

SUBMISSION FROM CLARE SYMONDS, BUILDING ALTERNATIVES
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I welcome the opportunity to provide my views on the NPF2. The committee has asked specific questions to be answered, all of which are concerned about the content of the NPF2, however, I have concentrated on the development of the document through consultation. I have submitted a report called 'A Critique of the National Planning Framework (NPF) Consultation Process' and this forms the main substance of my submission. As process is a fundamental tool to achieving what is contained within the NPF2, it is a crucial piece of evidence. In addition, I am contributing this short paper to specifically answer the question 'whether the policies set out in the NPF2 support the Government's key aims for the development of Scotland to 2030?' It is intended to link my report to the Government's goal of achieving sustainable development.

The Planning etc. (Scotland) Act 2006 places a duty on Ministers to prepare a National Planning Framework with the objective of contributing to sustainable development. This then forms one of the key aims of the document. Community engagement in decision-making is a fundamental element of sustainable development. Good governance is one of the 5 principles of sustainable development and participation and public engagement are core aspects.

Alex Salmond stated that he is "committed to a new chapter in Scottish politics - one in which the story is written by the people and not just the politicians." However if we are to renew trust in Scotland's democracy the Government needs to develop new and more effective systems to enable participative decision-making. The Government places great emphasis on the need for economic growth in the document however there is also an imperative for greater community participation in decision making in order to address the significant issues that we face and to find long term solutions that involve people in helping to implement the changes needed.

Sadly, for the reasons comprehensively set out in my report on the consultation process, the key challenge of achieving this fundamental tenet of sustainable development has not been met, because the process of engagement in drawing up the NPF document was fundamentally flawed. One of the criticisms of the consultation process is that it did not involve people in decision making, but was an information giving exercise. It didn't provide opportunities to develop solutions together. In order to address the profound issues society is currently facing, such as climate change, the Government needs to develop systems of public engagement that create opportunities for people to have a dialogue, to develop mutual understanding, find solutions and make decisions together. The consultation process did not do this.

There was an opportunity here to develop a new system of decision-making, to embrace the spirit of the planning Act and to revitalize Scotland's democracy and

regain public trust in the planning system. The Government instead carried out, albeit a wide ranging, but essentially tokenistic consultation process which failed to fully engage the public in the development of a sustainable Scotland.

Since completion and publication of my report I have had a number of organizations, community councils and individuals contact me to corroborate my findings and further validate my conclusions.

I would urge the committee to read the report and follow the recommendation that the adoption of the NPF2 be postponed until a more effective process of community engagement has been carried out.