

Kevin Stewart,  
Minister for Local Government & Housing  
Scottish Government  
St. Andrew's House  
Regent Road  
Edinburgh  
EH1 3DG

28<sup>th</sup> May 2018

Dear Minister,

### **Delivering a fairer planning system for Scotland's communities**

We are writing to urge you to strengthen the Planning Bill by putting forward proposals to deliver a fairer planning system for Scotland that empowers our communities of place and interest.

We wholeheartedly agree that the places we live and work are key to our identity and wellbeing. Scotland is our land, it defines us and gives us a sense of identity. The way it is developed is hugely important to us all. We want to build a strong and successful nation, but this aspiration can only be realised if our planning system is fair and inclusive.

Research conducted by the Scottish Government demonstrates clearly that there is a significant lack of public confidence in planning. It is therefore imperative that amendments are introduced to the Planning Bill to give communities a greater say and better rights over how Scotland is developed in future and restore our trust in the planning system.

Collectively, we, the signatories to this letter have been involved in all aspects of planning, including the preparation of local and strategic development plans across Scotland and responding to planning applications. The one key emerging theme from our collective experience is that people feel very strongly that there is a need to change the current planning system which leaves them feeling disempowered and disregarded, particularly with respect to rights of appeal.

The fact that applicants can appeal when planning permission is refused but communities have no such right of appeal against a decision to allow development, no matter what the impact on their lives and environment, is viewed as one of the most unfair and inequitable aspects of planning. Despite consistent calls from communities throughout Scotland for appeal rights to be considered the issue was not debated during the planning review and did not become part of the Planning Bill. This is a source of considerable disappointment to community groups and others who see the value of a balanced system of planning, where both developers and communities have equal rights to influence decision-making.

The Planning Bill is a once in a generation opportunity to consider the positive benefits of community appeals. We firmly believe that providing people with equal rights can help to build a stronger, more effective planning system that commands public trust. Equalizing appeal rights will encourage more positive and early engagement in planning, ensure stronger and better planning decisions and provide strong incentives to deliver appropriate development in keeping with the aspiration for a plan led system. A system of planning that allows communities to appeal decisions is

a reflection of strong and democratic governance and public confidence in that system is far more likely to thrive.

We urge the Scottish Government to reconsider their stance on Equal Rights of Appeal and bring planning in line with the spirit of a fairer Scotland and community empowerment initiatives, which aim to really empower communities to protect and nurture their local environments.

Yours sincerely

Midlothian Federation of Community Councils  
Edinburgh Association of Community Councils  
Professor Mark Stephens Save Our Landscapes (Lanark)  
Granton & District Community Council  
North Edinburgh Fights Back  
Professor Emeritus Sir Thomas M Devine, The University of Edinburgh  
Save East Linton From Excessive Expansion  
Cluny, Midmar & Monymusk Community Council  
South West (Edinburgh) Communities Forum  
Monklands Residents Against Pyrolysis Plant  
Brightons Community Council  
Polmont Community Council  
Reddingmuirhead & Wallacestone Community Council  
Save Woodhall & Faskine Greenbelt  
Professor Michael Pacione  
Blackness Community Council  
Leith Links Community Council  
Friends of Burghlee Park Midlothian  
Cockburn Association  
Tollcross Community Council (Edinburgh)  
Community Action North, Edinburgh  
Pencaitland Community Council, East Lothian  
Strathblane Community Council  
Dumgal Against Pylons Dumfries and Galloway  
Biofuelwatch  
John Muir Trust  
Clyde River Action Group  
Duneaton Community Council (South Lanarkshire)  
Kilmacolm Residents Association  
Culter Community Council  
Sustainable Shetland  
Fairlie Community Council  
Save Meadowbank Campaign  
Jackton and Thorntonhall Community Council  
Scone North Study Group  
Scotland Against Spin  
Ceres and District Community Council  
Cupar and North Fife Preservation Society  
Stop Scolty Redevelopment Aberdeenshire  
Scottish Wild Land Group

Grassmarket Residents Association  
Dunbar Community Council  
West Barns Community Council  
Charlestown, Limekilns and Pattiesmuir Community Council  
Halfway Community Council in Cambuslang East  
Save Bishopriggs Canal Greenspace  
Canonbie and District Residents Association  
Scottish Wildlife Trust  
Thainstone Resident Group, Aberdeenshire  
Frackwatch  
Residents Against Greenbelt Erosion Dunblane  
Denny & District Community Council  
Avonbridge & Standburn Community Council  
Bonnybridge Community Council  
Grangemouth (including Skinflats) Community Council  
Maddiston Community Council  
Shieldhill & California Community Council  
Friends of the Earth Scotland  
Woodland Trust Scotland  
The Cairngorms Campaign  
Froglife  
Ramblers  
Archaeology Scotland  
Buglife  
North Lanarkshire Greens  
Group to Stop Development at Culloden  
Leith Links Residents Association  
RSPB  
Association for the Protection of Rural Scotland  
Not Coull (Coull Links campaign)  
The Pollokshields Trust  
Pollokshields Community Council  
Silverton & Overtoun Community Council  
Badenoch and Strathspey Conservation Group  
Protect Damhead's Greenbelt  
Save Jim's Farm  
North East Mountain Trust  
Aberdour Community Council  
Our Forth  
Nick Kempe, Parkswatchscotland  
Kirkton Community & Safety Partnership  
Save Kingspark for the Community  
Care for Caird  
Kinross-shire Civic Trust  
Stockbridge & Inverleith Community Council  
Wallyford Community Council  
Gilmerton Inch Community Council