

SUPPORTING STATEMENT

Application Site: Gairloch Waste water Treatment Works (WwTW)

Application Description: New Waste water Arrangements

Applicant: Scottish Water - Specialist Services, Henderson Drive, Inverness, IV1 1TR

Date: 24/11/2015

Project History and Background to Works

The existing Wastewater Treatment Works (WwTW) at Gairloch has extensive Capital Maintenance issues; consequently Scottish Water Managed Delivery has been tasked with resolving the on-going problems identified.

A review of long term treatment requirements at Gairloch showed that the existing waste water membrane treatment was deficient in terms of cost, performance, complexity, that it requires frequent chemical cleaning and has a high carbon impact. As a result, a decision has been made to move away from this type of treatment and adopt more sustainable long-term treatment arrangements.

Proposed Works

This statement accompanies an application to the Highland Council which seeks planning permission for a project that includes a short outfall extension and the installation of a septic tank. Dispersion modelling has demonstrated that the proposed solution will ensure sufficient dilution and dispersion of the treated waste water to maintain the required water quality in line with SEPA's requirements.

Site Location

The site (177164, 877514) lies 1.5 kilometres to the west of Lonemore, a small rural settlement north west of Gairloch. The site is in a National Scenic Area and is just outside SEPA's 1:200 year coastal flood risk envelope. There does not appear to be any historic interest in the site

Planning Application

The planning application comprises the following works:

- Re-contouring of land;
- The above ground portion of the works.

Permitted Development

As a statutory undertaker, Scottish Water benefit from 'Permitted Development' rights for sewerage undertakings under Class 43A of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development)(Scotland) Order 1992, as amended. The following works therefore do not form part of this planning application:

- Ancillary underground works;
- Outfall extension.

Pre-application Discussions

Pre-application advice was sought from Environmental Health on the project, in particular on the content of the Odour Management Plan (OMP). These detailed comments have been passed to the North Waste Water Risk and Lifecycle Planning Team, who will comment further on these issues through the planning process, if required.

Planning Policy

Under Section 25 of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997, the proposed development stands to be determined against the policies contained within the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. In this regard the application site falls within the area covered by the Highland wide Local Development Plan 2012.

Other documents material to the determination of this planning application include:

- Scottish Planning Policy (SPP)
- Planning Advice Note (PAN) 79: Water and Drainage

Scottish Planning Policy (2014)

Scottish Planning Policy is a statement of Government Policy on land-use planning matters, on how these nationally important matters should be addressed across the country. It sets out the key priorities for the planning system and provides the national context for decision making.

To meet these objectives, local authorities must have sufficient wastewater provision for customers both present and future. This project has been created to address supply demand deficit and improve the security of supply of water which is fully in accordance with this overarching aim.

Planning Advice Note 79: Water and Drainage

PAN 79 provides advice on good practice in relation to the provision of this infrastructure in a planning context, including the role of Scottish Water, the planning authority and other key stakeholders in relation to their interactions with the planning system for provision of new infrastructure. The PAN makes specific reference to developments undertaken by Scottish Water:

“Where new infrastructure is required, careful site selection will be necessary, especially for developments in sensitive locations such as coastal areas...Even when sites are not allocated, pre-application discussions should assist in determining whether infrastructure proposals are in accordance with the development plan.”

Although certain aspects of this development do not require planning permission, Scottish Water has engaged in extensive pre-application discussions with stakeholders in relation to these proposals.

Highland wide Local Development Plan

The proposed works are located in a very remote area accessed by a track. There are no properties in the vicinity.

Policy 36 relates to Development in the Wider Countryside and states that outwith Settlement Development Areas, development proposals will be assessed on the extent to which they:

- are acceptable in terms of siting and design;
- are sympathetic to existing patterns of development in the area;
- are compatible with landscape character and capacity;
- avoid incremental expansion of one particular development type within a landscape whose distinct character relies on an intrinsic mix/distribution of a range of characteristics;
- avoid, where possible, the loss of locally important croft land; and
- would address drainage constraints and can otherwise be adequately serviced, particularly in terms of foul drainage, road access and water supply, without involving undue public expenditure or infrastructure that would be out of keeping with the rural character of the area.”

The proposal has been developed to maximise use of existing infrastructure and minimise new development in the countryside. The pumping station has been designed to be as sympathetic to existing patterns of development as possible and is considered compatible with landscape character as discussed below.

“All development proposals will be assessed taking into account the level of importance and type of heritage features, the form and scale of the development, and any impact on the feature and its setting, in the context of the policy framework detailed in Appendix 2.”

As a result, the following criteria will also apply:

“For features of international importance developments likely to have a significant effect on a site, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects, and which are not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site for nature conservation will be subject to an appropriate assessment. Where we are unable to ascertain that a proposal will not adversely affect the integrity of a site, we will only allow development if there is no alternative solution and there are imperative reasons of overriding public interest, including those of a social or economic nature. Where a priority habitat or species (as defined in Annex 1 of the Habitats Directive) would be affected, development in such circumstances will only be allowed if the reasons for overriding public interest relate to human health, public safety, beneficial consequences of primary importance for the environment, or other reasons subject to the opinion of the European Commission (via Scottish Ministers). Where we are unable to ascertain that a proposal will not adversely affect the integrity of a site, the proposal will not be in accordance with the development plan within the meaning of Section 25(1) of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997.”

Landscape and Visual Impact

Policy 61 Landscape of the HwLDP states that;

“New developments should be designed to reflect the landscape characteristics and special qualities identified in the Landscape Character Assessment of the area in which they are proposed. This will include consideration of the appropriate scale, form, pattern and construction materials, as well as the potential cumulative effect of developments where this may be an issue. The Council would wish

to encourage those undertaking development to include measures to enhance the landscape characteristics of the area. This will apply particularly where the condition of the landscape characteristics has deteriorated to such an extent that there has been a loss of landscape quality or distinctive sense of place. In the assessment of new developments, the Council will take account of Landscape Character Assessments, Landscape Capacity Studies and its supplementary guidance on Siting and Design and Sustainable Design, together with any other relevant design guidance.”

The Ross and Cromarty Landscape Character Assessment 1999 characterises the subject site and its surroundings as Sloping Terrace Moorland. This character type is defined by its smooth, gently undulating moorland horizons and new elements are best located in this character type where they do not interfere with the downward visual movement.

Although the application site forms part of the Wester Ross National Scenic Area, the proposed works are located on the lower slopes where new elements generally appear visually inferior due to the broader base. In this location, conflict with the strong visual force will be minimised and because the landscape already accommodates small scale infrastructure, it is considered that adding the works described is appropriate in this context.

Consequently, in our assessment, the proposed development does not compromise the objectives of the Development Plan.

Other Planning Issues

Access/ Traffic

The existing point of access is to be retained. There will be a temporary increase in vehicle movements during construction. However, traffic movements during the operational phase of the development will be limited because visits to the site will only be required for repair and maintenance purposes.

Historic/ Archaeological Interest

There are no known Scheduled Ancient Monuments or other archaeological sites affected by the proposals.

Conclusion

We trust the information provided is sufficient to allow the application to proceed to determination as soon as possible. Scottish Water is working to a tight timescale for the above works so your earliest attention to this matter would be appreciated. Should you have any queries or require any further information please do not hesitate to contact Stuart Morrison of Scottish Water Specialist Services Delivery.