

PE2095/E: Improve the public consultation processes for energy infrastructure projects

Cabinet Secretary for Climate Action and Energy written submission, 10 July 2025

Thank you for the letter of 5 June 2025, which highlighted that the Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee considered the petition PE2095 at its meeting on 4 June 2025. Please accept my apologies for not meeting the 3 July deadline.

The joint UK and Scottish Government review of electricity infrastructure consenting has concluded, with public consultation completed in November 2024 and the UK Government response published in March 2025. Reform is now being implemented through the Planning and Infrastructure Bill, currently progressing through Parliament in Westminster.

At the earliest opportunity, the Scottish Government will publish guidance for measures taking effect two months after the bill receives royal assent and consult on the additional measures enabled by Scottish Ministers' new regulation-making powers. The Scottish Government is committed to engaging stakeholders during the development of any regulations, ensuring they are practical and proportionate.

The proposals to implement statutory pre-application community engagement processes will require secondary legislation to be laid in the Scottish Parliament. Measures included in the Planning and Infrastructure Bill provide for parliamentary scrutiny of regulations to be made under these powers, with the level of scrutiny tailored to the significance of the regulatory powers.

On 22nd May 2024, the then Minister for Climate Action responded to the committee regarding this petition, acknowledging that the scale and linear nature of electricity transmission development may require a more detailed approach to public engagement prior to submission of applications, and that pre application guidance specific to transmission line applications requiring EIA would be taken forward, to provide that affected communities will have clear and meaningful opportunities to influence the process of developing route options. On 7 May 2025, we published this guidance, known as [Pre-application Consultation and Engagement Guidance for Transmission Line Projects](#).

Beyond pre application stage, it is intended that there will be an application acceptance stage, during which the Scottish Ministers will assess the completeness of an application including whether all pre application requirements to engage with communities have been carried out effectively. This will ensure that only projects which have fully considered the views of communities, as well as consultees in the pre application process, are accepted and processed.

Members of the public will be given notice that representations may be made on any applications that are accepted, and community councils will be consulted. It would be possible to consider in any future consultation whether current public notice arrangements are up to date and provide suitable public awareness of the submission of applications. Material issues raised in representations and

consultation responses will be given full consideration before any determination is made, as is the case at present.

The UK Government's Planning and Infrastructure Bill proposes the implementation of a new reporter-led examination process where a relevant planning authority objects to applications within a specified time period. The examination procedure to be adopted by a reporter would be published, interested parties would be notified of the proposed procedure and written representations on it would be invited by the reporter. The reporter may even decide it is appropriate to hold a meeting to hear representations as regards procedure. The reporter would then publish a decision on the procedures to be adopted along with reasons for the decision. This would strengthen community participation in the processes to be adopted for examining the application and would increase transparency of decision making.

The reform provides for a range of options for examining the application and allows for it to be tailored to the development under consideration, while crucially retaining the important option of a public inquiry where this is deemed appropriate.

I hope that this reply is helpful.

GILLIAN MARTIN