

Media Release

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Scottish Environment LINK welcomes Holyrood committee's call to improve Scottish planning system

Scottish Environment LINK members warmly welcome the Scottish Parliament's Local Government and Communities Committee has today set out its recommendations to strengthen the Scottish Government's Planning (Scotland) Bill. Planning influences and regulates the use of land and as such can have huge environmental consequences and drive sustainable development.

Scottish Environment LINK members and their supporters are therefore frequently involved in the planning process and LINK has been involved throughout the reforms leading up to the current bill.

Commenting on the recently published committee report on behalf of Scottish Environment LINK:

Aedán Smith, Convener of the Scottish Environment LINK Planning Group said:

"We welcome this report from the Local Government and Communities Committee. A strong and effective planning system is critical to achieving sustainable development and many of the Committee's recommendations would help the planning system make Scotland a better place for people and the environment. However, there are a number of areas where the Planning Bill needs to be improved further. For example, we are particularly concerned about the proposal to remove 'Main Issues Reports' from development plans, which could seriously reduce opportunities for planning authorities, developers and communities to identify and agree on the most sustainable development options for local areas. We hope these issues will be able to be addressed as the Bill progresses."

Clare Symonds, Deputy Convener of the Scottish Environment LINK Planning Group said:

"We commend the cross-party Local Government and Communities Committee for their well-considered and thorough examination of the Planning Bill and for taking into account the views of those who took part in the consultation. The committee has recognised the value of planning, the need for the purpose for planning to be explicitly identified in the Bill and the importance of community engagement in the process. Many of the recommendations of the report, particularly the introduction of a purpose for planning and the strengthening of community engagement, are critical to improve planning and address the widespread feelings of distrust within communities. Importantly, for communities throughout Scotland who are calling for equal rights of appeal, the report urges the Scottish Government to review appeal rights, emphasising that people should be engaged in planning 'at all stages'. We hope that the Scottish Government will recognise the over-whelming call for equal rights for communities on appeals and will use this opportunity to address long-standing concerns about inequality, rectifying a longstanding injustice in Scotland's planning system"

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Editors' Notes

(1) The Local Government and Communities Committee have made wide ranging recommendations, reflecting the broad nature of the bill and its potential impact on Scotland's people and environment. LINK broadly welcomes many of the recommendations, many of which complement the recommendations LINK have made. In particular, LINK welcomes recommendations for the Bill to set out a purpose for planning, to improve coherence with other policy areas such as climate change and to make a number of improvements to development plans. However, LINK remains concerned that the Bill's proposals to remove "Main Issues Reports" from development plans could seriously reduce opportunities for community engagement and environmental scrutiny. The Bill also does not go nearly far enough to balance the appeal rights of applicants and communities.

(2) Scottish Environment LINK is the forum for Scotland's voluntary environment community, with over 35 member bodies representing a broad spectrum of environmental interests with the common goal of contributing to a more environmentally sustainable society.

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www.scotlink.org

www.savescottishseas.org

(3) Scottish Environment LINK Stage 1 Briefing to the Planning Bill is available here: http://www.scotlink.org/wp/files/Scottish-Environment-LINK-Planning-Bill-Stage-1-Briefing_May2018_FINALdraft.pdf

Scottish Environment LINK evidence to the Local Government and Communities Committee on the Planning Bill is available here: <http://www.scotlink.org/public-documents/link-evidence-submission-on-the-planning-bill/>

(4) The Local Government and Communities Committee report on the Planning Bill is available here: <https://digitalpublications.parliament.scot/Committees/Report/LGC/2018/5/17/Stage-1-Report-on-the-Planning--Scotland--Bill>

(5) Help us plan a better Scotland: Support our e-action: <https://act.foe.scot/help-plan-better-scotland>

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