

## East Lammermuir Community Council “Hustings” questions

### Response from Morgwn C Davies - Independent Candidate

*What an excellent set of questions, very detailed and on a different election platform or a different election, I would enjoy answering them in the detail that they deserve.*

*However, I am standing on a single-issue platform of no parking charges in Dunbar, Haddington, and North Berwick. As such I am saying that on other issues I would consult widely with the residents and communities within the constituency of East Lothian Coast and Lammermuirs and seek to ascertain the majority view. Regarding these question I would be led by the steer that East Lammermuir Community Council provided.*

*Having said all that I will make some general non -committal comments on the individual questions.*

*I am reminded that as the Planning Liaison Office for Haddington and District Community Council I was asked to write and present a paper on the wind farms planned in East Lothian, I did this and after presenting the pros and cons, the Acting Chair said you haven't stated your position. I replied no, I want to hear what everyone else thinks and see if we can reach a consensus view.*

*I am going to take that approach to your questions.*

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?

*If the view of the majority of residents and community groups supported that I would support that position in Holyrood.*

*We generate more electricity than Scotland needs and there is a case to be made for pausing any more large-scale electricity while it is decided whether we need to produce any more.*

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?

*This isn't just an issue for the Energy Consents Unit; all Governments claim to be open and transparent and then withhold information and force individuals and*

*community organisations to raise Freedom of Information Request. If Governments, Parliaments and Councils truly believed in openness and transparency then there would be no requirement for Freedom of Information Request. As an MSP I would call on the new Government and Parliament to put openness and transparency at the heart of everything that they did.*

*I would call for all information relating to applications to the Energy Consent Unit to be made public.*

*I would also ask if it was possible for there to be discussion on the application between the Minister and local groups before any decision is taken.*

*I would also call for the Minister making the decision to meet with community groups and the wider public to explain how they arrived at any decision.*

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?

*If the view of the majority of residents and community groups supported that I would support that position in Holyrood.*

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

*I would consult widely across the constituency, seeking view from those that would support relicensing and those who opposed it, and seek to judge what the majority position is.*

*It is surprising that the UK is reluctant to drill for gas in the North Sea but will happily buy gas that Norway has recovered from the North Sea. Whether this is a reasonable and sustainable position must be questionable.*

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?

*This in theory shouldn't be too difficult to do as the Scottish Government current position is to promote shared ownership of renewable infrastructure, so that increasing the amount a community can own should just be a case of tweaking the current process.*

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?

*A very good question, between 2015 and 2024 there was a de facto moratorium on onshore wind farms in England. Westminster's preferred option to generate and supply electricity to the southeast of England and London was to build massive windfarms onshore in Scotland then put up pylons to take the electricity south.*

*Scotland should not be used to generate electricity so that 'England's green and pleasant land' can be spared from the site of wind farms.*

*If we, Scotland, was paid fairly for all the electricity flowing south it might be reasonable to generate it here, but that doesn't happen.*

*Scotland should produce enough electricity for its own needs and then enough to sell to other countries, including England.*

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?

*Given the turmoil in oil prices then there is a need to consider what help can be given to rural residents and providing help to pay for heating oil would be an obvious route to go down. Harder to target help with petrol prices to rural residents, but the Government should regulate how fast petrol companies raise prices at the forecourts compared to how slow they are to reduce prices when the price of oil falls. The easiest way to reduce the cost of petrol to everyone is for the Government to reduce the amount of tax they extract from litre of petrol sold. About 50% of cost goes to the UK Government, therefore they could reduce that percentage to help everyone with the cost of petrol.*

*Short term solutions are not a long-term solution. And whilst immediate financial help may be required, that is a sticking plaster and a papering over of the cracks in our economy.*

*No what is required is a fundamental realignment of the Scottish economy to ensure that anyone working is paid at a level that they do not require benefits or financial help to cope with the cost of living. No employer should pay their staff less than the living wage. No one working should be in a position to need benefits. When working people need benefits to survive it is not a handout to them, it is in fact a subsidy to their employer.*

*Sort that out and we can set realistic levels of benefits for those who are unable to work, and those who have retired.*

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?

*The most important thing is to make sure that the site traffic safely access and egress the site. Sometimes it appears that not enough consideration is given to site traffic in planning application. If after development starts, problems on access and egress are apparent then immediate action should be taken to improve safety. If necessary, construction should be halted whilst the transport safety issues are resolved.*

*In the longer term, redesign of the A1, Innerwick junction needs to be consider and any changes needed to improve safety should be prioritised.*

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?

*As with everything, there are pro and cons with nuclear power. Proponents of nuclear power make much of the fact that it produces carbon free electricity, whilst ignoring the full environmental cost of nuclear power. Especially the disposal of the nuclear fuel itself.*

*Decommissioning of Torness is due to start in March 2030, and the initial phase will last 4 years, with the main reactor standing for 70 years to allow for radioactive decay. The final disposal of the spent fuel has yet to be determined as the UK Government has not yet developed a Geological Disposal Facility to hold the waste for the thousands of years it will take to decay to safe levels.*

*It is hard to believe that it is reasonable to commission more nuclear power plants when Scotland can produce all the electricity it needs from renewal sources. A mix of onshore, offshore wind farms, solar panels and tidal generated electrically will ensure there are no gaps in producing electricity due to the weather.*

*Peterhead Power Station provides further back-up as it is a combined Cycle Gas Turbine plant, the only question is do we drill for gas in our sector of the North Sea or buy North Sea Gas from Norway.*

*But as I have said, I will consult with the communities and residents of East Lothian Coast and Lammermuirs before I take any position on these issues in Holyrood.*