

Response from North Lanarkshire Council, 14 May 2025

Planning and Infrastructure Bill LCM

Please find below North Lanarkshire Council's responses to the Committee's questions on the UK Government's Planning and Infrastructure Bill.

1. How do you anticipate the proposed procedural changes to the consenting process for electricity infrastructure will affect the delivery, timing, and costs of projects in Scotland?

The procedural changes, requiring the applicants to carry out pre-application consultation with the public, will make the process more open. The removal of the automatic public inquiry if the local planning authority objects to a proposal is welcomed and should reduce costs and timescales. The introduction of the changes may result in the requirement for additional staff and training to ensure there is sufficient capacity and expertise within local planning authorities to meet the required timescales.

2. What impact do you foresee from the Bill's provision to replace public inquiries with written submissions or informal hearings in cases of objection to large-scale electricity infrastructure applications?

As stated above, the removal of the automatic public inquiry if the local planning authority objects to a proposal is welcomed and should reduce costs and timescales. Though, unless it is made very clear that comment on the proposal should be made direct to the developer there may be an increased burden on the local planning authority to guide members of the public and communities through the pre-application process, as currently happens with controversial Major planning applications.

3. Do the revised consultation and engagement mechanisms outlined in the Bill provide sufficient opportunities for public and environmental scrutiny of electricity infrastructure proposals?

Yes, but see response to question 2. The new legislation should improve the current situation where planning authorities can be unaware of projects until they are submitted or receive insufficient information at an early stage to comment meaningfully. They are often unable to offer valuable early advice that could shape project development.

4. What are the potential environmental impacts of the UK Planning and Infrastructure Bill as it relates to environmental matters for which the Scottish Parliament and Scottish Government have devolved responsibility? We are interested in any views you may have on:

The proposed reforms aim to shift the engagement of Scottish Planning Authorities to an earlier stage in the process through mandatory pre-application consultation at the acceptance stage should lead to developments that are better integrated into

their environment, as often under the current system there is little time to fully assess the potential environmental impacts. Reform of the formal objection process should allow for more flexibility and efficiency. The overall package of reforms has the potential to produce better applications that are less likely to face objections from planning authorities.

I hope these are of assistance.

If you have any further queries, please feel free to contact me.

Lorna Bowden
Planning and Place Manager
North Lanarkshire Council