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Ms Joan McAlpine MSP
The Scottish Parliament
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Dear Joan,

I refer to your letter dated 14 November 2013 regarding Buccleuch Estates. I was surprised and disappointed at some of the statements you have chosen to make, I hope you will agree that it is very important for land owners, industry, potential investors and the local community to engage and discuss the potential opportunities that any new development can bring to an area. I also believe that this needs to be done in an open and transparent way and I hope that process will continue at Canonbie.

I firmly believe in the importance of the views of local communities and that the impact on the Canonbie environment must be given due consideration in the planning process. With that in mind, I am sure you will be aware of the announcement made on 19 October 2013 by the Scottish Government, signalling a strengthening of planning policy in relation to unconventional gas in line with the text set out in the Draft Scottish Planning Policy. The new Scottish Planning Policy, which comes into force next year, will reinforce environmental and community protection and community consultation guidance in relation to planning applications for unconventional gas extraction. It also introduces the need for adequate buffer zones in relation to such planning applications.

Development projects are of course subject to local planning processes which include public consultation and developments should be judged on their individual merits. Many alternative energy sources including shale gas, and coal-bed methane may offer potential, and of course these should only be pursued as long as development and use is consistent with environmental objectives.

Yours Sincerely

Fergus Ewing

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