# Plans for Speyside hydrogen plant prompt local opposition over environmental concerns



Plans for a new hydrogen production facility in Speyside have sparked significant local opposition, with over 160 objections raised by residents concerned about potential environmental harm to the area’s natural landscape. The proposed plant is to be situated in Marypark, approximately six miles south of Aberlour, with heavy goods vehicles (HGVs) expected to access the site via the A95 Aviemore road.

The development is being put forward by Storegga, a company with offices near Aberdeen, and is projected to create roughly 100 new jobs in the region. It has received support in the form of a £3.1 million grant from the Scottish Government. However, despite this backing, a growing number of local people have voiced their opposition, fearing the project will overextend the natural resources of the River Spey, leading to reduced water levels that could negatively affect fishing and tourism in the popular scenic area.

Storegga has indicated that the hydrogen plant would operate continuously, 24 hours a day, necessitating the movement of about 70 HGVs, carrying hydrogen tankers, to and from the site daily. Objectors have repeatedly highlighted concerns about the increased traffic this would entail, describing the nearby stretch of the A95 as a “bottleneck” that is already “overloaded with traffic.” Further apprehensions stem from the environmental impact of the development in what many describe as a “region of natural beauty.” One local resident urged the developers to “leave our beautiful countryside alone,” while others warned of a “knock on effect” that could disrupt the local tourist trade, which thrives on visitors coming to fish and appreciate the area’s landscapes.

In response to some of the criticism, Storegga noted that more than forty potential sites were examined before concluding that Marypark offered the most favourable location for the enterprise.

Despite the widespread objections, the project has received a handful of letters of support—five to date. Supporters have spoken of the importance of green hydrogen to local distilleries and the potential for the plant to attract investment to the area. One proponent described the development as a “thorny issue” but maintained that “the benefits outweighed the negatives,” emphasising the need for “investment, job creation and economic growth” in Morayshire.

The proposed hydrogen facility would generate clean hydrogen through the electrolysis of water, powered by renewable electricity. Storegga has outlined ambitions for the plant to aid in regional decarbonisation efforts and assist the Speyside whisky industry in reducing reliance on fossil fuels. If given the green light, the plant is expected to have a capacity of 70 megawatts and produce approximately 25 tonnes of green hydrogen daily.

A significant operational concern relates to water use. Storegga plans to extract the bulk of the plant’s water intake—around 500,000 litres per day—from a borehole linked to the River Spey, supplemented by collected rainwater. This volume is put into perspective by comparison to an Olympic-size swimming pool, which holds roughly 2.5 million litres.

Local voices, such as Innes Community Council member Jim Mackie, who has fished the Spey for over six decades, challenge Storegga’s assurances that the plant’s water use will not affect river flows. Speaking to the Press and Journal, Mr Mackie stated: “All the calculations on the river flow are averages, they are not looking at the critical times when there are low water levels during the summer. [The borehole] will impact the water levels on the Spey.” He raised concerns about the compounding effects of climate change increasing water temperatures, potentially making it harder for aquatic life to thrive. Mr Mackie added, “There are a lot more possible environmental impacts that the developers, Sepa and the council appear to be ignoring.”

Storegga has also indicated that processed wastewater will be returned to the river, but asserts that the quantity released will result in less than a 0.1% change in river water quality and is therefore “not considered to be significant.” Scottish Water has confirmed that it has no objections to the plant going ahead.

The project is part of a broader vision for Scotland to develop regional hydrogen hubs; should it proceed, the Speyside plant would join 13 other planned hubs across the country. The ongoing debate highlights the balancing act between fostering economic development and protecting the region’s environmental and cultural heritage.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

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