

## Calum Kerr, MSP

Renewable energy matters to Scotland's future. The climate case is clear, and I am excited by the opportunity it offers our nation.

I also share much of the concern raised across Lauderdale and the wider constituency about the scale, pace and cumulative impact of deployment, and the process by which it is happening.

I have spent some time getting up to speed. I have met campaign groups, developers, community councils and residents, both those directly affected and those with a wider interest in how we get this right.

Before Parliament broke for the election, I raised five areas with the Energy Secretary. If elected on 7 May, these are some of the areas I will continue to push in the new Parliament:

1. A Scottish national energy plan, with an independent review of how the current system is working. Whilst energy policy is reserved to Westminster, I want us to take more control of how the system works here. Decisions on planning, grid and cumulative impact are being made in isolation from each other. A proper plan could join them up.
2. Clarity on how the NESO spatial plan, NPF4 and local planning fit together. NESO is producing a UK-wide spatial plan, and that concerns me. I would prefer to see a Scottish plan, with our regions having an important say in shaping it, rather than a UK framework setting the direction with limited local input.
3. A serious look at the Section 36 threshold. Anything over 50MW currently bypasses local councils and goes straight to Scottish Ministers, and many developments are designed to sit just above that line. There is a Scottish Government consultation already underway on raising the threshold, which is welcome, but I want it to go further. Bigger projects should come back into local decision-making.
4. Tighter rules on grid connections. Developers can apply for planning consent without a confirmed grid connection. In some areas communities and councils are facing an onslaught of applications, many of which may never connect or which get sold on. That puts real strain on communities and councils, who are spending time and energy on schemes that may never come to anything. This is an area where I think we need to think again.
5. Easier engagement with the Energy Consents Unit. The current system can be hard for residents to engage with, and councils are given short windows to respond on complex applications. Email representations should be accepted, and timelines should be realistic.

Communities must have a real voice in how this happens. National ambition and local consent should not be in conflict, but the current system does not balance them well enough. Full control over energy in Scotland would be the best answer. In the meantime, these are changes we can pursue now.

I have been asked whether I will sign the joint statement of community councils. I will not.

Two reasons. First, I think the statement is flawed in a number of areas. Second, what communities here actually need is not another candidate adding their name to a statement and putting out a press release. They need someone who will roll up their sleeves, understand the issues properly, and take action. As it was put to me recently, don't just make some noise, make a difference.