

**Main Issues Report Stakeholder Workshop:
Sustainable Economic Growth
DGOne, Dumfries
19 April 2011**

Workshop Attendees

Name	Organisation
Maggie Gordon	D&G Food Co-operative
Bob Lee	Barfil Management Centre
Ian Anderson	Scottish Natural Heritage
Colin Bell	Scottish Enterprise
Gordon Mann	Crichton Trust D&G Chamber of Commerce
Mike Bonaventura	Crichton Carbon Centre
Robert Gladstone	Smiths Gore
James Gladstone	Smiths Gore
Amy Tigg	Transport Scotland
Chris Miles	Scottish Natural Heritage
Karlis Pramhs	Individual - Castle Douglas resident
Inga McVicar	Destination Dumfries & Galloway
Ewan Green	DGC - Economic Development Operations Manager
Andrew Maxwell	DGC – Development Planning and Environment Service Manager
Mairi Telford-Jammeh	DGC – Annandale & Eskdale
Shona McCoy	DGC – Development Planning Team Leader
Hugh James Killen	DGC – Development Planning Senior Planner

Workshop Notes:

General Local Development Plan (LDP) Comments

How stable is the context of the LDP given the forthcoming elections?
The current planning system is underpinned by Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 2006. Regardless of the elections, there would not be a significant alteration of the LDP process in the short term.

More clarity on the Vision is needed. The LDP needs to set out more clearly what D&G could be like in 20 years time. There is a fine line between flexibility and allocating land for specific uses.

The Scottish Government aspiration for sustainable economic growth could be considered a contradiction, workshop attendees suggested that it should be changed to sustainable development. The emphasis in MIR is on economic growth and not sustainable economic growth.

How collaborative are we with neighbouring Councils such as Ayrshire and Scottish Borders? Are timescales in sync?

Each council has to consult neighbouring councils on their LDP's. They are not necessarily in sync but will be kept more up to date.

Charette / Community involvement

How can we create places where people want to live is a main issue which the proposed plan will need to address. Scottish Government documents such as 'Designing Places' and 'Designing Streets' aim to improve the layout of housing developments to create places where people wish to live.

Could we expand the Ladyfield Charette process as a way to help prepare inset maps?

A Charette requires a lot of preparation. A number of officers from both the Council and key agencies such as Scottish Water and SNH would be needed. It would be a resource intensive process for 49 settlements and could not be done quickly

It was suggested that Leader funding through "communities for change" is currently available. It might be possible to use it to fund such an approach. There are a number of active local initiatives throughout the region which could get involved and the Councils partnership officers could also help. Given the timescales involved it may not be possible to do for all 49 settlements but could be an option for the larger settlements e.g. district centres. There could be an opportunity to link up with community planning partners.

It was recommended that the outcomes from the Lochgelly Scottish Sustainable Communities Initiative (SSCI) Charette be looked at as a starting point.

It was suggested that the proposed plan needs to make doing the right thing easier and not make doing the wrong thing easy.

Employment Policies

Employment

There are a number of young people in the region that do not want to go away to university or college, what opportunities are there for them locally?

There is also an ageing workforce that need to and want to work longer, what opportunities are there for them?

Mixed Use

Sustainable development tends to result in mixed use developments. There are not many businesses that need to be segregated from residential areas. High density developments where people are able to walk or cycle to work should be the aim. The pattern of development changes from 'zoning development' to creating neighbourhoods. The proposed plan needs to be innovative or we will fail by 'doing the same old thing'.

Key Sectors

Education is an important key sector that should be included in the proposed plan. The Crichton University Campus in Dumfries has helped to slow down the out-migration of young people from the region.

Providing planning policy support for key sectors was considered by the group to be a good way forward. Cross cutting across key sectors important along with synergy – e.g. food tourism.

The biosphere could provide good opportunities for economic growth which needs to be recognised in the proposed plan.

Employment Land

Should the proposed plan protect employment sites? Given land values then probably yes.

Existing businesses should be protected against difficulties arising from new development being situated adjacent to them e.g. noise pollution from the existing business could be problematic for the new houses. Clear policy direction would be required.

Need to think 'outside the box'. The traditional approach of identifying land to attract business in may need rethinking. Successful businesses in D&G are 'home grown' such as Natural Power, Dalry and PowerGrip (Gates Corporation), Dumfries.

Employment Hubs

Perth & Kinross have introduced employment hubs at Alyth which is a similar rural region as D&G. Local community involvement was key. Businesses benefit from quicker internet speeds. This should be investigated to see if a similar approach could be adopted in D&G.

Climate Change

The proposed plan should focus more on lifestyle choices, approach to design, the use of local materials. Biomass schemes have an important role to play, the proposed plan should support the use of them at the smaller community level.

Sustainable communities – how do we create them? We should stop looking at individual sites in isolation and plan at the neighbourhood level and nothing less.

Renewable Energy

Scottish Power is likely to be investing £1.5 billion in the region through future renewable energy schemes. Are there likely to be any economic benefits for the region?

Shetland / Western Islands have been successful in community energy programmes which should be investigated to see if D&G could adopt similar policies.

Carbon Reduction

Should the LDP set a target for carbon reduction? This would make D&G different from the rest. The Council has set a target for reducing carbon in its own buildings as an example to private and other public sector businesses.

It was considered by some of the attendees that the private sector will primarily drive the renewable energy sector and that Building Regulations will continue to improve insulation levels for houses. With that in mind what can planning do?

Natural Environment

The natural environment is a key economic resource, it attracts visitors to the region and can help the health and well being of existing communities. The relationship of the proposed plan with the Local Biodiversity Action Plan and natural environment is key.

Transport

Poor public transport makes it difficult for people to access work. The workforce needs to be flexible in terms of travelling. The MIR is proposing to fix people to location. We should be looking to reduce people's needs to travel give the current cost of fuel, it would also be more sustainable.

Concentrating people in locations could provide the critical mass needed to support public transport as public transport will no doubt get worse considering the majority of public transport is currently subsidised.

Retail

The new Tesco store at Castle Douglas may not have affected Castle Douglas town centre too much but it has had an impact on other settlements such as Gatehouse. Majority of shops in Castle Douglas are owner occupied which means they can operate with lower margins, might help explain it success.

Producers markets not held in town centres.

Whitstable, Kent is a good example of town centre that's successful.

Shopping patterns have changed – lifestyles have changed. Should we argue for the retention of town centres as they were? Should they be more cultural centres if their traditional role has changed? Different approach is needed for different centres – 'not one size fits all'. Should the Local Development Plan reflect that?