



Spatial Economics Research Centre

Friday, 9 September 2011

You've Been Trumped

Posted by Paul Cheshire, SERC and LSE

Anthony Baxter's film [You've Been Trumped](#) is an award-winning documentary about the building of Donald Trump's now-notorious [Menie Golf Resort](#) outside Aberdeen. The film is [showing at the BFI this Sunday afternoon](#), with a Q&A session afterwards. I make some brief appearances in the film, and will be on the panel at the screening.

The film tells the extraordinary story of how [The Donald](#) managed to get planning permission to build a golf course, a hotel and 500 luxury homes on a 452-hectare site covering some of the most beautiful coastline in Britain, including a [Site of Special Scientific Interest](#). The unique environmental feature of the site - huge, shifting sand dunes - will be largely destroyed by seeding the area to create the golf course.

How did this happen? Essentially, it seems the developer used local insecurities about the decline of Aberdeen's oil economy to propose a new source of prosperity: an (illusory) golf economy. Trump's team asked Strathclyde University to conduct an impact study, which suggested that construction, golf course and hotel would result in thousands of new jobs for local people. As I explain in the film, this is not an easy argument to sustain. In reality, golf course construction is a specialised business, and the winning contractor has brought in their own trained staff from Ireland. The hotel, like most luxury hotels around the world, is very likely to be staffed largely by migrant workers. Indeed, the proposal included a 400-bedroom worker hostel!

I and other colleagues working in SERC have argued against the way our planning system [restricts housing supply](#) and [helps to make housing unaffordable for many](#). However, as the [battle over planning reform rages on](#), this is a sad story of how the system can let local communities down where there really is a case for protecting environmentally and socially important sites from development.

Financial imperatives drive councils to allow development on sites they own, particularly parks, school playing fields and allotments (for which there is currently a [waiting list of over 86,000](#)). These are sites of real value to local people, and their loss is an obvious case of market failure. But restrictions on other land - especially intensively farmed green belt - can raise the market value of other open space to a level too tempting to resist.

Posted by Admin on [Friday, September 09, 2011](#)

Recommend this on Google

5 comments:



geoperson said...

This comment has been removed by a blog administrator.

9 September 2011 at 13:15



geoperson said...

You have failed to mention that the original plans included nine hundred apartments.

9 September 2011 at 20:23



geoperson said...

Aberdeen has full employment, so that most of the labour will be recruited from outside the area, and these people will be sending the money home rather than spending it locally.

9 September 2011 at 20:25



geoperson said...

Aberdeen's oil industry is not declining; production is steady. No oil field has been abandoned. Oil fields at the end of their lives require more labour rather than less. How else can Trump hope to sell five hundred expensive houses and nine hundred apartments.

9 September 2011 at 20:31



geoperson said...

By destroying the natural environment and the dunes where Aberdonians have been taking their informal recreation for generations, Trump is making it less likely that a high technology company would want to set up in the area.

9 September 2011 at 20:47

[Post a Comment](#)

