

Planning Bill Response – 15th March 2013

From: Mark Crean

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My objections to the Planning Bill with proposals for change are as follows and relate to Clauses 2, 5, 6, 10 and 20.

As a general comment, the Bill proposes double counting of economic development; this means primacy for economic development; this is not the objective of the planning system.

1. **Clause 2** should be reworded to include a definition of sustainable development, and the sub-clause regarding economic development should be removed.

I think the following overarching policy on sustainable development be included in Clause 2:

It shall be the principal objective of local and neighbourhood plans to ensure sustainable patterns of development which improve the quality of life of all people, while respecting environmental limits and the ability of future generations to enjoy a similar quality of life.

In order to uphold this objective, all land use policies and decisions must enshrine the principles of:

environmental justice: putting people at the heart of decision making, reducing social inequality by upholding environmental justice in the outcomes of decisions;

inter-generational equity: ensuring current development does not prevent future generations from meeting their own needs;

environmental limits: ensuring that resources are not irrevocably exhausted or the environment irreversibly damaged. This means, for example, supporting climate mitigation, protecting and enhancing biodiversity, reducing harmful emissions, and promoting the sustainable use of natural resources (including those outside Northern Ireland);

resource conservation: ensuring that planning decisions assist in the prudent and sustainable use of finite natural resources (including resources sourced outside Northern Ireland);

the precautionary approach: the precautionary principle holds that where the environmental impacts of certain activities or developments are not known, the proposed development should not be carried out, or extreme caution should be exercised in its undertaking;

the polluter pays: ensuring that those who produce damaging pollution meet the full environmental, social and economic costs;

the proximity principle; seeking to resolve problems in the present and locally, rather than passing them on to other communities globally or future generations;

public participation; ensuring that there are meaningful opportunities for people to engage in the planning decision-making process.

2. **Clause 5** should include the introduction of a Third Party Right of Appeal.
3. **Clause 6** should be removed from the Bill because it means any applicant can claim economic advantage by gaining permission, lots of people can object claiming disadvantage if something is given permission.
4. **Clause 10** should be amended to allow the Planning Appeals Commission to appoint temporary commissioners as needed.
5. **Clause 20** should be clarified to make it clear that Fix Penalty Notices are not in lieu of enforcement action, and that further action will be taken if breaches are not remedied.

Mark Crean