



Caithness site to be developed as energy and data park

Proposals are being developed for a former US Navy communications site at Forss, Caithness to promote the creation of an Energy and Data Park in an ambitious bid to consolidate the area's potential to be a national leader in the development of wind, wave and tidal renewable energy, and address the growing 21st century demand for secure data storage facilities for the major internet search engines.

Developer Nick Sutton, of Abbey Properties Ltd which owns the 76-acre site at Forss, close to the UKAEA site at Dounreay, said: "We have developed wind energy capacity at the Forss site in recent years but have always considered that the nature, location and potential of the site to provide facilities for the research and development of green renewable energy and data storage, is highly significant.

"Forss is ideally located; on the Pentland Firth, close to the UKAEA Dounreay site with its major national grid connection, and crucially, with outline planning consent already in place for developments of this kind."

The site is now being masterplanned

by HRI Architects of Inverness to illustrate its development potential.

"Opportunities seem to be converging,' said Mr Sutton, "research and development of wave and tidal power in the Pentland Firth and the need for onshore facilities to support this; increasing interest from ISP's like Google and AOL in rural locations offering secure data storage sites with their requirement for high capacity assured power supply, and other new technologies related to renewables – for instance, hydrogen 'cracking' from water to power fuel cells, and the possible use of wind or wave generated power for this – are all part of the new technologies coming to prominence and offering huge potential for northern Scotland. The Forss Energy Park provides an ideal location for this kind of development."

Other potential users of the Forss Park could be the UKAEA itself, and the University of the Highlands and Islands.

"We know that UKAEA is interested in offsite laboratory facilities and the UHI Environmental Research Institute in Thurso will hopefully expand over the next few years," continued Mr

Sutton. "Again, we consider that a co-location to Forss, with resultant potential relationships in data storage, hydrogen cracking, onshore research and development facilities for wave and tidal power developments in the Pentland Firth, can all offer exciting synergies for the various organisations and companies involved."

Abbey Properties is in early discussion with the Caithness & Sutherland Regeneration Partnership, UKAEA, Highlands & Islands Enterprise and the Highland Council.

"We are already planning further wind turbine development at Forss," said Mr Sutton, "and are approaching a range of other research and development organisations who are actively involved in assessing the renewables potential of the Caithness and Pentland Firth area. We are very excited at the possibility of the Forss site becoming a major employer and an important research and development facility; and a means of securing investment and employment for Caithness and Thurso well into the future."

Forss Energy Park, Abbey Properties Cambridgeshire Ltd, Nene Lodge
Funthams Lane, Whittlesey, Peterborough Cambridgeshire PE7 2PB
Tel: 01733 200908 email: ns@taguk.co.uk www.theabbey-group.com