

Scawd Law Update for WDC meeting 19th March 2025

Fred Olsen (FORL) have now issued Additional Information (AIR) and we have until 4th April to submit our response. If necessary we will request an extension until end April. The additional information primarily includes updated ornithological survey work mainly on Golden Eagles. The expectation is that the Scawd Law application will be considered by the SBC planning committee in early June.

The project is unchanged: 8 turbines with a 180m tip height. FORL have confirmed that if required they are prepared to reduce this to 6 turbines but in that case they would double the battery storage from 12 to 24 MWh. FORL themselves state that 6 vs 8 turbines will have a negligible impact on visual and landscape effects.

Golden Eagle activity has increased dramatically since FORL issued their original studies as evidenced by information provided by the South of Scotland Golden Eagle Project (SSGEP). A breeding pair has set up a territory in the area and built nests in multiple sites as is typical of the species. A further 3 territories have now been created on the Southern Moorfoots by other Golden Eagles and activity continues to increase. This reflects the excellent suitability of the habitat and the plentiful food supply. The SSGEP rate the area around Scawd Law as the number 1 territory for Golden Eagles in the whole of the South of Scotland.

The Scawd Law development is within the home range of the local breeding pair and is in excellent territory being on or close to ridges where Golden Eagles like to hunt. The loss of habitat is estimated to be 10-15% of their total territory, a very significant proportion.

The increasing activity is only partially reflected in the FORL report as the latest data they show is for 2023 and therefore already out of date. The estimate of collision risk has increased from 1 in 50 years in the original study to 1 in 7 years in 2023 and this doesn't take account of more recent increases in Golden Eagle activity or the impact on fledglings who are much less likely to avoid turbines. The current risk is therefore likely to be significantly greater, 1 in 5 years or less. This is equivalent to more than 5 Eagles killed during the lifetime of the wind farm. This risk is only likely to rise further as Golden Eagle numbers in the area increase and don't forget the project is unlikely to be operational before 2030.

The example of Sparky the Golden Eagle killed in a collision with a turbine in the South of Scotland in August 2024 offers a salutary lesson here. The turbine that killed Sparky is part of a wind farm that only became operational in January 2022. When the wind farm was given planning consent in 2017 there were no Golden Eagles present but since then the success of the SSGEP has seen some arrive in the area. In less than 3 years of operation a collision has already occurred. What will happen at Scawd Law if the wind farm goes ahead?

We will continue to review the AIR and will draft a response for approval by members.