

Response to National Policy Forum – Local Economic Development

Submission on behalf of Totnes and Newton Abbot CLPs. This was developed by members at a policy forum event (22/06/2019) based on knowledge of our constituencies, reflection on the recent District election campaign, and our reading of the NPF briefing.

Question (a) & (b)

(a) How can each of the following be used to support local economic development? (b) How can each of the following be reformed to strengthen the role they can play in local economic development?

Planning – by encouraging the Green economy locally. Include in planning a commitment to install renewable energy systems, improved insulation, etc. will create an immediate boost to the local economy but will also create long term jobs in the maintenance, design and manufacture of components.

Procurement – modify the competitive tendering regulations so that consideration of the social aspect when evaluating ‘best value’. Price is not everything, impact on the environment, local employment, transport miles, etc. need to be taken into account. Encourage co-operative partnerships between suppliers and purchasers. Putting large numbers of contracts with a small number of major suppliers through Framework Contracts can have devastating impacts on local suppliers and sub-contractors.

All wage and benefit conditions to meet Living Wage criteria as a minimum.

Enterprise Zones – current structures do not work and a more flexible, quicker to react, be more locally based and allow local people to respond more easily. Decisions currently seem to be made by a few and exclude many businesses, particularly the smaller ones.

Support that is readily and quickly available for small businesses needs to be established as the failure rate in this sector is very high.

Housing – through social housing building need to encourage use of local suppliers, maybe dividing up developments to allow smaller local builders to compete for contracts and again by requiring energy efficiency this will support the local economy. See below regarding local energy generating schemes.

Energy & Low Carbon – Applying the Transition Town Totnes experiences would encourage self-employment start-ups, local energy organisations #, less food miles, etc. Local employment results in less commuting & less pollution.

<https://tresoc.co.uk/>

Car sharing, social housing developments including provision of a shared electric car in the rental*all help to reduce living costs and pollution.

*www.southdartmoorcommunityenergy.org

Local Banks – Totnes has seen all but one of the major banks close their branches over recent years so we are now left with one & the post office. Establishing more Credit Unions or returning to

organisations based on the mutual building society philosophy would assist the many people who still need face to face banking services.

Devolution – We recognise that some matters such as rail and road infrastructure are a national decision but that does not mean that through such means as citizens assemblies that involvement at a local level cannot take place. The current more formal approach of nationally controlled enquiries does not seem to meet the needs of local people. They are expensive, complex and lengthy which results in high levels of frustration. The Labour Party should be seen to be at the heart of co-operation amongst the citizens of the UK.

Question (c)

How should Britain use state aid to support local economic development? How should state aid rules be reformed if greater flexibility is introduced on Britain's exit from the European Union?

State aid should reach the point that it is to be most effective quickly, easily and with the minimum of administration. Too much aid money is diluted by intermediate administration meaning that the actual financial benefit is reduced before it reaches the point where it is needed. Match funding is not always possible and in many instances the capital funds are provided but running costs to get the idea up and running are not included. Hence many well being projects fail in the early years. Simplification of the process is long overdue.

Question (d)

What should replace EU Structural Funds? On what basis and for what purposes should any replacement funds be distributed?

EU Structural Funds or their replacement must continue to enable the regions to have the major infrastructure investment that is so desperately needed. In this area the obvious examples would be the rail communications to the far south west; the broadband service improvements and rural transportation. All of these would generate employment and create the need for improved training resulting in future proof service industry jobs and money into local economy, particularly when linked to other measures to fully incorporate full environmental and social assessments when making funding decisions.