



15th March 2013

Dear DoE Environment Committee

Re: NI Planning Bill 2013

I would like to make the following response to the consultation re the above Bill.

In my view the Bill would not benefit the people, economy or environment of Northern Ireland and should not become law.

My reasons for opposing the Bill are:

- Economic development is already one of the important factors taken into account when assessing planning proposals
- The economic value of a proposed development is impossible to forecast accurately. Planners do not have the necessary training as economists.
- The planning system would become overburdened and slowed with appeals by developers, making it effectively unworkable.
- There would be no way of monitoring compliance with the economic conditions of planning approval.
- There is no accountability against developers who renege on their promises of economic benefit.
- There is a contradiction between the priority of economic factors and the responsibility to encourage and protect sustainable development. The favouring of the former over the latter would have devastating consequences for Northern Ireland's vulnerable natural environment and the health and prosperity of our people.
- To introduce such devastating changes to the planning system in this manner without a full public consultation being carried out is inappropriate.

In place of the economic development test, which accords equal status to beneficial and to destructive, dangerous and inequitable development, I would urge the committee to support a policy of sustainable development as defined by the World Commission on Environment and Development 1987; "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs". Such a policy would include the principles of resource conservation, environmental and inter-generational justice, the precautionary principle, the polluter pays principle and meaningful public consultation.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Zelda Kingston