



Scottish Environment LINK
2 Grosvenor House
Shore Road
Perth PH2 8BD

T 01738 630804
E enquiries@scotlink.org
W www.scotlink.org

Corinne MacDougall
Principal Planner
Bidwells
corinne.macdougall@bidwells.co.uk

Via email

26th February 2016

Dear Corinne,

RESEARCH ON PERMITTED DEVELOPMENT RIGHTS AND PLANNING GUIDANCE FOR ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS INFRASTRUCTURE

Many thanks for the invitation to participate in your research project into permitted development rights for electronic communications infrastructure. As the questionnaire format is not completely relevant to Scottish Environment LINK members' areas of interest and expertise I provide some comments below.

Scottish Environment LINK recognises the many benefits of improved electronic connectivity and recognises that there may be a need for additional infrastructure to support this. However, infrastructure must be sited so as to minimise impacts on the natural environment. There may be some scope to extend permitted development rights but this will only be very limited in scope if it is not to risk additional harm to Scotland's landscapes, the features of designated sites or to undesignated environmental features such as sensitive species or habitats.

The planning process provides an important regulatory function which aids environmental protection and quality control. As well as increasing the risk of environmental harm, increasing the scope of permitted development rights within SSSIs and European wildlife sites may not be compatible with wildlife legislation and could therefore create additional uncertainty and expose developers and Scottish Ministers to additional risks. Even with current controls, in our view, electronic communications infrastructure is sometimes deployed that is of insufficient quality in terms of location and design. We would therefore firmly oppose any wide scale increase in permitted development rights. We would be happy to discuss how some limited increase in permitted development rights might be facilitated if this would be of assistance.

I hope these comments are of assistance but please do not hesitate to contact me if I can be of further assistance.

Yours sincerely

Aedán Smith
Convener Scottish Environment LINK Planning Group

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