

Dr. Tom Dargie

Rebuttal Statement
RSPB / SWT / BSBI

Golf & Leisure Resort

Menie Estate, Balmedie, Aberdeenshire



Public Inquiry

Rebuttal of Opposition Precognition

Precognition of Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB): Dr Martin Auld

General Overview

This RSPB precognition places correct emphasis on the strong relationship between dune habitats and dynamic geomorphological processes. There is no disagreement with these statements. It expresses reservations on the likely success of proposed mitigation methods. These reservations in general agree with the conclusions of SNH witnesses.

On particular matters regarding mitigation the RSPB is asked to refer to the more detailed Rebuttal statements by this witness to Scottish Natural Heritage on impacts and their mitigation via habitat translocation, as well as the aims of MEMAG.

Witness: The witness for TIGLS is Dr Thomas Dargie.

Issue 1 5.5 A Possible alternative Option

This witness has examined the golf course design of Mr. M. Wood submitted by RSPB (RSB 17). Without digital data it is not possible to quantify its effects on habitats, including those of national and international importance. However, it is clear that grey dune, dune heath and dune slack habitats would all be affected to a severe adverse extent, on ground outwith the SSSI. The RSPB therefore seems to be proposing an alternative which might be as harmful or even worse than the TIGLS development outwith the SSSI and the southern Balmedie sector. The RSPB course runs counter to RSPB principles of golf development expressed elsewhere in their submissions.

Witness: The witness for TIGLS is Dr Thomas Dargie.

Rebuttal of Opposition Precognition

Precognition of Scottish Wildlife Trust (SWT): Mr Jonathan Hughes

General Overview

This SWT precognition places correct emphasis on the strong relationship between dune habitats and dynamic geomorphological processes. There is no disagreement on this. The precognition expresses reservations on the likely success of mitigation. These reservations agree with the conclusions of SNH witnesses.

On particular matters regarding mitigation the SWT is asked to refer to the more detailed Rebuttal statements to Scottish Natural Heritage on impacts and their mitigation via habitat translocation, as well as the aims of MEMAG. Further particular issues are considered below.

Witness: The witness for TIGLS is Dr Thomas Dargie.

Issue 1: Course re-design and sustainability

Para. 28 of this SWT precognition asserts that a re-designed golf course “could go a long way to becoming sustainable”. This witness has examined the quoted golf course design of Mr. M. Wood submitted by RSPB (RSB 17). Without digital data it is not possible to quantify its effects on habitats, including those of national and international importance. However, it is clear that grey dune, dune heath and dune slack habitats would all be affected to a severe adverse extent, on ground outwith the SSSI. The SWT witness therefore seems to be proposing an alternative which might be as harmful or even worse than the TIGLS development outwith the SSSI and the southern Balmedie sector. This is counter to the SWT case on sustainability, especially since much of the RSPB course applies to ground rated as SSSI quality.

Witness: The witness for TIGLS is Dr Thomas Dargie.

Issue 2: Destruction of Menie Links

Para. 30 of this SWT precognition states that Menie Links will be destroyed. This is not correct and is an exaggeration of effects. The scale of loss (i.e. destruction) by direct impacts on the key dune habitats of Menie Links from the first course (T2) is 19%, cited in the precognition of this witness. This 19% figure takes no account of mitigation.

Witness: The witness for TIGLS is Dr Thomas Dargie.