

## **NPF4**

### **1. Developments needed to address climate change.**

Windfarms have their place in theory, but we are now being bombarded with applications for on-shore windfarms with very large and tall turbines on sites of high scenic and natural value. Applications for small schemes go to local authorities and there have been several instances where the Scottish Government has approved windfarms by over-riding local democratic decisions against such windfarms. Local government does not have much of a say in large schemes and the people are usually ignored; this is undemocratic. Electricity produced by windfarms is also costly, not only because the imported turbines and their fixing are not conducive to carbon reduction but also due to the ridiculously high guaranteed price paid for the power produced and so consideration must be given to limit these to sites that do not spoil places. Instead it should be a requirement that every new building, whether residential or commercial, should be fitted with solar panels where feasible; this should be enshrined in planning legislation.

More hydro-electric schemes are also needed. Nuclear power should be considered.

Railways should be much improved so as to encourage more use by passengers and for freight. Although aircraft produce relatively low total carbon emissions once airborne, take off and landing produces a great deal. Very short flights between cities should be stopped in favour of road travel (which can also save user time) on good roads. To replace existing major roads with dual carriageways (eg A9 and A96) is costly and not always necessary where three-lane highways are acceptable.

### **2. Quality of life.**

The countryside is emptying of people; they are all migrating to the towns. So townships get larger and do not have good shopping facilities in these new residential areas, with the result that cars are used for local travel to large shops and supermarkets. Large numbers of houses with minimal open space and little or no good quality landscaping is unpleasant. All such schemes should have roads with avenue trees and gardens with hedges instead of 1.8m wooden fences, because these absorb traffic fumes as well as creating pleasing environments, and good play areas; these should be mandatory and an integral and enforceable part of planning applications.

If we must cater for this seeming need to move to the town then new townships could be more sensible than expanding existing towns, provided that – within reason - these do not reduce too much (quality) farmland and natural woodland. These new townships must also cater to first-time buyers and low rent prices - which theoretically pre-supposes competitively costed construction and no excessive profit taking by developers - but at the same time the external design of and positioning of the buildings must be such that pleasant places are created, rather than some of the mundane housing estates that we have seen in recent years. There is no simple answer to reducing the depopulation of the countryside because the interest of firms that can employ reasonable numbers of people at a site away from (large) townships appears to be limited; we see this even in places not that far from cities like Aberdeen and Inverness, but where we can attract the we must create industrial estates that are not just a range of ugly tin sheds.

We must fund public parks and open spaces adequately to ensure their proper management and continuous regeneration, in order to permit continued access from township centres to their green lungs. This may entail improving pedestrian access and the addition of township trees to internal pedestrianised centres and pedestrian and cycle routes. Consideration should be given to putting parks into properly funded trusts. Where house space is at a premium and gardens not practicable easily accessible allotment areas should be included as a planning condition.

### **4. Special character of Places.**

Local authority planners appear to ignore place because planning applications for single or small numbers of units (eg houses, businesses) or industrial operations (eg small industrial parks, quarries) look only at the development site and almost ignore the surroundings. This lack of looking at planning applications in a global context means has given rise to developments that adversely affect neighbours (eg quality of life) and eyesores that detract from the visual amenity (eg tin shed industrial units along the access routes into townships like Elgin, lack of good quality landscaping to new housing estates on outskirts of old townships like Elgin). This can be rectified or at least ameliorated by having better rules for neighbour notification and consultation. For larger schemes significant landscaping is required to soften the effect of mass buildings – we do not have to be able to see the buildings from the public road or tourist route to learn where they are – it only needs proper signage!

Planning consultations do not necessarily take into account detailed design and relation to neighbouring properties, so sense of place is lost. So we get eg ugly supermarkets plonked totally out of keeping into old township areas, sometimes involving demolition of perfectly good existing buildings. Sense of place is obvious, but are planners and architects taught this when in training?

Sense of place also applies to windfarms, pylons, motorways, large housing schemes, and new townships.

## 5. New infrastructure.

Integrated transport links – dual function (train and bus) stations.

Landscaped and pedestrianised township areas with easily accessible transport links to trains and buses.

Up-grading local harbours (fishing) and ports (imports, exports, cruise liners, ferries).

Train stations at airports.

Upgrade Aberdeen airport to accommodate international flights in large airplanes.

Upgrade railways from Central to Northern and Highland areas to reduce travel time inter-city and limited stop locally, but also allow for more stopping trains for very local use by reopening some closed stations and creating new ones.

Reopen some old rail lines for freight, local passengers, and tourism, and including branches to industrial sites (eg Aviemore to Elgin and some distilleries and sawmills, Elgin to Fraserburgh along the coast).

More hydro-electric schemes rather than windfarms, which will also provide possible outdoor recreation facilities.