



## **SSE Renewables welcomes Highland Council visit to proposed new wind farm**

**19 February 2013**

**SSE Renewables, the renewable energy development division of SSE, welcomes today's request by the Highland Council's south planning committee to visit the site of the proposed Stronelairg wind farm, located to the south east of Fort Augustus and adjacent to the Glendoe hydro scheme. Today's request follows a report by the Highland Council's planning officer advising the committee 'not to object' to the proposal.**

SSE will work with Highland Council to facilitate access to the site and will put in place measures, including the removal of snow if necessary, to ensure the safety of members in what is an operational hydro site.

Director of Onshore Renewables, Colin Nicol, said: "We welcome the committee's visit to the proposed site at Stronelairg so that they can see at first hand the sensitive design of the wind farm.

"Contrary to claims from some corners, the area is not wilderness, the proposed development is to be built around existing hydro infrastructure, including a one km-long dam, and lies within a managed sporting estate containing over 20km of roads and tracks including a road to the Glendoe Dam and a road through the wind farm.

"Through the course of the project, planning officers have visited the site on numerous occasions, and satisfied themselves that our responsible approach will minimise the impact on both the community and the main tourist routes and attractions of the Great Glen, including Loch Ness. SSE has also worked closely with

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**Media Team:** 0845 0760 530 \*

\*calls to this number costs 2p per minute plus your phone company's access charge

SEPA during the design stage to ensure that any disruption of peat on the site will be minimised.

“SSE is proud to have been part of the Highland community for generations and we want to make sure local people continue to benefit from the development of the area’s natural energy resources. We are absolutely committed to working closely with the local community and all stakeholders as the project progresses to maximise benefits for the local area.

“Should consent be received for Stronelairg, significant opportunities could be secured by Highland companies and considerable local employment will be created. This contribution to the local economy cannot be under-valued and we are pleased to be investing in an area where we already have a strong connection.”

The application for the proposed Stronelairg wind farm comprises 83 turbines, and SSE has agreed to the removal of 16 turbines and the reduction in height of a further 10. Since plans were first proposed in March 2011, an open and positive consultation has taken place between SSE, the local community and key stakeholders. This has resulted in making reductions to the number of turbines and careful design of the site.

All of the proposed development lies within the Highland Council area of search for wind energy development and, as highlighted in the planning officer’s report, the ‘design and layout of the development will not have such significant an impact on wild land or landscape resource’. The project has been designed to avoid being seen from the main tourist routes and iconic attractions of the Great Glen, including Loch Ness.

As part of its responsible approach to delivering new renewable energy infrastructure projects in the Highlands, SSE has committed to support local business, create sustainable employment opportunities and maintain regular and positive engagement with the local community.

This activity includes promoting contract opportunities to local companies through its dedicated Highlands and Islands web portal\* and at targeted ‘Meet the Buyer’ events; creating apprenticeships and skills opportunities for young people, including through its recent strategic partnership with University of Highlands and Islands\*\*; and delivering best practice in community liaison, environmental and transport management.

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**Notes to Editors:**

SSE is one of the UK's largest generators of electricity with around 13,000 MW of generation capacity in total (UK and Ireland) from the most diverse portfolio of power stations. It is the leading generator of electricity from renewable resources with a total generation capacity of 3,200MW. Through its renewable development division, SSE Renewables, it is involved in the development of new renewable energy projects covering wind, wave, tide, and hydro electricity.

**SSE Renewables** is the renewable energy development division of SSE, the UK's largest generator of renewable energy with over 3,200MW of renewable electricity generation capacity (wind, hydro and biomass) in the UK and Ireland.