

SCOTTISH BORDERS LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN: PROPOSED PLAN

Renewable Energy

All references to renewable energy should be qualified thus "affordable renewable energy". The perverse policies of both Governments are leading towards an energy crisis and unsupportable energy cost rises. The need for expensive conventional generation to provide intermittent backup and the financial and social costs of fuel poverty, hitherto unacknowledged by those authorities, must now be taken into account and all further proposals for renewable energy production rejected. Apart from nuclear generation, there is no viable renewable energy technology.

There seems to be no mention of how land vacated by wind farms is to be used. Maybe it is already, perforce, 'wilderness'. Vast tract of landscapes will be released when these reach their end of life. It seems most unlikely that the windmills will be worth replacing.

The Eastern Hub

The Strategic Plan correctly locates the Eastern Borders with East Lothian. This is very much at odds with the allocation of administrative responsibilities. Eyemouth shares much in common with other East Coast towns. Were it not for the accidents of history, Berwick upon Tweed would have also been included.

Significant savings might be possible were public services to this area to be aligned with the North/South road and rail infrastructure.

Especially important is the effect of the present arrangement on the Health Service, especially on the Ambulance Service. There are many instances where patients from the Eastern Borders have been delivered to BGH only to be redirected to ERI, doubling their journey time.

The public service facilities in Berwick seem to be used only rarely while the public seems regularly to make use of all retail facilities there, thus reducing demand for local services in Eyemouth and Ayton.

It seems that traditional administrative arrangements may be undermining the drive for efficiency and excellence. A study should be made of the effects of a similar realignment of other public services.

The Border.

There seems to be haste in finalising the long term plans before determination of the independence vote. Yet, so far as the Eastern Hub is concerned, the presence of a policed National Border separating Berwick from its hinterland could have profound effects. It could also affect the prospects for Eyemouth/Ayton in other various ways, but these have not been studied.

The situation at other Border towns, such as Coldstream may need reassessment if a National Border is to be established.

Sustainable Development.

The promotion of sustainable, but uneconomic, development is predicated on many unsubstantiated assumptions about population growth and distribution, about the rate of depletion of resources and about the capability of future generations to meet the challenges of their time. The notion that the present generations should be destitute for the sake of ensuring the prosperity of the coming generations is very problematic indeed.

For governments to impose a regime of self-sacrifice in the name of future generations seems to be a betrayal of trust and ethically questionable to say the least. The future is imponderable. The unintended consequences of planned action could be so profound that taking no planned action may be more prudent than engaging in elaborate planning.

The Resolution of the Inherent Paradox.

The Scottish Government claims to have a mandate from the electorate to interfere in the affairs of local government. The Proposed Plan must conform to the Strategic Plan for Edinburgh and South East Scotland. Representatives of local government have conceded this in the SOA arrangement, but they have not sought a mandate from their constituents. This leaves the issue of responsibility unresolved.

There is the further complication introduced by the appointment of "Location Directors" to monitor and urge action. To whom are these officials accountable? If, as a result of their urging something undesirable emerges, shall they be personally accountable and held responsible in law? What redress would aggrieved individuals have against them?

Critique of the Proposed Plan

Unless the reader is thoroughly familiar with the existing rules, s/he cannot make an informed criticism of the plan.

The Evidence Base

Attempts to plumb the depths of the data bank via a post-code reference, proved abortive. Units of measurement were not specified and many data were missing or out-dated. This is no place for the amateur.

The Unknown Future of the High Speed Train Line.

The Strategic Plan notes that a Capital to Capital high speed train link may be built, presumably within the planning horizon. Such a development could so reduce traffic on the existing line as to reduce its viability. The consequences for the Eastern Hub could be profound. This should not be ignored.

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