

The Kielder Water Scheme: the last of its kind?

CS MCCULLOCH, University of Oxford, UK

SYNOPSIS. The peculiar history of the Kielder Water Scheme provides insights into the operation of democracy, the politics of promotion of mega-projects and the problems of their subsequent assessment and accountability. Two public inquiries were held before the Scheme was approved but the industry it was planned to supply was already reducing its water requirements before construction started. Opposition to the reservoir, particularly from those whose homes it would displace, was strong and divided Conservative political allegiances. The controversies, which led the Director of the Water Resources Board to claim that schemes like Kielder would never be repeated, continue even today. The history of the Scheme has been explored by examination of the records of the public Inquiry and by interviews with some of the principal actors involved in the drama.