

East Lammermuir Community Council “Hustings” questions

Response from Martin Whitfield – Labour Party

1. A recent [survey](#) of local residents in East Lammermuir suggests strong support for a pause in all large scale electricity generation projects pending the agreement of a national energy policy for Scotland. If elected, would you support that proposal?

I believe that communities must be at the heart of any large-scale infrastructure projects, particularly in relation to energy. While I believe that investment in renewables and nuclear energy is essential for Scotland’s future, we must ensure that the enormous investment and job creation related to these projects benefits local communities. Scottish Labour will redefine community benefit, so that funds derived from local energy projects deliver tangible, long-term results for communities, and mandating contributions in future consenting of offshore wind projects. We will also invest in community ownership of new renewables projects by creating a community energy fund, ringfencing at least £100 million of ScotWind revenues to be used as low cost finance for communities to develop or take equity in local energy projects, and ensuring the money is recirculated for the benefit of future generations.

2. Planning applications for energy generation projects deemed to be of national importance are determined by the Energy Consents Unit. Local communities are concerned at the closed, opaque nature of the ECU’s workings, and at its record of decisions. How would you propose to open up meaningful democratic accountability at the ECU?

Decades of SNP control has cultivated a government obsessed with denial and deflection, preferring concealment over action. The people of Scotland deserve a government that is open, honest and accountable, where effort is spent on improving services, not on protecting those in power from scrutiny. Scottish Labour will end the culture of secrecy, including in organisations like the ECU, by establishing an independent ethics advisor to uphold standards across government. It is vitally important that we have a Scottish Government that has a culture of accountability, something both Scottish Labour and I are committed to. That is why we would implement other accountability mechanisms at the parliamentary level, such as strengthening the power of committees to compel witness attendance and testimony, as well as tightening accountability for the Scottish Ministers.

3. A recent [survey](#) of local residents in East Lammermuir suggests strong support for a pause in all data centre proposals, pending a national planning inquiry commission. If elected, would you support that proposal?

I believe that any proposed data centre should be considered on its individual merits, and whether it is providing value for any community it is close to. Given that there has been evidence from other jurisdictions that developers have oversold the level of job creation and investment which data centres have produced, I think it important that we rigorously examine the numbers to ensure that any proposed sites are providing value for local communities and for Scotland as a whole.

4. Do you support the re-licensing of the Jackdaw and Rosebank oil and gas fields for production? Please explain your position.

Ultimately the decision to relicense the Jackdaw and Rosebank oil and gas fields is a reserved matter and rests with the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero. Both Scottish Labour and I recognise that oil and gas production will continue in the North Sea for decades to come, and we will ensure there is a genuine just transition that generates growth, creates good skilled jobs, and gives Scotland energy security once again. I stand by our commitment to reach net zero emissions by 2045, and believe that this essential for the future of Scotland's natural environment and for the world's climate. A just transition for those connected with the oil and gas sector is absolutely essential, which is why we must improve the passporting of skills, building on progress made to date with our new Digital Skills Passport to allow offshore workers to move seamlessly between oil and gas and renewables. We will also back the transition in the North East with £40 million of funding over the Parliament for Opportunity North East and the Energy Transition Zone in Aberdeen, as well as delivering transition loans to supply chain businesses to meet the manufacturing needs of the renewables' expansion. Furthermore, by ending the SNP's ideological block on new nuclear we can generate thousands of skilled jobs, as well as generate enormous business for supply chain businesses.

5. A recent [survey](#) of local residents in East Lammermuir suggests strong support for shared ownership of renewables infrastructure. How would you seek to see that realised?

As noted in my answer above, I believe wholeheartedly in communities having a stake in our expanding renewables infrastructure. That is why Scottish Labour will establish a community energy fund, ringfencing at least £100 million of ScotWind revenues for communities to use as low-cost finance for developing or taking in equity in local energy projects. We will also simplify the well-intentioned but convoluted Community Right to

Buy system, making the legal process easier for local people to buy and own local land and assets for the benefit of communities. Alongside this, it is essential that all large-scale infrastructure projects operate for the benefit of communities, regardless of whether they have a direct financial stake in them. We must also encourage the expansion of existing community-ownership models, with better data on their prevalence and success in Scotland, and specialist advice available for business on how to convert to these models.

6. How much electricity is sufficient for Scotland to produce? Sufficient for our own needs, sufficient for the UK as a whole, sufficient to allow us to sell to other countries?

We know that Scotland, thanks to its exceptional geography, has the potential to be a clean energy superpower given the huge volume of excess energy it produces. However, we are constrained by an electricity grid which is woefully ill-equipped to deal with the fluctuations in power generation by renewable sources such as wind farms. That is why Scottish Labour will make grid upgrades a planning priority in our national industrial strategy, cutting decision times and supporting grid build through planning reforms, as well as increasing community ownership of renewable energy generation. This will help us to end the hundreds of millions of pounds spent annually on constraint payments to renewables firms, and bring down bills.

In order to take full advantage of the surplus energy which Scotland has the capacity to generate and bring down bills for Scots, we need a government that is fully committed to modernising our energy infrastructure. Scott Arthur MP recently revealed a Freedom of Information request which showed that, as of March 2026, there were 184 electricity generating stations with capacity in excess of 50 MW under review by the ECU and awaiting determination by Scottish Ministers. Unnecessary bureaucratic delays, an all-too-common hallmark of this SNP government, are holding us back from energy production which could help to bring down household bills.

7. If elected, given recent turmoil, how would you see that the government supports all rural residents with increased cost of living especially in regard to heating oil and petrol as we have no alternatives?

Following the turmoil caused by the US-Iran conflict for international oil markets, the UK government delivered £4.2 million in funding for homes in Scotland which are reliant on heating oil. This funding was delivered, as it was in Northern Ireland and Wales, with the expectation that the devolved governments would also provide funding to address the crisis. I believe that it is essential that we mitigate our dependency on older systems like heating oil to ensure Scots are less vulnerable to market volatility in future. That is why

Scottish Labour is committed to expanding the use of community heat and power networks, particularly in rural areas like East Lothian, working with local authorities, communities and local developers to identify potential areas and opportunities. It is important that we make the transition to alternative heating systems and installation of improved energy efficiency measures, as smooth and easy as possible, which is why we will have a national warm homes programme. This will include one-stop centres in communities to advise on new technologies, access to domestic solar, energy efficiency measures, financing, and trusted local installers to help support local jobs.

8. Given current increase in HGV and works vehicles on A1 near Innerwick and Torness, and local disruption to roads in East Lammermuir due to energy developments, as well as the number of road traffic accidents and wind-tipped lorries, some fatal, what are your views on improvements in the short and long term?

Making sure our roads are safe and work properly will be a key priority for a Scottish Labour government. That is why we will upgrade Scotland's road network, reducing the risk of accidents by speeding up repairs through a £350 million potholes and road repairs fund. We will also produce a new National Roads Plan, which would consider areas of key importance to our national infrastructure like Innerwick and Torness, to prioritise upgrades based on economic need, public safety, and local connectivity.

9. Finally, with the decommissioning of Torness Nuclear Power Station looming, do you believe we are now past the point of no return for future nuclear development, and do you believe renewables will realistically provide everything Scotland needs for future energy requirements given constraints and lack of a National plan?

We are not yet past the point of no return for nuclear projects to generate huge investment in our communities, create thousands of new jobs, and deliver true energy security for Scotland. However, if we allow the SNP to stick their heads in the sand for another five years then we may lose the opportunity, knowledge and expertise from sites like Torness, and the chance to develop new small modular reactors. We know that renewable sources like wind and solar are never going to be able to provide the consistent level of energy production offered by nuclear power. When production from wind farms is low, we already import nuclear energy from England – it is baffling that the SNP are so against Scotland becoming truly self-reliant for our energy. I strongly support the development of small modular reactors to prevent the need for Scotland to rely on imported nuclear power, and to generate skilled jobs and investment.