

I am sorry I could not attend the meeting at Hillyard House on Tuesday 22nd April, I really did intend to try and go. How did the meeting go?

I appreciate your flexibility in allowing me to raise my issue via Email instead and would be grateful if you could forward it to the OFMDFM under Consultation on Section 75.

My issue is one, I believe, of inequality and disadvantage concerning provision of employment in South Down and Newcastle in particular.

I was fortunate myself to have started my employment years in Lisburn and served both the Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service and the general public for over 23 years in the Fire 999 Control Centre (1974-1998). During the latter years of my service I moved from Lisburn to live in Newcastle near my elderly parents and where I married and settled down (1989). I was one of the lucky few nowadays to have had a well paid secure job even though I was pensioned out on medical grounds in 1998, which is more than I can say for the prospect ahead of many residents of Newcastle. Recently however I was trying to get back to work again and, although being well qualified, I found local employment prospects bleak to say the least. Even my employment advisor for Belfast admitted that I was in one of Northern Ireland's worse "Black Spots" if I wished to be employed within Newcastle. Although I found this unsurprising I have to admit I was still sadly disappointed.

During the past 20 years here in Newcastle I have observed that there has been no inward investment for the creation of local employment. Any time I would try to mention it in passing conversations I would get the stock answer "Sure you've got Tourism". I do not deny the well appreciated investment in improving Newcastle's image but as usual this is to benefit mostly tourism. Don't get me wrong, it is well appreciated. What of employment prospects then? Well you are all right if you are;

A business (trader) owner

Prepared to commute (often to Belfast) to gain employment of a certain standard

What is largely left is only low paid often seasonal work. There are practically NO JOBS in Newcastle for the myriad of well qualified people, both mature and school leavers, who wish to be employed locally in a job with good prospects and befitting the skills they have obtained. The Down and Ards Area Plan set aside only ONE very small pocket of land off the Dundrum Road (beside the Barbican Filling Station) for future industrial use up to 2015. This I have to say was very indicative of the lack of commitment to Newcastle

employment. To add to this problem the Housing Executive appear to have been re-locating many people out of the greater Belfast area (for very good social reasons I'm sure) into Newcastle but yet there are too few jobs even for locals let alone the new recent population influx. When re-locations are made they should ensure that there is a healthy employment situation in the target area before arranging re-location to it. You can't help thinking that it seems preferable that if you are going to draw unemployment benefit you may as well do it at the seaside.

There are a lot of well qualified people in Newcastle of all ages and this provides a valuable talent pool for any prospective employer. We just have to get past the apathetic notion that our tourism is all we need. In this day and age of increasing global awareness of the need to protect the environment it is more and more important that we try to provide employment locally for people to reduce the number of commuters on the road and improve the environment at the same time. Government policy to date has been to Centralise everything thus exacerbating the commuter problem and increasing the carbon footprint instead of reducing it.

Over the past 20 or 30 years I have heard of lots of investments made to improve unemployment figures in Northern Ireland but it always seems to be elsewhere. Historically it does not matter whether the lack to any coming to Newcastle is due to our local politicians not pushing hard enough, not pushing at all maybe or just political prejudice, what matters is here and now.

Therefore I would argue that NEWCASTLE NEEDS JOBS and has not received fair treatment in the past. Please consider this request when deciding the issues of importance to addressed within the Budget and Investment Strategy for the near future.

Many thanks for this opportunity

Yours sincerely

Josi Crory