

The "draft" NPPF – National Planning Policy Framework for "consultation"

29+/7/11 by Henry Adams henryadams@dragonfly1.plus.com www.twitter.com/@henryadamsUK #NPPF

The recently announced changes to the planning system are huge – the biggest changes for decades, and as with many government policies, e.g. Lansley's for the NHS – it is for the benefit of big business profits (for chums of the "millionaires club" in government).

With planning – it is the handing over of the countryside to big business to carve up – by replacing proper planning with excessive deregulation and the promotion of development for economic growth.

De-regulation and short-term greed caused the recession and damaged our economy. This truth is ignored by Osborne, Pickles and Clark – and now these factors threaten to damage our countryside – in this case irreversibly.

You are welcome to forward this on to whoever you reckon might be interested. I hope they will write their concerns both to their MPs and to the "consultation" process, which closes on **17oct11**.

Primarily it is the over-arching emphasis and presumption for economic growth that needs to be changed. Such change to the NPPF is already being strongly insisted by campaigns by the National Trust, CPRE and RSPB – but your support will be essential. This document aims to make that quick and easy, by providing links overleaf in the section headed **ACTION**.

Also appended are links to the actual NPPF document and interesting relevant articles.

I've been copying this - my first impression from a quick partial skim-read of the draft NPPF to a number of people - in the hope I'll be corrected - I actually hope my assessment turns out to be wrong!

My comment appended to BES article titled:

National Planning Policy Framework released

<http://britishecologicalsociety.org/blog/blog/2011/07/26/national-planning-policy-framework-released/comment-page-1/#comment-189090> (I am a member of the BES)

My first impression on skimming through the draft Planning Framework is that the above BES description cherry-picks the best parts of the document some of which are very appealing to nature-conservation-minded ecologists (including myself) - but naively omits to show us that all these good attributes are almost totally made subservient to the very obvious over-riding emphasis on promotion of economic growth by allowing unrestrained development, with deregulation of planning restrictions and conditions that have helped up to now to protect the environment. E.g. "Planning must operate to encourage growth and not act as an impediment". In fact - it reverses the whole emphasis and meaning of planning re the countryside from constraining loss of the countryside to promoting loss of countryside - to building-development.

It is underlain by a neoliberal type of conservative political ideology (unleash profit-making big business greed-is-good from regulatory constraints), and promotes an associated economic GROWTH model which many ecologists see as obsolete for a future to cope with climate change by resilience and with declining and limited natural resources. Why should one ideology - favoured by big business and many of the rich and powerful, coupled with an increasingly dubious economic model - be allowed such a strong emphasis - when many of us find this thinking abhorrent.

The "nice bits" referred to in the BES article are typical of the present government - the way it puts up a green-screen to hide what it actually wants to do - which is exactly the opposite! I could give many examples: it's first one was the promise for a "greenest government ever" followed by e.g. an attempt to sell-off our forests; also

Cameron's claims for a desire to reduce carbon emissions, which contradicts government's less open attempts to support free-trade of tar sands oil (despite this oil having the highest production emissions of all oils) - as if outsourced carbon is OK then! - This green-screening and green-wash is a frequent government ploy. So the planning framework is full of contradictions - which it realizes - so tries to resolve that by saying that they are not the contradictions they seem to be (so that resolves that then?).

I hope my initial interpretation is incorrect - and that yours turns out to be correct, but the government's track record suggests I may be right.

BES reply: "Thanks for comment on BES blog post on NPPF. We have significant concerns about the doc - particularly the emphasis on economy"

The draft NPPF can be downloaded from the following link – but first read my notes of caution below.
<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/planningandbuilding/draftframework>

NB: Be aware when you read the NPPF that the word "**sustainable**" is used as a "weasel word", in that it gets re-defined as early as page 3, for example in the heading "The presumption in favour of sustainable development" (which it says should be "at the heart of the planning system") – which is a contradiction in terms, unless the word "sustainable" is replaced with the word "sustained". This redefinition is then made clearer by the statements: "The Government is committed to ensuring that the planning system does everything it can to support sustainable economic growth. A positive planning system is essential because, without growth, a sustainable future cannot be achieved. Planning must operate to encourage growth and not act as an impediment. Therefore, significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth through the planning system." "Local planning authorities should plan positively for new development, and approve all individual proposals wherever possible." It is obvious that a strong priority is being given for *growth* to be sustained, not for the natural resources of the countryside to be sustained. It is in contradiction with even the Oxford dictionary's definition of sustainable i.e. without "damage to the environment" or "depletion of the natural resource" – consequences the prevention of which would presumably come under "impediment"s.

Bear in mind that the ConDem government got rid of the Sustainable Development Commission (the SDC would surely have strongly condemned this misuse of the term).

ACTION: You can help change the NPPF by adding your name to the **National Trust's** internet petition and by using templates provided by **CPRE** and **RSPB** to email your MP and the NPPF Consultation:

NT: http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/main/w-chl/w-countryside_environment/w-planning-landing.htm

CPRE: <http://e-activist.com/ea-action/action?ea.client.id=21&ea.campaign.id=11530&ea.tracking.id=cpre-web>

RSPB: <http://campaigning.rspb.org.uk/ea-action/action?ea.client.id=13&ea.campaign.id=11417>

The RSPB link states that "Consequences for natural environment could be severe" (if NPPF left as it is now).

Some of the many other recent articles re NPPF worth reading:

http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2011/jul/28/localism-bill-sacrifice-countryside-market?CMP=tw_t_gu - Simon Jenkins – a good read.

http://www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2011/jul/26/planning-changes-green-belt-nppf?CMP=tw_t_fd – John Vidal – "National Trust warns planning changes could tear up countryside"

http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/damian-carrington-blog/2011/jul/26/planning-policy-development-green-belt?CMP=tw_t_fd

<http://www.rspb.org.uk/news/285404-wildlife-threatened-by-short-sighted-planning-reform>

http://www.foe.co.uk/news/new_planning_system_harmful_to_environment_32168.html#.Tj42UU_OfMM.twitter

<http://saveourwoods.co.uk/articles/news/nppf-a-response-to-advice-produced-by-planning-inspectorate-for-use-by-inspectors/>

<http://www.cpre.org.uk/media-centre/latest-news-releases/item/2392-radical-planning-shake-up-threatens-green-fields>

Not on the NPPF but on the strong corporate pressures on Government that influence its policies, by Professor David Beetham – a paper titled "Unelected Oligarchy": <http://www.democraticaudit.com/corporate-and-financial-dominance-in-britains-democracy>

Url for the present document: <http://www.dragonfly1.plus.com/HenryAdams-re-NPPF.pdf> 29/7/11 with subsequent additions.