For the attention of The Inspector

Comments on Public Inquiry Round Table Discussion Paper

Population Figures

In essence the whole Revised Strategic Plan rests on question of predicting population levels; this is substantially based on predicting net [assumed to be] [in] migration on an annual basis. Several people / organisations query the reliability on the figure of 500. The figure of 500 is said not to support the Tynwald approved document “Vision 2020”. Carse Hannay specifically show how this figure may be inaccurate. [As presumably the same two people who have previously, as Government employees, led / administered the Isle of Man Census they should have a good insight understanding.]

What is not clear is whether the figure of 500 is intended to reflect what has happened, what it is considered most likely to happen or whether, like “Vision 2020”, it is intended to be a “visionary figure” of what it is desirable to achieve. Without any basis of understanding of where / how the figure of 500 is derived the revised Strategic Plan could be seriously misled at the outset.

During the pre-inquiry meeting I asked if it would be possible to obtain a paper explaining the basis of the 500 figure so that “people” could understand more of the background, even if the figure itself was not to be a topic for consideration in the forthcoming Inquiry. I received the answer “off course”. When I received further e-mail correspondence headed Population Projections I made the mistake of assuming that this was the agreed-to information. It was only towards the end of this consultation period when I actually had time to look at the paper (DoI Position Paper 1) that I realised I had mistaken DoI for DED and that the information has not been supplied to date. I have since requested the information from Carl Hawker but have had no reply.

I now note that the DoI have in their above paper argued further against querying the 500 figure within the Inquiry. While I note their position, this was not what I requested. An explanation was requested and seemingly agreed to. It is of concern that, having now looked more at other submissions, I note that others had previously requested such an explanation and again noted that it has not been supplied.

For a normal planning application going, say, to appeal or Inquiry, I have always understood that reference to and more especially reliance on statistics and / or information in reports may only be given weight when the sources are available for public scrutiny even if the reports in which they occur are not themselves the subject of or to be examined at the appeal / inquiry.

In this instance we appear to be being denied all access to such information.

I respect that by looking at a range of scenarios it is hoped to address the question of estimates being too high or too low but I remain of the opinion that there should be the opportunity if not to examine ie query the figure of 500, at least to ensure there is common understanding of what has gone into its make up so that other figures for projected housing needs may be properly put into context.

I also attach a newspaper extract from July 28th 2015 which seems to indicate where Government intends to “go”, without any reference to an Inquiry into a partial let alone a future full revision of the Strategic Plan.

Kind regards

Patricia Newton
There's room for 115,000 people

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ulation. We do have space to grow, he told the Examiner.

There has always been change. Looking at the population growth we've had it's not destroyed the character of the Isle of Man and I don't think it is to the detriment of the cohesion of Manx society.

Unveiling the government's Enterprise Isle initiative in Tynwald last week, Mr Bell said: We must aim to increase our working population by 500 to 1,000 people each year.

He said the working population had fallen by 775 in the past three years, that's 2 per cent of the workforce. Growing the economically active population was vital, he said, to support the ageing population and the mounting costs of pensions, health and care.

Statistics published by the Cabinet Office earlier this year indicate a fall-off in both population growth and inward migration. The total number of new work permits or renewals issued has fallen each year from 5,321 in 2021 to 3,842 last year.

The Chamber of Commerce says net inward migration of 1,000 a year - that's 15,000 in 15 years - would give 3 per cent growth in jobs.

Jane Dellar, the Chamber's chief executive, said: We are only talking about an additional increase of 500 people per year over the current government forecast, so we are not talking about an overnight sea change.

The more important question, in Chamber's view, is the consequences of not seeking an increase in the economically active population.

She said those consequences would be a per cent economic growth, a 44 per cent increase in those aged 65 and an 0.3 per cent decrease in those between 25 and 44.

'So if you think we are facing a challenging fiscal picture now, please take a moment to imagine the unpalatable prospect of life with a smaller working population and a significantly larger number of pensioners,' she said.

If, however, there was net inward migration of 1,000 per year and then by the year 2026, the population would have risen by 10,000 and there would be an increase in working age 25-44-year-olds, which will support the increase in pension costs.

She said it has to be the right kind of population growth and welcomed the Chief Minister's Enterprise Isle initiative.

'Jobs attract people, not the other way around, so attracting owner-entrepreneurs and smoothing entry to the island for the skilled workers who will follow them as key,' she said.

The Chief Minister's speech is a very positive step in that direction,' she said.

The infrastructure already well manages the instant jump of significant numbers during TT-races, severance and hospital etc.

'There is a general acceptance the island could take a population of 115,000 without the need for any change to the infrastructure. Then there's the additional benefits - more workers equals more spending in the shops and restaurants, more people taking flights and ferries, cost efficiencies for utilities and government services,' she said.

Centre-piece of the Enterprise Isle initiative is a £50m Enterprise Development Fund to support the growth of new business and new jobs for the island.

There are also changes to the work permit legislation to be brought in from October, with most permits issued for five years rather than requiring annual renewal.
Another 15,000+ living in the island

The island's population will have to expand substantially over the next decade to protect public finances, pensions and frontline services.

That's the view of government and business leaders who believe no inward migration of up to an extra 1,000 extra workers a year is needed, that's 15,000 – the size of the populations of Onchan, Port Erin and Port St Mary combined – over 15 years.

And the actual population increase would be higher still as it would include the partners and children of the newcomers.

INFRASTRUCTURE

The Chamber of Commerce claims the island's population could increase to 115,000 without having to improve the infrastructure.

That would be like adding a population of almost the size of Douglas to the current population of 86,000.

Chief Minister Allan Bell said he did not believe such demographic changes would destroy the island's character.

He pointed out that over the last 20 years there had been substantial investment in the island's infrastructure.

'We can cater for a larger pop...