

# **PE2075/H: Prioritise local participation in planning decisions**

## **Petitioner written submission, 3 June 2025**

I am disappointed with the written submission from Ivan McKee, the Minister for Public Finance.

He stresses "community engagement", involvement, "comments and representations", and the role of community councils as statutory consultees – all of which can be and have been ignored by Argyll and Bute Council in its dealings with Helensburgh Community Council.

The Minister also lays emphasis on local place plans, but these too can be ignored.

In the last paragraph of his evidence, the Minister refers to the "suggestion by Jackie Baillie MSP that decisions on planning applications could be devolved to the relevant local area committee". In an online conversation with Argyll and Bute Council's chief executive and one of her executive directors, the late convener of Helensburgh Community Council and I made exactly this suggestion to them.

We were told that that had been done before but had been given up in favour of the Council's present system, namely the Planning, Protective Services and Licensing Committee, with membership drawn from throughout the whole of Argyll and Bute Council. We were also told that they would not go back to the previous system, but no reason was given. We were left with the impression that to do so would have been an admission that the current system is not working.

Lastly, the Minister states that to give decision-making powers on planning to Community Councils "would require significant changes to both primary and secondary legislation, to alter the long established role of local authorities as planning authorities for their areas". In other words, to make the planning system fairer for the people of Scotland would involve too much hassle. I find that very sad.