

**From:** Leitholm Eccles Birgham

**Subject: Why we need to stick to the current Unified Statement**

**Date:** 5 February 2026 at 10:23:24 GMT

**To:** South of Scotland Community Councils

Good Morning,

I respond to Mike Marshall's valid questions on what is going on and hope to convince you that we need to stick together and get behind the existing Unified Statement:

1. The problem in the UK probably began over 20 years ago when the then UK Government who have primacy for Energy took the decision to allow market forces to deliver the largest infrastructure project since WW2 with the only strategy to work towards Net Zero by a given date. This opened the gates to multi national speculators who were empowered to do virtually with Government backing. With no delivery plan provided by the Government, wind farms were developed across the country without the necessary support infrastructure. Electricity was, and is being generated which could not be used which has led to the taxpayer paying for wind farms NOT to generate electricity. The situation has remained unchanged under successive governments and only in the past 18 months has there been any suggestion for the need for a PLAN. That decision came not from Government, but from Grid Operators unable to cope with year on year 400% increases in demand for grid connections. The UK Government has now directed the National Energy System Operator (NESO) to establish future energy needs and manage grid connections.
2. The Scottish Government, who have primacy over Planning in Scotland, have a different political agenda which is to be the largest exporter of green energy in Europe and is prepared to permit almost all proposed developments. In the past year they have approved 90% of Energy Infrastructure applications irrespective of opposition from local authorities or communities.
3. Climate Change: Is happening. No Community Council that I have spoken to disputes that, nor the need for us to play our part. A Net Zero UK would only remove 1% of the World's Carbon and make no real difference to climate change. This needs a worldwide commitment. The Unified Plan acknowledges Climate change. The reality in Scotland is that due to the agenda of the Scottish Government, the South of Scotland is now OVERSUBSCRIBED in all energy production to meet future UK energy needs based on NESO calculations. We can do no more.

**South of Scotland has seen 37,488 MW out of the queue**

3,055mw solar removed

26,252 mw batteries removed

8,181 mw onshore wind removed

Queue now 16,482 MW and basically full

4. Transmission: We will continue to have to pay Constraint payments until the grid system has been 're-wired' from managing power from power stations to managing power from hundreds of renewable energy projects. This work is understood to take up to 30 years to complete to include undersea cables down both the east and west coasts of the UK. Grid Operators are currently of the belief that they can do as they wish with total impunity. We cannot allow SPEN, SSE and others to operate like cowboy builders having no regard for our environment or rural habitats. In this respect they need managed through a strategic plan, agreed with, not done to communities. Having a pause to make this happen is essential to ensuring that the countryside we leave to our children and children's children is fit for use.

5. Community Benefits: my community council, faced with multiple applications to develop BESS in the area of Eccles substation took the view that our first priority was our countryside and the wishes of our community. We accepted 3 developments as playing our part and have strongly opposed the other three. Only when a developer gains planning permission and moves to construction have we pursued community benefits. Being BESS these are modest compared to the monies being paid out by wind farm developers, and indeed grid operators. To be clear, community benefits are unlikely to be paid from company profits, but are liable to have been passed on to the bill/tax payer.

#### THE UNIFIED STATEMENT:

#### **Unified Statement:**

Originally created by community councils in the Highlands, it was picked up by NE Scotland. They made some alterations to personise it to their area, however the four ASKS have remained exactly as those in the Highland version. Following our Convention, and in consultation with both Highland and NE, I have removed local emphasis to allow the statement to resonate with community councils across Scotland.

Those concerned with Climate change will note that the first words acknowledges Climate change. The remainder speaks to all community councils impacted by any aspect of the transition. I believe that it is essential that as we move forward ALL community councils should get behind this clear message who has been accepted by 50 community councils in Highland, 85 in NE Scotland and a growing number from our own area.

That our Community Councils:

- RECOGNISE the impact of Climate Change on our planet but OPPOSES an unjust and unnecessary industrialisation of Rural Scotland.
- CALLS for our elected members to URGENTLY support and protect our communities at NATIONAL level, given that community consultation is inadequate and LOCAL DEMOCRACY is being overridden, with decisions made by Community Councils and Local Authorities consistently disregarded by the Scottish Government.
- CALLS upon the Scottish Government to undertake a PLANNING INQUIRY COMMISSION to address the whole cumulative impact of all major renewable infrastructure developments, including transmission, storage and generation with all ancillary infrastructure on our communities and landscape, rather than the salami sliced approach which has thus far been taken.
- CALLS for a PAUSE of all major applications, given the impact upon our communities, which may hasten depopulation in some areas until a clear NATIONAL ENERGY POLICY is in place and an ECONOMIC IMPACT ASSESSMENT undertaken given that tourism is a major part of our rural economy.

#### MOVING FORWARD:

I started this process in the South of Scotland in an effort to join up with the other regions. I am happy to arrange a further Convention to allow community councils to formally sign up to this Unified Statement and decide next steps, but have no appetite to start a new process of negotiating a different proposal. Please take this Unified Statement to your community council, if they decide to support it, let me know and I will add you to the invite for the next convention.

In the meantime I will continue to work with our partners in Highland and NE Scotland to extend the reach of this movement across rural Scotland.

Bob Hope

Chair, Leitholm, Eccles and Birgham Community Council

Begin forwarded message:

**From:** Michael Marshall

**Subject: Re: [AELCC] Jedburgh Convention - Next Steps**

**Date:** 4 February 2026 at 16:59:05 GMT

**To:** South of Scotland CC's

Hi Folks,

We have enormous collective planning experience on this mailing list. Experience of taking complicated issues, boiling them down to their essence and articulating persuasive reasons for our communities' views – generally in opposition to specific proposals.

For those with the experience, who are convinced that the asks in the Unified Statement are correct, could we please have a clear statement of reasons? Paying particular attention to the climate emergency.

This will help Peebles Community Council as we debate the issues ourselves next Thursday 12th and as we consult our community. PCC's initial discussions reflect this email discussion – the Unified Statement has obvious appeal (and we're grateful for the warning) but there's also a great deal of sympathy for the views Chris Bruce and others have expressed – because it's not at all obvious (to us) how to weigh this up.

We all take our responsibilities to future generations seriously. Could we please have a clear and concise statement of reasons.

Thank you Philip Kerr for [the NESO webinar deck](#), though that does seem to indicate that there is (from NESO's point of view) both a National Strategy and Economic Impact Assessment in progress at least. Could we also have a few paragraphs – for community councils like us at PCC that are playing catch up – clearly articulating the reasons for the application pause and why this is realistic given the work NESO is doing.

We could really do with hearing the reasoning from those with the most experience.

Kind regards,

Michael

Royal Burgh of Peebles & District Community Council (PCC)

**Dr Michael Marshall, Planning Convenor**

c/o The Eastgate Theatre

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<https://ccrbpeeble.co.uk/>