

PE1465/D

COSLA Letter of 31 July 2013

Dear Andrew,

Please find below COSLA's response to Petition PE1465.

I am writing in response to the letter relating to Petition PE1465 which was sent to COSLA.

As you will be aware COSLA officials met with the Petitions Clerking team at the Scottish Parliament in May to highlight COSLA's work and role in relation to requests from the Committee pertaining to specific petitions.

COSLA is the representative political body for Scottish Local Government and we work together on behalf of our 32 member local authorities on matters of significant common interest across our membership. While COSLA will endeavour to respond to requests from the Committee, it is often the case that deadlines do not permit consultation with our members, or COSLA may feel the petition is a matter for a specific authority and COSLA would therefore not be in a position to offer a detailed response.

In this case, COSLA does not hold specific information or a formal political position relating to this matter as it affects Falkirk, and we understand the Committee has already received a response from Falkirk Council and also from the Scottish Government's Planning and Architecture Division. Furthermore, COSLA, as primarily a political lobbying organisation, does not routinely collect or hold information from our member councils on file, and so is not able to provide the Committee with numbers of waste land notices served in Scotland at this time.

That said, more generally, the regeneration and maintenance of our local communities, and environmental and planning policy have been and continue to be key areas of work for COSLA, for instance via our work on the Town Centre Regeneration Fund, the Regeneration Capital Grant Fund, and reflected in our responses to the Scottish Government's recent planning consultations. Additionally local authorities are always continuing to look for ways in which local areas can be improved and developed for the benefit of local communities, and so while COSLA does not hold a formal political position on this issue I suspect that most elected members may be sympathetic to the general concerns raised by the petitioner.

However, as highlighted above we do not hold a formal political position in relation to this issue and have never been lobbied on it previously so it is not in itself currently a political priority for us. If further substantial evidence was available that provided a

better indication of the scale of the problem across Scotland, then this may be an issue that would become more of a political priority for our membership and we would revisit it. However, as indicated in the response from Falkirk Council, the problem does not appear to be a widespread one. Were the suggestions in the petition to be actively pursued then clearly we would have to consider more fully the implications of them.

I hope that this response is helpful in explaining our position.

Regards

Gillian Fyfe
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COSLA