

Dear resident,

You may be aware that ILI submitted their planning application to the Scottish Government's Energy Consents Unit (ECU) on 15th November 2018. The application reference is ECU00000728 and can be viewed online at <https://www.energyconsents.scot/ApplicationDetails.aspx>. It can also be viewed on the Highland Council planning portal under reference 18/05427/S36.

DECC believes that, in order to mitigate the effects of climate change and global warming, increased reliance need to be placed on generating electricity from renewable sources, as is expressed in Scottish Government policy .

It also believes that pumped storage hydro schemes potentially have an important role to play in supporting such a policy as, in effect, they can be used to store the excess electricity generated by renewables when demand is low.

However, when such a scheme is proposed in its area, DECC has a duty to its residents to look critically at the plans, to assess the impact of the scheme on the local community, to listen to the views and concerns of those residents and, based on all this information, to make representations to the developer, Highland Council and to the Energy Consents Unit.

#### **Matters of concern:**

We have identified the following matters of concern. (In no particular order)

- **Traffic:** Over the six year construction period, significant volumes of traffic will be generated both within and around Dores village and the surrounding area.

DECC along with other neighbouring CC's will be having a meeting with Highland Council's Transport Planning team on 20<sup>th</sup> February to discuss what measures may be appropriate to deal with the issues arising.

The council's initial response drawing attention to the many issues and measures required to manage this is enclosed.

- **Noise and vibration:** Gavin Findlay undertook a review of these impacts as assumed by the developers and informed us accordingly. Using the developer's own data he drew the conclusion that only the properties at the top of the hill would be affected.

However, the Council's Environmental Health team has produced an initial response which goes further and proposes a number of stringent conditions and control measures on the development in the event of approval. Once again their response is enclosed.

- **Visual impact:** Although not visible from the village, locals have drawn attention to the impact of the headpond embankment structures and hard landscaping and the potential impacts on amenity and tourism.

Similarly the tailpond structures which will be visible from the slipway on the beach have been commented upon. DECC will include comments in our final response.

- **Flood risk:** This is an extremely difficult issue for us to reach a conclusion on as most of the relevant data is unavailable due to national security reasons.

However concerns have been raised about the choice of location directly above the village and the unlikely, but still theoretically possible breach of the headpond structure.

Despite assurances from the developer's professional team that the dam will be built to the very

highest standards and subject to stringent statutory controls over its operation and management, matters such as the absence of a spillway, the potential effect of seismic activity (especially as the dam embankment will be directly over an existing geological fault) and possible blight affecting village properties, remain as matters of concern.

DECC is continuing in its efforts to obtain further comfort from the developer on these matters, including the request for an insurance-backed indemnity for local properties.

- It should be noted that the developer set out two schemes in the run-up to the planning application (Options A and B). Option B was selected by the developer as the preferred scheme (for reasons which have been explained to the CC). Option A would have placed the headpond further to the south west and with a lower embankment height (by some 13 metres or so) but this was ruled out before the planning application was lodged. With hindsight, this is unfortunate since most of the above concerns (apart from traffic) might have been mitigated considerably
- **Decommissioning:** A comment was made after the last CC meeting regarding obligations about how the dam would be dealt with after its working life. The CC is content that current law is clear about the obligation remaining with the then owner to do this responsibly.

### **Potential Benefits:**

It should be acknowledged that, over the lifetime of the operation of the project (perhaps 125 years), the potential benefits to the community could be considerable. There are examples of other communities which have derived funding for community projects from renewable energy developments that would otherwise not have been possible.

DECC has signed Heads of Terms with ILI confirming agreement in principle to both shared ownership and community benefit, each of which will be negotiated separately by a sub-group formed for that purpose.

ILI have proposed an amendment to the Heads of Terms to include a payment of some community benefit at commencement of the development: this remains under review by the Community Council.

Owing to the anticipated planning timetable and process, it is not expected that further dialogue on these matters will take place until mid-2019. The sub-group will keep DECC informed of any developments.

### **Community Responses:**

DECC is required to make its representations on the planning application to the ECU by 28th February 2019 and will do so in the terms noted above.

However, we will remain in dialogue afterwards as consultees with Highland Council and we would encourage residents to continue to make their comments known (whether positive or negative) on the application until the middle of March, in order to guide us to an eventual position.

Any such comments must be in writing or by email and cannot be anonymous.

We appreciate there is a lot of information to consider here, but this is probably the biggest decision

our community will have to take in our lifetime, so please participate.

We are not in a position yet to make recommendations, but we are working on them and will include them in our final submissions to the Council.

Finally, we have also enclosed ILI's reply to questions from the last public meeting