Friends Wind Shift

Tuesday 7 November, 2023

The conservation charity, Friends of Loch Lomond and The Trossachs, is changing its stance towards large scale renewable energy projects.

In the past it has steadfastly opposed large scale schemes which it felt might damage the special qualities of valued landscapes in the National Park. It may no longer necessarily do so.

The Friends Chairman, John Urquhart said:

“Global warming is creating new imperatives. As a conservation charity, we have a duty to react. I have no doubt we have an important role to play in addressing the issues which are being created at our local level, so “thinking globally and acting locally”, last month our trustees agreed the following;

1. Tackling the interconnected crises affecting energy, climate and nature define the current period and influence every facet of the national park. The Friends agreed policy priorities are to Provide for the Protection, and Promotion of the Park’s special qualities. In that respect there is now an ever strengthening argument that there is nothing more important than reducing damaging atmospheric emissions.
2. We all have an individual responsibility to help in the process of tackling climate change. In the past the Friends have supported small scale community based renewable projects, such as the hydro-electric projects at Callander, Lochgoilhead and Arrochar. Now we need to reconsider our position in relation to larger schemes.

3. Due to its upland glaciated topography, high rainfall and proximity to Scotland’s major centres of population, the National Park area possesses a unique combination of advantages for renewable energy production, storage and distribution. These activities are already major land users within and around the park without causing significant environmental damage.
4. As it is the cheapest and most rapidly delivered technology, the rapid roll out of land-based wind power and energy storage systems are essential measures in decarbonising the atmosphere and improving the country’s energy security situation.
5. Decarbonising the atmosphere is essential to the resolution of the climate and nature crises which threaten the special qualities of the National Park, the protection of which lies at the heart of FOLLAT’s raison d’être.
6. FOLLAT believes very large wind turbines and photovoltaic schemes as well as energy storage facilities such as pumped storage schemes and battery installations, sited in appropriate locations on the edge of (and perhaps in certain special circumstances, in carefully selected areas, even within) the National Park need not be unduly detrimental to the park’s special qualities.
7. Bodies benefitting financially from energy production, distribution and storage and other related installations which may impinge one way or another on the National Park have a duty to contribute towards the preservation of the Park’s special qualities and any “Community Benefit” funds which may accrue to FOLLAT from agreements with such bodies should be used to support FOLLAT’s work helping to provide for the preservation, promotion and appreciation of the Park’s special qualities.
8. FOLLAT believes a share of income from such developments can create substantial benefits and opportunities for visitors, communities and nature. One example of this might be support for the rapid introduction of a modern low carbon park wide public transport system.
9. FOLLAT should be adopting a leadership role in recognising the critical importance of renewable energy and storage systems and should therefore be actively encouraging and facilitating their development on appropriate sites within and around the Park.

“Without doubt this is a radical departure for the Friends, but the trustees believe the current circumstances give them little option. Nonetheless, for some, it remains a controversial matter, so we have asked our members to make sure we have their backing. To date, only 5% have voiced dissent.

“The Friends was set up almost half a century ago to fight plans for a pumped storage hydro-electric installation which was to be built inside Ben Lomond (Much the same as was done around the same time at Ben Cruachan further west on Loch Aweside). Their campaign was successful and the Ben Lomond scheme was never built. Nowadays energy planners would give their eye teeth to have such a facility. (And had it been built, the road access to Strathard and Rowardennan would doubtless now be so much better!)

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“Now Scottish and Southern Electricity is proposing to partially convert their Sloy hydro-electric installation to pumped storage. How ironic that today the Friends will be enthusiastically supporting this project!

“You can help the Friends with its work by donating and/or joining online at

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