

# Energy UK Response to the Scottish Government's Consultation: Places, People and Planning – A Consultation on the Future of the Scottish Planning System

6<sup>th</sup> April, 2017

## About Energy UK

Energy UK is the trade association for the GB energy industry with a membership of over 90 suppliers, generators, and stakeholders with a business interest in the production and supply of electricity and gas for domestic and business consumers. Our membership encompasses the truly diverse nature of the UK's energy industry – from established FTSE 100 companies right through to new, growing suppliers and generators, which now make up over half of our membership.

Our members turn renewable energy sources as well as nuclear, gas and coal into electricity for over 26 million homes and every business in Britain. Over 619,000 people in every corner of the country rely on the sector for their jobs with many of our members providing lifelong employment as well as quality apprenticeships and training for those starting their careers. The energy industry adds £83bn to the British economy, equivalent to 5% of GDP, and pays over £6bn in tax annually to HMT.

## Executive Summary

Energy UK and our members welcome the opportunity to respond to the Scottish Government's consultation on Places, People and Planning. Planning policy is central to the deployment and development of new infrastructure across the UK and it provides an opportunity for the Scottish Government to drive forward its decarbonisation objectives. Energy UK and our members are conscious that this consultation represents one of a number which the Scottish Government has issued pertaining to energy and infrastructure. Energy UK will be responding to the Onshore Wind Policy Statement, the Scottish Energy Strategy and the Consultation on Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategies, and Regulation of District Heating each of which contains specific detail on the application of planning policy to its respective field. As such, our responses to these consultations should be read in conjunction with this submission on Places, People and Planning.

Energy UK and our members support the efforts of the Scottish Government to reform and refine the Scottish planning system and are confident that this consultation represents an overall positive step. We welcome any proposals which provide a clear and consistent approach to planning across Scotland, reduce bureaucracy and deliver a greater emphasis on outcomes and delivery. Land-use planning plays an important role in engaging communities whilst developing infrastructure and ensuring that the UK and Scotland continues to attract international investment.

Whilst accepting that housing should be a priority sector for planning purposes, we are concerned that this consultation is too narrowly focused on the housing sector. The narrow focus to this consultation may result in a planning system that does not adequately support other development types.

## Details of Energy UK's Response to Places, People and Planning

The Scottish Government has been clear that through their devolved powers, the Holyrood Government will work to ensure that Scotland is particularly attractive to those looking to invest in renewable energy sources in Scotland. It is therefore surprising that this consultation includes a proposal to introduce an Infrastructure Levy which combined with the already increasing planning fees represents a cost increase which will could act as a disincentive to investment and development in Scotland. We firmly believe that all energy infrastructure projects should be exempt from any form of

Scottish Infrastructure Levy. It is of note that the Community Infrastructure Levy Regulation (CIL) 6.2, applicable in both England and Wales, provides exemptions for windfarms and power stations. We would welcome further details and an appropriate period of consultation, from the Scottish Government, before the introduction of such a Levy.

Energy UK and our members support the proposed establishment of a national infrastructure and development delivery group. There is an important advisory role for such a delivery group in ensuring that the infrastructure decisions taken in Scotland are timely, sustainable, affordable, and based on robust analysis and evidence. There could also be a role for this delivery group in helping to build political consensus around long-term infrastructure projects in Scotland, working closely with Scottish Government, key stakeholders, developers and local planning authorities. Given the infrastructure responsibilities of the National Infrastructure Commission (NIC), it is important that this delivery group works closely with the NIC to ensure that the NIC is fully aligned with the infrastructure priorities and challenges in Scotland.

It is important that the infrastructure priorities set out in National Planning Framework (NPF) and Scottish Planning Policy (SPP) are properly reflected into the local development planning process, thereby promoting consistency in approach and objectives, across all areas of Scotland. We and our members support the proposed deletion of Strategic Development Plans as under the new arrangements there is an enhanced role for the National Planning Framework (NPF) and Scottish Planning Policy (SPP) as they are afforded Development Plan status. In translating these new arrangements into local development planning, the proposed community plan(s) or local place plan(s) will allow local community to influence planning proposals at the earliest stage.

We also support the removal of the requirement to undertake the 'main issues report' in the Local Development Plan (LDP) process. We do have some concerns regarding the proposal to extend the LDP cycle to 10 years as this could reduce the ability of the development plan process to effectively respond to changes in technology. It is therefore critical that LDPs are future-proofed and take account of future developments and emerging technologies and that Local Planning Authorities make informed updates to key elements of the plan within the 10 year cycle.

We are concerned that a disproportionate increase to costs within the planning system, will have the detrimental impact on the further development of the electricity infrastructure, at a time when demand for electricity is projected to rise significantly. This could be particularly damaging to the Scottish Government's ambitions for the development of 'subsidy free' onshore wind in Scotland which is currently undertaking a cost reduction programme on an unprecedented scale.

Energy UK and our members support the principle that a developer is entitled to an independent review of an LPA's decision to refuse planning permission. At present there is no evidence to support the view that Local Review Boards (LRB) have been sufficiently independent of the planning committees they are intended to oversee to add significant value to the decision-making process. In our view, decisions should ideally be made by Scottish Ministers, given Government's experience in this area. If this is not possible, there should be an appeal route via the DPEA.

For more detail about the questions posed within the consultation document please refer to the responses submitted by our members. Should you have any questions regarding this consultation response then please do not hesitate to get in touch via the details below.

I can confirm that this response may be published on the Scottish Government's website.

Yours sincerely,

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