

National Planning Framework Team
Scottish Government Planning Directorate
Area 2-H
Victoria Quay
Edinburgh
EH6 6QQ

15th April 2008

Dear Sir

NATIONAL PLANNING FRAMEWORK 2

I write to you on behalf of Dumfries and Galloway Chamber of Commerce and in response to the National Planning Framework 2 (NPF2) discussion draft which was published on 8 January 2008.

The Chamber of Commerce represents a wide range of businesses within Dumfries and Galloway and has recently been reorganised on a federal basis with local committees and a regional Board. Our membership comprises both small and larger locally based businesses with a high proportion of them locally owned.

The Chamber has frequently commented on the problems facing this region with the oldest and fastest ageing population of any part of the country. Out migration of the young and in migration of older people to retire has now created a serious imbalance in the population structure which now requires radical measures to address this issue effectively. We are aware and fully support the work done by the Academic Institutions at the Crichton University Campus and that this is now the most important economic regeneration project in this region.

The Chamber of Commerce is represented on the Local Economic Forum for Dumfries and Galloway and we have circulated the response from the LEF to our Board Members. I am therefore writing to confirm the full support of the Chamber to the comments made by the LEF.

We would wish to stress in particular the reference to the need for Stranraer and the related infrastructure to be regarded as a National Development. We were represented at the meeting in Easterbrook hall and it was clear that this was a view that was shared

by the majority of those present. The Stranraer Committee of Chamber has been closely following the proposals for the Waterfront and are fully aware that Stenna have not abandoned their investment plans but they are now developing an alternative project which they confirmed at the Easterbrook Hall meeting would be dependant on the necessary investment in upgrading the road links to Stranraer.

It strikes us as odd that a passenger hub of the importance of Stranraer should not be included as a national development and also that a road such as the A75 which is recognised as being of European significance should not be regarded as being of national importance.

The second point that we should like to emphasise is the relative position of the rural areas of the South West in comparison with those of the Highlands. The OECD report (published after the NPF) has identified the disparities that have been clear to us in the South West for a number of years. We are aware of the progress that has been made in Highlands and we certainly do not wish to criticise this. However the funding for HIE is roughly three times per head of population of the Enterprise Company in Dumfries and Galloway while European funding have recently increased in Highlands to three and a half times that available to this region on a per capita basis. Similarly spending on Higher Education in Highlands runs some six to seven times per head of population than in Dumfries and Galloway. Clearly this skewing of resources is a major factor in the growing gap between the remoter rural areas that the OECD report identified.

We hope that these comments will be taken into account when the final NPF is produced.

Yours sincerely

Gordon L Mann
President
Dumfries and Galloway Chamber of Commerce