

MEDIA RELEASE
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Vital Planning Vote: MSPs urged not to ignore communities and the environment

MSPs have been warned not to push through planning reforms that could actually threaten the environment and erode public confidence in the system. Commenting ahead of the final vote on amendments to the controversial Planning Bill LINK President Fred Edwards said:

“This package of measures contains a number of worrying elements, not least proposals that could potentially fast track major developments such as power stations, motorways and incinerators via the National Planning Framework. In the future the scope of planning inquiries will be reduced allowing politicians to push through major developments without proper scrutiny.”

“Scottish Environment LINK is very concerned that there remain both insufficient resources and expertise to deliver the increased community consultation measures proposed in the Bill. This could compound the continued absence of a third party right of appeal which has been demanded by communities across Scotland.”

“We urge MSPs to recognise the results of public consultation and amend the bill to provide a limited third party right of appeal as a safeguard for communities and the environment. Otherwise we will continue to see bad planning decisions slipping through the net and continued public discontent.”

Ends

Notes

1. On the 15th & 16th of November the Scottish Parliament will debate Stage 3 of the Planning Etc. Scotland Bill, finalising the biggest shake up of the nations planning system in over 50 years
2. Ministers are also seeking new powers via a National Planning Framework to designate national developments which reduce the opportunities available to the public to object and challenge national developments at planning inquiries.
3. Scottish Environment LINK has campaigned alongside communities for a limited third party right of appeal so that controversial planning approvals can be reviewed where:

- A) The decision is not supported in the area's local plan
- B) The decision is against the advice of officers



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- C) The local authority has a potential conflict of interests
- D) An environmental impact assessment has been carried out

4. In 2003, the Scottish Executive agreed to consult on a limited third party right of appeal. The consultation revealed there was 86% support for a limited right of appeal. Despite this evidence, the Scottish Executive rejected the idea in its White Paper and Planning Bill. In 2006, During Stage 2 of the parliamentary process over 80% of those who submitted written evidence to the Communities Committee and who mentioned third party rights of appeal supported its introduction.

This Press Release is issued on behalf of the Scottish Environment LINK Planning Task Force. For further details, please contact either Anne McCall at RSPB Scotland on 01313116500 or 07725065186; Stuart Hay on 0131 554 9977 or 07711855821; or Jane Herbstritt on 0131 225 4345