

Parliament asked to balance justice for all

In a petition backed by comedian Frankie Boyle and author Iain Banks, campaigners called on the Scottish Parliament this week to investigate the barriers people face when they try to stand up for the environment.

✘ Robin Harper MSP inspects the scales of environmental justice. On Tuesday 8 November Friends of the Earth Scotland submitted the petition – which raised over 1000 signatures across Scotland and is backed by top lawyers, academics and organisations including SCVO and RSPB Scotland – to members of the Scottish Parliament Public Petitions Committee.

The petition also pointed out that the current situation leaves the Scottish Government in breach of the United Nations 'Aarhus' Convention that requires 'fair, equitable and affordable' access to justice on environmental matters.

Currently individuals, communities or campaigners face impossible costs to challenge decisions that potentially break environmental law, as demonstrated in the ongoing case against the development of a new coal fired power station in Hunterston, and by Aberdeenshire pensioner Molly Forbes' wrangle with Trump's golf development.

Juliet Swann, Head of Projects and Campaigns, said: "For too long, money and power have been seen to outweigh communities and the environment in the legal process. It's time to tip the scales of justice so that communities and individuals can defend their rights.

"We want to see the barriers to standing up for your environment removed. Communities should not face massive expenses just because they tried to defend their environment. Individuals should not have to cough up tens of thousands of

pounds to challenge decisions that could damage Scotland's environment forever.

"The Scottish Government should introduce legislation enabling individuals, communities and interest groups to access justice in environmental matters without fear of prohibitive cost."