

**SCOTTISH
NATURAL
HERITAGE**



Directorate

Caspian House
Mariner Court
Clydebank Business Park
Clydebank
G81 2NR

Telephone: 0141 951 4488
Fax: 0141 951 4510

Our Ref: BF 42/06

Mark Duchamp

Save.the.eagles@gmail.com

16th August 2006

Dear Mr Duchamp,

Thank you for your email about the inter-action between eagles and windfarms.

This issue is clearly an important one and indeed the whole question of the possible impact of turbines on bird populations, and those of protected species in particular, has been central to SNH's consideration of proposed windfarm developments. I can assure you, therefore, that SNH takes the matters that you raise very seriously. That said, some of the views that you express are based on misunderstandings of our position and overall we believe, for reasons that I shall try to explain, that you have overstated the causes for concern.

You suggest that the report that you cite has been accepted by SNH as "proof" that windfarms and eagles can live together on the same territory. Actually, we interpret the findings from that and other studies rather differently. The picture that they present is of golden eagles avoiding windfarms. In general, therefore, we would expect the effect of a windfarm to be to displace any resident eagles; the question would then be whether there was sufficient alternative hunting territory in the same general vicinity to support them. Measures to increase prey availability elsewhere within their range, probably by habitat enhancement, clearly become relevant here.

We remain, of course, very anxious to establish whether this is indeed what happens. Monitoring is therefore essential. That does not mean, however, that there has to be a costly and time-consuming regime of regular searches of the windfarm and its environs for casualties, with the disturbance to the eagles and other birds that this would inevitably entail. Rather, at Beinn an Tuirc there is a monitoring protocol which requires a search to be instigated if one of the eagles is seen to be missing. As they are so well-watched, such an absence is likely to be noted very quickly. SNH regards this as a reasonable and responsible approach.

In fact the male eagle at Beinn an Tuirc did go missing this spring. Its absence was spotted pretty rapidly. A full corpse search was carried out in the vicinity of the Beinn an Tuirc and Deucheran windfarms, and beyond. Despite these extensive searches, no corpse as evidence of eagle collision was found.

The length of time that has since elapsed without a sighting of the Beinn an Tuirc male does strongly suggest that he is dead rather than simply absent.

Although the cause of his death is unknown, the evidence as I have explained does not point to collision with a turbine as the probable cause.

You ask whether SNH regards “intruding” eagles as “expendable”. The answer is most definitely not. Such birds are very likely to be juveniles in the process of establishing breeding territories. SNH realises the importance of these birds for the future breeding population and is currently embarking on research designed to improve our understanding of the dispersal pattern of juvenile eagles and of how windfarm development might affect their efforts to establish territories.

I hope that you will find these comments helpful and that they will assure you that SNH is by no means complacent about the potential effects of windfarm development on the golden eagle population.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "John Thomson".

JOHN THOMSON
DIRECTOR STRATEGY & OPERATIONS (WEST)