

**To: eplanning centre, The Highland Council, Glenurquhart Road, INVERNESS, IV3 5NX**

I wish to **OBJECT** to the proposed wind farm at Spittal Hill, Caithness, application reference number **13/04559/FUL** on the following grounds:

In June 2012 the Scottish Government, after a public local inquiry, resoundingly rejected the previous application for a wind farm on this site for various reasons including impact on residential amenity, landscape and cumulative effects. Now, the same developers backed by giant state-owned Norwegian utility company Statkraft, are back with another application at the same location. All the reasons for the previous application being refused still apply.

The proposal is contrary to the **Highland Wide Local Development Plan policies 28, 61 and 67** for the following reasons -

**Loss of Residential Amenity** - Spittal Hill is surrounded by homes, many very close to the wind farm site. The closeness, number, height, noise and movement of the turbines will combine to make a wind farm with an overbearing and dominating presence which will blight the lives of the local community. There is also great concern that properties close to the wind farm will decrease significantly in value or become unsaleable. Spittal and Mybster communities already have 41 turbines built or approved on their doorstep. Residents already find the noise from the Causeymire wind farm disturbing and that is before Halsary and Achlachan are built. Spittal Hill windfarm would only make their situation worse. Spittal Hill windfarm will have a significant long-term detrimental impact, which cannot be mitigated, on the amenity of the numerous residents living nearby.

**Cumulative Impact** - There are currently 152 large wind turbines built or approved in Caithness with many more both large and small in the planning process. In close proximity to Spittal Hill there are Causeymire (21 turbines), Camster (25 turbines), Flex Hill (3 turbines), Achairn (3 turbines), Wathegar and Wathegar II (14 turbines in total), Halsary (15 turbines) and Achlachan (5 turbines). Already this small area and its inhabitants are burdened by these developments. The full extent of the industrialisation of Caithness is only just becoming clear as the larger wind farms are built. The ability of the landscape to absorb another 7 turbines is exhausted. Caithness is already playing a significant part in achieving the Scottish Government's renewable energy targets at the expense of its people and unique landscape. There can be no justification whatsoever for a wind farm on Spittal Hill. Enough is enough.

**Landscape and Visual Impact** - Spittal Hill is a centrally located hill and a local landmark. It is surrounded by an open landscape with 'enormous skies'. It is highly visible throughout Caithness. To place a wind farm on a hill exaggerates the severity of its visual impact. A number of the turbines will be considerably higher than the summit thereby diminishing the hill's stature. The impact on the landscape and its people will be totally unacceptable.

**Tourism** - Caithness is described as having a fragile economy. Any negative effect on tourism and its associated industries by the proliferation of wind farms must be avoided. The static and sequential visual impact of this development with the consented and approved wind farms along the A9, the main tourist route into the county, would be significantly adverse. Added to this is the now significant visual impact of the numerous wind farms seen whilst travelling in either direction along the A882, the main Wick – Thurso road. Tourists come to Caithness for its wonderful landscape with its wide uncluttered vistas, not to see wind farms.

**Birds** – Due to the wind farm's close proximity to Lochs Watten and Scarmclate (component parts of the internationally designated Caithness Lochs Special Protection Area), the cited interests of Whooper swan and Greylag geese are at considerable risk from collision, particularly as they are known to fly over the wind farm site at night. Whooper swans roost on Banniskirk Dam which is very close to the turbines and their low flight patterns makes them particularly vulnerable. The Herons from the local long-established Heronry are also at risk.

**Other comments**

Name (block capitals) - .....

Address - .....

..... Post Code - .....

Signed - ..... Date - .....