

Kevin Stewart,
Minister for Local Government & Housing
Scottish Government
St. Andrew's House
Regent Road
Edinburgh
EH1 3DG

28th May 2018

Dear Minister,

Delivering a fairer planning system for Scotland's communities

We are writing to urge you to strengthen the Planning Bill by putting forward proposals to deliver a fairer planning system for Scotland that empowers our communities of place and interest.

We wholeheartedly agree that the places we live and work are key to our identity and wellbeing. Scotland is our land, it defines us and gives us a sense of identity. The way it is developed is hugely important to us all. We want to build a strong and successful nation, but this aspiration can only be realised if our planning system is fair and inclusive.

Research conducted by the Scottish Government demonstrates clearly that there is a significant lack of public confidence in planning. It is therefore imperative that amendments are introduced to the Planning Bill to give communities a greater say and better rights over how Scotland is developed in future and restore our trust in the planning system.

Collectively, we, the signatories to this letter have been involved in all aspects of planning, including the preparation of local and strategic development plans across Scotland and responding to planning applications. The one key emerging theme from our collective experience is that people feel very strongly that there is a need to change the current planning system which leaves them feeling disempowered and disregarded, particularly with respect to rights of appeal.

The fact that applicants can appeal when planning permission is refused but communities have no such right of appeal against a decision to allow development, no matter what the impact on their lives and environment, is viewed as one of the most unfair and inequitable aspects of planning. Despite consistent calls from communities throughout Scotland for appeal rights to be considered the issue was not debated during the planning review and did not become part of the Planning Bill. This is a source of considerable disappointment to community groups and others who see the value of a balanced system of planning, where both developers and communities have equal rights to influence decision-making.

The Planning Bill is a once in a generation opportunity to consider the positive benefits of community appeals. We firmly believe that providing people with equal rights can help to build a stronger, more effective planning system that commands public trust. Equalizing appeal rights will encourage more positive and early engagement in planning, ensure stronger and better planning decisions and provide strong incentives to deliver appropriate development in keeping with the aspiration for a plan led system. A system of planning that allows communities to appeal decisions is

a reflection of strong and democratic governance and public confidence in that system is far more likely to thrive.

We urge the Scottish Government to reconsider their stance on Equal Rights of Appeal and bring planning in line with the spirit of a fairer Scotland and community empowerment initiatives, which aim to really empower communities to protect and nurture their local environments.

Yours sincerely

Midlothian Federation of Community Councils
Edinburgh Association of Community Councils
Professor Mark Stephens Save Our Landscapes (Lanark)
Granton & District Community Council
North Edinburgh Fights Back
Professor Emeritus Sir Thomas M Devine, The University of Edinburgh
Save East Linton From Excessive Expansion
Cluny, Midmar & Monymusk Community Council
South West (Edinburgh) Communities Forum
Monklands Residents Against Pyrolysis Plant
Brightons Community Council
Polmont Community Council
Reddingmuirhead & Wallacestone Community Council
Save Woodhall & Faskine Greenbelt
Professor Michael Pacione
Blackness Community Council
Leith Links Community Council
Friends of Burghlee Park Midlothian
Cockburn Association
Tollcross Community Council (Edinburgh)
Community Action North, Edinburgh
Pencaitland Community Council, East Lothian
Strathblane Community Council
Dumgal Against Pylons Dumfries and Galloway
Biofuelwatch
John Muir Trust
Clyde River Action Group
Duneaton Community Council (South Lanarkshire)
Kilmacolm Residents Association
Culter Community Council
Sustainable Shetland
Fairlie Community Council
Save Meadowbank Campaign
Jackton and Thorntonhall Community Council
Scone North Study Group
Scotland Against Spin
Ceres and District Community Council
Cupar and North Fife Preservation Society
Stop Scolty Redevelopment Aberdeenshire
Scottish Wild Land Group

Grassmarket Residents Association
Dunbar Community Council
West Barns Community Council
Charlestown, Limekilns and Pattiesmuir Community Council
Halfway Community Council in Cambuslang East
Save Bishopriggs Canal Greenspace
Canonbie and District Residents Association
Scottish Wildlife Trust
Thainstone Resident Group, Aberdeenshire
Frackwatch
Residents Against Greenbelt Erosion Dunblane
Denny & District Community Council
Avonbridge & Standburn Community Council
Bonnybridge Community Council
Grangemouth (including Skinflats) Community Council
Maddiston Community Council
Shieldhill & California Community Council
Friends of the Earth Scotland
Woodland Trust Scotland
The Cairngorms Campaign
Froglife
Ramblers
Archaeology Scotland
Buglife
North Lanarkshire Greens
Group to Stop Development at Culloden
Leith Links Residents Association
RSPB
Association for the Protection of Rural Scotland
Not Coull (Coull Links campaign)
The Pollokshields Trust
Pollokshields Community Council
Silverton & Overtoun Community Council
Badenoch and Strathspey Conservation Group
Protect Damhead's Greenbelt
Save Jim's Farm
North East Mountain Trust
Aberdour Community Council
Our Forth
Nick Kempe, Parkswatchscotland
Kirkton Community & Safety Partnership
Save Kingspark for the Community
Care for Caird
Kinross-shire Civic Trust
Stockbridge & Inverleith Community Council
Wallyford Community Council