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Police called in over wind protest fracas

BY JAMIE MCKENZIE

POLICE were called to a north windfarm exhibition yesterday after a member of the public claimed he was assaulted by security staff brought in to prevent trouble.

The drama unfolded outside Kiltarlity Village Hall, where plans for a 10-turbine scheme went on display for the first time.

Druim Ba Sustainable Energy Ltd (DBSE Ltd) wants to build the devices on the nearby Blairmore Estate.

“Security guards preventing people from coming into public property”

It is the company's second attempt to build a windfarm in the area after previous plans were rejected by the Scottish Government in 2013.

Local man Cosmo MacKenzie complained: “The first thing I come to are security guards preventing people from coming into public property.”

People attending the exhibition were shocked to find four employees from a local firm, Continued on Page 6



INQUIRIES BEGIN: A policeman questions a staff member of Castle Security about the incident outside Kiltarlity Village Hall

 Max: 13c
Min: 6c

Weather in full: Page 4

Scanlon to call time on her career at Holyrood

A Highland MSP has decided to bring the curtain down on a Holyrood career that has spanned nearly 20 years.

Tory Mary Scanlon, pictured, first elected in 1999, is retiring to spend more time with her family, as she has a granddaughter whose need for chemotherapy has “brought home the precious time we have with our families as they grow up”. Ms Scanlon famously used her role on a parliamentary committee to quiz NHS Highland bosses over the running of the board.

Full story, Page 7



SPORT

Niculae fears for Caley Jags

Former Caley Thistle attacker Marius Niculae has warned the Highlanders will face a baptism of fire on their Europa League debut against Romanian club Astra Giurgiu. Full story, Page 56



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Village turbines objector alleges assault

Fracas: Security staff blocked visit – claim

Continued from Page 1
Castle Security, had been drafted in for the one-day event. Just a few minutes after the display opened, one visitor complained that he had been involved in an altercation with a member of the team.

Cosmo MacKenzie, of Fanblair, Kiltarlity, said the man was “not pleased” and

tried to stop him going into the hall. He claimed he was then shoved as he tried to enter a second and third time. “I called the police,” he said. “It’s a distressing way to start the event. I am going in the door and the first thing I come to are security guards preventing people from coming into public property.”

Mr MacKenzie was allowed inside to view the plans after speaking to a security supervisor. Two police officers arrived a soon afterwards and spent 45 minutes taking statements from him and the staff at the centre of the allegations. The security workers said they were there to provide “a bit of reassurance

and to make people feel more comfortable” after problems at a previous consultation event.

DSBE representatives at the event refused to comment on the windfarm plans or the security presence. The company’s previous proposals – for 23 turbines – sparked outrage locally and prompted a huge campaign against the development. Some of those protesters attended the exhibition yesterday.

The new plans involve reducing the size of the



Denise Davis questioned the security staff presence

Denise Davis, who is leading the campaign against the scheme, said: “We have been to dozens of exhibitions and have never seen security before.

“The proposal was refused locally by Highland Council and the Scottish Government. How much

“Security guards preventing people from coming into public property”

windfarm and cutting the height of turbines from 490ft to 415ft. After viewing the designs, opponents

sat in chairs at a table outside the hall and asked others to sign a petition against the development.



Staff from Castle Security at the site of the windfarm exhibition in Kiltarlity

more of a message do they (DSBE) need? This new proposal is not really an improvement and they are continuing to use old noise monitoring data.”

Fellow campaigner Lynsey Ward said: “There are more security guards here than there are members of staff inside. This is a ridiculous proposal and the community is fully against it.”

Comment, Page 25

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Cadet instructor denial over images

TRIAL

Images of young boys being abused were found on the computer of an Army cadet instructor, a jury at Inverness Sheriff Court was told yesterday.

Michael Macrae, 23, whose address was given as 14 Merryton Crescent, Nairn, denies possessing the images and permitting them to be made or taken at addresses in Inverness and Nairn between July 8, 2011, and November 24, 2012. As his trial got under

way at Inverness Sheriff Court yesterday, his lawyer Duncan Henderson lodged a special defence that his client had not seen the images or known they were indecent.

The jury was told police were granted a warrant on November 23, 2012, to search the house understood to be occupied by Macrae and his father Thomas at 14 Merryton Crescent, Nairn. The following morning, officers went to the address and discovered Macrae had recently moved to live with

his mother, Susanne Fraser, and her family at 25 Morning Field Drive, Inverness.

Computers and associated equipment were removed from the Nairn property. They were found to contain no indecent material. The same day, police obtained a second warrant to search Morning Field Drive, where officers seized a number of computers and associated equipment.

Police also went to Fort George where they found Macrae was acting as an instructor to Army cadets on the live firing range. Police

examined a laptop and found three indecent images of young girls and hundreds of photos of young boys between 10-12, which were not classed as indecent, but did show youngsters bound and gagged. They were created on Macrae’s computer on October 31, 2012. More than 90 indecent images were found, 76 of them in the highest category of obscenity. Of these, 41 were created on July 8, 2011, and copied on Macrae’s computer on January 18, 2012. The trial continues.

Letters to the editor

Write to: **Letters to the editor**, The Press and Journal, Lang Stracht, Aberdeen, AB15 6DF. E-mail: pj.editor@ajl.co.uk
Letters are subject to editing and must include your full address and daytime telephone number for verification. Thank you

Shooting to death of a seal

SIR, - I read your story (June 23) headed "Seal killers 'scaring tourists away'" and your accompanying editorial Comment headed "Shooting to death of a seal" and I viewed the video of the shooting incident on your website.

I have campaigned against seal shooting for 30 years and this footage might be the first clear recording of such an incident.

The Sea Shepherd activist who filmed this must be commended for bringing it to public attention.

I noticed the shot seal did not appear to be interfering with the salmon nets the shooter is licensed to protect. Seals are supposed to be shot only as a last resort and dead seals should be recovered for autopsy. This does not seem to be the case here and I will raise it with the Scottish Government.

In your editorial Comment, you asked: "... who is officially policing the shooters..." I can answer that: No one. No one checks to see if alternatives to shooting could be used. No one checks licence conditions are observed. Marine Scotland relies on the shooters themselves to report the number of seals killed.

The seal shooting licence system is a sick joke and needs to be replaced with a law protecting seals, instead of a law indemnifying those who kill them from prosecution.

*John F. Robins,
secretary,
Save Our Seals Fund,
c/o Animal Concern,
PO Box 5178, Dumbarton.*

'Sheer nerve' of councillors

SIR, - Is there no end to the sheer nerve and complete lack of embarrassment on the part of the leading Aberdeen councillors, with Angela Scott, chief executive of Aberdeen City Council, being told to approach Sir Ian Wood with cap in hand (the Press and Journal, June 23)?

It was only two years ago when Councillor Willie Young grandly stated about Sir Ian: "He knows where we are."

Mighty and fallen comes to mind.

*A. Bruce,
Lord Hay's Grove, Aberdeen.*

Blaming misery on Westminster

SIR, - Social Justice Secretary Alex Neil trying to blame the misery of Scots in poverty on Westminster cutbacks is disgraceful (the Press and Journal, June 23).

The SNP Scottish Government has the power already to raise income tax by up to 3% to alleviate



Masterplan proposal for bus stops

SIR, - I think abolishing bus stops in the centre of Aberdeen (Bridge Street to Market Street), as proposed in the Aberdeen city-centre masterplan, is not a good idea.

It will restrict access to and from Belmont Street and Back Wynd, including to pubs and restaurants, a cinema, the Art Gallery and steps down from Union Street leading to the St Nicholas/Bon Accord Centres.

On the south side, there would be restricted access to shops on Union Street, The Green and to the new bridge proposed to get to the rail/bus stations and Union Square by foot.

It is only a dubious advantage to widen the pavements at this point, as it is unlikely that people will zigzag across Union Street, as there are no large shops on the north side, nor are any proposed.

The proposal will lose this area's facility for people to transit from a bus stopping in central Union Street on to any other bus going to all points in Aberdeen, for no advantage known to me.

Pedestrianisation hasn't worked in the Castlegate; I would be wary about making similar mistakes in central Union Street.

*William Smith,
Victoria Road, Aberdeen.*

“The seal shooting licence system is a sick joke and needs to be replaced with a law protecting seals, instead of a law indemnifying those who kill them from prosecution

the suffering of those it professes to protect.

Instead of implementing this tax, they blame Westminster.

We hear the SNP criticise Westminster for a £100million cut in Scottish funding while sitting on last year's £444million underspend.

The SNP was voted to end austerity and has the power to do so.

Patience is wearing thin.

They should do as they were elected to do and stop the reprehensible tactics of using the avoidable hardship of Scots as ammunition in their political point scoring.

*Doug Gibb,
Morven Crescent,
Westhill, Aberdeenshire.*

Wild salmon and sea trout

SIR, - Mark Pattinson (Letters, June 23) is correct. Neither Alex Salmond, Nicola Sturgeon nor the Empowerment or Land Reform bills will save the west

coast salmon. Research based on experimental releases of young salmon in Ireland and Norway, published by St Andrews University in 2012, found that sea lice were responsible for a 39% loss of adult salmon returning to rivers.

Salmon farms are incubators and reservoirs for infectious diseases and sea lice, and there lies the answer to the lack of wild salmon and sea trout.

There needs to be a 32km "safe passage" salmon-farm-free zone around river mouths, or alternatively salmon farms should be moved to closed containment on land to reduce their detrimental impact on the marine environment.

This would then ensure that the historic wild fish economy and employment associated with Scotland's iconic wild salmon and sea trout will survive for future generations.

*Jenny Scobie,
Protect Wild Scotland,
Argyle Street,
Ullapool.*

Windfarm subsidies

SIR, - It is about time that the windfarm subsidies were abolished (the Press and Journal, June 19). When I started in business, you issued shares to finance your company. As shareholders, you took a risk and then if you made a profit you shared in the income.

Today, it appears that you buy shares, get government grants, rip the public off and then expect a large return on the shares - all without risk.

I'm told that solar panels have a 10-15-year life, wind turbines 20-25 years, a power station 40 or more years. Solar power depends on the sun. While we have plenty of wind, it does not blow all the time. We do have hydro and tidal power. With the tide, you get two tides a day.

Most solar panels are made in China, wind turbines in Denmark and Germany, but a large new plant is being built in Hull to build turbines.

We now have noise problems with wind turbines. It would be interesting to know where those company chiefs live: I bet there's not a wind turbine in sight.

*Nick O'Nion,
Heathfield, Croy.*

The Press and Journal
The Voice of the North

Councillors under investigation

The revelation that city councillors who voted for Aberdeen's controversial Marischal Square plan are under investigation by the Standards Commissioner will re-ignite debate over public consultation surrounding the project.

A strong body of opinion in the city believes the grandiose plan was ill-conceived, inappropriate for a site of such historical importance - and railroaded through too quickly, despite objections.

Given the backdrop of Aberdeen's never-ending struggle to establish a credible masterplan for the future, which captures the imagination of the public, this new twist in the saga is significant. The area around Broad Street, where the former council headquarters at St Nicholas House were demolished to make way for massive redevelopment, is a critical part of that future plan.

"Questions about the procedures, and attitudes towards public opinion, have not gone away"

Many saw the newly created open space, bordered by the architectural gems of the historic Marischal College and Provost Skene's House, as a perfect blank canvas to create something special.

Instead, critics argue they were given the usual glass and concrete, shops-offices-hotel combination which can be seen in any city centre. Since then, questions about the procedures, and attitudes towards public opinion, have not gone away.

Some believe it is now too late to stop anything, due to contractual processes. But it is never too late to get to the bottom of concerns about how public money is being spent and the accountability of public servants.

Windfarm exhibition

There were extraordinary scenes at a public exhibition featuring a new windfarm plan in the Highlands, when the police were called after complaints over altercations with security men.

Many might raise their eyebrows over the fact that security was required in the first place, at what was merely a public consultation exercise. But feelings are running high over windfarms in the Highlands and these developers have been embroiled in previous controversy. If they felt additional security was required, that was their call.

It sends a significant message back to the Scottish Government over how divisive windfarm policy has become.

And finally

It takes a brave man to talk about his sexuality in public - especially if he is a bishop and the subject is gay marriage. The Right Reverend Mark Strange, Scottish Episcopal Bishop of Moray, Ross and Caithness, who has been married for more than 30 years, revealed his past love for a man. It was, indeed, a courageous move to open his heart in such a way.