

Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee

14th Meeting, 2022 (Session 6), Wednesday
26 October 2022

PE1943: Help prevent the destruction of
greenfield sites by providing financial
incentives towards the remediation and reuse
of brownfield sites

Note by the Clerk

Petitioner	Victoria Mungall
Petition summary	Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to introduce financial support mechanisms which would enable local authorities to work alongside developers in bringing brownfield sites back into use, while also discouraging developments on greenfield land.
Webpage	https://petitions.parliament.scot/petitions/PE1943

Introduction

1. This is a new petition that was lodged on 3 August 2022.
2. A full summary of this petition and its aims can be found at **Annexe A**.
3. A SPICe briefing has been prepared to inform the Committee's consideration of the petition and can be found at **Annexe B**.
4. While not a formal requirement, petitioners have the option to collect signatures on their petition. On this occasion, the petitioner elected to collect this information. 86 signatures have been received.

5. The Committee seeks views from the Scottish Government on all new petitions before they are formally considered. A response has been received from the Scottish Government and is included at **Annexe C** of this paper.

Action

The Committee is invited to consider what action it wishes to take on this petition.

Clerk to the Committee

Annexe A

PE1943: Help prevent the destruction of greenfield sites by providing financial incentives towards the remediation and reuse of brownfield sites

Petitioner

Victoria Mungall

Date Lodged:

3 August 2022

Petition summary

Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to introduce financial support mechanisms which would enable local authorities to work alongside developers in bringing brownfield sites back into use, while also discouraging developments on greenfield land.

Previous action

I review and comment on planning applications, highlighting where proposed development is contrary to the local authority's Local Development Plan (LDP). I have also raised this issue in consultations with local councillors and MSPs.

Background information

A housing crisis undoubtedly requires action. New affordable homes which immediately become less attractive to developers because profit is key are the main driving factor for greenfield development. Developers regularly look to develop sites which will require minimal cost and effort on their part. Brownfield sites, be it due to contamination, clearance, unstable ground, pose many challenges, which can be very expensive to remediate.

As a result, greenfield sites are regularly targeted and developed; further reducing greenfield land, including the quality and availability of green space within towns and villages. Children are growing up in areas with less greenspace in which they can walk, play and explore. Natural habitats are being destroyed leaving wildlife displaced, and several other

issues, such as flooding, and congestion due to lack of infrastructure, are being exacerbated as a result.

In England in 2022, grants were introduced to allow local authorities to contribute to the remediation of brownfield land. Not only does this stop sites which are unsightly, and in some cases dangerous, becoming detrimental to the village/town which they are in, it also reduces the risk of unnecessary destruction of greenfield/greenbelt land. The Scottish Parliament needs to address this now.

Annexe B

The logo for SPICe, featuring the letters 'SPICe' in a white, sans-serif font on a dark purple background.

The Information Centre
An t-Ionad Fiosrachaidh

Briefing for the Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee on PE1943: Help prevent the destruction of greenfield sites by providing financial incentives towards the remediation and reuse of brownfield sites, submitted by Victoria Mungall

Background

Brownfield land has the following specific definition in the context of the Scottish planning system:

“Land which has previously been developed. The term may cover vacant or derelict land, land occupied by redundant or unused building and developed land within the settlement boundary where further intensification of use is considered acceptable.”

The [Scottish Planning Policy](#) (SPP) sets out the key principles that underpin the operation of the Scottish planning system. One of these principles is that “Planning should direct the right development to the right place”. In support of this principle, the SPP requires those making decisions on planning matters to consider “the re-use or re-development of brownfield land before new development takes place on greenfield sites”.

Scottish Government Action

The Scottish Government operates the [Vacant and Derelict Land Investment Programme](#), a five year, £50m capital investment programme that began in financial year 2021-22 with the aim of

“...tackling persistent vacant and derelict land and supporting place based approaches to delivering regeneration and sustainable inclusive growth, as part of a ‘just transition’ to net-zero by 2045.”

This builds on the previous Scottish Vacant and Derelict Land Fund, which allocated funds to five central Scotland local authorities for derelict land remediation. The Scottish Government also operate a number of other funding programmes which can be used for the regeneration of brownfield sites, e.g. the [Place Based Investment Fund](#).

The draft version of [National Planning Framework 4](#) (NPF4), the final version of which will supersede the SPP, sets out six spatial principles for Scotland in 2045, the first of which states:

“Compact growth. We will limit urban expansion where brownfield, vacant and derelict land and buildings can be used more efficiently. This will safeguard land to provide the services and resources we will need in the future, including carbon storage, flood risk management, green infrastructure and biodiversity. By increasing the density of settlements we will reduce the need to travel unsustainably and strengthen local living.”

This principle forms the basis of NPF4 policy 30 (vacant and derelict land), which includes the following direction to planning decision makers:

“Proposals on **greenfield sites** should not be supported unless the site has been allocated for development or the proposal is explicitly supported by policies in the development plan, and there are no suitable brownfield alternatives.”

Scottish Parliament Action

The Scottish Parliament has not previously considered the issue of brownfield land remediation in any detail.

Alan Rehfisch
Senior Researcher
 5 August 2022

SPICe research specialists are not able to discuss the content of petition briefings with petitioners or other members of the public.

Every effort is made to ensure that the information contained in petition briefings is correct at the time of publication. Readers should be aware however that these briefings are not necessarily updated or otherwise amended to reflect subsequent changes.

Annexe C

Scottish Government submission of 10 August 2022

PE1943/A: Help prevent the destruction of greenfield sites by providing financial incentives towards the remediation and reuse of brownfield sites

The Scottish Government recognises that long term vacant and derelict land blights communities, especially in areas with greatest levels of deprivation. Without action these sites will continue to have negative impacts on communities (social, economic, environmental) and will not live up to their potential for supporting re-uses that can deliver inclusive growth and help with tackling climate change.

Following the publication of the Scottish Land Commission's Vacant and Derelict Land Taskforce recommendations, which included a call for a national programme of investment, the £50 million low carbon Vacant & Derelict Land Investment Programme (VDLIP) was launched in March 2021. Over an initial five years, it will provide funding for and support innovative local approaches to tackling persistent vacant and derelict land and delivering new green infrastructure in support of our ambitions for a just transition to net zero.

The VDLIP is being delivered around four main pillars of action: urban green space; community-led regeneration; low carbon developments, and; multiyear/sustained investment to tackle the most problematic sites.

It is available on a competitive basis to all Scottish local authorities and Clyde Gateway Urban Regeneration Company who are working with communities and other partners to bring forward suitable project proposals for the reuse of vacant and derelict land. The VDLIP complements the delivery of our Place Based Investment Programme, helping to accelerate our ambitions around place, town centre action, 20 minute neighbourhoods, community regeneration, and community wealth building. Projects supported from the VDLIP will make use of capital grant funding to de-risk and unblock sites for re-uses that align with our place-based regeneration and green ambitions.

In September 2021, 10 successful projects were announced from the first round of funding representing an investment £5 million in financial year 2021/22. 10 additional successful projects were announced in May 2022 constituting a further investment of £5 million for financial year 2022/23. A list of successful projects can be seen here [Low Carbon Fund: Vacant and Derelict Land Investment Programme projects - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/publications/low-carbon-fund/vacant-derelict-land-investment-programme/projects/pages/12.aspx)

Additionally, draft National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) proposes an updated and expanded policy on vacant and derelict land and empty buildings which encourages re-use of land and buildings and discourages greenfield development unless there are no suitable brownfield alternatives.

We are now carefully considering the consultation responses received and it is intended to lay a revised NPF4 in the Scottish Parliament in the autumn.