Aberdeen & Grampian Chamber of Commerce

The Hub
Exploration Drive
Aberdeen Energy Park
Bridge of Don
Aberdeen
AB23 8GX

T 01224 343900
E info@agcc.co.uk
www.agcc.co.uk

Aberdeenshire Council
c/o Woodhill House
Westburn Road
Aberdeen
AB16 5GB

11 November 2026

Dear councillor,

Thistle Wind Partners Bowdun project APP/2025/1952

I am writing to you ahead of the upcoming Infrastructure Services Committee meeting, following my appearance at the pre-determination hearing on 9th September, relating to the above application.

You will be fully briefed on the technical merits of the scheme and so I'm going to focus on place and economy.

We are at a crucial juncture on our journey to a cleaner energy future. Having become a pioneer in oil & gas technologies, this region is again presented with an incredible opportunity to lead the world in the development and deployment of offshore wind. We have not only the natural resources but the finest energy engineering supply chain on the planet, on our doorstep.

But right now, our local economy is suffering because of decisions taken and policy direction made, hundreds of miles away. This should not be exacerbated on matters where we are in control of our own destiny.

We need investment, we need people that want to make things happen, to bring positive change to our region despite the headwinds.

This project and others like it are strategically important. Important to the future economy of our region. Important to our under pressure energy supply chain. Important to workers and communities across the North-east.

But perhaps most importantly, your decisions taken around projects like this will be watched carefully by investors and operators to determine whether Aberdeenshire and the wider North-east Scotland region are open for business or if they should take their investment elsewhere. Unlike the North Sea oil and gas cluster, new energy technologies are significantly more location agnostic.

The employment associated with this, and other related new energy infrastructure projects will provide jobs. Jobs we desperately need as the impact of the accelerated decline of oil and gas means roles are haemorrhaging at the rate of around a thousand every month. While STUC data shows that low carbon job numbers in Scotland have only grown at the rate of a thousand a year over the last decade.

Our regional local supply chain is increasingly deploying its people and resources on overseas contracts to fill the void being created by the premature shut down of domestic oil and gas and with renewables work not yet being available at meaningful scale.

Positive outcomes to applications such as this will send a message to a that there will be work for them here. Otherwise, once they leave the UK, they might not return. Paradoxically slowing down our ability to scale up wind and other clean energy technologies to meet our carbon ambitions.

British Chambers of Commerce Accredited

Living Wage Employer

Registered in Scotland as a company limited by Guarantee
Registration number SCO 000 791
VAT Number 265 3165 59
Registered Office: The Hub, Exploration Drive, Aberdeen Energy Park, Bridge of Don, Aberdeen, AB23 8GX

Aberdeen & Grampian Chamber of Commerce

Aberdeenshire Council has made clear commitments to drive forward the energy transition and earlier this year, your existing policy was significantly strengthened with the launch of the Community Wealth Building Strategy, which aims to ensure that the energy transition brings social and economic benefit to our communities. Much easier to write into a policy paper than to deliver in practice, however. This will only happen if we are supportive of projects and enable them to proceed at pace.

It will be through projects like Bowdun, that the benefits of renewable energy can become real for the North-east economy – realising economic benefit for the region lasting well beyond the construction phase and for many decades to come.

The decision you are being asked to make must balance impact against opportunity and prosperity for our communities and the next generation of our workforce.

It's estimated that the UK will need around 88 Gigawatts of offshore wind capacity by 2040 to meet our energy needs and climate targets. With the right policy environment and decisions, around a third of this can be delivered by ScotWind projects, the bulk of which are located within 100 miles of where I am writing this today.

But this cannot and must not be taken for granted. More wrong turns at this crucial juncture could see the remarkable opportunity presented to us, slip through our fingers.

Our local planning decisions must follow a presumption FOR…. progress. We should be welcoming investors with open arms and asking "yes how…. not saying, no because".

In conclusion, let me take you back over half a century. Picture a room. Much like the one the Infrastructure Services Committee will be held in. Ok, maybe minus the tech!

Your predecessors then were faced with the complex issues of building massive infrastructure including gas pipelines to facilitate the burgeoning oil and gas opportunity in this corner of the nation. There was no playbook, this was new.

Without their brave and far-sighted decision making, I suggest that we'd be living in a very different, much poorer region today. And goodness knows what state the UK economy would be in.

Get this right, and together we can secure our region the title, no longer of being Europe's oil & gas capital but instead….. Europe's capital of new energy excellence.

That is why I am urging you to look beyond a small amount of temporary disruption and consider the big picture, see the strategic value of this and other related projects, and show the leadership that will allow us to seize the once in a lifetime economic opportunities being presented to us.

Yours sincerely,

Russell Borthwick
Chief Executive

Registered in Scotland as a company limited by Guarantee
Registration number SCO 000 791
VAT Number 265 3165 59
Registered Office: The Hub, Exploration Drive, Aberdeen Energy Park, Bridge of Don, Aberdeen, AB23 8GX