



The Scottish Parliament  
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

## Official Report

# ECONOMY, ENERGY AND TOURISM COMMITTEE

Wednesday 18 April 2012



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**ECONOMY, ENERGY AND TOURISM COMMITTEE**  
**12<sup>th</sup> Meeting 2012, Session 4**

**CONVENER**

\*Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)

**DEPUTY CONVENER**

\*John Wilson (Central Scotland) (SNP)

**COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

\*Chic Brodie (South Scotland) (SNP)

Rhoda Grant (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)

\*Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green)

\*Angus MacDonald (Falkirk East) (SNP)

\*Mike MacKenzie (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)

\*Stuart McMillan (West Scotland) (SNP)

\*John Park (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)

\*attended

**THE FOLLOWING ALSO PARTICIPATED:**

Gordon Ball (Cameron Community Council)

Walter Inglis (Grangemouth Community Council)

Stephen Leckie (Scottish Tourism Alliance)

Kelly McIntyre (Fintry Development Trust)

Dave Morris (Ramblers Scotland)

**CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE**

Stephen Imrie

**LOCATION**

Committee Room 6



## Scottish Parliament

### Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee

*Wednesday 18 April 2012*

[The Convener *opened the meeting at 10:01*]

### Renewable Energy Targets Inquiry

**The Convener (Murdo Fraser):** Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. I welcome members, witnesses and guests in the public gallery to the 12th meeting in 2012 of the Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee and remind everyone to switch off their mobile phones and other electronic devices. We have received apologies from Rhoda Grant, who is unable to attend.

This morning, we continue our inquiry into the Scottish Government's renewable energy targets and I welcome to the meeting our only panel of witnesses: Gordon Ball, chairman of Cameron community council in Fife; Dave Morris, director of Ramblers Scotland; Kelly McIntyre, project manager at Fintry Development Trust; Walter Inglis, convener of Grangemouth community council; and Stephen Leckie, chair of the Scottish Tourism Alliance. Before we get into questions, I invite one of you to make a brief opening statement. Of course, it is not compulsory—you can simply rest on your written evidence.

**Dave Morris (Ramblers Scotland):** Thank you very much for this opportunity to appear before the committee. I want to make a number of points in addition to my written evidence on behalf of Ramblers Scotland.

First, we are very much concerned about the financial incentives that underlie wind farm development. Incentives and support for onshore large-scale wind turbines, which are primarily under the Westminster Government's control, might be severely curtailed over the next five years and we are very keen for the committee to examine the possibility of that happening and the options that might be available if it does.

There is certainly a lot of public anger and concern about the issue. Indeed, that anger runs all the way from the Duke of Edinburgh, who appears to be opposed to wind farm development, to Donald Trump and is shared by a large number of organisations. The controversy is only going to increase over the next two years not just with wind farm developments but with the construction of the Beaulieu to Denny power line. Once those pylons begin to appear in Drumochter pass, we will be

reminding everyone that 21,000 people wrote letters of objection to that project and a mere 48 people wrote letters of support. We need to bear that in mind.

Since the controversy began, this is the first time that I have appeared before a group of MSPs. Speaking as someone who was much involved in the establishment of the land reform legislation, I believe that there is a serious problem with stakeholder engagement in the process. From my previous role, I know that it is extremely important to get a dialogue going across the table. In the case of the world-famous land reform legislation, that dialogue was between the public sector, landowners and outdoor recreation interests. However, we have not had any such dialogue about energy under the present Government or preceding Governments. That situation needs to change and I hope that that will form an important recommendation in the committee's report.

At the moment, dialogue is taking place with certain sectors of the non-governmental organisation movement, particularly Friends of the Earth Scotland, WWF Scotland and RSPB Scotland, whose position is different from that of outdoor recreation interests. That preferential dialogue was established by Ross Finnie in a previous Administration but it has continued under the Scottish National Party Government. I hope that the committee recognises that that, too, needs to change.

**Stephen Leckie (Scottish Tourism Alliance):** Given that I am surrounded by community council compatriots, who have a local opinion about the areas in which they live, I should make it clear that I am chair of Crieff community council and president of the Perthshire Chamber of Commerce.

**Gordon Ball (Cameron Community Council):** Good morning. By way of a brief introduction, I should say that I am chairman of Cameron community council. After grammar school, I qualified as a mechanical engineer through an apprenticeship and technical college. For 17 years, I lived and worked as an engineer and salesman in various parts of east and west Africa and, after extensive training in America and Europe, I spent almost 30 years working for Stanley Tools as area manager for Africa, the middle east and the Indian Ocean islands. Unfortunately, a heart attack grounded me and I retired to Cameron, where I have served as secretary and then chairman of the community council and chairman of the St Andrews and district neighbourhood watch.

For the avoidance of doubt, I will tell the committee where Cameron is. The parish of Cameron is south and west of St Andrews. It is a 5-and-a-half-mile by 5-mile area of beautiful rural

countryside—mostly farmland that has been looked after by successive generations of farmers. Our kirk dates back to 1647. The reservoir was created around 1900, has been used by the St Andrews angling club since 1927 and has been designated a site of special scientific interest, a Ramsar site and a special protected area in order to protect migrating birds and wild animals. We have one of the best stonemasons in Scotland, a tractor museum, an international riding and livery stable, the Duke's golf course, Allanhill strawberry farm, Craigtoun park and caravan park and, for visitors, we have top-quality hotels, restaurants and bed and breakfasts. We also have our own website.

Thank you.

**The Convener:** Following that stunning advertisement for its attractions, we all look forward to visiting Cameron.

Do you want to say something, Ms McIntyre?

**Kelly McIntyre (Fintry Development Trust):** Yes, please. First, I thank the committee for inviting me to the meeting.

I am project manager with the Fintry Development Trust. We have been really fortunate to have an incredibly successful local renewables programme. As you might or might not know, we own one fifteenth of the Earlsburn wind farm, which has been great because we have been able to negotiate things ourselves. Community benefit is not a mandatory element in any of this but such benefits can be negotiated by local communities from day one to ensure that they get something that is important to them. In the projects that we have been involved with, we have focused on energy efficiency and community renewables. However, every community will have its own needs and I think that an approach that involves communities from day one in discussions about a particular renewables project, its siting and so on can be successful. Often, they are not included until the tail-end of the process and are not given the tools to be able to have that dialogue. I hope that the committee will consider that issue and how we can move such matters forward more successfully in future.

**The Convener:** Do you want to say something, Mr Inglis?

**Walter Inglis (Grangemouth Community Council):** I do not feel compelled to speak at all at this point.

**The Convener:** That is fine. You are the kind of witness that we like.

We will move on to questions. We have a large and disparate panel, so please do not feel that you must answer every question, or we will be here for some time. Some members will direct questions to

a particular individual; if someone wants to respond they should catch my eye and I will try to bring them in. If questions and answers are kept brief and to the point, that will help us to get through the business.

The committee has heard much comment on the impact on tourism of renewable energy projects—predominantly, but not exclusively, wind farms. Many assertions have been made to the committee about that impact, but we have struggled to find much evidence in support of such assertions that is not anecdotal. Perhaps Stephen Leckie, on behalf of the Scottish Tourism Alliance, will talk about the extent to which tourism businesses in Scotland are concerned about renewable energy projects and what evidence there is to back up any such concern.

**Stephen Leckie:** There is little evidence. Much of the argument so far has been on the emotional side. Lots of folk have a view on wind farms and renewable energy, but there is little research-based data on tourism. The recently renamed Scottish Tourism Alliance would be delighted to carry out significant research among the 20,000 or so tourism-related businesses in Scotland.

What we hear is the extreme, hysterical, not-in-my-back-yard views of people who do not want wind farms. That is just emotion. However, we do not know enough about the implications of wind farms. Are they carbon neutral and do they save us fuel, given the concrete that goes into their construction? There are many unanswered questions, on which there is no empirical evidence, so people rely on the emotional arguments and say that tourists will stop coming in droves because of wind farms—we will hear Trump talk about that on 25 April. We do not know that that is the case, because as far as we are led to believe, from some research and through VisitScotland, tourists shrug their shoulders and have no strong view. However, given the potential proliferation of wind farms around Scotland, people do not know what might happen to Scotland's landscape.

Tourism in Scotland contributes about 10 per cent of our gross domestic product and accounts for about 11 per cent of employees in Scotland. We know that people visit Scotland—I am talking about not just foreign and European visitors but local folk who take staycations and daycations in Scotland—because of the green aspects of life. People come for the rural scenery and the landscape. Currently, people are nervous about the landscape being ruined by the proliferation of wind farms, but they do not know how many projects are in the planning process and what the picture might look like if permission is granted for all of them. Many questions lie unanswered; for me, the issue still sits in the emotional category.

**The Convener:** The committee received a written submission from Gleneagles Hotel, with which you will be familiar, which expressed concern that was based on visitors' comments about wind farm developments. Beyond that, it has been difficult to find evidence on the issue.

You talked about surveying your members. Is that something that you could do? The results from such a survey would be interesting to the committee.

**Stephen Leckie:** That is something that we could do. I will not say that we could do it with relative ease, but we could use links such as the various agencies in Scotland, and, through our website, Tourism Intelligence Scotland, we could get a survey out pretty quickly and get some meaningful feedback.

My main role in life is chief executive of Crieff Hydro. We have 1,000 customers in the estate, and about 10 per cent of the population of Scotland walks through the doors of Crieff Hydro each year. No one has knocked on my door and said, "That wind farm in the Ochil hills that you can see from my room is ruining my short break here." No one has said that the wind farm that might go ahead up the Sma' Glen would ruin their stay. I have not heard that. However, the Scottish Tourism Alliance receives emotional phone calls from people who have strongly held views about what will happen in their back yard, and we need to find out more about the issue.

**The Convener:** Thank you. That is helpful.

10:15

**Dave Morris:** I am one of those people who enjoyed their family holiday at Crieff Hydro—it was a very good holiday. When I went to Crieff Hydro, I was interested in the facilities—the grounds and the hotel. I cannot say that I gave a thought to what was happening on the hills nearby. I do not think that the views of people who go to such a facility are that significant in comparison with the views of people who are involved in outdoor recreation, who are out and about in the hills.

However, I agree that there is an issue of evidence and that the position is inconclusive. The committee has debated the report that the Scottish Government produced in 2008. It is regrettable that elements of that survey are not repeated annually. I am keen that the committee recommends that that be done, so that we can see to what extent visitor opinions change as the landscape changes. Similarly, I am keen that Scottish Natural Heritage repeats annually its survey of the diminution of wild land that is occurring as a result of wind farms and other developments.

The situation is very serious as it relates to tourism. I have read Donald Trump's submission and he thinks that that is the case. Although I find a lot of his submission rather dreadful and was involved in opposing his golf course development up in Aberdeen, I think that he makes important points about competitive advantage, which the committee should question him carefully on. When it comes to the basic question of why people choose to come to Scotland rather than go somewhere else, we all know that Scotland the brand is highly significant. A place's reputation is extremely significant. If Scotland gets a reputation for having wind farms all over the place, the tourism industry—certainly as far as outdoor recreation is concerned—will be in serious trouble.

Some years ago, I went to a meeting in Granada in Spain. I flew to Malaga and on the way to and from the meeting, which was a two-hour drive up and down the road, I saw lots of wind turbines on the ridges. I talked to someone about that the other day; the advice was, "Don't go to that part of Spain if you want a hillwalking holiday."

If someone suggested going for a holiday in Wales, I would not go to mid-Wales for a hillwalking holiday because I know that there is a large amount of wind farm development there. This week, yet another scoping document arrived for a wind farm development near Stranraer, the site of which is adjacent to two other wind farm developments. There are already more than 100 wind farm turbines in that area. I could see from the scoping document that the southern upland way already runs between the turbines.

We often get asked for our advice on where to go in Scotland for hillwalking holidays—people from America and from mainland Europe ring us up to ask us that. I would feel duty bound to tell such people that we have many very good long-distance walking trails in Scotland, one of which is the southern upland way, but that if they were concerned about wind turbines in wild landscapes, they should perhaps avoid that trail.

The process is under way. Although the evidence is not there, the committee must treat the issue very seriously.

I will finish by mentioning VisitScotland. If I may, I will read out a bit from the website—

**The Convener:** Briefly, please, Mr Morris.

**Dave Morris:** The website points out—and this is in addition to information in the Scottish Government survey—that:

"A study carried out in April 2006 by Wild Scotland, the association of wildlife tour operators, showed that 61% of operators ... felt the impact of wind farms on Scottish Tourism would be negative."

Similarly,

"Activity Scotland, the association of activity holiday operators, revealed that 88% ... believed"

that there would be negative impacts; and

"Wilderness Scotland ... showed that 91% would not return to the Highlands of Scotland if wind farms are developed in a significant way."

A problem with the approach of the Scottish Government so far is that, although it carried out one survey in 2008, four years ago, it has not, I do not think, talked enough to the operators, who are the experts in the tourism industry. Simply asking the general public is a difficult thing to do.

**The Convener:** Many members of the committee, and other members of the panel, may wish to comment, but I think that we should try to move the discussion on.

**Chic Brodie (South Scotland) (SNP):** Mr Morris has given his position at length. The 2008 report on the economic impacts of wind farms concluded that there was little impact on tourism, and we must also consider our report into the issues affecting Scottish tourism, last week's RSPB report and the VisitScotland statistics.

As one of the MSPs for South Scotland, I attended the Dumfries and Galloway tourism conference, and I know the heat and hysteries—which Stephen Leckie has mentioned—that can be generated in discussions on the smaller turbines, in particular, rather than the larger ranges of turbines that Mr Morris mentions in his submission. People who take a contra wind farm position have produced no evidence. I am talking about evidence rather than emotion. As I said at the Communities Against Turbines Scotland conference, there is too much heat and noise and not enough clinical assessment.

I regret, Mr Morris, that you have just confirmed my view, because you "think" this and you "think" that. I want to hear the evidence to support the alleged impact of wind farms on Scottish tourism. There is none so far.

**Dave Morris:** I have said that I agree that there is no hard scientific evidence. However, I do not think that that is surprising.

**Chic Brodie:** I disagree with your suggestion that the Parliament is not engaging with developers; we are engaging, and we are talking both to those who are for and to those who are against. Where is your clinical, empirical evidence?

A total of 215,000 people have been through the Whitelee wind farm since its inception—more than attend any of the other iconic Scottish tourist attractions such as Edinburgh castle. Where is the evidence—the clinical evidence?

**Dave Morris:** Yes, a large number of people go to Whitelee—but that would be true even if there were no turbines there. There is a nice cafe and a very interesting exhibition, and the site is only 20 minutes from the centre of Glasgow. Probably between 2 million and 3 million people live within an hour's drive of Whitelee. Loads of people—200,000—would go there if you developed the cafe, the visitor centre and lots of walking and cycling trails.

I have been to Whitelee and I spent three hours cycling around. After you have gone past 10 turbines, it gets pretty boring; by that time, you have seen them all. However, the visitor centre is good and gives a very balanced picture. These days, there is great demand for cafes and restaurants out in the countryside.

Where I live, near Kinross, 200,000 people a year use the Loch Leven heritage trail. There are about five new establishments—farm shops, in particular—and people come in very large numbers to enjoy the facilities. I am not at all surprised that Whitelee gets 200,000 visitors, but I do not think that that has anything to do with the fact that there is a huge number of turbines nearby.

Returning to the issue of evidence, if someone in Wales wanted to try to work out whether people would go to mid-Wales, they would not interview me, because I would be taking the decision, as a potential hillwalker, not to go to mid-Wales. How would that be picked up in evidence?

**The Convener:** Mr Inglis is keen to come in.

**Walter Inglis:** I would like to respond to a couple of issues. First, we seem to be focusing on the tourism aspect. Wind farms are a subjective thing and many people actually like them and say that they find them calming. I am not in that category, but that is a comment that people often make. We are talking about gathering evidence—I talk about that in relation to a different issue in my written submission. The key is how you engage with people and whom you engage with. If you draw evidence from a tourism base, you will get a specific response. If you undertake a nationwide survey, I suspect that you will get no response, which is what we often get when we ask people's opinion. Apathy rules—to a certain extent, that is the way of the world—and we end up with the apathetic response, which, when it appears on the scene, pleases none.

Secondly, the nation has an energy problem. If we do not have wind turbines and/or other renewable sources of energy, what are we going to have and where is it going to be?

**The Convener:** That is a fair point. We are going to come on to that in a moment, but I want



to stay with tourism for now. Mr Ball, do you want to comment?

**Gordon Ball:** Yes. As I have explained, we are a small rural community council and we have received complaints. Mr Brodie highlighted the issue when he said that it is perhaps not the big turbines but the small turbines that are the problem. An absolute plethora of those are appearing in the area where we live, and there have been complaints because it is an area in which hunting, fishing and other sports such as horse riding are still enjoyed both by the local community and by people coming in as visitors. I will give a recent example. The community council supported the case for a wind turbine for a local farmer but it was erected next to a road where horses go and there was an accident just a couple of weeks ago in which two people from a professional riding stable were thrown off horses. We have such things around the area, and the concern is that people will be discouraged from coming to the area for riding and other activities in the countryside.

**Chic Brodie:** I am sorry to interrupt again, Mr Ball, but the Duke's course is one of the best courses that I have ever played—it is a beautiful course. Are you suggesting that people would not come to play on the Duke's course if there was a wind farm there or wind turbines close by?

**Gordon Ball:** I agree with Mr Morris that it is not my job to assess or speculate on whether people would come. Yes, the Duke's course is a fantastic course and I am glad that you enjoy it. If you can make cardiac brae, you are a good man.

**Chic Brodie:** If you can make 100 there—

10:30

**Gordon Ball:** It would be unfair for me to say whether people would make that judgment about playing golf there. All that I can say is what I just described. We do not see too much horse riding on the Duke's—we have to go into areas that are more rural for that. However, a lot of that takes place. If it is recommended that people should not come because there is a concern, that will be a problem.

**Kelly McIntyre:** Perhaps some clarification would help. I am not quite sure what the accident that involved the horse and the single turbine was. We have several farmers who have horses and single turbines, and quite a lot of horse riding takes place in our area. Awareness is probably helpful; perhaps I have missed something. Our area is primarily agricultural, and we support landowners who want to install single turbines, along with the Earlsburn wind development in which we have invested. There can be small, medium and large developments.

**The Convener:** Does Mr Ball want to say something? I do not want us to get bogged down in the details of one incident.

**Gordon Ball:** To do that would be unfair. Kelly McIntyre referred to awareness. The riding stable that has been involved in two accidents was in the area long before the wind turbine.

The community council was given the plans for the wind turbine and we said, "Yes—we accept that and we understand what you need it for," but it was not put where it was supposed to be put. One of our concerns is that developers ride roughshod over us. We say yes, then they say, "Well, it's in that ball park," but what should happen does not happen. That track has been established over many years—long before my time in Cameron.

I am talking about international standard horse riding. All that I can say that two riders were thrown.

**Kelly McIntyre:** I see that exactly.

**Stephen Leckie:** I hear from other panel members healthy and strong anecdotal evidence that is based on emotion and conjecture. We need to get to the clinical assessment—Chic Brodie was right to use those words. There is still huge ignorance about the impact of such activity, of which wind turbines are one part. What is the economic impact? What does building a wind turbine cost and contribute to the energy issue that faces us today in Scotland?

Some think that Scotland already has too many wind farms, which are ruining our lives, our tourism and our landscape and scenery—the principal reason why our customers keep visiting Scotland. Scotland has 130-odd wind farms operating today; a further 24 are under construction and a further 104 have planning permission. Applications are being made at an ever-increasing rate, and a further 177 projects are in the planning stage. The number of wind farms could double or triple. If people think that the situation is bad now, they should take stock of what could come our way. That is the reality.

My worry is that the evidence that is emerging—partly from us, and we are not really representative of Scotland—is anecdotal. We must have the clinical assessment—the research. We should just go home and focus our attention on that clinical assessment. At the moment, all that we are doing is coming up with lots of interesting, worrying and scary anecdotal stories.

**The Convener:** That point is fair. Mr Morris wants to speak, but I ask him to hold on a minute. From the exchanges this morning, we have teased out the fact that there is a lot of concern, but it is hard to find scientific evidence.

Do other members have questions on tourism? I do not want to go over ground that we have covered; new angles would be helpful.

**Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green):** To move the debate in a slightly different direction, it seems to me, particularly from what Mr Leckie said, that there is strong opinion on either side of the debate, but we will not know in hard numbers what will happen to tourism in Scotland when it has twice as many wind turbines as it presently has until it has twice as many. We will not be able to see that hard evidence until we have seen that development.

The question for me is what we need to do to ensure that we can have a healthy tourism industry and a renewables future. What does the tourism industry need support from Government to do, and what can it do itself, not only to live alongside renewables but to turn the renewables agenda into part of the positive vision of Scotland that will be attractive to people? What can be done to find ways for the two industries to live compatibly with each other, just as we want our communities to live compatibly with the ecological limits that climate change, among other things, is setting down?

**Stephen Leckie:** There are some realities here. The reality is that tourists get the energy thing. They understand that we all consume energy. What they do not understand is what the point of wind farms is. They do not know why Scotland is doing it. They do not know the ramifications of the potential proliferation of wind farms around Scotland. If they can understand that they make a big difference in terms of economic impact, energy saving or something around their stay in or visit to Scotland, that will help.

There is increasing evidence of ill health being caused by living within a couple of miles of wind turbines. There is an Australian lady called Dr Sarah Laurie who is producing research about that concern. That is part of a general clinical assessment and part of the process of asking questions such as "What does this all mean?", "What is the impact of all this?" and "Why is wind power so expensive?" Gordon Hughes has written an economic analysis and we should get stuck in about it to understand what it means and to update it.

The most recent research on wind farms took place in 2007, and previous such research took place in 2002. The research is way out of date. This is about research. If we can make the research empirical, we can explain to the tourists, "Look, this is good," or whatever.

**Patrick Harvie:** Convener, if other pieces of research or written evidence are referred to, can we have references provided for them? I am

aware that there are valid concerns in this debate about issues such as health, but there is a great deal of pseudo-scientific nonsense out there about the health impacts of wind turbines. If we are hearing evidence about that, we need to be clear what is being referred to.

**Stephen Leckie:** That is a fair point. The report from Dr Laurie appeared on my desk last night at 10.30, so I received it as recently as that. I was in the office at 6.30 this morning printing it off, so it is that fresh to me.

**Patrick Harvie:** To follow up on that, I want to turn to Kelly McIntyre about the question of how we relate to the wind turbine industry and not just whether we can provide definitive evidence that does not exist yet. You said in your opening remarks that community benefit is not mandatory and that there is a process of negotiation. Do you have ideas about what the solution is, how communities can relate to the industry, how we can place a greater emphasis on negotiation and perhaps on community ownership as much as on community benefit, who gets to dictate those terms and how we can engage people positively in the questions about where their energy comes from and how they relate to it?

**Kelly McIntyre:** It is a great starting point to get people aware of where energy comes from. I know that several Government and other programmes have gone into people's homes to try to get them to be aware of their energy use and to reduce it. However, the efficacy of those programmes is unknown. Some things have changed, but many people simply do not know about their energy use.

In many cases, the issue is getting into communities and contacting people who are key seedlings in their communities, who know everyone and are engaged with different groups, and ensuring that they know what is happening when developments come in. The Scottish Government can play a role by looking at a broad map of where developments are being scoped and may happen, and then pinging someone in to say, "Listen, this may be occurring in your community. Let's start having a dialogue about what you need." Perhaps someone independent could be brought in to start the collaboration process, even before the developer comes in with their offer.

There are many small communities that were offered what seemed like a good sum of change, but they had no pathway to spend it. Every year, those communities find themselves in a quandary about how they should manage that money, what they should put it into, how it is never enough or not quite right or how it does not pocket easily. They cannot seem to put it into meeting their aims and objectives or get the community to focus on its needs and ideals; if they could do that, they could use it when they enter into development

processes with developers. That should be best practice, rather than a legislative system. I took part in a community renewables implementation group meeting that discussed whether there should be a mandatory community benefit per kilowatt hour. I think that such a move limits the availability of the kind of options we had in Fintry to buy into and invest in a project and to broaden horizons.

It would be best to start very early with a community-level discussion about potential sites. That would not be hard because all you would need to do would be to look at a map.

**Patrick Harvie:** Within the overall target for renewable electricity generation, the Scottish Government has a megawatt target for community ownership and, indeed, has said that the renewable energy investment fund, an element of which comes from the fossil fuel levy, will be targeted at such ownership. Is the work in this area on the right scale and is it connecting successfully with people to ensure that they see such opportunities?

**Kelly McIntyre:** It could be on a bigger scale. We meet lots of community groups and, when they hear what we have done, they say, "Wow—that's great! We'd like to do that." However, so many groups do not know that this can be done; they have not been in touch with Community Energy Scotland or met someone from the Energy Saving Trust and do not realise that they can use renewables to do lots for their communities. Not only can community ownership present monetary opportunities, it can give a sense of identity and of being tied to a place.

I certainly believe that by giving more of an emphasis to community ownership of energy and making it more of a priority, we can move closer to the targets. In fact, if you turned the whole approach on its head and legislated to put the onus on communities and to require them to produce a certain amount of energy for their own use or to monitor and regulate their own energy use, you could have a real powerhouse with people seeking out their own resources and deciding how they might maximise them. Instead of the big guys coming in and inflicting these things on communities—of course, you would be the big guys who would put that into law—communities themselves would have a choice in such matters.

**The Convener:** Patrick Harvie has done a very good job of moving us off the subject of tourism. That is fine, but other members want to ask about the issue and Dave Morris wants to come back on a previous point.

**Dave Morris:** On the point about evidence, there is good evidence in the survey that the

Government carried out with Glasgow Caledonian University, which, according to VisitScotland,

"concluded that wind farm developments have a minimal impact on tourism, provided they are not visible from important tourism corridors, with 97% of those surveyed saying wind farms would have no impact on their decision to visit Scotland again."

That was the position in 2007. Nevertheless, the reference to "tourism corridors" is very important. When I discuss wind farms with MSPs, one of their lines of argument goes like this: "If I'm driving up such and such a road, I can't see the wind farm because it's back over the hill. If I'm not worried, the tourists driving up and down that road probably won't be." However, if I am trying to walk along that particular ridge, I will be worried. Moreover, these wind farms are already starting to come down the hills, because all the test sites have been used up; in fact, industry people have told us that they are now moving on to the more marginal sites, which means that the developments will be located within tourism corridors. Anyone who has driven down the M74 recently will know what I mean.

Can I come back on Patrick Harvie's question, convener?

**The Convener:** Briefly, please.

**Dave Morris:** We agree that the energy industry should be able to sit happily alongside the tourism industry; the problem is that the incentives are driving big-scale onshore wind farm developments. If the incentives were changed and we supported microrenewables to a much greater extent—we are not against wind turbines—that would make the situation much better. I have read the Fintry Development Trust's submission and I agree that what it is doing is fantastic. It does not really matter whether the money comes straight from the Government or, as in the case of the Fintry Development Trust, through some wind turbines. The work that the trust is doing on the ground on retrofitting, insulation and microrenewables is extremely important.

We are working in an extremely harmonious way with other parts of Government on legacy benefits from the Commonwealth games and the Olympic games. We are trying to promote active nation communities, in which levels of walking and cycling increase enormously. If we could link that to what I am hearing about Fintry and could establish in local communities people who would drive forward the walking, cycling and energy agendas in those communities, that would be fantastic, especially if it could be seen as a legacy benefit from the Commonwealth games.

10:45

**Mike MacKenzie (Highlands and Islands) (SNP):** I have three questions, which I will try to make as brief as possible.

My first is about tourism. I have recently come back from a visit to Orkney, where tourism has been increasing year on year for many years, despite the fact that Orkney is now largely self-sufficient in that it meets its annual energy requirement with the energy that it produces from onshore wind. If wind turbines are so detrimental to tourism, how do you explain that phenomenon?

My second question is one that I put to Andrew Thin of SNH in a previous evidence session. I ask it as someone who travels extensively throughout the Highlands and Islands. Where is the wild land that people are talking about? I would be interested in the panel's opinions on that because, as far as I am concerned, pretty much every part of Scotland has been worked by the hand of man over the past 10,000 years or so. Mr Thin's response was that there is no wild land in Scotland. I would be interested to know where that land is so that I can get back to nature.

My third question relates to the claim that has recently been made by some members of Ramblers Scotland that the organisation has never consulted its membership, which means that there is a question about whether Mr Morris—I appreciate that his views are sincerely held and I do not dispute his right to hold them—is representing the settled will of the members of his organisation rather than just his own views.

**Dave Morris:** I will deal with that last point first. We are a Great British organisation, but policy on the countryside and wind farms is determined in Scotland by our Scottish executive committee, which is elected by the Scottish membership. Our policy position was spelled out in 2005 in quite a comprehensive document, which is on our website. It provides guidance to us, as staff, on wind farm-related policy. Subsequently, our executive committee has had many discussions about wind farm policy and particular wind farm situations. We inform our members of what we are doing through newsletters that we issue two or three times a year. Although it is true that there may be a number of members who are not in favour of what we are saying and who are pro-wind turbines, they are in the minority.

**The Convener:** Do you want to answer the other questions? Can you remember what they were?

**Mike MacKenzie:** I will go over them.

Despite the fact that Orkney meets its annual energy requirement from onshore wind turbines, there is hard evidence that tourism there is

increasing year on year. Do any members of the panel have an explanation for that?

My other question was where the wild land that has been mentioned is.

**Dave Morris:** I have been to Orkney many times over many years, starting in the 1960s, when the first experimental wind turbines in Britain were erected there. The thing about Orkney is that it is primarily an agricultural landscape. I think that people are much more accepting of turbine development in an agricultural landscape than they are of it in a mountain or moorland landscape. For example, I live on the side of the Bishop Hill near Kinross and, when I look down from my house, I am looking at an agricultural landscape. I would be quite comfortable if I could see wind turbines in that landscape because it is already intensively managed. I would be much less comfortable if I went up the hill behind the house and saw turbines in what I see as being a wild landscape, which is primarily land that has not been ploughed or planted and is covered in heather or grass.

To go back to Mike MacKenzie's question about wild land, my answer is that wild land is more or less from your doorstep to the top of Ben Nevis. We are talking about degrees of wildness and the perception of someone going out into the outdoors into certain types of countryside and getting the feeling of wildness. You might get that when you go up the Pentland hills, which are very close to Edinburgh. People go up the hills because they want to experience the fresh air and a relatively unmodified countryside.

It is perfectly correct to say that there is no longer any pure wilderness anywhere in Scotland but, equally, you could go to the north pole today and ask whether there is any real wilderness left there. The argument is all about degrees of wildness. It is important to relate the degree of wildness of any piece of terrain to the type of development that might be proposed, and wind turbines are seen as having a great impact on wildness.

**Mike MacKenzie:** You do not accept that there is a degree of urban myth about it. I will explain what I mean. Most of the native woodlands of Argyll were cut down for charcoal to make cannonballs for Nelson. Had the small number of wind farms that are there now been built 200 years ago, you would not have been able to see them for trees. I am concerned that the idea of wild land is a romantic urban myth that describes a situation that is really not accurate, especially from the perspective of the people who actually live in those places.

**Dave Morris:** To go back to what was said about tourism at the start of the meeting, large

numbers of people come to Scotland because of its natural beauty. It has a worldwide reputation for natural beauty. For example, we could walk through the Cairngorm native pine woods. Most people who walk through the ancient remnants of the Caledonian pine forest would say that they have been in a wild environment.

When I worked for the Nature Conservancy Council in Aviemore, I would stand in front of the northern Cairngorms and say, "This tract of forest from Rothiemurchus to Abernethy is the greatest tract of semi-natural forest in the UK." That is a wild place in everyone's mind, but it has been being impacted on by human activity for centuries. There is nothing incompatible between regarding a particular place as being wild to some extent and the fact that it has seen human activity in the recent or distant past.

**Mike MacKenzie:** Just one final question—

**The Convener:** Very briefly, please.

**Mike MacKenzie:** Do you agree that planning policy has so far ensured that those relatively wild places have been protected, by and large?

**Dave Morris:** No, definitely not. I worked on that issue during my days with the Nature Conservancy Council and it is recognised that there are two problems with that. One is that wild land, wilderness or whatever you want to call it, has never been recognised in statute. The areas that are protected today have been protected because of their landscape or wildlife. There is no statutory designation that protects wild land as such.

The second problem is that, when the boundaries were drawn around the Cairngorms and Loch Lomond national parks, no one ever dreamed that developments outwith those boundaries would feature structures 300ft or more high. The current protected areas system is not designed to deal with the problems that we have with renewable energy, which is why the John Muir Trust and other organisations such as ours have been calling for a new approach to protecting wild land. Indeed, such an approach is an urgent necessity if we are to deal with the problem of energy developments.

**The Convener:** We have had a good kick of the ball with regard to tourism but, before we move on, I will let two other members ask about the subject.

**John Wilson (Central Scotland) (SNP):** Good morning. My first question relates directly to what we have been told might be the impact on tourism from onshore wind farms. Stephen Leckie suggested that he survey his members on the matter but also pointed out that certain emotional—indeed, hysterical—responses might well skew the results. Moreover, it would not be a

scientific analysis or survey of the views of tourists—not only those visiting for the first time, but repeat visitors—on the impact of wind farms on tourism.

Mr Morris, you said that staff in Ramblers Scotland follow a policy position that was set in 2005. Can you explain that position? If I may paraphrase, I believe that you said that, if someone phoned you up to ask about a walk in some part of Scotland where wind farms were sited, your advice to them would be not to go on it. I might have picked you up wrongly—the *Official Report* will show what you actually said—but my understanding was that you would recommend that people not go walking in particular parts of Scotland.

I am simply trying to find out how we measure tourists' views on the siting and operation of onshore wind farms in Scotland. Again, I ask Mr Leckie to tell us how he might advise the 20,000 members of his association with regard to giving us an accurate reflection of what tourists think, not the emotional, hysterical and other such views that have been expressed about the future development of wind farms in Scotland.

**Stephen Leckie:** First of all, Mr Wilson, I regret to say that we do not have 20,000 members; rather, 20,000-odd businesses in Scotland are related to tourism. It would be our dream to have that number of members, and it would be great if you could lend us your support in that respect.

I think that my response would be this: seek first to understand, then to be understood. I think that Alex Salmond will testify to the view that the detail of the question is key to getting a relevant response. We need to help those whom we ask about tourism to understand the issue in question. However, given that we do not know exactly what the issues are, it will take us some time to build up our own understanding and to make the questions relevant. If we do that, we will get back something meaningful. I absolutely accept that there is no point in asking a glib question and getting back a bizarre response. That will leave us none the wiser. We need to be intelligent in the way we ask our questions.

Indeed, we have taken that kind of intelligent approach in the significant research that we have carried out over the past two years into tourism and where it is taking us. For example, we now know that there are four key pillars of tourism, one of which is indeed the great outdoors. The other pillars are towns and cities, events and festivals and business tourism—I should add that that research will be released on 19 June when we issue our tourism strategy.

**Dave Morris:** When I spoke about the southern upland way, I was not saying that I would

recommend that people went somewhere else; I was saying that, if someone were to contact me about it, I would feel obliged today to point out that certain sections of the way had a considerable number of turbines. If they were concerned about that, I would suggest that there were other options in Scotland. If someone loves the idea of walking between turbines, then fine, they should go and walk the southern upland way. I was not saying that people should not go there, but they should understand the characteristics of the route.

I rather object to the suggestion that people who oppose wind farm development are in some way emotional or hysterical. This is not a minority—

11:00

**John Wilson:** Convener, may I clarify something? I apologise to Mr Morris, but I was paraphrasing an earlier comment from Mr Leckie who, in his introductory remarks, referred to emotional and hysterical responses to wind farms.

**Dave Morris:** Sure—I was not directing the comment back to you personally, Mr Wilson. However, it is certainly true that some people on the development side of the debate characterise other responses as hysterical and emotional. A large number of members of the public are very concerned. Chic Brodie was at the meeting in Ayr that was organised by Communities Against Turbines Scotland, which was attended by several hundred people. I have attended other such meetings in Scotland, and this is the issue that gets the most people out into village halls and other meeting areas. It raises deep concerns. We are not just talking about a few crackpots who are being emotional or hysterical.

Arguments come back to the use of money. We totally support action to develop renewables in order to address climate change. However, the Westminster Government put the wrong measures in place. Those measures were justified in the early 1990s, but they are not justified today. The priority for Scotland for wind energy is to develop the offshore wind industry, and that will require a lot of money for research and development and implementation. Money that is being spent at present on onshore wind farms is being wasted.

**The Convener:** Members want to ask about alternatives to onshore wind, but we have one more question on tourism first.

**Stuart McMillan (West Scotland) (SNP):** Mr Morris's point about offshore wind leads nicely on to a question for Mr Leckie. The discussion so far has been about onshore, but there is a wider debate about offshore capabilities and possibilities.

I chair the cross-party group in the Scottish Parliament on recreational boating and marine tourism, and I learned early that Scotland has more than 13,000km of coastline. I may be wrong, but I believe that 13,000km of coastline surely offers enough space for everyone, in every sector, to have a share. There should not be any contentious issues. I believe that the recreational boating and marine tourism fraternity could still utilise the coastline even if there were increased development of offshore capabilities—whether that involved turbines, wave or tidal technology.

The point has been made clearly today that no empirical evidence exists on the effect of wind farms on tourism, but I ask Mr Leckie whether he has received any correspondence from members of the Scottish Tourism Alliance about potential offshore developments? Have people suggested that such developments may hamper or adversely affect their business?

**Stephen Leckie:** The short answer is no—and I say that not only because of the Scottish Tourism Alliance. I am 47 years old, and I have sailed off the west coast of Scotland for 45-odd years, for up to six weeks a year. Whether sailing down Machrahanish way, or off the Mull of Kintyre, or across from Craighouse in Jura, not once have I heard anybody say, "Look at that wind farm, isn't that dreadful? I'm going to stop sailing around this area." Glensanda quarry is a bigger scar on the landscape than the wind farms.

That is my view—but then, I am being anecdotal and emotional about it. I cannot get my mind round the clinical assessment that we need; we have to carry out research. I applaud David Morris: it is great that he holds his views so strongly and he should not lose sight of them. However, such views have to be just part of the big basket of views on what makes financial sense. We have to find energy from somewhere, and research will be required. Whatever people think, sailors do not have a problem with wind farms; not one has ever said anything negative to me about wind farms on the west coast of Scotland—an area, by the way, where the sailing is among the best in the world, as often comes over loud and clear.

Tourism Intelligence Scotland recently produced its eighth book, on sailing in Scotland. It is a growth area. Marinas in Scotland are growing hugely, which is good for the Scottish economy. I have not heard any comments that were anti-wind farm, anti-wave or anti-offshore.

**Stuart McMillan:** Mr Leckie is more than welcome to come to our cross-party group at some time; I invite him along.

I have a second question for—

**The Convener:** Dave Morris wants to come back in, but carry on, Mr McMillan.

**Stuart McMillan:** It is a question for Kelly McIntyre. It is not about tourism, but earlier Ms McIntyre made points about community development and suggested that targets could be higher. I suggest that smaller communities could be easier to develop. How could small or medium-sized towns be encouraged and empowered to consider developments that could help them to help themselves?

**Kelly McIntyre:** This is my personal view. It has been shared with the board, which seems marginally in agreement, but please take the view as being my own. We speak to lots of communities, and we have real opportunities. Within small or medium-sized towns, elements will self-identify as a community. It is better to meet with the elements rather than the whole; you will never make much progress otherwise, because each element will have different needs and ideas. If a town contains three separate neighbourhoods, you should consider their needs independently. If the renewable heat incentive comes through on a domestic level we will have a real opportunity to do stuff anywhere, but until that happens the next big step in the generation of renewable energy will involve partnerships between communities that have renewable resources and communities that do not.

Nimbyism could go out the window if, for example, we had a community by us and if we had land on which to extend our development but did not need the full whack for ourselves. Say Portobello and Greener Leith were looking to put in a turbine down this-a-way, but were having a really hard time with the planning process so that things were going to fall through. Investment might have to be opened up. Communities will have to consider how to create energy, and partnerships with other communities with renewables potential will have to open up. That could lead to stronger links throughout the country between us and them. That kind of thing is already starting. You might hear, "Oh, well, it must be nice to live in a small village with hills and wind and to find that you have a lot of money all of a sudden." However, it is a two-way street.

We invested in a wind farm, but it did not have to be on our doorstep—except that that gave us a bit of negotiating power. People throughout Scotland could be encouraged to invest in renewables, with community ownership of a resource that might not be on their doorstep. That would be a great way to up the ante.

**The Convener:** Dave Morris wants to come back on the subject of tourism, but this will have to be the last comment on the matter.

**Dave Morris:** With regard to the marine environment, when last summer I sailed around the Mull of Kintyre all the way up to Ballachulish I

had a good view of the wind farm situation and, to be honest, I was pretty comfortable with the ones I saw on the Mull of Kintyre. In my mind, however, I thought that, if they can develop wind farms there, they might just go on and on and that would be a different situation. When I saw the three wind turbines on Gigha, I thought, "Fine—they're good," but, as Chic Brodie knows, a guy from Tiree at the conference in Ayr that I mentioned earlier explained how the massive amount of wind farm development in the sea might affect his island. There are big questions to answer in that respect.

The big advantage with the marine environment is that developments can be co-ordinated and organisations such as RSPB, WWF and so on can sit around the table with Marine Scotland and plan where the thousands of turbines will go. However, on land—

**Chic Brodie:** I thought that you were in favour of offshore wind farms, Dave.

**Dave Morris:** I am, but after what we both heard at that conference I think that there is a question mark over Tiree. On the east coast, however, you could give the green light to the development of thousands of offshore turbines.

The problem with onshore wind farms is that they are not planned in the way that offshore developments are planned. For a start, many of them will be put together in an ad hoc way by, say, a particular landowner keen on wind farms against a landowner who is not so keen, or by a development company that manages to get into a particular location. Onshore developments are far too market driven and ad hoc, and the fact is that a much better approach is taken to offshore developments.

**The Convener:** That leads us on neatly to our next question, which is about what the alternatives to onshore wind or biomass might be if we do not like either form of energy.

**John Park (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab):** Good morning. From the evidence that we have taken so far, it seems pretty clear that although different organisations might have certain aspirations or concerns, most of our witnesses agree with the direction of travel and with ensuring that Scotland's energy sources are much greener and are used much more effectively in future. Our discussion has highlighted concerns with onshore wind developments as well as offshore wind and, as the convener suggested, biomass developments at Grangemouth, Rosyth and Dundee. As an initial general question, have your organisations considered what the alternatives might be if we were to scale back on onshore wind, offshore wind and biomass? Do you have any strong views either way on what we might do differently?

**Stephen Leckie:** As I do not have an energy company, I do not feel experienced enough to answer that question. However, from a tourism point of view I can say that the big confusion over biomass is what the price of fuel will be tomorrow—whenever tomorrow might be. Given that we do not know about that, it is simply too risky to stick any investment into a biomass plant.

Crieff Hydro has ground-source heating that works impeccably—indeed, amazingly—well. It can be -7° outside and 43° inside; it is fantastic, but it requires quite significant capital investment. The situation with air-source heating is similar. As for solar energy or photovoltaic cells, I do not know enough about either to comment.

When I was at college 25 years ago, I shared a flat with energy engineers with whom I still communicate. Interestingly, even though they are in the business and have spent their life in this field, they still cannot tell me what we should go for or the method of heating or creating energy that would make most sense in tomorrow's world.

11:15

**Walter Inglis:** For me and my community council, the key issue is the definition of a renewable source. In our submission, we define it as:

“A naturally recurring force of nature capable of being harnessed by man to produce energy”.

Of course, that encapsulates wind, wave, tidal and solar energy.

From what I have heard this morning, the main issue with wind farms is their location. The prospect of moving such developments off the land itself is attractive to quite a lot of people, although I am sure that there are others who hold a different opinion. The other issue that comes into play with renewables is security of supply, because using the elements in that way gives rise to a degree of uncertainty.

People are arguing that biomass can fill that particular gap. That is okay until we try to define the fuel source. At the moment, it is broadly defined under the term “renewables” but there is a strong argument that that is not exactly the case. One can argue over the technicalities—and many people do. For example, some people talk about the carbon savings that can be made, while others say that burning biomass is more dangerous than burning coal. The fact is that there is simply not enough wood in the forests in the UK to sustain the biomass proposals that have been made; indeed, according to the calculations that I have included in my submission, if all the planning applications went through, those developments would use five times more wood than is actually available.

Companies will quite readily tell people that only 10 per cent of the fuel source will come from the UK and that 90 per cent will be imported, but that only raises more questions about security of supply. Given all the biomass developments that are being proposed across Europe, I suspect that the wood these companies intend to import will become less of a raw material and more of a commodity and as such will be traded on the commodity markets. The price would then depend on supply and demand and could go anywhere, and people could end up paying God knows what to get fuel for the plants. Where will energy costs go from there? Other specific issues for communities include the impact on air quality from the biomass facilities, but speaking broadly I do not think that large-scale biomass helps with either sustainability or power security.

From our reading of Scottish Government policy, we can live with smaller-scale biomass developments if they use wood waste from existing forestry on a manageable scale and if local generation can not only be got up and running but provide heating. A pure biomass generator runs at about 30 per cent efficiency, while in Europe the norm is about 75 to 80 per cent efficiency if it is to provide heating; after all, when heat is taken from the facility, electrical capability drops off. Given the technicalities around the issue, it is quite hard for community councils to embrace such proposals. It is a steep learning curve, but the information that we have been pulling together suggests that large-scale biomass does not fit the renewables mould at all.

**Gordon Ball:** In an attempt to get more information and to find out whether we should be focusing on wind, we organised an event at St Andrews called “Is Wind the Answer?”, which featured people who could talk about the various forms of alternative energy and make it possible for our communities to come to a better understanding of what each of them meant and what their implications might be. We asked people from all over Scotland to speak at the event and they said, “If you get more than 50 people, we will come”.

We got 350 people, with a further 100 standing outside who could not get in. They came from Ullapool, Banff, the Borders and all over Scotland. They wanted to know about alternative energy and they asked questions about it. Stuart McMillan raised offshore issues. We had fishermen at the event who were concerned about the destruction of reed beds and measures that are destroying areas that have been there forever. The fishermen say that those areas are being destroyed and will never be replaced. We had a lot of feedback at the event. However, we do not seem to be able to get through to councils or higher authorities that people need to be informed. Who will inform us? If



we do not know what the best source of energy is, we really need to have that information. We are asking, "Please provide that information."

We need that for all kinds of reasons. It is not just to find out what others think. It is not about nimbys and all those kinds of words. There should be a prescription for all the alternatives that sets out what can and cannot be done and where it can be done. A map is available online to show where all the wind turbines will be in the east neuk, and that is just today. Nobody is offering assistance. We do not get assistance from the council, but we really need it. We need guidance.

**Dave Morris:** I would like the committee to draw a firm line in the sand on wind turbines and to try to drive the agenda so that, in future, we have large-scale turbines offshore and small-scale turbines in the farming or crofting landscape. Beyond that, we need a lot more information on the range of options that is available. I point the committee in the direction of Professor David MacKay of the University of Cambridge, who has produced a good publication that sets out all the options that are available and the different mixes of coal, gas, nuclear and what have you. We need the scenarios to be painted for Scotland.

We attach a strong priority to much more investment in energy conservation. Yesterday, I was talking to an architect who works in that area. To my astonishment, he told me that our building standards today for new build are the same as those in Denmark in the 1960s. That is awful. There should be a massive programme to retrofit insulation in domestic properties, which would cut the energy bill massively.

Another issue is transport. It is shameful that the Scottish Government still spends only about 1 per cent of its transport budget on walking and cycling. We have known for years that other European countries spend at least 10 per cent of their budgets on that. That situation has to change.

Finally, Scotland should become a world leader in clean coal technology. There should not be a debate about whether we do that at Longannet or Peterhead, because both those places should use clean coal technology.

If we do all those things, we need not worry about nuclear in Scotland.

**Kelly McIntyre:** Our experience is on the small to medium scale, but if the Scottish Government or outside investors placed an emphasis on and invested in microrenewables, that would take up a lot of slack. As Stephen Leckie said, hydro and air and ground-source systems can do the trick. The properties that we have helped are doing fantastically and are taking a lot of load off the main means by which people heat their homes. Eighty per cent of Fintry's energy is used to heat

homes, because we are not on the gas grid. Across Scotland, many communities are in similar straits. Many targets could be hit through using microrenewables and community-level renewables.

**John Park:** Those were good answers about where we are. I will just make a comment and I would be happy if the witnesses want to respond. The debate that is taking place today in this room is taking place in Scotland more widely, not just among those who have an engineering background or who are involved in the industry, but among people across communities. We need to recognise that. However, if we are to continue in the direction that we are going—no one disagreed that we should—it strikes me that, to return to a point that Patrick Harvie raised, the issue is about how we get the balance right in community involvement in the development of the industry, the energy mix, reducing demand and microrenewables. If any of the witnesses have positive suggestions about how we improve engagement—some have been mentioned already—that would be useful, because we need to focus on that in our report. We all have the same direction of travel, so we need to make it work.

**The Convener:** That is a good point but, in view of the time, I will leave it hanging in the air, if that is all right. Three members want to ask supplementary questions on the same point. I hope that they will be brief and succinct.

**Patrick Harvie:** I thank the Fintry Development Trust and Ramblers Scotland for including in their written evidence arguments on the need for demand reduction, not just through energy efficiency, but through lifestyle changes. Ramblers Scotland joined the dots to transport. At present, transport is a separate system but, as uptake of electric transport increases, it will become part of the same system, so reducing demand must be part of that.

As members know, I have argued long and hard for radical and aggressive action on retrofitting and energy efficiency measures. If we were ambitious and bold on energy efficiency, insulation, retrofitting, microrenewables, heat pumps, district heating systems, combined heat and power and small-scale biomass, taking on board the correct comments about the limited role that biomass might have—certainly, industrial scale biomass has many problems associated with it—we could cut our electricity consumption by 30 or 35 per cent, but the rest of the electricity has to come from somewhere. Perhaps in 10 or 20 years we will be able to do carbon capture and storage and we will find that we can carry on doing that for another 10 or 20 years until it gets too difficult to pump material down into the sites. However, the

rest has to come from somewhere. I would love it if that programme of energy efficiency, demand reduction and microrenewables was enough, but it is not, is it?

**The Convener:** I am not sure that that met the definition of a brief and succinct question, but thank you for trying.

**Patrick Harvie:** The last bit was brief and succinct.

**The Convener:** Yes. I ask for brief and succinct responses to it if possible.

**Patrick Harvie:** Just to be clear, should the rest come from coal, nuclear or renewables?

**The Convener:** We get the point, I think.

**Dave Morris:** When I talk to people in the oil and gas industry, they say that gas is the answer in the immediate future, because it does not put as much carbon into the atmosphere and there is plenty of it around.

**Kelly McIntyre:** We obviously need a mix of energy efficiency and microrenewables measures as well as using the large-scale renewable opportunities that exist in Scotland.

**Mike MacKenzie:** I commend Kelly McIntyre and the Fintry community for their excellent work. I have a couple of points arising from the Fintry Development Trust's written submission, which states that its ownership of a percentage of a wind turbine has not produced any revenue for the past 18 months. I am curious about that and I ask Kelly McIntyre to explain it a wee bit more.

On microrenewables, do you feel that the prevarication from Westminster over the renewable heat incentive has created uncertainty and difficulties with uptake of the technology? Coupled with the recent proposal to reduce the feed-in tariff for solar PV, a lot of uncertainty has been created for small business and for people who are contemplating getting accredited to install those technologies.

11:30

**Kelly McIntyre:** Definitely. When we say that we have not made any revenue, it does not mean that the wind farm has not made any revenue. We have a mortgage on our section of the wind farm and we are in repayment. When our fifteenth of the wind farm does not generate more revenue than we need to repay, the village makes nothing, but we are still paying off our mortgage. Although we have brought no excess money into the village, we have not lost money on the investment. It is viable, but we are still in the repayment period. The investment was £2.3 million and we are paying it off at a very commercial rate of interest.

The rest of Earlsburn is doing fine and making a lovely profit.

I agree that the uncertainty that comes from to-ing and fro-ing over things such as what the FIT will be and the quick changes and turn backs can do nothing. It is the same with RHI. Let us face it: it was brought in as if it was going to happen, then we were told that the business scale would be introduced first. When asked, "Will air source be included?", the answer was, "We do not know," but it was to be part of the premium payment. There is a huge amount of insecurity and instability.

It is incredibly difficult for an individual or business that wants to convert if they do not know whether they will have a way of paying back whatever they take out—if they have the capital or are able to take out that form of credit in the first place. That is where there is a role for the Scottish Government. If risk-free or low-risk capital were available up front, people would be much keener and would be much more comfortable about checking out these technologies. However, we have to go to householders and say, "Theoretically, RHI will come in and, theoretically, that means that you will be able to get this paid off in 5 years and then you will be making an income," but that is not the easiest sale, certainly not to a small business person who is looking to make an income out of their business.

We know that wind and other things that are covered by FITs get grandfathered in at whatever the level is, but there is a lot of misunderstanding. Even my husband did not understand; he thought that people on the higher solar FIT lost it when the change happened. I laughed but, really, people do not understand. They are not unintelligent, but there is so much misinformation out there and that hampers the process.

**Chic Brodie:** I will be brief and succinct because Patrick Harvie covered most of the issues. I agree with Dave Morris about the involvement of the London Government, which has screwed up a lot of the issues. The proliferation of single turbines must be looked at.

We spend an awful lot of time talking about the supply side of renewables and not about demand. Gordon Ball asked about who will tell us what. I am a great believer in pressure from the bottom up. What role should community councils play in relation to energy conservation, demand reduction and putting pressure on Government? How might they be assertive in driving the demand side of energy economics?

**Gordon Ball:** We see the role of the community council as being to take the concerns of the general public or the community to the local council. On energy conservation, we have speakers talk to communities about what they can

do with regard to PV, heat pumps and so on and explain what is going on.

There have been proposals from Fife Council on how people who need replacement boilers, for example, can go about getting them. Some moneys were made available for that, but they ran out quickly because people in certain areas grabbed them and benefited. We try to help by talking about replacement bulbs, putting timers on switches and things like that. They are simple things, but they help to reduce overall consumption.

**Walter Inglis:** I reinforce the point that Gordon Ball made. The community council's role is not to lead the community but to listen to what the community tells us and to feed that information up the line. That said, a couple of years ago we put in an application to the climate challenge fund and obtained some money to establish a project called transition town. I know that there is a wider transition town movement; the aspect that we wanted to take on board was methodologies to achieve energy savings.

The project encompassed some of the things that Gordon Ball mentioned, such as low-energy lamps and power monitoring facilities, which we lent to people to allow them to understand their power consumption. We also tried to embrace healthier travel methods and people growing their own vegetables—a whole raft of things.

However, such projects work only if the community is prepared to go with us. It is difficult for community councils to lead. If the message does not come to us from the community in the first place, so that we can grab the initiative and take it forward with momentum, there is a chance that we will just run up a blind alley. As it happened, the next tranche of climate challenge funding went to other areas and the project has gone flat. However, such work is worth doing.

I want to pick up on Patrick Harvie's point about how we can move forward and sustain momentum. One thing that should be considered is funding for early education. The area that we are discussing is fairly typical of life in general; people have certain ways of doing things, and sometimes the only way in which we can influence them is to get right down to the kids in school and emphasise what their future will be like and what the impact will be on them if people do not make a change in their lifestyles. The kids can then start to influence their parents. That is just a thought.

**The Convener:** It is a good point, although I am married to a primary school teacher and she is driven to distraction by the number of people who say that it is all down to what is taught in schools. She takes the view that it is up to parents to tell

their children about these things. However, that comment is just by the by.

I know that other members want to come in, but we need to move on to another area as we are very over time. Angus MacDonald has some questions on planning.

**Angus MacDonald (Falkirk East) (SNP):** Before I go any further, I declare that I am a councillor on Falkirk Council and I was previously a member of its planning committee, at which I successfully moved last year against the council's recommendation for the Forth Energy biomass application for Grangemouth. I also declare that, in May, I will give evidence to the public local inquiry on behalf of local residents who oppose the proposed large-scale biomass plant.

Good morning, panel. As the convener said, I will move us on to the issue of planning. It is clear from Grangemouth community council's submission that there are a number of issues in respect of the proposed 100MW biomass plant in Grangemouth, not least issues of air quality, sustainability and visual impact. Unfortunately, we cannot go into those issues in great depth this morning, but the committee will address communities' major concerns about biomass in a future evidence session.

It is important that we investigate the planning difficulties that community councils are experiencing. Grangemouth community council's submission says that, given the large volume of technical information that comes along with applications,

"additional provision should be made to facilitate access to expert independent opinion."

The submission also says that a

"Lack of community council resources can negatively impact on equity of the decision making process."

It contrasts the limitless resources of large developers such as Forth Energy with the £1,000 per annum on which the community council must exist.

My question is for Mr Inglis and Mr Ball. Council planning issues have been referred to. In preparing submissions to local authority planning departments, what assistance—if any—have you received to access professional advice?

**Walter Inglis:** The short answer is none. What happens is pretty much driven by our will to do research. The internet has been a boon for accessing information, but the issue is not only accessing it but understanding it, disseminating it within the planning authority's process and how much regard is given to our contribution when we probably have no professional or technical qualification to back it up, other than perhaps a reference to an article.

**Gordon Ball:** We as a community council used to be regarded as an automatic statutory consultee, especially on big projects, but that has been taken away from us. We now have to trawl through applications every week and apply to Fife Council to be considered as a statutory consultee. I do not understand how that has come about or what is gained by that, except that we miss some things.

Since we have a community council meeting only once per month, it is difficult to deal with a big application that has a lot of detail. As I said in my submission, relevant documents can have hundreds of pages.

Who decides whether an application is acceptable? That is not decided by us; we must go to the community, and it is up to the community to tell us its feelings. We must poll the whole area on such matters. Our area has 900 people, although that does not mean 900 houses. That might not seem a lot to members, but we have to produce apolitical leaflets and questionnaires that do not try to persuade people one way or another and which ask people straightforward questions about whether they want developments. Once we have done that, we submit the answer to Fife Council.

We are unlike some community councils, which take a different view and run processes themselves without asking their communities the questions. That is not monitored in any shape or form by anybody. Community councils can perform and act as they want, without anybody questioning it.

11:45

I just heard Angus MacDonald declaring that he was involved in other things. It is the same with the local councillors to whom we used to be able to talk: they are not allowed to give advice on an application, which they used to do in the past. They are now gagged because, if they make any comments, they are not allowed to sit on the committee that determines the application.

The applicants have what seem to us to be unlimited amounts of money and we have precious little. We have something like £400 a year on which to run our community council, which just about covers paper, pencils and paying for the hall. It is no shape or form enough to enable us to question what the developers want to do. On top of that, they employ public relations people to campaign and go round the areas trying to persuade people by holding out carrots of making a certain amount of money if the developers are supported.

Something must be done about that, because people are frustrated. In our area, two community councils disbanded—one is still disbanded, but the

other one reformed with new people. That is the effect on community councils. We are really frustrated. How can we deal with such very large applications without any funding? It is difficult. We have to do it ourselves. I mean me, physically going round and—

**The Convener:** We get the message, Mr Ball.

**Gordon Ball:** Okay. That is the situation that we face.

**Angus MacDonald:** You certainly raise a number of valid points, not least the issue of councillors not being able to give advice, particularly if they sit on the planning committee. Also, if a major application comes in, technically, no councillor could give advice if the full council was to sit to take a decision. That is a definite issue that needs to be addressed.

What could be done to assist community councils in particular with preparing a case that would match that of the developers in major planning applications, particularly energy ones?

**Walter Inglis:** First, on what Gordon Ball said, Grangemouth community council has no difficulty with communicating with Falkirk Council as a statutory consultee. That is an absolute given and we are not kept out of the loop.

Most of the time, the issue that we come up against is that the applications that we get tend to be highly technical. I suggest that there should be an assessment of the level of technical expertise that major planning applications demand and that funding should be made available through a gatekeeper organisation—say, Planning Aid for Scotland—which could decide what body should get it, rather than it going automatically to a community council.

The key issue is to get independent expert advice. For one reason or another, people assume that the officers in a particular council have a view that differs from theirs and that, even with the best will the world, that will influence their decision. We need a degree of certainty that we are getting a wholly independent assessment of a planning application.

For example, we frequently have to engage with hazardous substance consents. You would need to be a skilled chemical engineer to assess all the elements that are put before you; it is about not just the individual chemical but the cocktail that can be created. However, whether we understand the complexity of that or not, we have to make an assessment as a community and put in a reasonable objection, so we are totally reliant on the integrity and understanding of the officer who deals with it.

**Gordon Ball:** We have a current situation involving a big application. A particular

organisation—not ours—has gone round all the people in the neighbourhood asking for donations to pay for two experts, because it will cost £20,000 to get their technical expertise. You said that I had made my point, convener, but the point is that we cannot continue to pay in that way. More and more applications are coming in, each of which requires a technical assessment by an independent person who is acceptable, because we cannot just say, “This fellow here is an engineer. He can do a report for me.” We cannot do that because the person must be professionally acceptable.

Getting such people is very expensive. The developers have a bottomless pit of money, but we have great difficulties in that regard.

**Angus MacDonald:** Given that Planning Aid for Scotland can assist community councils, how might the provision of training and independent advice work in practice?

**Walter Inglis:** I have attended a number of PAS training events, which I found beneficial. The case that we are dealing with at the moment is the Forth Energy application. We asked the council about getting legal support or access to a funding stream for it, because it became obvious that we would have to go to the public inquiry and sit down opposite Queen’s counsel and planning consultants of significant status. We wanted to ensure that we did not make any mistakes that would jeopardise the public inquiry process and we did not want to expose ourselves to any issues that might arise from it. The short answer from the council was that there was no mechanism to facilitate our using legal people and that it would look at the issue of funding—it is still looking.

We went to Planning Aid Scotland to try to get assistance but, to be brutally honest, when we first contacted people there it seemed to go over their heads and they were not able to assist us. We are now dealing with people at a higher level in the organisation who are trying to facilitate access to pro bono legal assistance for us. However, that is proving to be difficult, because the public inquiry is liable to run for up to two weeks and people are not going to give their services free for that length of time. So, that is the kind of scenario that we are in.

**Angus MacDonald:** There are clearly issues with the planning process. We must have safeguards to ensure that for major planning applications developers do not run roughshod over communities. I hope that the committee can address that issue in our report.

**The Convener:** Thank you, Angus.

I appreciate that others may have comments and I know that Stuart McMillan had more questions, but in view of the time, we must draw this evidence session to a close. If we have other

questions, we will write to the witnesses separately and ask for comments, if that is acceptable.

It has been a very long session and I am grateful to all the witnesses for coming along. Your evidence is very helpful for the committee’s inquiry. Thank you for coming.

11:54

*Meeting suspended.*

12:00

*On resuming—*

## Work Programme

**The Convener:** Item 2 is consideration of the committee's future work programme, for which the clerks have prepared paper 3. As members will be aware, the current inquiry into renewables will probably take us up to the middle of June. If we want to interrupt that, there is the opportunity to do a short piece of work on another important matter. We also need to consider what we might want to do in the autumn. Paper 3 is by no means definitive or particularly scientific—we have simply pulled together a range of suggestions from members about issues that we might want to consider.

I highlight a couple of points. First, we have been approached by VisitScotland, which, as members probably know, has developed a strategy on the winning years. Following the publication of our short report on tourism earlier this year, VisitScotland is quite keen to do a one-off evidence session on its strategy. That may be of interest, and is something that we could do at fairly short notice between now and the summer.

Secondly, I am sure that members will have had correspondence from various external groups proposing a committee-sponsored plenary debate on the subject of alternatives to GDP. Oxfam is launching its humankind index on Tuesday next week. Such a debate is certainly a possibility. It would be rather novel if we were to seek a debate on a subject without first having done some work on it. However, if members were interested in that we could try to factor it in and take some evidence. I am open to comments from members.

**Stuart McMillan:** I know that the suggestion is to have an hour-long debate on the humankind index. An hour is not long enough, and if we are to have a debate, the committee needs to do some work beforehand.

On tourism, I would be keen to focus not just on the winning years but on homecoming 2. There is a wonderful opportunity there and I would like to ensure that work is going on behind the scenes to ensure that homecoming 2 is even more successful than the first homecoming.

I will not go through all the other proposals in the paper, because there are so many of them. However, on the economic viability of small towns, I would remove the word "small". There should not be a distinction between small towns and medium or large towns—it should just be towns per se. It would be a legitimate piece of work for the committee to look at towns throughout the country. I dare say that we could all highlight towns,

whether large, medium or small, in which there are positives as well as negatives in relation to the economic situation.

**Patrick Harvie:** It will probably not surprise the committee that I speak up in favour of our doing something on alternatives to GDP. Members will know, but I declare it again for the record, that I am a member of the steering group for the humankind index. I have previously argued that we should do something on that theme, not just because Oxfam was starting its work, but because of Professor Stiglitz's role on the Council of Economic Advisers. He has pioneered some of the work at the global level.

The Church of Scotland was in the Parliament again last night to talk about its special commission on the purposes of economic activity, which covers much of the same ground. It starts from a different premise, but it reaches many of the same conclusions. Enough of a body of work is developing on the general theme for the committee to take it up and take it somewhere.

I agree with Stuart McMillan that an hour is not long enough for members to get their teeth into a topic in the chamber. We should ask for a fuller debate. I do not know whether that could be held before the summer recess, but I know that time is available and committees can bid for it, and I argue that we should do that. It might be that the debate could inform a later piece of work. Recently, some committees have taken that approach and held a debate in the chamber to inform an inquiry, with the debate being summarised as part of the committee report. We might have time for an inquiry later in the year.

I will quickly flag up two other issues. First, I am surprised that we have not heard much about the cities strategy since the beginning of the session, or shortly thereafter. I would be interested to know whether we have any updates on where it is going, if anywhere.

**The Convener:** Now that Perth is a city, I am interested in that.

**Patrick Harvie:** Indeed.

Secondly, if we were to do something on youth unemployment or women in employment, it might be possible to do something more widely on equality in employment and examine what effect the recession is having on equality in society.

**Mike MacKenzie:** Alternative economics is an interesting topic. My only concern is that it is a complex subject and we would need to give it adequate time, not just in a debate but in committee, so that we could explore it properly.

I suggested that we should look at the planning system, but there seems to have been a bit of a misunderstanding. Audit Scotland looked at one

narrow aspect of planning and how it operates. It considered measures of efficiency, planning fees and so on. As we heard this morning, the planning system is criticised by people on both sides. Developers say that it is not fit for purpose, as do communities that are concerned about proposals.

Given that we are six years on from the passage of the Planning etc (Scotland) Act 2006, I suggest that we take a broader view of the planning system than the paper indicates. The subject is important, because the planning system regulates pretty much all economic development, so it is profoundly important that we get it right.

**The Convener:** I point out that, strictly speaking, planning comes under the remit of a different committee—the Local Government and Regeneration Committee. That is not to say that it would not be relevant for us to look at the economic aspects of planning, but we do not want to tread on another committee's toes—we should bear that in mind. We have to be slightly careful about that.

**Mike MacKenzie:** Indeed, but it is the economic aspects that I am most concerned about. I am a bit of a student of post-neoclassical endogenous growth, and it is the planning system that is going to deliver that.

**John Park:** I agree with Patrick Harvie and Stuart McMillan. If we are going to do something on alternatives to GDP, I am pretty relaxed about whether we have a debate first, which would influence our inquiry, or have a debate afterwards, in what has been the normal fashion in the Parliament. The question is how we schedule that. We should certainly be considering the issue because it is relevant, and a wider discussion is being held outside the Parliament.

If we look at the first three topics in the paper—productivity, high-performing workplaces and employment issues; tackling youth unemployment; and women and employment—and bear in mind Patrick Harvie's comment about the wider issues around employment and those who are suffering because of the recession, we could probably bring all those issues together into one longer inquiry into employment and productivity. Some serious questions have come out of the Scottish Trades Union Congress debate about the nature, quality and availability of employment in Scotland.

Finally, there is an issue that is not included in the clerk's paper; perhaps it fell down because of what has happened during recess. I am concerned about what is happening with Scottish football at the moment, particularly with Rangers. The issue might be fraught but it is something that is happening outside Parliament just now. We should consider fan ownership and the economic

arguments around football and how it affects our communities.

**Angus MacDonald:** I do not fall out with anything that has been said so far, and I agree with Stuart McMillan about looking at the economic viability of towns in Scotland, particularly because I am trying to set up a cross-party group on town centres, so looking at that issue would be of benefit.

An issue has come up in the past couple of days that we have not really addressed. When the minister came before the committee, he did not address it either. There has been movement on fracking in England so maybe the committee should be looking at that issue. I did not feed it into the clerks but it is an issue that we should be looking at.

**Chic Brodie:** Having met with the Scottish Football Association a few weeks ago to talk about co-operatives, having been in discussion with the Rangers Supporters Trust in the past two weeks, and having won a Celtic strip in a raffle on Friday night, I must admit that I have some sympathy with John Park's suggestion.

**John Park:** You could give evidence.

**Chic Brodie:** I certainly will not be wearing the strip.

I also have some sympathy with the idea of looking at the humankind index, but we need to take a lot more time and not squeeze it in just before the summer recess because it is a significant topic.

We need to talk about the cities strategy before we talk about the economic viability of small towns in Scotland because one clearly has implications for the other. I would also like to do some work on the commercialisation of intellectual property and research in Scottish universities, but that can wait until next year.

We need to meet VisitScotland to discuss the tourism strategy because of the lack of information that we got in our earlier discussions.

With new councils in place soon, the role of public sector procurement and its implications for employment will be a significant issue. My vote goes to tourism and procurement, but that does not in any way diminish the importance of the other suggested issues. Next year, we should discuss the business arguments and debate around our constitutional future. I put that issue on the same level as alternatives to GDP.

**John Wilson:** I am quite content with the majority of what has been suggested for the work programme. I fully support the humankind index and what Oxfam is trying to do, and it would be useful for the committee to have a short, one-day

inquiry with some of the proponents of the initiative and those who are against it so that we can temper the chamber debate. As Patrick Harvie and others have said, if we are going to have a debate in the chamber, it should be a meaningful one. We have to consider GDP, the measures that are currently used and the benefits, if any, that they bring to the people of Scotland and our economic programme.

The humankind index might warrant a very brief inquiry. Oxfam will launch it on Tuesday and anyone who has not accepted the invitation to that launch should still go along to hear the presentations and speak to some of the people involved, including our very own Patrick Harvie.

12:15

**The Convener:** The very eminent Patrick Harvie.

**John Wilson:** It would be worth while to give the index due consideration instead of simply skipping over it with a one-hour debate in the chamber just to stimulate discussion. I do not think that that would be useful.

As most members have pointed out, the other issues in the paper certainly make up a full programme of work. With regard to tourism, it would be useful to hear from VisitScotland sooner rather than later—and preferably before the summer recess—to ensure that we know exactly what it is doing at the height of tourist season to tie in future events in the winning years and the year of homecoming in 2014.

**The Convener:** The committee seems to be of the view that it would be good to bring in VisitScotland for a one-off presentation, and we should certainly try to schedule that for before the summer recess.

**Stuart McMillan:** Would that replace one of the meetings that have already been scheduled?

**The Convener:** The paper that we will discuss in private is purely illustrative. None of the dates is set in stone; we can jiggle things around and slot in an evidence session on tourism either alongside an evidence session for our renewables inquiry or on a completely separate day. In fact, the latter option might make more sense.

**Stuart McMillan:** The paper that we will be discussing in private suggests that, although we will have completed our work on the renewable energy targets inquiry before the summer recess, the report itself will not be signed off until after the recess. I am keen to sign it off before the summer, if that is feasible.

**The Convener:** I suggest that we discuss the matter in private, because there are certain human

resource issues to take into account. Nevertheless, we will see whether, within the constraints of what we have discussed, we can schedule a session with VisitScotland.

There is a lot of interest from members in the humankind index and I get the general feeling that we want to do more work on the matter. I have to say, however, that I would be a bit nervous about going to the Conveners Group and asking for permission for a chamber debate on the issue without being able to demonstrate that we had actually done some work on it ourselves. We should ask the Scottish Parliament information centre to put together a scoping paper for a short inquiry on the subject and to bring that forward as time allows.

I also suggest that we ask the Scottish Government for an update on the cities strategy and fracking, which has been a newsworthy issue in the past couple of days, and get SPICe to produce research and/or scoping papers on the other topics, namely productivity and employment issues, including those involving youth employment and women; constitutional matters; procurement; intellectual property and commercialisation; and the economy of towns. We do not need to decide today on the issues that we want to go into in more detail but if SPICe can produce some more detailed work, ideas and scoping for potential inquiries we can choose which of them to take forward, probably in the autumn.

Does that seem like a reasonable way forward to the committee?

**Members indicated agreement.**

**The Convener:** In that case, we move into private for item 3.

12:19

*Meeting continued in private until 13:05.*



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