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Cc:  
Bcc:  
Subject: Fw: "Communication to the Aarhus Convention's Compliance Committee" Ref. ACCC/C/2012/68

From: "Susan Crosthwaite" <enquiries@cossescountryhouse.com>  
To: "Aphrodite Smagadi" <Aphrodite.Smagadi@unece.org>  
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Following my communication on 22<sup>nd</sup> March (see below), I felt compelled to forward this information to you:

Today Simon Johnson, political editor to the Telegraph reported:

"Revealed: How SNP pressurises councils to allow more wind farms

New evidence of the unprecedented pressure SNP ministers are exerting on Scottish planning authorities to allow more wind farm developments can be disclosed by the Daily Telegraph.

By Simon Johnson, Scottish Political Editor

Correspondence obtained under Freedom of Information laws show Alex Salmond's government has protested to council planners across Scotland that they have set aside too little land for turbines.

The Scottish Government ordered reluctant local authorities to highlight "areas of greatest opportunity" for more wind farms and urged them to adopt a "positive" attitude to further development.

Officials rejected any complaints that any individual area had "done its share", arguing there is an "onus" on councils to identify more land even if they had already permitted a larger than average number of turbines.

Even land that included sensitive wildlife was not deemed untouchable if it was not specifically protected by Scottish Government planning policies.

Dumfries and Galloway Council was warned that ministers would appoint a senior official to review its planning blueprint if the local authority refused to get in line.

In contrast, the Coalition Government last week unveiled new planning rules for England allowing local communities to block new wind farms if there is significant opposition.

Mr Salmond has set a target of generating the equivalent of all Scotland's electricity from renewable sources by the end of the decade, with the majority expected to come from onshore wind.

Although SNP ministers have recently moved to protect some wild land, Derek Mackay, the Scottish Planning Minister, told MSPs yesterday that their enthusiasm for onshore wind "remains as strong as ever".

The documents show Simon Pallant, a senior Scottish Government planner, emailed Dumfries and Galloway Council on August 17 last year about a planning blueprint the local authority was developing for wind energy.

The plan wrongly excluded areas that were deemed to be of "local significance", he said, before adding: "We are concerned that the approach used by the council is too stringent and restrictive and will deter development."

He warned ministers would appoint a Scottish Government planning reporter to produce an "examination report" if the council ignored their views. "You will be aware that examination reports are largely binding on planning authorities," he concluded.

Mr Pallant wrote again to the same council planner on October 29 complaining that some areas deemed to have "potential constraints" for wind farms were not consistent with Scottish Government planning policy.

These included land identified by the RSPB and Scottish National Heritage as "bird sensitivity areas" and wild land in Merrick.

Areas of "limited potential" for wind farm development should instead be presented on a map as "areas of greatest opportunity", he suggested.

Mr Pallant also asked for the removal of a council league table of renewable schemes, adding: "It would not be appropriate to convey a message that Dumfries and Galloway has 'done its share'".

Stephen Hall, a Scottish Government principal planner, gave the same message to East Ayrshire Council in a letter of January this year, adding that there is an "onus" on all councils to look for "expanded areas of search" for land.

He rejected the local authority's plans forcing wind farm developers to pay into a fund for community projects, stating: "We also question the assumption that wind farms cause a harm that requires recompensing".

Mr Hall also wrote to South Ayrshire Council in February last year complaining that its draft local development plan "feels restrictive" towards turbines and urging it to act "positively" towards renewable developments.

Similar advice was issued to council planners in Moray, Angus, East Lothian and East Dunbartonshire, with the latter being told to adopt an approach "in line with the Government's programme for renewable energy targets."

Another Scottish Government planner wrote to Western Isles Council in November 2011 complaining that its guidance stated that wind farms should "not have a significant impact on the landscape character of the Outer Hebrides".

Perth and Kinross and Stirling councils were also asked to remove wording from draft planning documents deemed to be too negative about wind farms.

This newspaper disclosed last year how Scottish Borders Council was pressurised to allow more turbines despite warnings the area was at "saturation point".

Speaking on a visit to Holyrood yesterday, Owen Paterson, the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, urged the SNP to follow the Coalition's example.

"In England we have made it very clear that local landscape, local topography, local environment and local heritage question can now be used as grounds for overriding national renewable energy targets," he said.

The Scottish Government said it was a "legal requirement" for councils to consult planning officials in Edinburgh on emerging development plans but it was for local authorities to decide how they supported the construction of more turbines.

A spokesman said ministers are currently consulting on a "revised approach" on how local authorities should deal with planning applications for onshore wind."

This is corroborated by Jacki and John Paddison of the South West Wind Farm Action Group [www.windfarmaction.co.uk](http://www.windfarmaction.co.uk):

"Today's Telegraph reports the threatening nature of the Scottish Government with councils that try to support the population they serve. Not so long ago it was the Borders council and now it's D&G's turn to elicit their wrath. D&G identified areas that are 'locally significant' but the Scottish Government official (Simon Pallant) stated that no area should be classified in this way because it will deter developers. D&G has also got into trouble for identifying land that has 'potential constraint' which includes land identified by the RSPB and SNH as 'bird sensitivity areas'. Pallant said the Councils map should identify areas of greatest opportunity - which sounds more positive. It is reported that the phrase 'done our share' is a negative approach that isn't acceptable to the Scottish Government. Threats have been issued to D&G i.e. the Scottish Government will send a 'planning reporter' to produce an 'examination report' of the county identify areas suitable for wind farm development and their word would be final. The original newspaper article contains quotes from emails sent to D&G planners from a Government official issuing threats and also adding that community benefit should not be expected because it implies that wind farms cause harm and requires 'recompensing'.

The original newspaper article is more punchy than the link here but please read it if you have time. It should be noted that other councils are also feeling Pallant's boot.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/scotland/10117029/Revealed-How-SNP-pressurise-s-councils-to-allow-more-wind-farms.html>"

I realise that this is probably inadmissible, but I could not let the opportunity pass to inform you just how desperate the situation is in Scotland.

Yours sincerely,

Susan Crosthwaite

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