

PE1864/LLLLLL: Increase the ability of communities to influence planning decisions for onshore windfarms

Emma Harper MSP written submission, 9 September 2025

I am writing to offer my support for the principles outlined in Petition PE1864, which calls for greater community involvement in planning decisions for onshore wind farm developments.

As the petition highlights, many communities across Scotland are experiencing the cumulative impact of multiple wind farm proposals, often concentrated in specific rural areas. This is particularly true in Dumfries and Galloway, which has become a significant energy-producing region.

As of Q2 2023, Dumfries and Galloway had:

- 490 operational wind turbines
- 275 turbines consented and awaiting construction
- 426 turbines in planning, many of which are significantly taller than those currently in operation

This represents over 11% of Scotland's total wind turbines, and in 2022 alone, the region generated 2,127.4 GWh, contributing 8% of Scotland's total renewable electricity output.

While I fully support Scotland's transition to renewable energy and our net zero ambitions, it is essential that this transition is delivered in a way that is fair, inclusive, and respectful of local voices.

I believe that communities must be active participants in the planning process—not passive consultees. This means:

- Ensuring local authorities are resourced to provide professional support to communities engaging with complex planning applications;
- Considering the appointment of an independent advocate to protect participants from intimidation or undue pressure during public inquiries;
- And reviewing the current planning framework to ensure that genuine local support is a material consideration in decision-making.

The concept of cumulative impact must also be more clearly recognised in planning policy. Communities should not be expected to absorb the long-term effects of multiple developments without meaningful input or recourse.

I urge the Committee to continue its important work on this petition and to recommend that the Scottish Government take forward measures that strengthen community empowerment in the planning system.