



Statement from Stratherrick and Foyers Community Council

Re: Cumulative Impact of Renewable Energy Infrastructure Development

The Stratherrick and Foyers Community Council wishes to express its concern over the cumulative impact of the numerous windfarms and pumped storage hydro schemes—those currently operating, those granted planning permission but not yet constructed, and those currently in the planning system—across our area and the wider Highlands.

While we fully recognise the urgency of tackling climate change and the national ambition to reach net zero, we believe that the current approach, as enshrined in the National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4), places disproportionate weight on energy targets without sufficient regard to the environmental and social consequences borne by rural and fragile communities. The result is an unsustainable level of industrial-scale development, particularly around Loch Ness, which threatens the very landscapes and ecosystems that must be protected for future generations.

A particularly troubling aspect of the current planning system is the widespread use of salami slicing—the practice of breaking up large infrastructure proposals into smaller, incremental applications in order to reduce scrutiny and avoid triggering more rigorous cumulative assessments. This approach distorts the true scale and impact of developments, undermines public transparency, and makes it more difficult for communities to respond effectively. It also fragments environmental review, which weakens the ability to assess broader ecological and social consequences. The cumulative burden of these fragmented proposals is often only realised when it is too late to intervene.

We believe NPF4 must be revisited and amended at the Scottish Government level. The current framework gives overwhelming precedence to net zero objectives while undervaluing the cumulative environmental impact, the destruction of habitats, the

degradation of wild land, and the long-term implications for tourism—a key economic pillar in our region.

The scale and pace of proposed developments and extensions of developments are not compatible with the infrastructure realities on the ground. Our rural B-classification single track roads are already struggling under existing traffic demands and are not up to standard to accommodate the significant increase in HGV and abnormal load traffic that would be required if all these energy schemes proceed. These roads were never designed for industrial use on this scale and their continued deterioration poses risks to residents, visitors, and the emergency services alike.

We are witnessing the creeping industrialisation of Loch Ness and its surrounding areas—one of Scotland's most iconic and ecologically sensitive regions. The visual, acoustic, and ecological impact of these developments threatens not just the landscape, but also the tourism economy that sustains many Highland communities.

This is not an isolated issue. What is built in one area affects neighbouring communities. Energy generated in one place must be transmitted via substations and grid infrastructure built in another. Every turbine blade, transformer, and ton of concrete must travel on our shared roads. The effects ripple outward, impacting all Highland communities.

We therefore call for a more balanced and regionally sensitive approach to energy planning. We stand with all Highland community councils to work together with one voice to demand that Scottish Government policy better reflects the realities on the ground. Sustainable development must truly mean sustainable—for the environment, for the people, and for the future of the Highlands.

We urge the Scottish Government to pause and reassess the balance within NPF4, and to work with communities to create a planning framework that does not sacrifice landscapes, biodiversity, or rural infrastructure in the pursuit of net zero.

Stratherrick and Foyers Community Council