

MEDIA RELEASE

13 June 2006

Embargoed until 00.01 14 June

IMPACTS OF UNJUST PLANNING LEGISLATION REVEALED IN NEW MAPS

New maps produced by Scottish Environment LINK demonstrate the alarming implications of the Scottish Executive's planning reforms for the first time.

The maps reveal which areas of Scotland could be in line for major developments, including nuclear waste dumps, waste incinerators, nuclear power stations, landfill sites, prisons and electricity transmission lines if amendments to the new planning legislation are not approved tomorrow.

Proposals in the Planning etc (Scotland) Bill for the National Planning Framework mean that the Executive could approve in principle any type of development without opportunities for local communities to object.

Once developments are approved in principle local authorities will be bound by the decision of the Executive, and any subsequent inquiry will not be allowed to consider the justification or need for the proposal.

Lloyd Austin, Chair of the Scottish Environment LINK, said: "The proposals for the National Planning Framework fly in the face of the Executive's public commitment to greater community involvement in planning decisions. The bill, as it stands, will enable successive governments to push through some of the most controversial development proposals without allowing those who are affected by them an opportunity to question whether the development is actually needed. MSPs have a window of opportunity to change these proposals which they must seize."

Notes:

1. The Planning etc (Scotland) Bill begins Stage 2 of the Parliamentary process on the 14th June 2006. At this stage MSPs can vote on amendments which could change the proposals outlined above.
2. The attached map and briefing has been produced by Scottish Environment LINK Planning Task Force. Scottish Environment LINK is an umbrella body of 36 environmental NGOs.
3. The developments included in the map are all based on proposals announced in government strategies, press releases and publications. References for all the proposals displayed on the map are included in the briefing document.



Scottish Environment  The voice of Scotland's environment movement

4. At present the legislation does not define precisely what a 'national development' is, but ministers have given strong indications that the proposals on the map will be classified as such. Exactly what constitutes such a development is not in the bill but the Planning White Paper indicated: "the legislation will provide for national developments to be called in by the Scottish Ministers, where it is necessary to expedite decisions in the national interest. Major transport, water and drainage, energy and waste infrastructure projects, major areas of urban regeneration or expansion and large strategic business or industrial investments may fall within this category of development."
5. In light of the above, it is likely that the developments displayed on the map represent a highly conservative picture.
6. Scottish Environment LINK and the Association of Scottish Community Councils have been lobbying the Scottish Parliament and the Executive to secure a more effective mechanism whereby community voices can be heard in the form of an 'Examination in Public'.
7. This included a public petition which attracted more than 5,000 signatures.
8. Further details are available from the Scottish Environment LINK website: <http://www.scotlink.org/>

For further details, please contact either James Reynolds or Anne McCall at RSPB Scotland on 01313116500 or 07725065186.