

Scotland's heritage at risk from spread of wind farms – experts

By **Gareth Rose**

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SCOTLAND'S majestic castles, picturesque ruins and historic buildings risk being spoiled by the sprawl of wind farm developments, a quango has warned.

Historic Environment Scotland (HES) said that it had concerns about the 'cumulative impacts' of turbine developments.

It is the first time a main arm of the SNP Government has warned against the proliferation of turbines across rural Scotland.

HES was set up to protect and promote some of our most iconic structures, such as Edinburgh Castle and the Wallace Monument.

It has 30 sites in Dumfries and Galloway, including the 2,000-year-old Barsalloch Fort, Caerlaverock Castle and the Neolithic Cairn Holy Chambered Cairns.

The region, with its abundance of hills and blustery weather, is also home to an increasing number of wind farms, which HES warned could harm the way 'historic structures or places are understood, appreciated and experienced.'

In a submission to planners on the

SNP quango breaks ranks with historic sites warning

proposed Gascrogo wind farm in Galloway, HES wrote: 'We also note the potential for cumulative impacts on the setting of heritage assets caused by the proposed development, in combination with other existing, proposed and consented wind farms in the surrounding areas. We recommend that cumulative impacts are assessed and examined.'

The quango raised specific concerns about the 'significant impact' the Gascrogo wind farm would have on landmarks, including Kenmure Castle, near Outlander star Sam Heughan's childhood home.

An HES spokesman said: 'Our



UNDER SIEGE: Caerlaverock Castle is near proposed wind farm

comments relate to the potential impacts on the setting of the nationally important heritage assets.

'Setting in this context includes visual impacts, but also other factors that contribute to setting which is important to the way in which historic structures are understood, appreciated and experienced.'

Last night, campaigners said the threat of wind farms blotting the landscape was a growing concern.

Iain Milligan, of Save Our Hills, said: 'As HES points out, it's not just standalone developments that are the problem.'

'Giant onshore wind farms begin to merge into one another, and that

has a hugely negative impact on the landscape.

'Many parts of Scotland are at saturation point.'

Tourist agency VisitScotland agreed that wind farms should be 'sensitive to their surroundings', but said that tourists were not deterred by the sight of turbines.

A spokesman added: 'Renewable energy projects are a part of the landscape in nearly every destination in the world and vital in enabling Scotland's transition to a zero-carbon country.'

Energie Kontor, the company behind the Gascrogo wind farm proposal, did not respond to requests for comment.

The Scottish Government has a 'net-zero' target of 2045, which means the amount of harmful greenhouse gases produced will be at least matched by the amount removed from the atmosphere, with a growth in wind power set to play a major part.

In December, Paul Wheelhouse, then Energy Minister, said: 'The Scottish Government is determined to drive a green economic recovery with investment in renewable energy at the heart of it.'