

Friends of the Earth welcome court judgement on solar tariffs

Friends of the Earth Scotland welcomed The Court of Appeal's unanimous rejection today of the UK government's attempt to overturn a High Court ruling stating that its plans to rush through sudden cuts to solar tariff payments were illegal.

The government is now seeking permission to appeal to the Supreme Court. Friends of the Earth Scotland says any further appeal will create yet more uncertainty for solar firms, and after two courts have ruled their move illegal, is urging Ministers to concentrate on safeguarding the industry rather than wasting more time and money on further appeals.

Friends of the Earth Scotland's Chief Executive, Stan Blackley, said:-“This landmark judgement confirms that devastating UK Government plans to rush through cuts to solar payments were and are illegal – and will prevent UK Ministers from causing industry chaos with similar cuts in future.

“The UK government must now take steps to safeguard the solar industry and the 29,000 jobs still facing the chop across the UK, including potentially more than 2,000 in Scotland.

“Ministers must abandon plans to tighten the screw on which homes qualify for solar payments – and use the massive tax revenues generated by solar to protect the industry.

“Helping more people to plug into clean energy will help protect cash-strapped households from soaring fuel bills.”

The High Court ruled shortly before Christmas that UK government plans to cut payments for any solar scheme

completed after 12 December – 11 days before the official consultation closed – were unlawful. The judgement followed legal challenges brought by Friends of the Earth (England, Wales and Northern Ireland) and two solar firms, Solarcentury and HomeSun, last month.

Today's judgement will prevent UK Ministers rushing through cuts to feed-in tariff payments in the future, restoring some confidence to the clean energy industry.

Friends of the Earth Scotland is urging UK Ministers to find more money – paid for from tax payments the industry generates – to safeguard the long-term stability of the solar industry.

Today's ruling means that, subject to any further appeal to the Supreme Court, solar tariff payments will remain at 43.3p (p/kWh) until 3 March 2012 when – following government moves last week – they will fall to 21 pence.