

## **General -**

### **6d National Planning Framework 3 and Scottish Planning Policy**

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#### **o Purpose of Report**

The purpose of this report is to inform members of the publication of the third National Planning Framework for Scotland and to seek approval for a formal response to the consultation.

#### **o NPF 3**

Members will be aware that the Scottish Government publishes National Planning Framework documents, which act to influence Development Plans across the country and bring together the Government's commitments and national policies.

In April, a Main Issues Report and Draft Framework for the third such document, NPF3 was published. A number of stakeholder meetings and public exhibitions have been held to publicise the plan and formal responses are sought as input to a final Framework.

Both Local authorities' planning sections and the Strategic Development Planning Authority have been involved in discussions and have discussed with Nestrans staff the appropriate response. The attached responses have been prepared as part of a wider response by the Strategic Development Plan team, which will be considered at the SDPA meeting on 19 June 2013.

Appendix A contains an extract on the issues of relevance to Nestrans, along with a suggested response to six of the sixteen high level questions which have issues concerning strategic transport.

Responses are requested by 23 July 2013.

#### **o Scottish Government: Scottish Planning Policy**

The Scottish Government's Planning Division are also running a consultation in parallel with the NPF review into a review of the Scottish Planning Policy. The SPP sets out national planning policies for the development and use of land. It directly relates to the preparation of development plans, design of development and aids the determination of planning applications and appeals.

In so far as transportation policies are affected, there is a section in the Consultation Draft entitled "Movement: Promoting Sustainable and Active Travel".

The draft promotes sustainable patterns of transport and travel as part of the transition to a low carbon economy, supporting development in locations which are accessible by walking, cycling and public transport. It calls on plans to identify active travel networks and promote a hierarchy of modes, as well facilitating integration between modes.

Development Plans in the north east already embrace this philosophy and no significant change of priority is proposed. It is therefore suggested that Nestrans need not formally respond to the consultation, but feed into SDPA or local authority responses as necessary.

### o **Recommendation**

It is recommended that the Board:

- a) note the content of this report and consider the attached Appendix A as Nestrans' response to the consultation.

RD/David Jennings 30 May 2013

## NPF3 Main Issues Report: Consultation Questionnaire Draft Nestrans' Response

### A LOW CARBON PLACE

#### **6. Does our emerging spatial strategy help to facilitate investment in sites identified in the National Renewables Infrastructure Plan?**

Are there consenting issues or infrastructure requirements at NRIP sites that should be addressed in NPF3 through national development status or other support?

Generally, the emerging spatial strategy may help to facilitate such investment. However, NPF2 identified a strategic transport route north of Aberdeen towards Peterhead which has been omitted from the diagrams in the MIR (particularly significant being its omission from the strategy map on page 1). The link between Peterhead and Aberdeen is vital to the local economy, critical to the oil and gas industry and to the delivery of the National Renewables Infrastructure Plan. It is also key to the delivery of Energetica and the area identified for coordinated action in section 6 of the MIR. It would appear to be the only part of Scotland performing a nationally significant role (including a number of national developments) which is not shown to be linked to the rest of the country in transport terms. This omission should be rectified, with the link re-instated as a key part of the spatial strategy in NPF3.

### A NATURAL PLACE TO INVEST

#### **9. Can NPF3 do more to support sustainable tourism?**

What are the key national assets which should be developed to support recreation and tourism?

Should a national network of long distance routes be designated as a national development? What new links should be prioritised?

How can we ensure that best use is made of existing supporting infrastructure in order to increase the cross-sectoral use of these routes, and enhance the quality of the visitor experience?

It is vital that the national development proposal for a national walking and cycling network is not focused solely or even primarily at tourism. While this will be an important component, active travel (everyday walking and cycling) needs to be facilitated through a high quality network and it is through this type of use that the real benefits to the country will be achieved in terms of health, reduced congestion and CO2 emissions from transport. Any active travel benefits should be seen as integral to the justification of routes rather than an added bonus.

## A SUCCESSFUL, SUSTAINABLE PLACE

### **11. How can we help to consolidate and reinvigorate our existing settlements and support economic growth and investment through sustainable development?**

What more can NPF3 do to support the reinvigoration of our town and city centres and bring vacant and derelict land back into beneficial use?

How can NPF3 support our key growth sectors?

Could NPF3 go further in indicating what future city and town centres could look like, in light of long term trends including climate change, distributed energy generation and new technologies?

How can the strategy as a whole help to unlock the potential of our remote and fragile rural areas?

Investment in infrastructure (transport, education, public realm and affordable housing for example) is vital to facilitate the growth that is already happening in the energy sector. The investment is required to facilitate the growth that is already happening as well as support further growth.

## A CONNECTED PLACE

### **14. How can NPF3 help to decarbonise our transport networks?**

Is our emerging spatial strategy consistent with the aim of decarbonising transport?

Are there any specific, nationally significant digital infrastructure objectives that should be included in NPF3?

Should NPF3 go further in promoting cycling and walking networks for everyday use, and if so, what form could this take at a national scale?

Meeting the Scottish Government's own targets for cycling will require considerably more focus on supporting policies and infrastructure provision than is indicated in the MIR. Facilitating cycling into and within the country's largest towns and cities should be seen as a national priority to be taken up by RTPs, SDPAs and local authorities (with the support of the Scottish Government, Transport Scotland and other national agencies and organisations).

### **15. Where are the priorities for targeted improvements to our transport networks?**

Are there other nationally significant priorities for investment in transport within and between cities?

As well as prioritising links within and between cities, what national priorities should NPF3 identify to improve physical and digital connections for rural areas?

There is a need to identify the commitment to dualling the A96 between Aberdeen and Inverness.

There should also be recognition of the importance of the A90 linking Dundee-Aberdeen to ensure that this is not left as a “missing link” when there are dual-carriageways linking all of Scotland’s cities, but without commitment to upgrade this section to the same standard, including grade-separated junctions.

There is a need to recognise the need for Rail infrastructure upgrades including Aberdeen-Inverness and Aberdeen-Central Belt.

## **16. How can NPF3 improve our connections with the rest of the world?**

Should the Grangemouth Investment Zone, Aberdeen Harbour and new freight capacity on the Forth be designated as national developments?

Should Hunterston and Scapa Flow be viewed as longer-term aspirations, or should they retain national development status?

Do you agree that the aspirations for growth of key airports identified in NPF2 should remain as national developments and be expanded to include Inverness, and broadened to reflect their role as hubs for economic development?

Should the proposed High Speed Rail connection to London be retained as a national development? Should it be expanded to include a high speed rail line between Edinburgh and Glasgow?

Alternatively, should High Speed Rail be removed as a national development and instead supported as a part of the longer-term spatial strategy?

Support for the national development proposal at Aberdeen Harbour.

Support for the continued designation of Aberdeen International Airport as a national development. While the recognition of the importance of air links to the rest of the world (para 5.33) is welcome, from an Aberdeen City and Shire perspective links to the rest of the UK (and Heathrow in particular) are vital. However, there is a potential danger in widening the scope of the national development in the way proposed because the land uses associated with airports should properly be a matter for the development plan. In any event, airport masterplans would generally not cover areas outwith the perimeter of the airport except where this was required for an airport or wider transport-related proposal.

While retaining the current national development for high-speed rail is supported, any suggestion of expanding its terms needs to be treated with extreme caution. While generally supportive of the current national development, there is already a project to spend £750m on the rail system between Edinburgh and Glasgow. The costs and benefits of any additional high-speed rail project need to be set against other projects before this decision is made. For example, the East Coast mainline between Aberdeen and Edinburgh is extremely slow and has no prospect of being electrified for decades. For a long-distance journey between Scotland's four largest cities to be quicker by car than train is not acceptable and does nothing to support a shift to more sustainable transport options. Paragraph 5.18 identifies 'a significant level of investment' will be required to address constraints on the rail network at Usan (south of Montrose). However, no mention is made of the significance of the cost of high-speed rail.

There needs to be a clear focus on facilitating journeys by rail through a recognition of the role that local rail travel (including commuting) can have in reducing congestion, CO2 emissions and air pollution in Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire. Evidence suggests that rail use has grown considerably in the area over recent years and more needs to be done to support this trend.