

SUBMISSION FROM BUCKINGHAM, HAMILTON AND RUSKIN ASSOCIATION

I represent the Buckingham, Hamilton and Ruskin Association a Resident's Association of some thirty years standing and located in the west end of the City of Glasgow. I refer to the above as it affects a Consultation Exercise apparently conducted to elicit view on the above. Questions I would ask are as follows:

Any consultation exercise must set out goals which it intends to achieve. In the context of the above the exercise has failed. It does not fulfil the reasonable expectation that it should demonstrate by its operational application an integrity of performance to elicit information representative of community aspiration and opinion. For example my own association was not consulted. A more proactive approach should have been engaged to give an empiricism to the consultative process. I find myself having to respond at the eleventh hour viz., 11 January 2009. Why is this? Answer because I knew nothing of this exercise. Question: In a democracy it is not intent is not good enough it needs to be matched with appropriate resources to elicit information/opinion sought. This could have been easily done by placing the questionnaire in key journals eg funding Community Councils to distribute such a questionnaire. As a consequence the Consultative exercise conducted lacks integrity of application and cannot be regarded as having any serious import or credibility. No Marketing Executive in prompting a product would be assured of progressing any decision based on an consultative exercise conducted under such weak parameters as this one has displayed.

My Association reaches the same conclusions as given you by Clare Symonds of Buiding Alternatives:

Clare Symonds

"During and since the passage of the Planning Scotland Act 2006, the Scottish Government has emphasized the critical importance of promoting better and earlier public participation in the planning system. It set out standards in PAN 81 to promote this. Yet in terms of the most powerful Planning Document in the land these standards of best practice have not been met. Despite willingness on the part of the staff managing the process, it is clear that this process was poorly designed at the outset, lacking clarity and transparency. The process was not exclusive but cannot be claimed to have been inclusive either because it failed to proactively reach beyond the people already knowledgeable about the planning system. Nor was their sufficient action to involve people most likely to be affected by the policies and developments proposed in the document. Whilst the sample of participants interviewed found the process was conducted in a professional manner by the staff involved, few felt empowered. The influence of people from communities on the final decisions is unclear and should be investigated by the Scottish Parliament. It seems that the Scottish Government's practice of community engagement differs from the Standards it has set itself. In practice it is more about informing people of decisions already made, when it

should be giving them a role in, or allowing them to, influence the decision-making process. Whilst this requires a fundamental culture shift for planners and Government, it is the bedrock that the 2006 reforms were built on. Failure to grasp this point means that the Scottish Planning system is on shaky foundations indeed.

The fact that the Scottish Government cannot meet its own standards sets a dangerous precedent. It sends the wrong message to local authorities that are considering how to consult on the next generation of development plans. It is now up to the Scottish Parliament to put this right by properly engaging those members of the communities throughout Scotland that this process either did not reach or failed to convince that their view actually mattered.

Recommendations

The report concludes that the participation statement objectives were not met and therefore asks that the NPF2 consultation process be thoroughly reviewed and improved until the Governments own standards are fulfilled and the participation statement objectives achieved. The results of this evaluation demonstrate a need for greater understanding of what participation and community engagement really mean. The report asks that training and support be given to planning officers in order to increase the skills required for successful community participation. Any officer required to consult on a development plan should receive training in these skills and on the national standards, prior to commencing the process. Precise guidelines should be provided on how to write a participation statement and how to assess compliance with the participation statement. In addition the report asks 24 that all officers, Government ministers and reporters required to assess if a consultation process has complied with a participation statement, should be provided with support and training to ensure high standards are maintained."

Please accept this as our conclusions

Ralph Green

Chair

Buckingham, Hamilton and Ruskin Association