

News Release

For immediate use: Wednesday 12 December 2007

Environment groups unite to pressure Scottish Government over Trump golf plan

Following today's (Wednesday 12 December 2007) emergency meeting of Aberdeenshire Council, fourteen of Scotland's top environmental organisations, all members of Scottish Environment LINK, have sent a joint letter to John Swinney MSP raising profound concerns about the integrity of planning process provoked by the Donald Trump's proposed golf development in Scotland.

The organisations, including Scottish Wildlife Trust, RSPB Scotland, Ramblers' Association Scotland, WWF Scotland and John Muir Trust, support the decision made by Aberdeenshire Council Infrastructure Services Committee on 29 November 2007 to refuse the Trump International Golf Links Scotland's (TIGLS) planning application for a golf course resort and housing development at Balmedie, north of Aberdeen.

The proposal would see the destruction of one of the most spectacular dune systems in Scotland, an area of great landscape, amenity and wildlife value, part of which is legally protected as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) due to its national importance for nature conservation.

The Scottish Government has since made the unprecedented decision to call-in the application and to further scrutinise the proposal. LINK organisations share concerns with members of the planning profession that this decision appears to be at odds with the spirit of the new Planning etc. (Scotland) Act 2006. Ministers will need to ensure that the scrutiny of the case is impartial and is based on planning law.

Paul F Gallagher, the Vice-Convenor of the LINK Planning Group said: *"LINK member organisations pointed out to John Swinney MSP that the decision by the Aberdeenshire Council to refuse the application does not eliminate the opportunity to develop this site, nor does it restrict the potential to create a world-class golf course. We request that the Scottish Ministers should, at the very least, undertake further assessment of the environmental effects of those parts of the proposed golf courses which impinge on the dune system."*

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Gallagher continued: “We believe, given the unusual circumstances, it is important that the final decision on this proposed development should be delegated to an independent public inquiry reporter. This will help to allay any public concern that there has potentially been too great a level of political involvement in this case.”

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Editors' Notes

(1) Scottish Environment LINK is the network for Scotland's voluntary sector environmental organisations. LINK has 36 member organisations spanning interests across the natural environment and associated cultural heritage and supported by around 500,000 people. Further information on LINK is available at www.scotlink.org. The **everyone** campaign is a LINK network initiative enabling people who care about their environment to find out about current issues and take action online or at events - further information is available at www.everyonecan.org

(2) The Scottish Environment LINK members who have signed the joint letter to John Swinney MSP include: *Badenoch and Strathspey Conservation Group; Buglife, Friends of the Earth Scotland; John Muir Trust; Marine Conservation Society; Plantlife; Ramblers' Association Scotland, RSPB Scotland; Scottish Allotments and Gardens Society; Scottish Council for National Parks; Scottish Countryside Rangers' Association; Scottish Raptor Study Groups; Scottish Wildlife Trust and; WWF Scotland.*

(3) For more information on Scotland's Planning etc (Scotland) Act visit: www.opsi.gov.uk/legislation/scotland/acts2006/pdf/asp_20060017_en.pdf

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:

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