



**APRS**  
The Association for the  
Protection of Rural Scotland

## **SAVE THE GREENBELT DEBATE**

**8 MARCH 2018**

### **PARLIAMENTARY BRIEFING**

#### **Scotland's Green Belts**

Scotland's eleven Green Belts, including the Greater Glasgow Green Belt of which the Woodhall and Faskine areas form part, are a precious resource of national importance. They protect and enhance the landscape setting of the towns and cities they surround, and they help to direct growth into appropriate locations within settlements. They provide access to the countryside for people living in towns and cities, often those in deprived areas with limited access to open space. However, the integrity of our Green Belts is threatened more seriously than ever, primarily for housing development which should mostly take place on brownfield land. The Scottish Government and local Councils should give stronger protection to Green Belts and should promote their positive management for landscape and recreation.

#### **Public Support for Green Belts**

The term "Green Belt" is well-understood and popular with the general public; it is a well-known brand whose purposes and benefits are clearly understood by most people. In a poll of Scottish residents carried out for APRS by Survation in June 2017, 74.6% of those who expressed an opinion agreed that "All Green Belt land in Scotland should have stronger protection from building development".

#### **Green Belts Under Threat**

For many years national Green Belt policy has guided development to the most appropriate locations, whilst protecting the rural character of the landscape settings of towns and preventing them from merging. However, the Scottish Government's strong promotion of growth, including through the National Planning Framework, increasingly cascades down through the planning system, to the detriment in many places of both the environment and the quality of life of local communities. Community groups in and around Scotland's Green Belts report serious concerns about significant losses to Green Belts and the need for their stronger protection in the planning system. As well as around Glasgow, substantial developments are also proposed within Green Belts around Edinburgh, Perth, St Andrews and Stirling. The Scottish Government has recently approved major developments in the Edinburgh and Stirling Green Belts, in both cases overturning decisions to refuse them by the local planning authorities, Midlothian Council and Stirling Council.

#### **Benefits of Green Belts**

Green Belts provide many important benefits to the quality of life and health and well-being of society in addition to their planning purposes. They often include important designations for the protection of landscape, nature conservation, informal outdoor recreation and cultural heritage as well as containing significant areas of prime agricultural land, needed for home-grown food production. The purposes of Green Belts

remain as valid now as in the past; they are an important quality of life investment for future generations and deserve stronger protection.

### **APRS Green Belts Alliance**

APRS has a long history of campaigning for better protection for Scotland's Green Belts. We have recently formed the APRS Green Belts Alliance to:

- Advise local groups on how best to protect their local Green Belts
- Co-ordinate and conduct research and publish findings to support these groups
- Provide a national voice to campaign for stronger Green Belt protection

### **Woodhall and Faskine**

APRS members visited the Woodhall and Faskine area in May 2017 when we held our AGM in Calderbank. We were greatly impressed by its beauty and history and the variety of its unspoilt landscapes, and we saw clearly how it provides valuable space for exercise, fresh air and tranquillity for local people from the surrounding towns and villages. It should definitely be protected from development for the long term; North Lanarkshire Council has identified plenty of brownfield sites in its area which are much more suitable for development.

### **Country Park**

There is great merit in the idea promoted by local people that the Woodhall and Faskine area should be considered for designation as a Country Park. This would bring in additional resources and expertise to enable more people to experience and enjoy its natural and historic features. It would also promote the protection of its valued landscapes, partly through supporting the traditional agricultural and woodland management land uses on which some of its special qualities depends.

### **Stronger Protection for Green Belts**

Our response to the recent Planning Review called on the Scottish Government to give stronger protection to Green Belts. The Scottish Government should use the Planning Bill and the next review of Scottish Planning Policy to give stronger protection to Green Belts. It should introduce a Brownfield Register of land which must be developed before any release of Green Belt land is considered. Local Councils should use their Local Development Plans to give stronger protection to Green Belts.

### **APRS**

APRS is the charity which promotes the care of **all** of Scotland's rural landscapes. We campaign with others for better national landscape and planning policies. We advise our members and others how best to protect the local landscapes which they value as the settings for their lives.

#### Further Information

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