

Hello,

I live in Aberdour and I was involved in a local (unsuccessful) campaign to prevent a massive planning application which will see the small, coastal village expand by 10 per cent in terms of population. The application had been rejected on several occasions but, the fact that developers can appeal to the Government Reporter, meant that, eventually, they got it approved on appeal. There were so many discrepancies and the system was totally exposed as being undemocratic (We had 800 objections to the planning application from a village of 1000 homes) and open to lobbying and pressure from wealthy and powerful developers.

My ideas for the planning system to make it more democratic are informed by this and my other ideas stem from my concern for the environment and the climate emergency.

IDEAS

1) Congestion charging in cities: this should and must become the norm. I lived in Edinburgh when the council held a referendum to decide whether to implement one in the city. It was, unsurprisingly, voted against. However, having seen laws instigated rapidly to contain a pandemic, we can see how laws can be changed when the will is there. We need to start treating the climate emergency in the same manner. The time for referenda on such crucial matter is over. Motorists pay very little of the actual price their behaviour costs the World, its inhabitants and society in general and congestion charging would help to begin redressing that.

Edinburgh had a very good plan drawn up for zones and, now that technology has moved forward since the early part of the millennium, congestion charging would be even simpler to implement.

2) Compulsory purchase of grouse moors. Studies show that grouse moors have a devastating effect on the environment both locally and globally. This includes habitat loss for native species, carbon emissions through peat loss and heather burning, raptor eradication and more. Nothing is being done by the Scottish Government to tackle this massive impact. Grouse moors are believed to cover 13 per cent of Scotland but only benefits the economy by 0.04 per cent. Most of the jobs created are low paid and dangerous. There would be more economic benefit in eco tourism if the land was rewilded. Grouse shooting is confined to an elite minority, mainly from the South, who like to kill wild animals. The rights of this small minority can have no priority over the rights of the human population of the world, Scotland and its other indigenous species. The Climate Emergency, like the corona virus crisis, should give adequate powers to Government to take these measures to protect the Earth.

[Climate change, fires and why we need to rewild grouse moors - starting with our National Parks - parkswatchscotland](#)

1.1 Climate change, fires and why we need to rewild grouse moors - starting with our National Parks - parkswatchscotland

I almost never watch TV but last week, in the middle of the first week of the Extinction Rebellion protest, I did watch the BBC documentary

“Climate Change – the Facts” narrated by David Attenborough. The footage of forest fires burning out of control

3) Rights to buy land and Orchards and Food forests: Community rights to buy land should be given first priority when land comes up for sale or a developer presents a planning application. In the current system, by the time a community has fought an undesirable planning application, there is no time to present an application for a community buyout which would see the land developed for optimal common good. Developers are profit motivated and do not have an interest in providing affordable housing, food growing, sustainable transport infrastructure or infrastructure of any kind. This is why we see small communities being overwhelmed by large scale housing development on arable or wild land. Incentives for communities to buy land to create community orchards and food forests should be brought in and support given for community buyouts.

Overhaul of planning system to make it more equitable and holistic: The entire planning system needs an overhaul. Currently it is not managed in a holistic way. It is not managed at all as development happens in a haphazard and ad hoc way. Individual councils have to decide on planning applications and cannot reject any on grounds of global climate impact. Objections are only considered on the grounds of local environmental impacts. The number of objections is not taken into consideration and the decision rests upon single objections. There are, therefore, many loopholes which developers can use and their experiences, specialist lawyers are able to find loopholes in objections. This leaves local councils open to legal challenges if they reject planning applications. I suggest that, instead of the current system, the land use of the entire nation be determined by a citizens assembly comprised of residents from all parts of the country with input from recognised agencies such as charities, environmental groups, community councils and conservation bodies to develop the best strategies for land use in a Climate Emergency. This would include cycling and public transport infrastructure to encourage much greater sustainable travel. We have seen that, in lockdown, many more bike journeys being made. This is, in the most part, because there are fewer cars on the roads. People do not, and will not, cycle on roads which are busy.

Once the best use of land has been determined, practical ways to develop the land can be considered locally by citizens assemblies with local councils and other bodies. Whatever development is agreed will be put up for tender with community projects given priority over private developers. Community projects will be supported by Government. Food growing would be prioritised and supported and brownfield sites developed by offering incentives to developers. Currently virgin, prime land is favoured by builders as it is much cheaper to develop than brownfield land.

4) Nationalising public transport: The transport network must change to a Scandinavian type model to encourage people to travel by sustainable means. It must be free for all to use so tickets do not need to be purchased. Under the current privatised system, ticket pricing is complicated and not user friendly. Ticket prices vary at different times and depending on where tickets are purchased. Services do not link up so passengers have to wait for connections. It is not fit for 21st Century in any way. It needs a massive overhaul. I suggest citizens assemblies to determine best ways to provide suitable public transport for all including people with all kinds of disabilities.

Making public transport free will also boost tourism locally. Currently, it is cheaper to fly than travel by train so why would people not do that? There must be an end to fuel subsidies to airlines as the real cost of flying must be reflected in fares.

5) A halt to airport development: no additional flights to and from Scotland. This is a Climate Emergency and flying produces a considerable proportion of CO₂. A way to reduce the number of flights needs to be considered. Although this is not within the remit of the planning system, it is an aim which would have an effect on it as any planning applications to develop airports could be legally blocked.

6) The Climate Emergency must be a legal ground to refuse Planning permission. Currently, only local environmental impacts have any weight in decisions regarding the granting of planning permission. This could be revised very quickly in a Global crisis, as we are in now.

I am happy to provide more detailed information on these ideas as well as my experience of the current planning system and its impact on a small community.

I had organised a meeting in Aberdour to discuss ideas and give information about NPF4 but it had to be cancelled because of the Covid19 restrictions. I have been unable to discuss my ideas and my hope is that this process, now begun, will result in more meetings in the future to enable more people to contribute to the shape of Scotland's planning system. My fear is that the current crisis has had an impact on this early stage and on the number of contributions to it.

Best regards,

Carrie Todd