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Dear Colleagues,

Thank you for your letter of 6 June 2025 regarding concerns you have relating to renewable energy deployment. I understand and appreciate your concerns. I have been very clear that the transition to net zero and the deployment of renewables in Scotland must benefit Scotland's communities, economy and people.

We have a pressing environmental need to increase our renewable generation capacity, particularly as electricity demand is expected to increase to support further decarbonization. There is an important role for onshore wind to play in meeting this increased demand as well as driving economic growth, creating high-quality green jobs, and bringing wider benefits to communities across Scotland. Therefore, the Scottish Government has no plans to introduce a moratorium for onshore wind development.

Our National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) places climate and nature at the centre of our planning system and makes clear our support for all forms of renewable, low-carbon and zero emission technologies, including the associated grid infrastructure. This was scrutinised and approved by the Scottish Parliament in 2023.
Where new development proposals come forward, our Fourth National Planning Framework (NPF4) ensures the impacts of proposals on communities, nature and cultural heritage, including cumulative impacts, are important considerations in the decision-making process. All applications are subject to site specific assessments and are considered on a case-by-case basis.

We are aware that local authorities across the country are under financial pressure, and we understand the need to ensure that planning departments are financially resourced to deliver in the immediate future and years to come. The Scottish Government is therefore taking forward a range of actions to boost resources including increasing planning fees in line with inflation and establishing a Planning Hub, providing direct support to planning authorities.

Tha Ministearan na h-Alba, an luchd-comhairleachaidh sònraichte agus an Rùnaire Maireannach fo chumhachan Achd Coiteachaidh (Alba) 2016. Faicibh www.lobbying.scot

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The Scottish Government is committed to ensuring communities see real and lasting benefits from the energy transition. Community benefits are a core part of renewable energy development in Scotland, and despite the powers to mandate community benefits being reserved to the UK Government, we have made good progress through a voluntary approach with around £30 million offered to communities in the past year alone, led by our Good Practice Principles. We are currently reviewing these principles to ensure they deliver the best outcomes for communities and industry. As Scotland transitions to a low-carbon economy, it is vital that communities are not just hosts to infrastructure but active participants in shaping and sharing the benefits of that future.

I also welcome ongoing work by the UK Government to review its approach to community benefit and continue to call on them to consult on mandating benefits from onshore net zero energy projects.

Regarding constraint payments, it is important to note that the Scottish Government has no role in setting constraint payments. All regulation and legislation relating to electricity networks is reserved to UK Government Ministers and the UK energy regulator, with the National Energy System Operator (NESO) being responsible for the strategic approach to network design and the undertaking of constraint management to balance the system - What are constraints payments? | National Energy System Operator. This includes the criteria in determining the stated capacity of the wind farm, the request to generators to reduce their output, and the cost of the constraint payments.

As we move towards a net zero energy system, we will need increasing levels of energy storage. Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS) can help to deliver reliable and secure power by storing electricity for use when it is needed most.

Safety is paramount in all energy infrastructure, including BESS. Where the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) receives information about a proposed BESS site, they refer those duty holders (site operators) responsible for the plant to the National Fire Chief Council's (NFCC) Grid Scale Planning Guidance for FRS. These guidelines detail, amongst other elements, minimum standards for fire safety systems and design features, water requirements for firefighting and access requirements. The SFRS will also aim to review planning documents if appropriate for firefighting and fire safety operations (e.g. water access, proximity requirements) and will continually review and develop its operational response to any new and emerging technology to keep communities safe and ensure the highest level of preparedness.

Thank you again for contacting me about this important matter. I hope you find the information above helpful.

JOHN SWINNEY

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