

# Minister for Local Government Empowerment and Planning submission of 15 March 2024

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

Thank you for your letter of 23 February 2024 about Public Petition PE1864: Increase the ability of communities to influence planning decisions for onshore wind farms. You referred to the Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee meeting of 21 February 2024 and raise three points for response:

- To ask when it expects to publish the outcome of the consultation on “effective community engagement in local development planning guidance”
- To seek an update on work to explore the scope for planning authorities to determine more applications for onshore windfarm developments, including the impact the Onshore Wind Sector Deal for Scotland has had on this work
- The Committee also noted the recent publication of the [Addressing Depopulation Action Plan](#) and its emphasis on a “local by default, national by agreement” approach. The Committee would welcome your views on how this approach will influence the Scottish Government’s approach to community engagement on planning decisions.

The Scottish Government consulted on draft guidance on “[Effective community engagement in local development planning](#)” between 24 May and 13 September 2023. Work is continuing on the final approach to the guidance, anticipated to be published later this year.

The [Onshore Wind Sector Deal](#), agreed in September 2023, includes a commitment to reducing the time it takes to determine Section 36 applications for onshore wind projects by increasing skills and resources and by streamlining approaches to scoping Environmental Impact Assessment Reports (EIARs).

On 28 February 2024, the Scottish Government published [Investing in Planning – a consultation on resourcing Scotland’s planning system](#)

which responds to current resourcing challenges in planning. As well as considering the potential to do things differently, the consultation explores options for leveraging in additional financial resources to better support the planning system and move closer to full cost recovery.

As part of the Scottish Government's commitment to explore the scope for planning authorities to determine more applications for onshore windfarm developments, this consultation invites stakeholder views on whether the current threshold of 50 megawatts (MW) should be raised. This threshold determines the requirement for consent from the Scottish Ministers for the construction, extension or operation of an electricity generating station. A change to the threshold could allow planning authorities to determine more applications for electricity generating stations, such as on-shore windfarms. In addition, the consultation asks whether different thresholds should apply to different types of electricity generating stations, and what the resource implications from this change would be. Views are invited on proposals by 31 May 2024, and thereafter responses will be considered further.

Alongside this, following a report from the Electricity Networks Commissioner, the UK Government has agreed with the Scottish Government that the Scottish energy consenting system needs to be reformed, and the governments are working on a range of proposals for consultation next year. In scope of consideration is the need for formal, pre-application requirements for energy consents, which may include increased early participation and engagement for communities in energy infrastructure proposals.

I trust this information is helpful.

Yours sincerely,

**JOE FITZPATRICK MSP**