RURAL ECONOMY AND CONNECTIVITY COMMITTEE

SOUTH OF SCOTLAND ENTERPRISE BILL

SUBMISSION FROM ANDREW MCNAB

Aims of the Agency

I welcome the proposal to establish a South of Scotland Enterprise Agency. During the consultations organised by the South of Scotland Economic Partnership a number of individuals and organisations have stressed the importance of the Agency having a social and environmental remit. I therefore welcome the recognition of this in paragraph 5(1). However, I am concerned at the wording in 5(1)(b) which states that the aim is to improve the amenity and environment of the South of Scotland. This wording seems to undervalue the importance and quality of the environment and natural resources of the South of Scotland which fundamentally provide a basis for economic and social development. I consider a more appropriate wording might be:

“conserve and enhance the environment and natural resources of the South of Scotland recognising that they provide an important base for inclusive and sustainable development.”

Paragraph 5(2) seeks further to develop the aims of the Agency. It lists five economic aims, one social aim and no environmental aims. This seems disproportionate. Paragraph 5(2)(a) refers to inclusive economic growth and I support this aim. However, it should more appropriately refer to “inclusive and sustainable economic growth.” There is global recognition that future growth needs to be sustainable.

Paragraph 5(2)(f) refers to “supporting community organisations to help them meet their communities’ needs.” I support this aim but I think it could usefully be expanded to include reference to enabling communities to research the potential for local inclusive and sustainable development, promoting the acquisition of community assets and promoting social enterprises. This would emphasise the Agency’s commitment to local, bottom-up development.

I consider that to be proportionate paragraph 5(2) should include some examples of how the Agency might assist the conservation and enhancement of the environment and natural resources. This might include assistance with evaluating natural capital, promoting local adoption of land use strategies in accord with national guidance, and enhancing the built environment.