

SUBMISSION FROM FRIENDS OF THE EARTH SCOTLAND

1. Introduction

1.1 Friends of the Earth Scotland (FoES) welcomes the opportunity to provide its views on the second National Planning Framework to the Committee. This evidence has been prepared by Duncan McLaren, Chief Executive of FoES.

1.2 Friends of the Earth Scotland exists to help people in Scotland look after the planet for everyone's future. We think globally and act locally in Scotland, delivering solutions to the problem of climate change by enabling and empowering people to take both individual and collective action. Friends of the Earth Scotland is an independent Scottish charity (SC003442) and an independent national member group of the Friends of the Earth International federation.

1.3 Friends of the Earth Scotland is an active member of Scottish Environment LINK and Stop Climate Chaos Scotland (SCCS). While this evidence reflects our understanding of the shared views of those coalitions, we understand they will make direct representations to the Committee, and this evidence should only be treated as the views of Friends of the Earth Scotland.

2. Summary

2.1 We have focussed in particular on the second and third questions the Committee pose, namely the balance between economic development and environmental protection, and the extent to which proposals fit with the criteria set out by Ministers.

2.2 Friends of the Earth Scotland agrees with the principle of a statutory national planning framework to guide regional and local plans and development decisions in support of a dynamic economy, a healthy environment and a better quality of life for all our communities.

2.3 However we have major concerns regarding the procedural and substantive approach to national developments, and the overall compatibility of the NPF with the Scottish Government's welcome aspirations to help address climate change. In this latter respect, and with respect to some other policies included in the NPF, we do not believe that the NPF as a whole can be expected to meet its statutory duty to contribute to sustainable development.

2.4 We therefore urge the Parliament to seek improvements in the policy content of the NPF to promote sustainable development and climate compatibility, and to seize the opportunity to begin the urgent transformation to and to recommend – in the strongest possible terms – that status as a national development should not exclude such developments from full scrutiny of need at a public inquiry.

3. Has the correct balance has been struck between economic development and environmental protection?

Sustainable Development duty

3.1 Under the Planning Act 2006 the NPF is required to contribute to sustainable development. This is a stronger test than a *'balancing of economic development and environmental protection'*. It requires an integrated delivery of economic progress, social equity and environmental health. For the duty to be delivered, the policies and proposals in the NPF as a whole must contribute to sustainability. It is not adequate for some measures to contribute to sustainability if others of significance detract from it. Moreover, while the statutory requirement does not apply to specific elements of the NPF, if it is desirable that the NPF as a whole contributes to sustainable development, it is clearly also desirable that every policy and proposal in the NPF contribute to sustainable development.

3.2 Friends of the Earth Scotland believes that the NPF on balance, and therefore as a whole, does not contribute to sustainability. This is principally because in practice *it primarily takes a 'predict and provide' approach* to issues with potentially severe environmental and social impacts, such as motorised transport; energy use and waste management.

3.3 For instance, despite clear aspirations to shift from motorised transport to more sustainable modes (para 21); the infrastructure proposals set out for transport (primarily summarised in para 109) suggest a significant increase in road capacity, likely to generate significant additional traffic; while the *national developments* identified include what has subsequently been acknowledged to be an *additional* Forth road crossing; as well as port developments predicated on increased heavy goods vehicle traffic at Loch Ryan (and at Rosyth) using Scotland as 'a land bridge' between Ireland and mainland Europe. These proposals detract significantly from the delivery of sustainable development; and indeed cannot comply with the outcomes outlined in paragraph 21.

3.4 The failure is further highlighted by the contradiction between reducing the need for motorised travel (para 22), and commitments restated from the National Transport Strategy to address congestion and improve journey times by road through engineering works. A sustainable approach would seek to reduce traffic levels, thus reducing congestion as a consequence of effective demand management; and improving health through the widespread expansion of active travel modes (notably walking and cycling). The National Planning Framework is the best place to pursue this approach as planning and transport policies must be integrated to deliver reductions in the need to travel, and opportunities to prioritise active modes. Unfortunately such integration has not been achieved, and the potential economic benefits of traffic reduction are foregone.

3.5 The *failure to consider the role of demand management* is also significant in the areas of energy and waste. Energy efficiency gets passing mention in paras 25 and 79, but as conservation and efficiency lie at the top of the energy hierarchy, they should be central to any discussion of energy infrastructure or building and planning standards. Waste reduction (as opposed to reuse and recycling) is not even

mentioned. Yet reduced waste of energy and materials would both generate greater wealth, and reduce environmental impacts. Indeed both are central to the potential for sustainable economic growth – especially in the face of economic recession, where a ‘green new deal’ is needed to stimulate the economy. Recent proposals from the incoming US administration to invest \$150 billion over 10 years in clean energy and create 5 million jobs¹; and from the UN² have highlighted the scale of the opportunity here. Yet the NPF has failed to grasp this opportunity.

3.6 The same failures make it much less likely that the Government will be able to achieve its climate change targets for emissions reduction (currently proposed to be a 50% cut by 2030 – although this is scientifically inadequate³; and an 80% reduction by 2050). Enabling growth in demand for mobility by road and air, growth in demand for energy, and growth in waste generation makes it much harder to deliver the levels of renewable energy generation, public transport and recycling that will be needed to deliver emissions reductions. The overall compatibility of the NPF with climate targets is addressed in the next section of this evidence.

Climate compatibility

3.7 There are significant proposals and policies set out in the NPF that would (other things being equal) lead to a significant increase in climate changing emissions. The framework provides for additional road transport capacity, and enables growth in air travel (para 116);; indicates increased combustion of waste for energy purposes (para 164) (even though typical incinerators are more polluting than coal fired power stations per unit of electricity produced); and promotes a significant increase in housing provision (para 72) (which even with improved building standards still adds to overall emissions from the building stock). These are of particular concern because the scientific evidence on climate change argues that significant reductions in emissions in the coming five years – the period covered by the NPF 2 – is critical to stabilising the climate. Action cannot be postponed to NPF 3 or 4.

3.8 For the proposals in NPF 2 to be compatible with climate targets would require very significant improvements in technology to be delivered and adopted across the existing and replacement stock of buildings, facilities and vehicles. This is unlikely on the timescale of the NPF, and moreover, the NPF does not set out any policies or other measures to enable the planning system to help force the delivery and adoption of such improvements. In the absence of such policies the *NPF2 is incompatible with climate targets*.

3.9 Such concerns are most acute with respect to major long-lived developments such as the additional Forth Crossing, power stations and airports. The climate effects of a decision taken today will be felt for many decades, and in most cases well beyond 2030 or 2050. It is therefore particularly significant for proposals designated as national developments.

¹ See: http://www.barackobama.com/pdf/factsheet_energy_speech_080308.pdf

² Summary at: <http://www.unep.org/Documents/Multilingual/Default.asp?DocumentID=548&ArticleID=5957&l=en>

³ See for example www.tyndall.ac.uk/publications/briefing_notes/Livingwithacarbonbudget.pdf which suggests a 70% reduction by 2030 is necessary for the UK.

3.10 Several climate threatening candidates for national developments – such as road improvements around Dundee and on the A90 - considered in the strategic environmental assessment have not been included in the NPF. This is welcome, as their exclusion from the list of national developments may indicate that Ministers do not consider the need for them has been demonstrated. However their inclusion in the Strategic Transport Projects Review leads us to fear that they may not be subjected to the rigorous scrutiny of a public inquiry that is properly allowed to consider the need for the road. The very limited scope of the recent inquiry into the Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route has demonstrated the need for full and comprehensive scrutiny.

3.11 Given uncertainties about developing technologies for abatement of emissions from road vehicles, aircraft and power stations, Friends of the Earth Scotland believes *it is irresponsible to designate airport capacity increases, road capacity increases or new unabated fossil fuel power stations as national developments*. The climate implications are not simply a matter of design or location – they are typically fundamental to the existence of the development. A decision in principle on such developments should therefore only be considered in the light of best available knowledge as to technological options through a rigorous and participatory process. The level of assessment provided by the NPF and the accompanying SEA is *not adequate* to make such decisions. Even though Friends of the Earth Scotland is optimistic regarding the likely future development of electric vehicles and carbon capture and storage technologies (cf para 69-70), the developments as currently set out in NPF2 are incompatible with the delivery of Scotland's climate targets.

3.12 For instance regarding airports, it is unclear how proposals for new runways would be assessed within the current NPF. It does not appear that land is being set aside for new runways but the NPF expresses enthusiasm about increasing international connectivity and includes airport enhancements designed to enable increased passenger and freight movements as national developments. The second NPF suggests that growth at Scotland's international airports will be facilitated through a mix of access enhancements and surface measures such as new taxiways and hangar facilities. In the last decade growth in air travel has driven annual increases in emissions from the sector in Scotland of 7% a year since 1990, and almost 9% a year in the last decade⁴.

3.13 However, the climate implications of growth are a simple factor of the number of flights and the efficiency of the aircraft. The design and location of new public transport links, hangars, terminal buildings and so forth will have negligible impact on climate implications. Estimates suggest aircraft efficiency could improve by 1-2% per year⁵. So simply to hold emissions stable, flight numbers must not grow more than this. To contribute to the target reductions in emissions it is necessary for flight numbers to fall. Using the NPF to designate measures to increase air travel as a national need therefore sends the wrong message when urgent action on climate change is needed.

3.14 *In some other respects the NPF makes substantial efforts to contribute to the delivery of climate targets* – notably in its approach to renewable energy and

⁴ Greenhouse Gas Emissions Data for International Aviation and Shipping, 1990-2006. www.naei.org.uk

⁵ http://www.aef.org.uk/uploads/Alternative_fuels_article.pdf

transmission developments. In the energy sector, we are encouraged to see plans to deliver Scotland's renewable energy targets, strengthen the electricity grid to enable renewables and to provide for Scotland's future energy security. However, we note that the development of the grid needs to respect sustainability criteria – both with respect to the location and design of new capacity; and to the strategic role of demand management. We are also encouraged, despite over-optimism regarding the potential for energy from waste, to see strong and positive reference to renewable heat and the decentralised production of energy, which offers significant potential for mitigation of climate changing emissions. However for the reasons set out below with respect to procedure, Friends of the Earth Scotland cannot endorse the application of 'national development' status to such proposals either.

3.15 More generally the energy systems analysis is partial and in some respects poor, notably in its failure to properly consider demand management and efficiency (see above) and in relying on a combination of a misconceived notion of 'baseload' demand and a meaningless commitment to 'carbon-capture readiness' to justify continued fossil fuel use. New coal power capacity at Longannet, Cockenzie and Peterhead must feature fully operational carbon capture and storage technology from the outset or be refused planning permission. It should not therefore be designated as of national need. Instead the NPF should establish the principle of a strictly enforceable emissions performance standard for new combustion plant.

4. Do the proposals listed as potential national developments meet the criteria set out by Ministers in a statement to Parliament on 13 September 2007?

4.1 Ministers set out six criteria. Whilst it is clear that not every development must meet every criterion, in his statement to Parliament the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Sustainable Growth argued that they would be applied in a transparent and 'joined-up' fashion. The Cabinet Secretary also made clear that all the developments would be critical for the delivery of sustainable economic growth.

4.2 In our view these tests have not been demonstrated for many of the national developments included. Most of them could be compatible with a sustainable economy, but only if other conditions were also met (such as particular technological advances). In the current circumstances several of them might not even generate additional economic activity, but instead may simply redistribute it - most notably the additional Forth road crossing – or even generate an economic loss for Scotland. Increasing passenger numbers through Scottish airports could actually worsen the balance of trade, as expenditure by Scots travelling abroad significantly outweighs expenditure in Scotland by visitors⁶. In other cases there may be an increase in economic activity, but not one which is sustainable. The Loch Ryan gateway port may increase HGV traffic through Scotland, with some additional economic activity, but as Switzerland has discovered, such through traffic imposes excessive environmental, congestion and economic costs as well. None of these developments are compatible with the subsidiary climate criterion either, and thus the aim of 'joined-up' consideration has not been achieved.

⁶ <http://www.dft.gov.uk/consultations/archive/2002/fd/scot/mc/chapter9otherkeypolicyissues1516> para 9.1.17 notes annual tourism receipts from inbound passengers were £0.5bn in 2000, and the comparative figures for outbound expenditure by Scots travelling abroad was £0.7bn.

4.3 We are also not convinced that the proposals for additional baseload electricity generation capacity adequately meet the criteria. Given Scotland's increasing levels of renewable electricity generation, what is needed for the economy is a combination of 'load-following' or 'peaking' plant (not baseload) and improved electricity storage. This might be provided by fossil fuel in ways compatible with climate objectives but only if such plant operates with full carbon capture and storage from the outset. Additional generation capacity is not needed so urgently that unenforceable rules for carbon capture readiness are appropriate⁷.

5. Process

5.1 The Committee has not specifically requested evidence around process and procedure. However, these are crucial considerations and we urge the Committee to take them into account during the scrutiny period. Friends of the Earth Scotland has concerns regarding both the consultation process surrounding the NPF, and the proposed procedure for the national developments.

5.2 The consultation and participation procedures around the draft NPF have not offered an adequate alternative to a rigorous public inquiry. Research carried out by the independent consultancy 'Building Alternatives' indicates that the procedures provided fell well short of the commitments made in the Government's 'Participation Statement' as well as failing to meet most of the ten National Standards for community engagement. There has been no parallel research into the effectiveness of the consultation process from the perspective of local authorities and statutory consultees, but the limited information provided on candidate national developments would suggest that such bodies would be unable to adopt properly informed positions on the need for the developments or their likely impacts.

5.3 In Friends of the Earth Scotland's view, the main purpose of the NPF should be to direct Scotland's planners as to how they can contribute to sustainable economic growth through a properly participative development planning process; not to mandate specific developments as 'national priorities' on the basis of a sketchy assessment.

5.4 Friends of the Earth Scotland believes that such priority projects should still be subject to proper democratic accountability by local people and local politicians. As it stands, such proposals could be held up far longer in legal wrangling than by a planning inquiry.

5.5 We fear that the process has been motivated by a misplaced belief that rapid decisions and greater certainty can be delivered to underpin economic growth. In practice we suspect that this approach to national developments will do less for the economy than one in which proposals are democratically and rigorously tested by the planning system to ensure they contribute to sustainable growth. If these national developments are challenged by objectors in the courts or protestors on the ground,

⁷ The energy consultancy Poyry conclude that additional replacement generation capacity is not needed before the 2020s if UK government renewables and efficiency targets are met. http://www.wwf.org.uk/filelibrary/pdf/energy_gap_summary.pdf

delay could easily exceed the few weeks or months required to consider need at a planning inquiry. Delays could be particularly severe if challenges arose under European law with respect to participation, or the impacts on habitats protected by European law (which are potentially affected by at least four of the 12 proposed national developments). We note that for sound reasons, decisions affecting such sites should be made in a single instance, at which point the relevant tests - of whether there is no alternative site meeting the same economic or social need elsewhere in the European Union, and whether the economic or social need is of such overriding importance that it justifies the level of damage - can be properly applied.

5.6 In conclusion, Friends of the Earth Scotland urges Parliament to review the national developments in as much detail as possible, and to reject those which do not match its assessment of the criteria. More importantly, given the constraints on such assessment, we urge Parliament to recommend – in the strongest possible terms – that status as a national development should NOT exclude such developments from full scrutiny of need by way of a public inquiry.

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