

## Media News

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### Planning Bill is no Christmas present for communities

LINK Planning Task Force press release 20 December 2005

Local communities have been profoundly let down by the proposals in the new planning bill. Despite repeated consultations and overwhelming public support for the issue of limited Third Party Rights of Appeal (TPRA), the Executive has failed to deliver real rights for communities. At the same time, the Executive has made it easier to push through national developments without the risk of public challenge.

The failure to address the issue of TPRA is particularly disappointing given that the Scottish Executive has previously undertaken two consultation exercises, both of which showed a significant public majority in favour of TPRA. In 2004, a consultation showed 86 per cent of those responding in favour of TPRA. In 2005, following the publication of the Planning White Paper, 62 per cent of people responded supported TPRA despite the fact that the paper chose not to address the issue. Furthermore, the proposals for scrutinising the National Planning Framework deny local communities an opportunity to challenge significant developments that could affect their environment and quality of life.

These two issues have been the source of such significant concern that Scottish Environment LINK and the Association of Scottish Community Councils have joined together to lodge a petition with the Parliament, which has already attracted thousands of signatures.

LINK does welcome the contribution to sustainable development contained in the Bill, although we would wish to see this extended to all aspects of the planning process.

Fred Edwards, the President of Scottish Environment LINK, said: "Despite the modest commitment to a sustainable development purpose for development plans, this bill is generally very disappointing. The Executive claims that they want to give local people better opportunities to influence the decisions that affect them. However, local communities will not be given the same rights as developers nor will they be able to influence decisions on some of the largest and most controversial proposals in Scotland. Despite repeated consultations on these issues, the Executive has chosen not to listen. This is not a good basis for restoring public trust and confidence in the planning system."

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#### Notes for Editors

Scottish Environment Link comprises 36 member bodies representing over 500,000 members in Scotland. Further information about LINK is available from [www.scotlink.org](http://www.scotlink.org). The LINK Planning Task Force published a Planning Manifesto in April 2005 setting out the core issues the new planning bill should address.

Concerns over the absence of a limited Third Party Right of Appeal and the proposals for the National Planning Framework resulted in Scottish Environment LINK and the Association of Scottish Community Councils lodging a petition with the Parliament. Scottish Environment LINK is a Scottish charity under Scottish Charity No SC000296 and a Scottish company limited by guarantee and without share capital under Company No SC250899.

**Registered office:** 2 Grosvenor House, Shore Road, Perth PH2 8BD  
Tel 01738 630804, Email [enquiries@scotlink.org](mailto:enquiries@scotlink.org)

**Parliamentary office:** 3rd Floor, Gladstone's Land, 483 Lawnmarket, Edinburgh EH1 2NT  
Tel 0131 225 4345 Email [parliamentary@scotlink.org](mailto:parliamentary@scotlink.org)

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Community Councils jointly lodging an e-petition with the Scottish Parliament. This petition has already attracted thousands of signatures and will be presented to the Petitions Committee in January 2006. Further details available from [www.everyonecan.org](http://www.everyonecan.org)

The Association of Scottish Community councils represents approximately 650 Community Councils across Scotland. Further details are available on the ASCC website <http://www.ascc.org.uk/index.html>

4. The text of the petition reads as follows:

We, the undersigned, call upon the Scottish Parliament to seek to secure real rights for all in the planning system by ensuring that the forthcoming Planning Bill will:  
Establish real and effective rights for people to have their views taken into account on planning decisions and conditions, through the introduction of a limited third party right of appeal in the planning system, rather than just more opportunities to express opinions; and  
Ensure that all strategic planning decisions taken by Government at the national level, including the National Planning Framework, will be open to challenge and public inquiry.

5. The white paper "Modernising the Planning System" was published on the 29 June, analysis of the responses received was published yesterday (Monday) with 62% of people indicating they supported Third Party Rights of Appeal despite the fact that the White Paper did not seek views on the subject. During the original consultation which was specifically on widening the rights of appeal in the planning process 86% of respondents supported a limited third party right of appeal.

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