

Media News

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For Immediate Release

ROBUST PLANNING LAWS CRUCIAL FOR SCOTLAND'S FUTURE

The planning system in Scotland is crucially important for our landscape and our communities. New planning legislation has been promised by the Scottish Executive in this session of Parliament. In the years to come this legislation will affect the location and size of housing estates, windfarms, opencast mines, landfill sites, quarries and large supermarkets. It may also determine whether a new generation of nuclear power stations are built. Scotland's environmental groups have made five demands of the new Bill.

Scottish Environment LINK, the umbrella group for Scotland's environmental organisations, welcomes the Scottish Executive's commitment to introduce new planning legislation. The Executive has indicated that it will introduce a White Paper before the summer, and will introduce the Bill in this parliamentary session. LINK has launched a Manifesto which details five demands.

In order to restore public confidence and create a planning system that reflects the needs of the 21st century, we recommend that the following five points be incorporated into the new law.

- **Sustainable planning** - include 'sustainable development' in the planning process.
- **Planning for people** - create a system that people can trust. This should include a limited Third Party Right of Appeal; clarification of when Ministers call-in applications; a requirement for Local Authorities to make public the reasons for their approval of planning applications; and the use of Good Neighbour Agreements.
- **Planning with the right processes in the right places** - firm up mechanisms for protecting the natural and built heritage, retain strategic planning for rural areas and regular reviews of planning guidelines

Scottish Environment LINK is a Scottish charity under Scottish Charity No SC000296 and a Scottish company limited by guarantee and without share capital under Company No SC250899.

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- **Planning together** - public bodies such as SEPA and SNH should contribute to the planning process at an earlier stage
- **Revitalising planning** - provide adequate funding for the planning system so there are appropriate numbers of skilled professionals and enhanced support for planning aid.

Lloyd Austin, Chair of Scottish Environment LINK, said:

"The Scottish Executive must grasp the opportunity of this new legislation to restore the public's trust in the planning system. This will not be achieved without greater rights for communities and the other improvements we suggest. The current system is fractured and failing to deliver for communities, developers and the environment."

The Manifesto is attached as a PDF file - please get in touch if you have trouble reading this file.

<<Planning - Final LINK Priorities for the Proposed Bill-Ad6.pdf>>

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Notes for Editors

1. The Executive has indicated a planning white paper is due by summer 2005. Recent press coverage of a leaked Cabinet memo suggests that the Communities Minister does not support the introduction of a limited Third Party Right of Appeal (TPRA) despite an Executive consultation exercise which showed that 86% of respondents supported the introduction of TPRA in principle.
2. Planning in the marine environment would be dealt with by a different set of legislation. The Scottish Executive has consulted on Marine Spatial Planning, and this might be introduced under any new Marine Bill.

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