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To: <ajspmail@south-ayrshire.gov.uk>
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Subject: Ref: Ayrshire Joint Structure Plan 2025 Consultation Draft

Dear Sirs,

Having examined the consultation document, I would like to take this opportunity to submit a few comments that I feel are of some importance and would like you to consider for your plan.

MINING:

Opencast mining which has ravaged the Doon and Nith Valley seems to continue unabated with extension after extension. The Doon Valley (at the Dalmellington end), fortunately seems to no longer have actual coal extraction taking place, and once the land restoration is done, hopefully will allow peace to return. However, I have recently become concerned at the number of open cast sites that seem to be left 'un-restored' after the developers seem to have taken their dues. One such site is now subject to a windfarm development right above Dalmellington. These 'un-restored mounds and holes' must seem like open invitations, to be yet again, taken advantage of by organisations in search of another way to exploit the land in return for profits. The Ayrshire Coal Subject Plan identifies what seems more than half of the potential coal still to be extracted and it seems we still have some considerable way to go as far as opencast infliction goes. Modern technology continues to reduce the number of jobs this industry supports. I question of the real opportunities this brings compared to what it other developments might bring to the community if opencast were to stop. There are also some concerns of the negative effect this extraction process has on the health of the local communities, particularly in relation to air quality. I think an extended period of recovery from industrial exploitation should be allowed in communities once opencast operations move on to new areas.

WINDFARMS:

These enormous structures have the potential to dominate sky lines, rendering the spectacular natural environment as 'industrial sprawl'. Although these are claimed to be for the salvation of the environment, careful placement away from areas would ensure that other opportunities like tourism are not disadvantaged. It is particularly the scale of the new

generation of turbines when compared to the modest cluster currently above Cumnock that they will completely dominate the countryside. According to my recent calculations, there are plans for a total of 255 wind turbines (6 separate developments) all at least 100 meters or more tall between the villages of Straiton and New Cumnock. These are not little discreet windmills on top of an odd hill or so, it is total domination of the skyline. (Please note that the 255 wind turbine figure does not include the existing 56 units of 40 meter high turbines.) These developments do not bring any long term employment opportunities and actually will contribute to the decline of the sought after tourism that we are only just starting to benefit from. My fear is that visitors will just drive straight 'through'. My relatives from Holland marvel at the scenery, rolling hills, valleys and lochs seemingly devoid of callous commercialism and industrialisation. Visitors still view Scotland as wild, unspoilt beautiful countryside, one of the few places left in Europe. Are we not already (and will continue to do so for a long time to come) contributing to the common good of the nation with the heavy burden of coal?

BIOMASS:

The potential to see the old opencast/forestry converted to vast areas of shrub land, which is regularly harvested will not contribute the visual beauty that is so important to the fledgling tourism opportunities in this area. Commercial forestry was also heralded as 'labour intensive', when in it's infancy. Where are all those jobs now? - Mechanised. A quick look on the internet very quickly establishes that there are already machines that reduce the labour requirement substantially for biomass crops. Promises of large scale employment in this industry rings rather hollow as a result. Coppice does also not contribute an awful lot to the recreational and tourism opportunities. Walks do not seem so attractive through 2m high bush all planted in regimented rows, and continuously harvested in short rotation. It would seem sensible to have these developments take place in separate, reasonably small designated areas and prevent a massive blanket effect.

TOURISM/RECREATION:

The biggest potential that I can see for this area is based on tourism, both from home and abroad as well as in recreation. Dalmellington is the gateway to the Dumfries & Galloway forest and marked on all European tourist maps as a recommended route. The colossal scars that opencast inflicts on the environment here, does not help encourage visitors to stay and support the local economy with the use of the facilities the Doon Valley has to offer. The surrounding countryside has such potential to tap into the ever

increasing leisure market, with walks, riding, camping, wildlife, lochs and breathtaking scenery. This market has the potential to allow the local population to make their own opportunities and move away from the dependency culture that still exists in some areas.

ENVIROMENTAL JUSTICE:

The continuous exploitation of the Doon and Nith valley seems to go on unabated. Years of coal extraction has ravaged the countryside, and there seems no respite for the local population. The commercial coal extraction, unnatural forestry, wind turbines and the potential biomass blanket all have or will take their toll on the community, with heavy goods vehicle movements, dust, noise and visual pollution. Over the last five years that I have been part of this community, I have witnessed many changes where local individuals have striven to make their own changes and brought a proud sprit of belonging back with a desire to break away from the dependency culture.

Is it not time to give this Valley a rest from industrial exploitation, and give us the opportunity to reap the sustainable rewards of our very own efforts in tapping into the available tourism market right on our doorstep?

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