

As a 'plan' or a 'framework' the document fails entirely: it does not give any view of what might be desirable for Scotland in future. Rather, the predicted outcomes of future development are taken as read. These outcomes are that there will be a continuing net shift of population from the established high-density urban areas of the west to the lower density settlements in the east and, to a lesser degree, the north, and that, with the exception of Edinburgh, all of Scotland's urban centres will continue to decline in population. This can be explained by, on the one hand, a desire to pursue 'economic development' - measured in the crudest national income terms - at any cost, and, on the other, a chronic lack of confidence in promoting the currently 'unattractive' parts of Scotland. This has a number of consequences which the document does not adequately examine:

- Lower overall density of settlement requires a greater input of transport.
- A continuing shift of population eastwards will place increasing pressure on greenfield space in that part of the country.
- A continuing shift of population away from the west will create difficulties in making the remediation and redevelopment of derelict land commercially viable.
- The clear desire to avoid suburban sprawl into the peri-urban greenbelt around Edinburgh, together with the expansion of the city's commercial areas, means that dormitory areas will inevitably be located some distance from the city.
- There is nothing in the document which makes clear that the future commercial development of Edinburgh will not be of low-density.
- Low-density commercial development and dormitory settlement together result in diffuse travel patterns which are difficult to serve by mass transportation.
- Many of the distances involved are not (perceived as) suitable for walking or cycling.

Further, the document, while frequently stating that future development for *rural* areas is through economic diversification, it does not explain how this might be achieved, although tourism - another transport intensive development - is frequently mentioned. The key difficulty that is seen to be overcome in rural areas is their connectivity, i.e. how easily the major centres of population can be accessed. That this obsession will result in more and more rural areas becoming pseudo-suburban and dormitories for long-distance commuters is not addressed. Further, in advocating the development of rural

communities, the document also contradicts itself: while stating that internet and IT allow the carrying out of business to no longer be dependent on physical proximity to others, elsewhere it cites research which has questioned the value of distance working in terms of benefit to greenhouse gas emissions.

The document is a missed opportunity in terms of being able to present a future framework for Scotland to develop in ways that require less transport input, and there should be an assessment of where and how development can take place with least negative impact on the environment. Clearly, this would require measures to be undertaken by the government to actively encourage development in the west and discourage it in the east, and in order to do this, the document would need to examine why the pattern of development that has taken place hitherto, has done so. While this might seem like a blatant call to support the west of Scotland in favour of the east, a couple of things should be borne in mind. First of all, the economic policies of the past fifty years have - irrespective of actual intent - favoured the east, hence the observed patterns of development: it is not unreasonable to expect action to redress this balance. Secondly, the general direction of policy over the past half-century has been towards dispersal, but in order to reduce the necessity for transport in future, there needs to be an encouragement of dense urban development near existing transport systems, and the greatest opportunity for this kind of development - on 'brownfield' land - is in the west. That said, a not-insubstantial amount of derelict land also exists within the City of Edinburgh and the government needs to assert just what sort of development should take place there. NPF2 should seek to spread growth - whether by economic, population, social development or any other measure - proportionately around the country. However, in order to do this, the key imbalances between areas where population has been growing and declining have to be addressed, and the substantial depopulation of the west of Scotland (which is predicted to continue) needs to be reversed.

Sadly, the Second National Planning Framework shows the government as pursuing a 'lowest common denominator' approach: that if there is any impediment at all to the wishes of business, then Scotland has nothing to offer. Surely, a Scottish Nationalist government should be seeking to change this psychology.