

MARITIME

'Costly' hoax led to search

A major search was launched on the west coast yesterday afternoon after radio messages were picked up saying a boat was sinking.

But after a three-hour search, the incident was being treated as a stupid and costly hoax.

Coastguard and lifeboat teams scoured lochs and waterways in the Fort William area after the Coastguard received the distress call on VHF radio, which was transmitted from a radio mast at Achnacarry near Fort William.

The voice sounded like that of an elderly man, said the Coastguard.

A local boatyard also picked up a garbled message on their radio equipment.

Oban lifeboat was involved in searching Loch Linnhe and Loch Eil, while the Coast-

"It sounded genuine and we always have to act"

guard helicopter from Inverness also joined the operation, searching the Caledonian Canal and other bodies of water.

But after more than an hour of searching, the crews were stood down with no sign of a vessel in difficulty.

A Stornoway Coastguard spokeswoman said that the incident was being treated as a hoax.

She said: "We got the call at 12.20pm and someone was saying 'Help, help. My boat is sinking.'

"It sounded genuine and we always have to act. It did sound like a man in distress."

Earlier yesterday a fishing vessel drifting powerless north of Cape Wrath was rescued by the Lochinver RNLi crew.

The 55ft Sparkling Line, with six crew on board, had suffered a fouled propeller.

Fears windfarm would scare off Nessie tourists

Development: Turbines would be too visible, say protesters



PROPOSAL: An artist's impression of the Cnoc an Eas windfarm, which is coming under fire from the Stag protest group

BY IAIN RAMAGE

Residents opposed to a windfarm proposed within close range of Loch Ness say "dreams will be shattered" if it is approved.

Around 80 people attended a meeting at Drumadrochit's Balnain Hall on Monday night when a new protest group was formed and website established to fight the 13-turbine Cnoc an Eas proposal.

Based on information from the developer, the new Stop Turbines at Glenurquhart (Stag) group said towers up to 137ft tall would be visible above the local forest, from all routes into Glen Affric and from Fortrose on the Black Isle.

Energy giant's proposal for major windfarm

An energy giant has revealed plans to build a large windfarm on forestry land near Lybster.

The proposed Golticay Windfarm would see 47 turbines, each standing 426ft-high, built 2.5 miles north of the Caithness village and just under 10 miles south-west of Wick.

The A9 Inverness-Thurso road runs close by. E.on has launched the

It has cited visual blight, fire risk, rotor flicker, vibration and detrimental impact on house values as reasons to object.

But its main concern is the close proximity of the proposed turbines - 1.5 miles from the Glen Urquhart community of Balnain.

The developer, Force 9 Energy, says it has altered its initial proposals in response to public feedback and feels confident the scheme is "well designed and in an appropriate location with limited visual impact".

Stag has, however, echoed widespread concern that the cumulative effect of 500-plus giant

turbines within close range of Loch Ness would ultimately repel tourists.

The group's chairman Bernie Close said: "It was a great turnout with the best part of 80 people after a let-

"The changes we have made have been welcomed"

ter-drop at 300 addresses with an interesting, intellectual and stimulating discussion among well educated people who are well up to speed with the topic.

"Some said the development would shatter their dreams. These turbines

would be too close to homes. They would shatter the peace and tranquility of the place. It should be illegal to industrialise this landscape."

The new group was triggered by anger following a presentation in March by the applicant.

It has revised its initial plan for 17 turbines and proposed to amend the site layout in response to concerns about visual impact and peat.

It is working with EDF Energy Renewables which would build, own and operate the windfarm if approved.

Force 9 Energy planning director Andrew Smith said: "We have consulted

extensively and addressed concerns about the visual impacts at key sensitive viewpoints.

"The changes we have made have been welcomed by the majority of residents we have spoken to.

"We have had support locally, as well as interest from a large number of local companies who would like to work on the project."

The company expects to submit its application to Highland Council soon.

The turbines would be built on land owned by Count Axel Wachtmeister, an absentee landlord who owns the Kilmartin Estate and is a director of the company Kilmartin (Scotland).

COURT

Man broke friend's jaw

A hairdresser who broke a friend's jaw with one punch was ordered to carry out 150 hours of unpaid community work at Inverness Sheriff Court yesterday.

Kyle Skinner, 23, of 17 Auldhouse Gardens, Southside, Glasgow, was out with pals in Nairn on October 19, 2013, and had been drinking heavily, fiscal depute Roderick Urquhart told the court.

"They were all invited to a party in Lochloy, Nairn, but Skinner was in an argumentative mood. He was asked to leave and walked away. But as he left, he got involved in an argument with one of the party of four. Paul Cope was concerned that the argument may develop beyond mere words and told both of them to 'chill out'.

"Skinner reacted and punched him on the left side of the face.

"He went to the Nairn Town and County Hospital and was later transferred to Raigmore Hospital in Inverness to have a metal plate inserted in his jaw."

Defence agent Duncan Henderson said: "He cannot explain why he punched Mr Cope. He regards him as a friend and he wants to apologise publicly to him for his behaviour, which seems unusual for him."

Village gets sponsor

A special festival to mark the 250th anniversary of the village of Grantown has found a sponsor with close historic links to the Speyside town.

The Grantown 250 takes place from June 21-28 and is a celebration for both locals and visitors.

Now Seafield and Strathspey Estates has come forward as a sponsor.

formation Forum, said: "It's a very large site that they are looking at.

"Because Caithness is flat you can see the turbines from almost anywhere. There is a lot of focus on that particular area which is getting to be far too much."

Highland Council will be consulted on the plans - but a final decision would have to be made by

the Scottish Government because of the scale of the project.

E.on said: "It's still very early days with this project as we continue to do studies to determine the suitability and potential of the site.

"Although it's geographically close to the Camster II windfarm, we will continue to consult on the project separately."

posed for nearby Rumster Forest.

Golticay would be built on land owned by Forestry Commission Scotland (FCS) if granted permission.

E.on has described the plans in the "early days" of development and initial community events were held late last year.

Brenda Herrick, of the Caithness Windfarm In-