedule 3 of the Regulations and in particular the following:

The characteristics of the development

(a) Size of the development

The proposal relates to the creation of a small scale 'run of river' hydro scheme (200kw). Four intakes are proposed measuring no more than 2m high and 6m wide, the visible part of the intakes will be less then these measurements due to the topography of the watercourses which are steep sided. The intakes will be connected by underground pipe (355mm diameter)). The overall length of underground pipework will be approximately 1500m. A powerhouse would be located adjacent to the A85 measuring 5.5x6x5.4m. A working corridor of 8m is proposed.

The proposal includes further consequential development namely:

- 2no. new permanent access tracks. (To powerhouse - 550m x2m. To Intake – 1km x 2m)
- transmission of power via (S37 notification over ground or underground)
- pipe lay down area and material storage area

The proposal would not be out of scale with the existing environment.

(b) Cumulation with other development

There are a number of other hydro schemes in Glen Dochart. These include
2013/0311/DET - Benmore Farm
2014/0261/DET - Allt Essan
2014/0274/DET - Auchessan
2014/0297/DET - Allt Coire Chaorach
2013/0047/DET - Ledcharrie
2006/0443/DET – Inverhaggenie

All of these schemes are now operational with some still undergoing restoration and monitoring work. The main infrastructure however, intakes, powerhouse, penstock and access tracks are in place. Despite the number of hydro schemes within Glen Dochart, inter-visibility of the schemes is low. Further to this, due to the major construction works having already been undertaken for the above noted schemes, the chance for significant cumulative environmental impact is low.

The project is not part of a larger scheme that involves further intakes in the vicinity

(c) Use of natural resources

Construction - The proposal will be constructed on undeveloped/agricultural land. The proposal is likely to use minerals or aggregates for new tracks. Materials will be used including timber and blockwork for constructing the powerhouse. Energy will be used in construction and delivery vehicles.

Operation - The proposal will abstract water from four unnamed burns. The water from the two east most intakes will be returned to the same unnamed burn as the two west most intakes. This is opposed to returning water further downstream into the burns which water has been extracted from. It will still flow back into Loch Lubhair. There will be a compensation flow and this would be controlled via a SEPA CAR licence. The proposal will create renewable electricity.
It is not anticipated that there will be a significant loss of natural resources within the site as a result of the proposed development.

(d) Production of waste

The works would produce waste through the construction process. This is not anticipated to be significant due to the limited scale of the proposal.

(e) Pollution and nuisances

Noise, vibration, release of leachates inc. sediment - Evidence will be required that the potential effects of sedimentation and pollution affecting the water quality downstream have been overcome via pollution prevention measures and sediment control. Potential noise impacts from construction period and running of turbine expected to be low.

(f) Risk of accidents, having regard in particular to substances technologies used

Accidents could include harm to the workforce from machinery during construction and also risk of landslides due to works on embankments.

The effect is not likely to be significant due to the scale of the proposal and nature of the terrain.

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(g) Other characteristics - potential physical changes (topography, land use, changes in waterbodies etc) from construction, operation or decommissioning of the development

- Permanent and temporary change to landuse - There would be change to four tributary burns due to abstraction of water and possible change to topography after pipe reinstatement works have been undertaken. Possible loss of vegetation during construction of powerhouse and pipe laying.
- Peat Land Disturbance - areas of peat may be disturbed during the construction of the pipeline and access tracks
- Construction and excavation works through formation of intakes, formation of access tracks, laying of underground pipe and powerhouse
- Underground works - the new pipe will be underground
- Facilities/land required for storage of pipes
- Possible new transmission lines dependant on location of powerhouse . The water abstraction requires authorisation under the Water Environment (Controlled Activities)(Scotland) Regulations 2005. Note that some new culverts may also require authorisation.

The impact will be largely temporary until reinstatement works are complete. The successful restoration of the access tracks would mitigate landscape impact.

The location of the development

(a) Location of site

The proposal consists of the construction of four intake weirs on small unnamed burns, a pipeline, a turbine house and permanent access tracks. The burns are in valleys with bed material made up of boulders.

There are no significant waterfalls on these burns. The surrounding land use is upland agricultural land used for sheep grazing.

(b) Relative abundance, quality and regenerative capacity of natural resources in the area

The surrounding land use is upland agricultural land. The location of the intakes would be to the northern edge of Ben More SSSI. Landscape change and visual intrusion in terms of the pipeline is likely to be temporary until the ground is restored.

(c) Absorption capacity of the natural environment

Protected Sites - The site is within the National Park which is recognised as a sensitive area for the purposes of the EIA Regulations. Part of the site is also within Ben More Stob Binnein Site of Special Scientific Interest and is adjacent to the River Tay SAC - There are no qualifying interests of the SSSI within the area proposed for development. The SAC is designated for Atlantic Salmon, otter, brook lamprey, river lamprey, sea lamprey and clear water lochs, standard good working practices will ensure no adverse impact on the qualifying interests of the SAC. There is therefore no anticipated significant impact on the SSSI or SAC.

Woodland and Bats - There is an area of Ancient Woodland within 100m of the proposed development. It will not be affected by the proposal.

Archaeology - There are no known archaeological sites in the vicinity.

Landscape and Visual - The landscape is open and there are various visual receptors including the views from the main road (A85), a forest track on the opposite hillside and from the hills themselves.. The landscape is sensitive due to the proximity to Ben More, however the most elevated section of the scheme is largely screened by mature forestry plantation (Forestry Commission Crianlarich Block). The pipe is to be routed across open field and will divert behind a block of existing forestry plantation trees and a new access track is proposed to follow this route. Disturbance to habitats will be minimal. Restoration of ground disturbed by the pipeline and reduction in the width of access tracks and restoration of disturbed ground and batters will reduce landscape impact. Photomontages submitted with the planning application demonstrate minimal landscape impact in the longterm. The site is on the periphery of a wild land area, the core and boundary wildland area being further uphill to the south. Due to the presence of existing tracks in this location and proximity to the A85, it is not considered that there will be a significant impact on wildness at this location.

Fish and Byrophtes - There may be fish or bryophytes that would be affected by the scheme. As stated above the site is within the catchment of the River Tay SAC so there is potential impact on Atlantic Salmon, brook lamprey, river lamprey, sea lamprey. The implementation of good standard working practices will ensure no significant impact.

Birds - Ground nesting birds including black grouse could be potentially affected.

Peat. Ground Water Dependant Ecosystems - The proposal is in an upland location where peat or wetland/flushes could be affected.

Residential Buildinqs - There are no houses in the vicinity of the powerhouse.

Public Access - There are two public footpaths in the vicinity. The pipe route and new accesses may bisect one path and share one path.

Characteristics of the potential impact

The potential impacts would include noise, vehicle movements, landscape change, visual intrusion, pollution of water (River Tay SAC), impact on the ecology of the river/protected species/protected site (Ben More SSSI).

Potential impact on SSSI would be temporary and only affect a small area at the outer edge of the designated area where none of the qualifying interests of the SSSI are present.

Potential Landscape change is low due to the size of pipe to be installed, scale of the scheme and topography of the site. The proposed permanent tracks will be reduced to 2m wide and would be screened from main visual receptors. Views of the upper track to access the proposed intakes would occur from the existing path to Ben More. However, given the existing baseline of existing vehicle tracks in this location there will not be a significant landscape impact subject to appropriate mitigation by reinstatement of disturbed ground.

Potential impact on River Tay SAC could be due to sedimentation as a result of construction works and cumulative impact of a number of schemes in the vicinity. This is unlikely however due to construction works being 130m from the SAC, and subject to appropriate mitigation being put in place and the small scale of the proposal. Further to this, construction works on the other hydro schemes in the area is largely complete.

In relation to the development proposed it is considered that there is low probability of any significant impact having regard to the criteria set out in Schedule 3 of the regulations and, in particular, having regard to the scale and characteristics of the proposed land use in the location proposed.

Signed Julie Gray Date 20/09/17

Planning Offi

Signed [redacted] Date 20/09/17

DM Manager