

PE1469/C

COSLA Letter of 22 May 2013

Dear Mr Todd

PE1469

Thank you for your letter dated 30 April regarding the above petition and seeking a COSLA response by 22 May.

COSLA's view is that the current neighbourhood notification regimes for local authorities as laid down by the Scottish Government are proportionate. However should the Government wish to formally consult on any proposed changes to current provisions then any proposals would be considered by COSLA.

We would also add that COSLA and Heads of Planning Scotland (HOPS) are currently engaged in the short life ministerial working group convened by Fergus Ewing MSP regarding onshore energy planning issues. COSLA's Development Economy & sustainability Executive Group members formally agreed in March 2013 a joint position statement as our contribution to the work of this group, highlighting the issue of community concerns.

The following is an extract from COSLA/Heads of Planning Scotland contribution to Short life working group on onshore renewables (approved by COSLA members March 2103):

Responding to local community concerns

It must be recognised by both the Scottish Government and on-shore wind developers that certain wind-farm proposals will inevitably give rise to public concern. The Scottish Government must recognise that local opinion on a planning application or section 36 application is a very important material consideration.

Consideration ought to be given to providing community councils with access to technical assistance in the assimilation of a complex environmental statement potentially through Planning Aid for Scotland. This, rather than the reliance on lay-persons without technical knowledge, disadvantages community councils from making effective representation; assistance cannot flow from a local authority as regulator of a proposal.

As consented schemes are completed on less sensitive sites it is clear that there will be an increasing scale of public concern being voiced as familiar and more sensitive local landscapes may be altered by emerging development pressures. Whilst

protection is afforded to the higher categories of landscape in national terms, local landscape designations and non-designated countryside has less protection from the planning system as set out in Scottish Planning Policy (SPP). This is a concern locally.

Smaller clusters of turbines and single turbines can on occasion have a disproportionate landscape and visual impact in relation to the benefits that accrue. The cumulative effects of additional windfarms will change an otherwise unaltered local landscape into a 'windfarm' landscape.

The views of those opposing such developments contribute to the assessment of an on-shore wind proposal by professional planners who then make the determination on the proposal and cannot be discounted simply in the national interest.'

I trust that this addresses the question raised by the Public Petitions Committee.

Laura Hoskins
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COSLA