

**Rt Hon Nicola Sturgeon MSP**  
First Minister of Scotland

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*Dear Elaine*

Thank you for your email of 1 March in which you ask that I look into the decision taken by Fergus Ewing, Minister for Business, Energy and Tourism, with regards to the recent Sandy Knowe windfarm application. You have suggested that his involvement in this matter may have breached the obligations set out in the Scottish Ministerial Code.

I have now looked into the background to the decision and taken advice from the Permanent Secretary. I have also discussed the issue with Fergus Ewing. I have concluded, as a result of those enquiries, that in his consideration of this application Mr Ewing acted with due propriety and within the terms of the Ministerial Code.

I am clear that the application in question was considered against the appropriate planning criteria and underwent the usual process of consideration within the Scottish Government. The Minister based his decision solely on the planning merits of the application and there is no evidence to suggest that his decision was influenced by any factors other than the specific circumstances relating to the case before him. I have noted the press article to which you refer. But, again, this does not provide any evidence of impropriety.

To that end I am satisfied that consideration of the Sandy Knowe application did not deviate from normal practice and that Mr Ewing did not act improperly or was otherwise in breach of the Ministerial Code.

*Nicola Sturgeon*

**NICOLA STURGEON**