

War and wildlife on the Moray Firth

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Abbie is a star karter

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Fresh fight over wind farm plan

By Caroline McMorran
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OBJECTORS to the controversial Tressady wind farm project are gearing up for a fresh fight.

The plan to erect 13 turbines, each 115 metres high, to the north west of Rogart, was rejected earlier this year by Highland Council's north planning committee.

But the power company behind the project, Wind Prospect Developments, are now appealing that decision, it was officially confirmed this week.

The company's appeal has been lodged with the Scottish Government's Energy Consents and Deployment Unit.

The move is a blow to the 33 objectors, most of whom live close to the proposed location on Tressady Estate 4km north of Rogart, but they have vowed to "fight back hard".

Rogart action group No More Wind Farms is planning a leaflet and poster campaign.

The group is also investigating whether Wind Prospect is legally allowed to send its development officer, Sophie Niche, to Rogart to drum up support.

No More Windfarm chairman David Graham, Dalreavoch, said: "No one wants to come on holiday to a part of the Highlands that is covered in huge, white turbines. That's not the image holiday-makers have of the north."

The area is already dominated by two existing wind farms at Kilbraur and Gordonbush. Further afield are the Struie, Rosehall and Lairg wind farms.

According to background

reports the Tressady development would be visible at all points of the compass within a 3km radius.

Those against are concerned about the visual impact, noise nuisance and effect on tourism, among other issues.

Alastair Gilchrist, East Langwell, objected to the original Tressady application.

He said: "We're within a mile from the nearest turbine to our house."

"When I look out my house just now I can see three turbines at Lairg. If I look out the other side I can see Kilbraur and from the garden I can see Gordonbush and Rosehall. We're pretty surrounded."

Mr Gilchrist said there would be an "enormous amount of disruption" from construction traffic which would access the site by leaving the A9 at Drummuie and travelling along the Dunrobin Glen route.

Rogart Community Council did not object but raised concerns, saying there was a disproportionate share of wind farms in the area.

Four letters of support were received and it is understood a number of residents in the area have reached financial agreements with wind farm developers.

Local authority planners supported the scheme, with planning chief Ken McCorquodale acknowledging the development would become a "significant feature" of the local area but the proposal was acceptable in terms of design and layout.

He said: "The application is one that can be seen as being sited such that it will not be significantly detrimental overall,

either individually or cumulatively with other operational developments."

But members of the council's north planning committee went against planners' recommendation, and voted seven to two against the development following a site visit.

Councillors were swayed by East Sutherland and Edderton member Graham Phillips who had demanded a visit be made to the area before a decision was taken.

Councillor Phillips said he could not support the wind farm because of its potential effect on local residents. He maintained its only supporters were those who could make money out of it.

Councillor Phillips added that the area would probably have been left untouched as designated wild land if previous developments had not taken place.

He also told how a local resident had pleaded with him in tears not to support the project, stating that noise from other nearby turbines was blighting his life.

However in its application Wind Prospect Development said the scheme would be a "visually coherent and compact development within the open landscape" and while it would have an impact on properties, it would not make any of them an "unattractive" place to live.

Representatives from Wind Prospect will be attending the Rogart Community Council monthly meeting on Monday to provide an update and answer any questions. The meeting will be held at 7.30pm at the Pittentrail Inn.



You don't have to be quackers for this race

ENTRIES are mounting for East Sutherland Rotary Club's annual charity duck race on June 1st. But also in training for the big day are some land-lubbed competitors who will race alongside the ducks to the finishing line, including, pictured here, Rowen (6) and Daniel (9) Gullick from Brora. (Full story page 7).

Floral group taps into flow of kindness

AN East Sutherland floral group whose water supply has been cut off, had an urgent appeal for help answered this week.

Other floral groups in the area rallied round to help Golspie in Bloom, which is currently nurturing thousands of plants in a polytunnel at the community garden.

The delicate plugs need watering daily and volunteers previously used a garden tap connected to a unit in the nearby industrial estate.

But the water supply has been shut down because the unit has been vacant since the demise in October of Golspie Recycling Environmental Network (GREAN).

Golspie in Bloom began negotiating six weeks ago with Highland Council, which owns the community garden site, to turn the supply back on.

East Sutherland and Edderton ward councillor Deirdre Mackay and ward manager Phil Tomalin have become involved in the issue.

Golspie in Bloom secretary Carol Collings said: "The

authority is reluctant to turn the supply back on because the system has been drained and the concern is about the possibility of leaks in an empty building."

The floral group was coping by bringing in water from elsewhere until this week when a further 2200 plants were delivered. More are expected today.

Mrs Collings said: "We put out an urgent appeal on Facebook and the Golspie website this week for help with water."

Other East Sutherland floral groups were quick to respond with Dornoch sending a water bowser to Golspie and Brora also offering its bowser. Golspie resident and former GREAN manager Fergus Morrison arranged with Scottish water to have 40x20 litre water containers delivered.

Mrs Collings said: "Everyone has rallied round and we've had so many offers of help but our aim is to have our original supply reconnected and we are still in discussions with the council."

Get on the right track for steam journey to Dunrobin



The Cathedrals Express.

A RARE opportunity has arisen for local people to enjoy a trip on a steam train from Tain to Dunrobin railway stations and back on Monday, 12th May.

The Cathedrals Express, operated by commercial rail tour company Steam Dreams, will be stopping at both stations as part of its nine-day 2014 Highland Explorer tour from King's Cross, London.

It is thought to be the first time a steam train has puffed its way as far north direct from the capital since the Second World War. It is also unusual for steam tour companies to allow local passengers to board.

The opportunity is there because a number of those on the tour are set to disembark at Tain for an outing, leaving space for anyone interested in making either a single or return trip to Dunrobin.

The six-carriage Cathedrals Express is scheduled to arrive at Tain at 10.50am and leave just after noon. It is expected to reach Dunrobin at 1.35pm, returning to Tain at 4.32pm.

A second-class return ticket is priced at £39 and half-price for a single. First-class tickets, which will include complimentary tea and coffee, can be purchased for £59 return and half-price for a single.

Anyone who takes up the opportunity will find themselves transported back to a bygone age, with the 1950s' Pullman carriages boasting wood panelled walls, elegant table lamps and window curtains.

The museum at the private Dunrobin Station, a request

stop owned by Sutherland Estates, is to be specially opened from 11.30am to 4.30am to welcome the train.

The museum contains various relics of the Highland Railway Line including the original Act of Parliament granting the Duke of Sutherland permission to build a railway on his estate from Golspie to Brora.

Loth Antiques will be running a stall on the platform selling railway antiques plus other memorabilia. Souvenirs will be on sale at the museum including platform tickets, mugs, fridge magnets and tea towels.

Daniel Brittain-Catlin, who looks after the station on behalf of the estate, said: "The arrival of the Cathedrals Express is going to be an absolutely great day for the station. I doubt a steam passenger train has arrived from London since at least the Second World War."

Mr Brittain-Catlin is appealing to anyone who might know when steam trains last made the direct journey to get in touch.

He added: "I am particularly grateful to Steam Dreams for agreeing to local journeys on the steam train from Tain to Dunrobin."

"It's a great opportunity for people in Sutherland and Easter Ross. I do not remember any recent steam or diesel charters which allowed local journeys like this."

Details of how to book your ticket will be in next week's Northern Times.

Spring/summer term at Lairg & District Learning Centre

Monday
Sewing (Beginners), Patchwork (Cathedral Window), Sewing (Intermediate), Ukulele

Tuesday
Guitar, Backpack Journalism and Digital Media, Sewing (Intermediate)

Wednesday
Art History, Folklore of the Highlands, Work Club, Sewing (Beginners)

Thursday
Poetry Café, French (Beginners), Get Ready for Work, Spanish (Beginners)

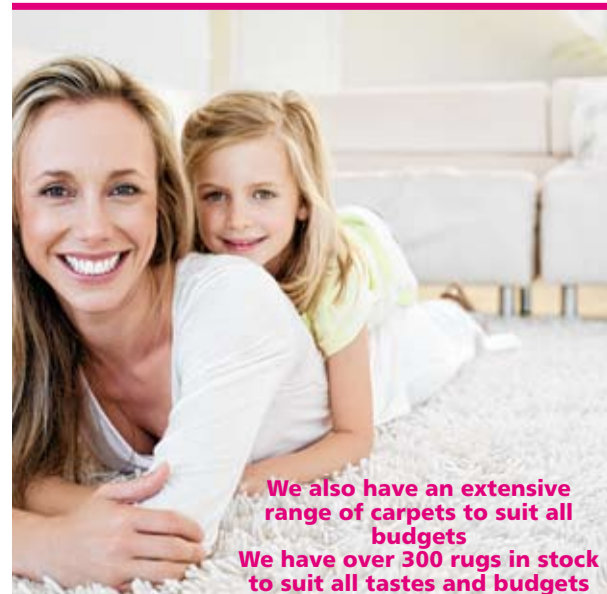
Friday
Healthy Packed Lunches for Kids, Make the Most of your Ipad/Kindle, IT (Beginners), Spreadsheets (Beginners)

Weekend workshops
Tweed at Heart, Upcycling (Jewellery), Fabric Dyeing, Gardening/Polytunnel, Yarn Spinning

For business
First Aid, Elementary Food Hygiene, Certificate for Personal Licence Holders (Alcohol), Child Protection

Classes start week beginning 28th April - Lairg, Bonar Bridge, Rogart, Golspie, Rosehall

To book, call 01549 402050 or email lairgic@hotmail.co.uk
A standard 8 week class costs £40 and a workshop £25. Some classes may be free or subsidised - call us for details.



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