

Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee  
Wednesday 10 September 2025  
13th Meeting, 2025 (Session 6)

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

### Introduction

**Petitioner** Aileen Jackson on behalf of Scotland Against Spin

**Petition summary** Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to increase the ability of communities to influence planning decisions for onshore windfarms by—

- adopting English planning legislation for the determination of onshore wind farm developments;
- empowering local authorities to ensure local communities are given sufficient professional help to engage in the planning process; and
- appointing an independent advocate to ensure that local participants are not bullied and intimidated during public inquiries.

**Webpage** <https://petitions.parliament.scot/petitions/PE1864>

1. [The Committee last considered this petition at its meeting on 13 November 2024.](#) At that meeting, the Committee agreed to write to the Minister for Public Finance.
2. The petition summary is included in **Annexe A** and the Official Report of the Committee's last consideration of this petition is at **Annexe B**.
3. The Committee has received new written submissions from the Minister for Climate Action, the petitioner, Douglas Ross MSP, Murdo Fraser MSP and Sharon Dowey MSP, which are set out in **Annexe C**.
4. [Written submissions received prior to the Committee's last consideration can be found on the petition's webpage.](#)
5. [Further background information about this petition can be found in the SPICe briefing](#) for this petition.
6. [The Scottish Government gave its initial response to the petition on 1 June 2021.](#)
7. Every petition collects signatures while it remains under consideration. At the time of writing, 2430 signatures have been received on this petition.

## **Action**

8. The Committee is invited to consider what action it wishes to take.

**Clerks to the Committee**  
**September 2025**

## **Annexe A: Summary of petition**

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

#### **Petitioner**

Aileen Jackson on behalf of Scotland Against Spin

#### **Date Lodged**

24 March 2021

#### **Petition summary**

Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to increase the ability of communities to influence planning decisions for onshore windfarms by—

- adopting English planning legislation for the determination of onshore wind farm developments;
- empowering local authorities to ensure local communities are given sufficient professional help to engage in the planning process; and
- appointing an independent advocate to ensure that local participants are not bullied and intimidated during public inquiries.

#### **Previous action**

We have written to Jamie Greene MSP, Brian Whittle MSP and Willie Rennie MSP. We have also written to Kevin Stewart MSP in his role as Minister for Local Government, Housing and Planning.

Scotland Against Spin has been a member of the Directorate for Planning and Environmental Appeals (DPEA) Stakeholders' Forum since 2013. It has been raising issues to which this Petition relates since 2019.

#### **Background information**

In 2020 the UK Government announced its intention to allow onshore wind farms to compete for subsidies in the next round of Contract for Difference (CfD) auctions which would allocate market support for projects coming forward towards the middle of the decade. This news was followed by a rapid rise in the submission of onshore wind farm planning applications, particularly in Scotland where National Planning Policy is very supportive of development compared to the rest of the UK.

Onshore wind development is considered, by some, to be particularly lucrative for developers, owing to lower development costs. Some areas of rural Scotland are, we believe, at saturation point with large scale industrial wind power station proposals and developments which have been built or are currently going through the planning process.

In Scotland, wind energy schemes with generating capacity of 50MW or less are determined by Local Planning Authorities (LPA). Local Community Councils are statutory consultees for such planning applications. A refusal of planning permission regularly leads to an appeal by the developer. That appeal, delegated to the Directorate for Planning and Environmental Appeals (DPEA) by Scottish Ministers is often very costly to the LPA, particularly if a Reporter decides that an appeal should be determined by means of a Hearing or Public Inquiry.

Larger wind farms exceeding 50MW are determined at the outset by Scottish Ministers under the Electricity Act 1989, section 36 (s.36) rather than by the LPA. However, the LPA remains a statutory consultee for each s.36 planning application submitted to the Scottish Government's Energy Consents & Deployment Unit. Should an LPA formally object to a s.36 application, a Public Inquiry is automatically triggered. This results in significant expense to the LPA, in order for them to defend their objections. In the majority of cases, the objections of these LPAs and the Community Councils are overruled by the Scottish Ministers, acting on Reporters' recommendations.

In contrast, wind energy schemes in England are determined by the LPA, irrespective of size. LPAs are directed to only grant planning permission if:

- the development site is in an area identified as suitable for wind energy development in a local or neighbourhood plan; and
- following consultation, it can be demonstrated that the planning impacts identified by affected local communities have been satisfactorily addressed and therefore the proposal has community backing.

Whether a proposal has the backing of the affected local community is "a planning judgement for the local planning authority."

If an LPA rejects a planning application, then a developer has a right to appeal to the Secretary of State via the Planning Inspectorate.

This difference in legislation makes it significantly more difficult to obtain planning permission in England, and has led to an influx of developers seeking sites in Scotland, because they believe that the Scottish Government will overrule local decision making and grant consent for planning applications for onshore windfarms.

This has resulted in Scottish rural communities facing multiple applications simultaneously or consecutively. They are left simply overwhelmed and unable to manage, either in terms of the manpower required to scrutinise large technical documents and/or to fundraise in order to employ professional help. In turn, this leaves them particularly disadvantaged in a Public Inquiry situation where they face teams of professionals and the applicant's consultants, who are well able to present windfarm applications in their most favourable light, and at the same time seek to marginalise the evidence from public witnesses.

Live streaming and archived video footage of Inquiries visible on the DPEA website, has resulted in prospective public and lay participants witnessing what they perceive to be personal and vicious attacks on local objectors by experienced lawyers

employing aggressive cross examination techniques. Whilst such techniques might be suitable in a criminal court setting, in those circumstances, the witness would have the protection of counsel or intervention by a judge if there was irrelevant and intimidating questioning. No such protection is provided for a public witness at a planning Public Inquiry; it is seen as a 'no holds barred' arena for the appellant's legal team. Many bona-fide people, giving of their best in the local interest feel they cannot cope with the psychological or financial strain of becoming involved in such a combative and unequal process. It seems to us that the appellant's legal team frequently seeks to discredit a public witness on a personal basis and, as a consequence, their opinions and evidence before the Inquiry are diminished and ignored. Some Community Councils and members of the public will simply withdraw their representation.

We believe that this is a one-sided process which acts as a barrier to effective public engagement in the planning process; the opposite result to that which the Scottish Government is seeking to achieve.

We believe that the adoption of planning legislation such as that in England where there is strict adherence to local development plans which have previously been the subject of public consultation, would direct developers to suitable sites where there is less likelihood of objection from local planning authorities and communities. Any community which had not had its concerns fully addressed could be confident that proposals would be justifiably refused and an appeal would be unlikely. This would encourage developers to have longer, more meaningful consultation with local communities before finalised plans are submitted. At present, the required community engagement exercise in Scotland seems to be largely a one-way consultation which we believe is regarded by many developers as simply a 'tick box' exercise. All parties would benefit as only plans likely to succeed and gain consent would progress to being formally submitted to LPAs.

We call on the Scottish Government to bring planning legislation for the determination of wind farm developments in line with that of England. We also call on the Scottish Government to find a way to restore "equality of arms" in the planning process by equipping LPA's to give positive assistance in the form of professional help to local communities, and to appoint someone to act as an independent advocate or adviser in public inquiries to ensure that local participants are not bullied and intimidated, and that their voices are heard.

## **Annexe B: Extract from Official Report of last consideration of PE1864 on 13 November 2024**

**The Convener:** Our next petition is PE1864, lodged by Aileen Jackson on behalf of Scotland Against Spin, which calls on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to increase the ability of communities to influence planning decisions for onshore wind farms by adopting English planning legislation for the determination of onshore wind farm developments, by empowering local authorities to ensure that local communities are given sufficient professional help to engage in the planning process and by appointing an independent advocate to ensure that local participants are not bullied and intimidated during public inquiries.

We have been joined by our MSP colleagues Brian Whittle and Douglas Lumsden. Brian Whittle has maintained an interest in the petition over a number of years now. We last considered it on 21 February, when we agreed to write to the Scottish Government seeking an update on efforts to ensure effective community engagement on planning issues and on its work to explore the scope for planning authorities to determine more applications for onshore wind farm developments. I am struck that we last considered the petition on my wedding anniversary. I cannot think that there could have been a more exciting way to spend the day.

In March, we received a response from the then Minister for Local Government Empowerment and Planning, indicating that the guidance on effective community engagement in local development planning was anticipated to be published later this year. The minister's response highlighted the consultation on resourcing Scotland's planning system, which included a question on whether the current 50MW threshold should be raised, enabling planning authorities to determine more applications for onshore wind farms. The minister also stated that the UK and Scottish Governments were in agreement that the Scottish energy consenting system needed to be reformed, and our papers for today note that a consultation on a package of proposals for reforms spanning the consenting process, including pre-application community engagement, will be open for responses until 29 November.

We have also received new submissions from the petitioner, expressing continued concern about the unequal playing field, particularly for people participating in public inquiries, noting that they have written directly to the minister about the lack of professional support available to members of the public and community groups wishing to take part in those processes.

The petitioner also draws our attention to the outcome of the Scottish Government's consultation on planning resources, which indicated support for raising the 50MW threshold. The petitioner was concerned that, while action has been taken to progress other proposals from the consultation, little progress has been made on this matter.

In the first instance I would ask whether Brian Whittle wishes to say anything to the committee that we might take into consideration.

**Brian Whittle (South Scotland) (Con):** You are right that this is an on-going petition; it has been considered over some time. The same issues keep arising, and I currently have six individual casework items open on six different wind farms in the south of Scotland. I will not take too long on this, but the basic thread running through all of them is the inability of communities to be properly heard or to be involved in consultation. I have a whole list.

We considered all of the cases and the public's response to the building of wind farms or solar farms. In one case, there were 57 against and two for; in the next one, there were 57 against and one for. There was a huge amount of consideration of the impact of the developments on the local environment. There was a huge amount of worry about that, and about the impact of the developments on the value of people's houses.

When I meet wind farm developers, I always stress that the most important thing that they should do is to consult the local community at the earliest possible point. They all say, "Absolutely, that's what we're going to do," but the overwhelming feeling from reports that I hear and constituency work that I have done is that they avoid doing that. The public believes that, even when there is a local vote against a wind farm, all the developers have to do is refer that to the Scottish Government and it will be passed. The overwhelming feeling is that public views are not heard at all.

I commend the petitioner. As I said, I represent an area with a high density of wind farms and plans for more in future, and there does not seem to be any change in how consultations take place or in the interaction between wind farm developers and local communities. I will end my comments there.

**The Convener:** Mr Lumsden, this is your debut at the committee. We are pleased to have you here and keen to hear any contribution you might wish to put before the committee as we consider the petition.

**Douglas Lumsden (North East Scotland) (Con):** I thank the committee for the opportunity to come and speak to you today and note that the petition—like the one that you dealt with previously this morning—has been on-going for more three years and during the time of three First Ministers.

The convener mentioned the current consultation between the United Kingdom and Scottish Governments on proposals for electricity infrastructure consenting in Scotland. I fear that the direction that we are going in is the opposite to what the petitioner would hope for, and I think the proposals are an attack on local devolution and an attempt to ensure that electricity infrastructure projects, wind farms, pylons and substations are railroaded through against the will of local communities. Those dangerous proposals are basically Scottish ministers telling local communities, "We don't care what you think; we're going to push the proposal forward anyway."

At present, when locally elected planning authorities object to proposals, that causes a public inquiry. The new proposals would change all that, so that an objection would trigger Scottish ministers to appoint someone to examine the application and to decide whether further evidence is required. The stated purpose of the changes is to speed up the consenting process, but that would undermine the voice of local

communities who want to speak against detrimental changes to our rural communities, many of which are in the North East.

This seems more and more like a David versus Goliath scenario. Communities are finding it harder and harder to fight against proposals from energy generating companies because the legal costs make it difficult to fight generating companies, which have very deep pockets. The reduced timeframes that are proposed would make it harder for communities to fight, given that the generating companies have paid staff who can work to tight timescales. The erosion of decisions made by locally elected authorities will make it harder for communities to fight planning applications. It seems more and more as if the system is rigged against local communities. I understand that our energy system is changing, but those changes must be made with communities, not done to them.

We are in danger of destroying our countryside forever. When we look at pictures of our cities and see a place where a once-magnificent building has been demolished and some concrete thing has been put up in its place, we think, "How on earth did they get planning permission to do that?" In years to come, when we look back at what has happened to our countryside, people will ask, "How on earth did they get permission to do that?" It will be because of people, probably in Edinburgh, deciding that they know better than our rural communities.

I urge the committee to press the Government to ensure that our communities are heard, that we listen to those communities and do not press forward with some of these infrastructure projects. We might think that they are the right thing to do just now, but they will have a long-lasting effect that we will probably never be able to overturn.

**The Convener:** This issue is familiar to the committee because petitions that address it come to us from time to time. Work is supposedly under way but it is not yet crystallised into a formal date.

Do we have any proposals from the committee about how we might proceed?

**Maurice Golden:** I am a little bit concerned about closing the petition when we have not yet seen the guidance that the Scottish Government has published. We could write to the Minister for Public Finance to seek further information on when that guidance will be published, an update on work to progress proposals for raising the current 50MW threshold to allow planning authorities to determine more applications for onshore wind farms, and more information on what consideration the Scottish Government has given to ensuring that support is available to members of the public who wish to participate in public inquiries.

I fear that we are reaching the end of our involvement with the petition, but there are still some actions that we could undertake.

**The Convener:** That final point reflects the point in the petitioner's latest submission, which is that they feel that the deck is still stacked. As Mr Lumsden and Mr Whittle said, the developers have much deeper pockets than the individuals in the community who might want to contribute to the process but who find themselves in



what has been described as a David versus Goliath position, which makes it hard to do so. Mr Golden's suggestion therefore seems to me to be an excellent one. Are there any other thoughts from the committee or are we content to keep the petition open and proceed on that basis?

**David Torrance:** I am happy to back those recommendations, convener. However, could we highlight to the petitioner that the UK Government's consultation is open just now so that they can take part in it?

**The Convener:** Yes, we could also do that. We will keep the petition open and seek to find out what progress is being made on the effective community engagement proposals that have been promised.

**Members *indicated agreement.***

**The Convener:** Thank you to Mr Whittle and Mr Lumsden.

## Annexe C: Written submissions

### Minister for Climate Action written submission, 13 December 2024

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

Thank you for your letter of 20 November about Public Petition PE1864: Increase the ability of communities to influence planning decisions for onshore wind farms. You referred to the Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee meeting of 13 November 2024 and raise three points for response:

- further information on when the Scottish Government expects to publish guidance on “effective community engagement in local development planning”
- an update on work to progress proposals for raising the current 50MW threshold to allow planning authorities to determine more applications for onshore windfarms
- information on what further consideration the Scottish Government has given to ensuring support is available to members of the public who wish to participate in public inquiries.

Guidance on ‘Effective community engagement in local development planning’ is expected to publish this month.

We continue to consider the process and timeline for making any changes to the Electricity Act 1989 threshold, which determines whether planning authorities or Scottish Ministers determine applications for energy generating developments. Stakeholder views on whether the current threshold of 50MW should be altered; whether different thresholds should apply to different types of generating stations; and on the resourcing implications of increasing the threshold were sought through our [‘Investing in Planning’](#) consultation which took place between 28 February and 31 May 2024. A summary of responses was published on 15 August and is available on the Scottish Government website - [Investing in Planning – A consultation on resourcing Scotland's planning system Summary of responses to the consultation - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#).

In regard to what consideration the Scottish Government has given to ensuring support is available to members of the public which wish to participate in public inquiries, the Planning and Environmental Appeals Division (DPEA) continues to discuss and hear from the Petitioners and other members of the DPEA stakeholder group in relation to their experiences at inquiries, including at the group’s most recent meeting on 26 November. DPEA has also introduced a questionnaire which will be issued to all parties who have participated in an inquiry to seek their views about their experiences. This includes their views on how fairly the inquiry was run; whether they felt comfortable participating; and whether they felt able to present their case. Results of this exercise will be shared and discussed with DPEA’s stakeholder group.

DPEA will also shortly publish a Guidance Note in relation to the use of community sessions as part of the examination process. These sessions allow members of the community, who may not wish to participate in an inquiry, the opportunity to state their case to the reporter in a less formal environment.

I trust this information is helpful.

Yours sincerely,

**Alasdair Allan**

## **Petitioner written submission, 22 January 2025**

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

This Petition has now been live for four years during which time there has been a change in English planning policy. That is irrelevant; the aim of this Petition is to increase the ability of communities to influence planning decisions for onshore wind farms in Scotland and that still stands.

The Committee has supported the Petition by recommending that the Scottish Government explores the scope for planning authorities to determine more applications for onshore windfarm developments by raising the 50MW threshold while ensuring that genuine local support is a key material consideration in the decision-making process. The Committee also requested that further research be undertaken into how support could be provided for communities wishing to participate in public inquiries.

Despite a Summary of Responses to the “Investing in Planning” Consultation being published in August 2024 showing that the raising of the 50MW threshold was supported by all respondent categories except Development, Property & Land Management Sector & Agents, no decision has been made by the Scottish Government on this matter.

[“Effective Community Engagement in Development Planning: Guidance”](#) was recently published. Whilst it is noted that there are references to some of the points raised in our petition, such as inclusivity, this Guidance is not relevant to our petition. There is no mention of local support becoming a key material consideration in the decision-making process.

No support has been offered to communities wishing to participate in inquiries, only token gestures offered by DPEA.

We have supplied ample evidence to DPEA, including video evidence, showing the challenging and adversarial situations which some participants experience at Inquiries. We have also submitted further written evidence from our members showing that they are happy to take part in an inquiry as long as they have professional support to do so. To date DPEA has failed to engage with us, despite written reminders.

Fear of bullying is not the sole reason for our request for professional help for third party participants. We have made this abundantly clear in our numerous submissions to the petition over the last four years.

Many people have little or no experience of either public speaking, or of complex statutory planning and Inquiry procedures. Most people quail at the prospect of participating in the adversarial experience at a public inquiry. Individual members of the public may also be disadvantaged with overt and/or hidden neurodiverse disabilities, such as autism or dyslexia, which can affect their ability to communicate, verbally or by way of written submissions. In remote rural areas subject to numerous onshore wind farm planning applications, elderly and isolated individuals in particular may not have adequate internet access or computing skills to be able to contribute without help. The Scottish Government is supposedly committed to policies of diversity and inclusivity. These problems can all be overcome with skilled help and support to ensure inclusivity in our society.

Applicants have the advantage of a team of lawyers and other experts on their side. Third parties are fortunate if they have been able to raise the fee required to pay for even one lawyer or other professional to support them at one inquiry. There is little hope of financing multiple inquiries. Many small communities are unable to raise any or enough funds and make the decision not to participate.

The principle of 'Equality of Arms' is well understood in law. A key component of Article 6 of the European Convention on Human Rights means that tribunals or decision-makers must ensure that there is 'equality of arms' on both sides – meaning that a visibly fair balance must be struck between the opportunities given to both parties. There is currently no fair balance in a public inquiry.

We find the suggestions made in [the Minister's letter of 13 December 2024](#) to be rather naïve. The idea of issuing a questionnaire to **all** parties about their experience participating in an inquiry means the results will be skewed by the views of applicants and local authorities.

For the reasons given previously, many inquiries do not have third party participants who would otherwise have liked to have contributed to the questionnaire. Moreover, the views of the people who have previously taken part in inquiries will not be taken into consideration, further skewing the conclusions in favour of applicants.

The community sessions mentioned in [the Minister's letter of 13 December 2024](#) would allow members of the public the opportunity to state their case to the Reporter in a less formal environment without cross examination. Properly managed by a professional this could present a broad picture of community concerns and local knowledge, but unless local opinion becomes a key material consideration in the decision-making process, that 'informal chat' will have no value. The role and contribution of such community engagement requires to be clarified, not least for a Reporter.

It is obvious in reality that the Scottish Government does not wish members of the public to be able to compete on equal terms with an applicant. Public opinion is considered to be a "barrier to deployment" which must be removed. It seems that nothing, even local authority objection, must be allowed to impede 'green agenda' political targets.

A letter dated 28 November from Gillian Martin MSP to Douglas Lumsden MSP suggests that it would be inappropriate and pre-emptive to debate proposed reforms until the outcome of the Electricity Infrastructure Consenting in Scotland UK Consultation is published. As a government committed to devolution, this lack of independent thinking is ridiculous. We have no timescale for how long such a decision would take. Meanwhile, the Scottish public are being palmed off yet again in order to exclude them from meaningful influence and participation, and in the interim, Scottish Ministers are focussed on consenting as many large, >50MW generators as possible, even when DPEA Reporters recommend refusal.

The Convener of this Committee has himself made it clear, in an article in his local paper (Barrhead News), that to ignore residents' views reinforces concerns that the planning process is not fit for purpose.

We ask the Convener and other members of the Committee to refer this petition for debate in the Chamber as a matter of urgency. Any further delay would not be acceptable.

## **Petitioner written submission, 18 August 2025**

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

Thank you for the opportunity to update our [previous submission](#) to the Committee due to the length of time between hearings.

## **CONSULTATIONS**

It is now a year since a Summary of Responses to the [Investing in Planning Consultation](#) was published showing that the raising of the 50MW threshold in order to allow for greater local decision making, was supported by all respondent categories except Development, Property & Land Management Sector & Agents, yet still no decision has been made by the Scottish Government on this matter. We doubt it ever will be. It is noted that the threshold in England is 100MW despite the average capacity of wind farms there being much less than the average of 120MW in Scotland.

The outcome of the [Electricity Infrastructure Consenting in Scotland and UK consultation](#) was published in March 2025. It confirmed what we all already knew - that democracy is repeatedly, and often irrationally overruled in favour of UK/Scottish Government so-called 'climate objectives'. This is illustrated in many of the responses, where overwhelming agreement or disagreement to consultation questions was overruled as a 'Nanny knows best' decision if majority responses did not comply with the Scottish Government's objectives, one of which is to speed up the consent process for major renewable and network projects.

The public consultation to reform provisions of the Electricity Act 1989 was simply an exercise in political correctness to try to show that the public had a voice and were listened to, but they were ignored regardless. The amended UK legislation, with lockstep cooperation by the Scottish Government, is heavily weighted to favour developers/applicants whilst removing effective rights of statutory representation from local authorities, statutory bodies and the public, so that objections are

minimised and consents at almost any price are speeded up. The Aarhus Convention is routinely ignored.

### **The Planning and Environmental Appeals Division (DPEA)**

DPEA continued to fail to engage with us directly on the subject of legal or representative help for communities wishing to take part in public inquiries. However, during the recent DPEA Stakeholder Forum (of which our organisation is a member), the proposal of Community Hearings for public third parties, instead of participation at Public Inquiries or Hearings was discussed. As explained in our [previous submission of 22 January 2025](#), unless local opinion becomes a key material consideration in the decision-making process, this format of a less confrontational 'informal chat' will have little statutory or meaningful value. Such Hearings will not include questioning of members of the public, save by a Reporter, so challenge by the applicant will be excluded. Renewable industry representatives at that DPEA Stakeholder meeting also made clear that they would not support a third party attending both a less formal community hearing and being allowed to participate in a formal inquiry, should that person so choose.

DPEA is of the opinion that there is unlikely to be a drop in the number of Inquiries being held, as a consequence of the amendment of the Electricity Act 1989 and that there will be "no pressure from above (Scottish Ministers) to not have a public inquiry". That is not what the evidence shows. For example it is evident that opportunities to avoid any need for a PLI are routinely taken by the Energy Consents Unit.

The DPEA forecasts that windfarm and grid application numbers will continue to rise and so too will the number of communities facing applications and inquiries without professional help. Many cannot raise enough funds for one inquiry let alone finance multiple inquiries for multiple renewable developments affecting a community council area. This acts as a barrier to effective public engagement in the planning process; the opposite result to that which the Scottish Government publicly purports to support.

As mentioned in our previous submission, a key component of Article 6 of the European Convention of Human Rights and Aarhus means that tribunals or decision-makers must ensure that there is 'equality of arms' on both sides – meaning that a visibly fair balance must be struck between the opportunities given to both parties. Where is the fair balance in the current Public Inquiry situation? Would applicants ever consider taking part in an inquiry without their army of wellresourced lawyers and other consultants? Of course not. Even councils flinch from taking part because of the resource implications for them.

DPEA confirmed to us, in writing, that they were unable to support the need for professional help for communities at inquiries because "the DPEA position, as you would expect, will be in line with that of the wider Scottish Government in relation to this Petition". It is obvious from this statement that even if they did support the need for professional help, they could not say so.

Communities across Scotland are crying out that their opinions are being ignored. That is clearly and simply because the reality is that the Scottish Government does not want rural voices to be heard on this matter and does not want articulate and well-informed third parties to be able to participate in planning procedures on an

equal footing with a well-resourced commercial applicant. Without proper support and equal terms of representation, equality will never be achieved.

Given the public strength of feeling throughout the country on this important matter, we urge members of the Committee to refer this petition for debate in the Chamber as a matter of urgency. This petition has been kicked down the road for over four years, and any further delay is likely to result in responsibility for a decision to a newly formed Scottish Government. Further procrastination would not be acceptable.

### **Douglas Ross MSP written submission, 22 August 2025**

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

I would like to formally acknowledge my support of the aims of the Petition and the need for a debate.

### **Murdo Fraser MSP written submission, 28 August 2025**

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

A number of constituents have written to me asking for my support for this Petition, in relation to the number of onshore windfarm planning applications now coming forward across the Mid-Scotland and Fife region.

I have a great deal of sympathy for what this Petition is trying to achieve, and accordingly am writing in support of the Petition, and hope that it will be given due consideration by the Committee.

### **Sharon Dowey MSP written submission, 29 August 2025**

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

I write in support of Petition PE1864, which seeks to strengthen the community voice in planning decisions for onshore windfarms.

While renewable energy has an important role to play in achieving Scotland's net zero ambitions, it is equally important that communities with concerns are properly empowered within the decision-making process. At present, it appears that many local authorities and community councils feel disadvantaged when faced with complex applications and appeals from well-resourced developers.

The proposals in the petition would help to create a fairer, more transparent system. These changes would protect communities and also encourage developers to engage more meaningfully at an earlier stage, leading to better outcomes for all stakeholders.

I am pleased to add my support to this petition and commend it to the Committee for further consideration.