

Scottish Planner

The Journal of RTPI Scotland

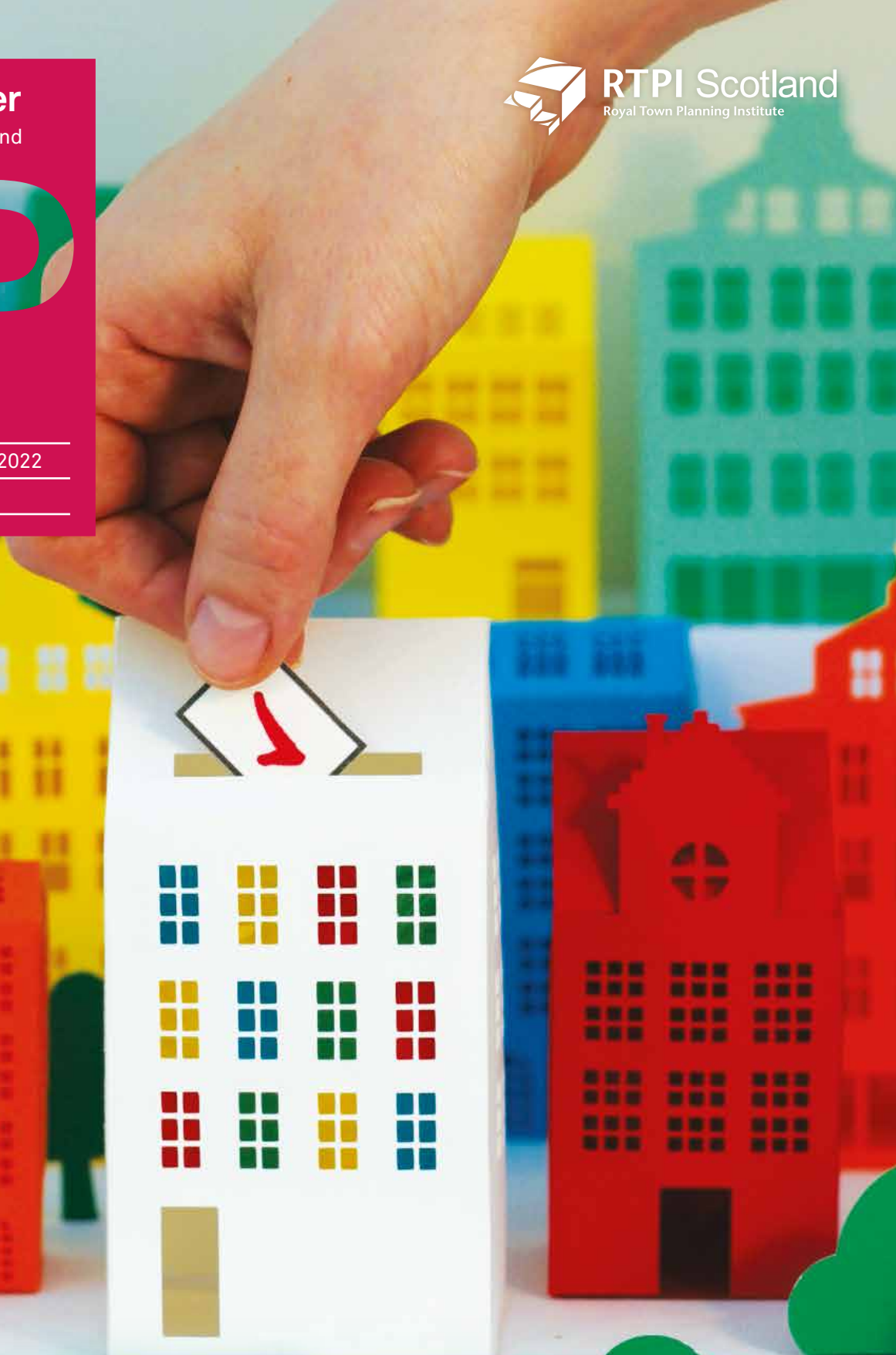
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Editorial

Welcome to our first edition of the Scottish Planner for 2022. What an exciting year we have ahead for planning indeed. Is this the year we will finally have a new National Planning Framework in place? Beyond the prospect of a finalised NPF4 being laid before parliament, there's a raft of other important workstreams being progressed at Scottish Government including for example guidance on Local Development Plans, Regional Spatial Strategies, Masterplan Consent Areas and community engagement.

Of course another key event on the horizon is the Scottish local elections due to take place on the 5th of May. This will have a total of 1,219 seats across all 32 local authorities up for grabs and no doubt hotly contested. So alongside a potentially new planning system this year, we are going to have to engage new cohort of elected members.

Local politicians play a pivotal role in the planning system and that's why we have decided to dedicate this edition to highlighting the critical link between planning, politics and local government. We have a fantastic array of articles covering all aspects of planning and local government. We hope this provides some useful ideas about how we can seek to bridge the gap between planning professionals and politicians to support our shared ambitions for vibrant, healthy and sustainable places for communities to live, work and play in.

- Robbie Calvert co-editor

Convenor's Comments: Planning, Place & Politics



Andrew Trigger
MRTPI,
Convenor
RTPI Scotland
[@convenorrtpis](https://twitter.com/convenorrtpis)

RTPI Scotland Convenor Andrew Trigger disusses the importance of investing in planning services.

With this edition of Scottish Planner focussing on local government and planning it has afforded me an opportunity to crack out my rose-tinted spectacles. Like a great many before me, and one or two since, my first venture into the planning world was in local government (the dizzy heights of the 9th floor of Aberdeen's St Nicholas House to be precise). My 'apprenticeship', spanning 10 years across two authorities in a multitude of roles gave me the grounding that enabled me to appreciate the bigger picture and even more importantly recognise that planning is as much about people as it is about place. Looking back, what particularly resonates is the time that my colleagues invested in me to help develop my skills and whilst it didn't feel like it at the time (especially the wild goose chases!) nor was referred to as such, we would now recognise it as on the job mentoring.

Hearing the experiences of some current local authority planners there is a sense that time is a luxury that can be ill-afforded just now with heavy workloads and a planning system in transition to adjust to. I understand the pressure, but I cannot help but worry for those new to the profession with the situation exacerbated by the pandemic depriving many of the opportunity for 'observational learning' – such as how a colleague handles a meeting or a phone call and the quickfire line of questioning that would follow. Inevitably, it raises the matter of resourcing in the planning system, and it will have its time in the spotlight again later in the year. I don't think any of us want to work in a poor performing planning system and if proper resourcing provides a quality of service, engagement and outcomes that ultimately manage the development and use of land in the long-term public interest then surely, it's hard to argue with...

Talk of resourcing leads us to the relationship between planning and politics. The two will forever be intertwined and I for one, always enjoyed my interactions with the

elected members (partly due to the sweeties passed around on the planning committee tour bus) although the committee meetings in the run up to a local election definitely had the feel of running the gauntlet! We cannot forget that these are ordinary people who for the most part are not qualified planners. Like with our colleagues that are new to the profession, we have a duty to support our councillors to get their heads around a system with no wrong answers and where every case is judged on its own merits. They are held accountable and 2022 is another year of reckoning for them. As the key decisionmakers for our Local Development Plans, our Regional Spatial Strategies, and the majority of major planning applications across the country it is critical to emphasise the positive role planning can offer. This will be a key workstream for RTPI Scotland this year alongside efforts to bolster the Politicians in Planning Network (PIPNetwork) and we call upon member support in this cause.

Planning is about people as well as place. If you have some time to spare, please keep thinking about how you can continue to share your knowledge, experience, and skills with others and help me keep the rose-tinted spectacles for everyday use! ■

“Like with our colleagues that are new to the profession, we have a duty to support our councillors to get their heads around a system with no wrong answers and where every case is judged on its own merits.”

Article: Draft National Planning Framework 4 Consultation

Robbie Calvert MRTPI, Policy, Practice and Research Officer, at RTPI Scotland looks at the recent consultation regarding the draft National Planning Framework 4.

It's been a long winding road for planning reform in Scotland, from its early conception with the independent review of planning in 2016, to the Planning Act receiving Royal Assent in 2019, and now the scrutiny of the draft National Planning Framework 4 (draft NPF4). The process of drafting the new spatial vision of Scotland to 2045 has in itself been much longer than anticipated, drawn out by the unprecedented circumstances deriving from the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Draft NPF4 was laid in Parliament on 10 November 2021, triggering both parliamentary and public scrutiny running for 120 days to the end of March. The publication of the draft NPF4 followed an extensive engagement process; through a call for evidence and the subsequent publication and consultation on the NPF4 Position Statement. With the consultation now passed colleagues at Scottish Government will undoubtedly have their hands full, collating responses, reflecting, and choosing the best course of action. The final NPF4 will then be laid before parliament for a vote accompanied by an explanatory document which sets out any changes made in response to the consultations or why changes have not been made.

RTPI Scotland has been closely involved throughout all the consultation stages and especially so during this important draft scrutiny period. We have been busy undertaking an engagement strategy on

behalf of Scottish Government which has included running a series of 4 roundtables alongside 7 chapters events. These events were a great opportunity for our 2,100 members across Scotland to set out their views. We drew in a great range of presentations; across private, public and third sector covering differing geographical and sectoral perspectives. The importance of this kind of engagement work can't be understated, as it's our members that will be the key means by which the NPF4 will be implemented.

In January RTPI Scotland responded to the Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee's inquiry through both written and oral evidence and in March we submitted a full response to the government's consultation.

So in a nutshell what makes the draft NPF4 different from previous national planning policy frameworks? Firstly it is worth noting what an ambitious document this is and in many regards it is broadening our collective horizons on the potential of the planning system can have in achieving a number of desired societal outcomes. The document is

“With the consultation now passed colleagues at Scottish Government will undoubtedly have their hands full, collating responses, reflecting, and choosing the best course of action”



Robbie Calvert
MRTPI
Policy, Practice and
Research Officer at
RTPI Scotland

split into four the sections, the first being the Spatial Strategy which intends to bring together the document as a whole. It sets out an overarching spatial strategy for Scotland in the future which includes Spatial Priorities, 6 Spatial Principles and Action Areas. The section is intended to guide the preparation of Regional Spatial Strategies, Local Development Plans and Local Place Plans and be relevant to wider policies and strategies relating to land use. Part 2 of the draft NPF4 proposes a series of 18 national developments, 10 carried through from the NPF3. This designation means that the principle of the development does not need to be agreed in later consenting processes, providing more certainty for communities, business and investors. Appropriate consents and associated impact assessments will still be undertaken in line with statutory obligations. There is very much a green growth theme running through these National Developments - which is something RTPI Scotland is very supportive of - and these projects could be transformative for Scotland if delivered. There does however need to be some clarifications setting out the status and consenting process which planners are to follow when handling such applications. Importantly it also remains to be seen how they are to be funded and delivered.

The draft NPF4 has a very different look and feel from the NPF3 and that is mostly a consequence of it incorporating Scottish Planning Policy, with part 3 including a suite of revised National Planning Policies (NPPs). Undoubtedly this section has received the most scrutiny in the consultation period and for a very good reason - all of these policies when adopted can be applied directly to decisions on individual applications with the NPF4 now part of the statutory development plan. This section is split into four overarching themes, Sustainable Places (a section of universal policies that need to be applied to all planning applications), Liveable Places, Productive Places and Distinctive Places. Some of these NPPs are new, some have had minor changes when being brought through from Scottish Planning Policy and others have had more significant changes and extensions.



In our response we have made clear that each and every policy in the draft NPF4 needs to provide clarity and certainty to give confidence to decisions makers and help deliver the outcomes for the NPF4 set

out in the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019. We believe that this will involve a significant amount of 'stress testing' i.e., working these policies through real world planning application scenarios to ensure planners working in planning authorities can make robust decisions and provide applicants with much needed direction and certainty. It seems like many of the NPPs could do with being sharper and more

succinct to avoid lengthy legal challenges and appeals which could snarl up the planning system whilst focusing the decision maker on the critical issues at hand when determining an application. There are many elements of the NPPs where concepts can be better defined, and processes mapped out through publication of associated guidance. Further to this, there are a number referenced strategies and guidance that are out-of-date and need to be updated to reflect the ambitious nature of the Framework.

The final section deals with delivery and in lieu of draft delivery plan published alongside the draft NPF4 Scottish Government have set out some thinking of how to implement the Framework. This includes setting out thinking on the potential role of how developer contributions,

Masterplan Consent Areas, and the Infrastructure First Principle can work in the synergy with the proposed Framework. The draft NPF4 contains a number of new and expanded policies and a range of new assessments which will have a cumulative resource impact on planning authorities. This is an issue of great concern to the Institute and many other stakeholders. Many of the scrutinising parliamentary committees have also picked up on this as a fundamental consideration so we hope this message will be heard loud and clear. Beyond additional workloads there are many new elements within the draft NPF4 which will require an industry wide upskilling. Fundamentally we need to design a planning system that can operate effectively in the resource constrained environment we find ourselves in or find new ways of bringing the appropriate amount of resource in to support the expanded role of planning.

Beyond this we need to ensure that the vision for Scotland becomes a reality, and this will require careful consideration on where funding can be derived. Throughout the planning reform we have advocated for a capital investment programme to be published alongside a final NPF4, as was published in Ireland alongside their National Planning Framework. As part of this we have urged Scottish Government to collaborate with stakeholders in developing a delivery plan, including a resourcing strategy.

Regardless of whether Scottish Government make significant or minor rewrites before the final NPF4 is laid before Parliament one thing is for definite: the NPF4 will change how we all work for the next decade and beyond. So let's hope we get a document which will help position a proactive planning system at the core of our push to a more successful, healthy, green and resilient Scotland. ■

“Fundamentally we need to design a planning system that can operate effectively in the resource constrained environment we find ourselves in or find new ways of bringing the appropriate amount of resource in to support the expanded role of planning.”

Q&A

Public Enquiries



Jane Tennant MRTPI,
Scottish Young Planner of the Year.

Jane Tennant
MRTPI,
Scottish Young
Planner of the Year

1 Who has been the biggest inspiration or influence on your career and why?

This is a tough question! I have encountered so many great people in this profession over the last decade who have inspired and influenced me. I don't have enough space here to mention them all. In terms of inspiration, the spark that started the fire for me was during the CSGN conference in 2012 where we heard from Lisa Switkin, from James Corner Field Operations speak about the Highline in New York. I was blown away by her presentation and it was inspiring to hear about such a great place, how it was created and the new leaves of life it was generating. I would also add that as someone who is a bit of an older Young Planner, I am also inspired by those who are younger and have joined the profession in recent years, it gives me confidence for the future.

2 What do you feel is the biggest issue facing planners and planning at the moment?

There are a number of issues, which are also opportunities. However, I think for the planning system resourcing is a key issue. The additional requirements of the new planning system and the reduction in staff levels since the recession could have significant impact on existing staff. Added to this is the loss of knowledge and experience through retirement. A mentorship scheme would ensure succession of the knowledge and understanding of experience so that it is not lost. Young people will bring new ideas, knowledge and skills. There is a win-win to be had here.

3 Why is planning important?

We only need to look at the make-up of our towns and cities to see the importance of planning. Planning is multi-dimensional in its considerations and outcomes. A well-planned place will hit the mark on all the key aspects: social, economic, and the environment. There are many parts of the system to balance, and planners can facilitate in bringing it all together to create places that work.

4 Where do you think best exemplifies planning's role in creating great places for people?

Did I mention the Highline?! I think there are lots of great examples out there, some of the best have been the result of collaborative working and pushing for higher standards. I believe that we need to take what works and roll it out. Exemplars are great, but the learning points need to be acted on so that all places can benefit. A development I studied whilst doing my undergraduate degree, is BedZed in London, its a mixed-use eco village that was completed in 2002. There are lessons that can be learned from its conception through to end user experience. I think this development is a great example of how we should be moving forward. I also like that the NPF4 has mentioned live/work units. I conducted research on this back in 2012 and visited some units in England, its complex and a bit niche but it's an idea that should be pursued, there are multiple benefits to be had.

5 What are the greatest challenges and opportunities for the young planners at the beginning of their career?

An immediate challenge is impact of covid and working from home curtailing early years career development. This has been shown through the recent The Planner's Career Survey. It has been nearly been two years of working from home, this significant amount of time when in the early years of your career. There is only so much that can be learned at home. It's the side conversations in the office and after meetings, as well as discussions with a range of planners at CPD events that are a massive benefit to better understand what is learned. Alongside this is the potential loss of knowledge and experience through retirement as mentioned previously. That said, we are now moving into a new system, that is creating a new base for everyone, and that requires new skills - this is definitely an opportunity for young and soon-to-be planners! ■

“There are many parts of the system to balance, and planners can facilitate in bringing it all together to create places that work.”

Immaterial Considerations

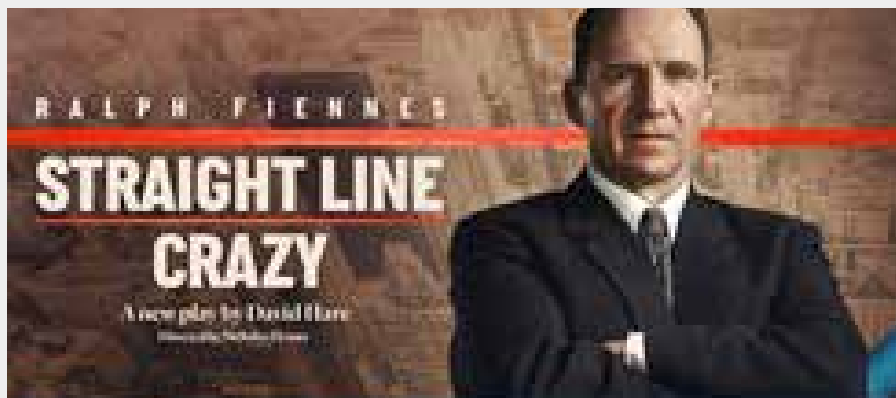
An irreverent look at the world of planning...

A Play for a Planner

Fancy a bit of culture with a planning twist? Perhaps you will be interested the latest offering from The Bridge Theatre in London called *Straight Line Crazy* which is a “blazing account” of the life of Robert Moses whose “iron will exposed the weakness of democracy in the face of charismatic conviction”. The play’s pretext is – as described by the Theatre “For forty uninterrupted years, Robert Moses was the most powerful man in New York. Though never elected to office, he manipulated those who were through a mix of guile, charm and intimidation. Motivated at first by a determination to improve the lives of New York City’s workers, he created

new parks, new bridges and 627 miles of expressway to connect the people to the great outdoors. But in the 1950s, groups of citizens at grass roots began to organize against his schemes and against the motor car, campaigning for a very different idea of what a city was and for what it should be.” Sounds like another typical day at the town hall but with Ralph Fiennes starring as Robert Moses and Helen Schlesinger as Jane Jacobs.

You can find out more and get tickets at <https://bridgetheatre.co.uk/whats-on/straight-line-crazy/>



No Go Logo?

We were delighted to discover the genius blog by Robin Wilde, a freelance writer and graphic designer, where he provides “Totally Objective Rankings” of organisations’ logos. These include British Think Tanks, British Public Transport Systems, UK Universities and, most interestingly, UK Local Authorities. Robin outlines his methodology of adherence to design principles, originality of concept and technical execution with “nebulous points added or subtracted on a whim because, unlike your local council, this isn’t a democracy”. So how do Scottish councils fare? Well, of the 403 listed the worst-rated is at #350 and the best-rated at #3! You can decide which you think is best by looking at the list <https://robin-cg.medium.com/a-totally-objective-ranking-of-every-uk-local-authority-logo-b76e8f7efd5a>



* The small print: the quality of a council's logo is in no way a measure of the performance of its planning service and, as such, is not included in their annual Planning Performance Framework.

A Theme for Great New Towns

Older readers may be aware that the Scottish rock band Simple Minds have an instrumental song called Music for Great Cities. (In our humble opinion it is well worth a listen so check it out on one of those modern music streaming platforms!) However their commitment to providing a sonic landscape for our cities may have been outdone by a newcomer. Graham Chapman-Fox - or Warrington-Runcorn New Town Development Plan as he is known - is producing some interesting music with his latest offering “Interim Report, March 1979” is his “hymn and homage to the brutalist beauty of Cheshire’s designated new towns of Warrington and Runcorn.” You can check out his Bandcamp page at <https://warrington-runcorn-cis.bandcamp.com/>

In Practice: Heritage Horizons

David Clyne, Head of Head of the Heritage Horizons project at the Cairngorms National Park Authority discusses the recently launched landscape scale project.



David Clyne
Head of Heritage
Horizons at the
Cairngorms National
Park Authority

In July 2021, the Cairngorms National Park Authority was awarded a package of up to £12.5 million over the next seven years for an ambitious landscape-scale project, 'Cairngorms 2030: people and nature thriving together'. The funding is provided by the National Lottery Heritage Fund as part of their Heritage Horizons Awards, and many of the project's key activities will address critical issues around the joint climate, nature and public health emergencies. The successful funding of this project marks the beginning of an exciting, major transformation for the Park and will affect how we all live, work and play in the area.

The project is hugely ambitious, and it needs to be. It's the biggest programme CNPA has ever envisioned to tackle the climate emergency, protect and enhance biodiversity and deliver meaningful improvements to people's health and wellbeing.

We have designed a programme of 25 bespoke projects covering a broad range of activity including nature-based solutions to climate change, public health, sustainable transport development with community learning, engagement, and empowerment at its heart.

Critical to the project's success is collaboration and the project brings together over 45 partners to achieve inclusive, transformational change for people and nature in the Cairngorms National Park. The project partners range from NHS Highland to

Deer Management Groups and local communities, working together to reduce the impacts of our activities on nature and our climate, something that we heard lots about at COP26 in Glasgow last November.

The project will place the future of the National Park in the hands of the people and communities who live and work here, as well as those who visit. The National Park has a proud history of people coming together to tackle major issues – most recently the impacts of a global pandemic – and this task will require a huge collective effort to achieve the transformational change required for the future of the Cairngorms and our planet.

Right now, we are in an 18-month-long development phase which includes finalising our plans and talking to communities and partners to get clear insight and understanding on their priorities. In addition, 12 new jobs have been created in the area, with the possibility of further recruitment in later phases of the project. The five-year delivery phase will focus on:

- Improving people's health and livelihoods by fundamentally shifting our approach to deliver a wellbeing economy, outdoor

“The project is hugely ambitious, and it needs to be. It's the biggest programme CNPA has ever envisioned to tackle the climate emergency, protect and enhance biodiversity and deliver meaningful improvements to people's health and wellbeing.”

health programmes, a nature-based dementia centre and an engaging, inclusive learning and outreach programme

- We will empower diverse communities through sharing power to co-design decisions and activities via deliberative decision making, community managed grants and innovative land use collaborations.
- On the land management side, we will enhance nature through green finance, woodland expansion, peatland restoration, river catchment management, deer management, nature friendly farming, landscape connections and sustainable transport.
- And we will continually share our learning through a global knowledge exchange programme.

There's a long road ahead and much to do, but it's hugely exciting that the Cairngorms has an opportunity to lead the way. With our committed partners, communities, businesses and visitors coming together, our collective endeavour is for the Cairngorms National Park to become a global exemplar with integrity and heart, where the future is placed in the hands of the people and communities that live, work, and visit here. <https://cairngorms.co.uk/discover-explore/heritage/heritage-horizons/>
Follow David on Twitter @CNPActive. ■



In Focus: Planning for Offshore Wind



Catherine Kelham
MRTPI, Senior
Conservation Planner
at RSPB

Catherine Kelham MRTPI, Senior Conservation Planner at RSPB looks at the practical considerations for planning for offshore wind.

Views expressed are that of the authors not her organisation.

The announcement in January this year that the Scotwind offshore wind auction had raised £700 million put the marine environment and offshore wind very briefly in the public conscious. But there is more to offshore wind than the money it raises from options agreements. As with development onshore, there are targets, engineering challenges, ecological considerations and other uses and users of the sea to consider. Our marine planning system in Scotland seeks to balance the various demands on our seas and achieve sustainable management of our marine resources. It's a vast topic, and for this article, I'm going to touch upon on two interlinked practical considerations - Ornithology and the Habitats Regulations.

“Our marine planning system in Scotland seeks to balance the various demands on our seas and achieve sustainable management of our marine resources.”



Firstly, a quick background. For commercial scale offshore wind developments in Scotland, key documents include the National Marine Plan and the Sectoral Marine Plan for Offshore Wind Energy. As on land, there are also a number of legislative requirements including, amongst other, the Electricity Act 1989 and the Habitats Regulations. Working for RSPB Scotland, my role unsurprisingly focuses upon the ornithological and environmental aspects of

development. I am supported scientifically by our inhouse conservation scientists. By way of non-technical summary, seabird colonies across Scotland are generally declining. Offshore wind can result in direct mortality where birds collide with the turbines, or indirect mortality. Turbines can disturb birds, displace them from preferred foraging areas and/or result in them flying further (avoidance). With the birds using more energy for other purposes there is less to put into raising chicks. On top of this, seabirds are typically long lived and tend only to have one chick per year after several years as a non-breeding juvenile. If your population is not being replenished at the same rate it is being reduced, then overall numbers will fall. I should make clear that offshore wind is not the only pressure associated with seabird population decline. It is though hitting populations already on downward trajectories and the same species – typically kittiwake, puffin, gannet, and razorbill – are being impacted each time.

Even with mitigation (such as increasing the turbine height to reduce collision risk), the modelled individual and cumulative impacts of offshore windfarms are large. For some species, cumulative impacts are in the remit of several hundred dead birds per annum. It is a massive element to consider for all involved in planning offshore wind and one that developers, and other stakeholders, are working to reduce in severity.

Addressing individual and cumulative ornithological impacts leads to second topic of this article - the Habitats Regulations. At the end of 2020, the Secretary of State in England established a requirement for all English offshore wind proposals to come forward with ecological compensation proposals without prejudice. This acknowledges the impacts of offshore wind on nature and relates to one of the derogation criteria under the Habitats Regulations. In essence, developments are now to be presented so, if required, they may be assessed as an exception to the requirement not to have an adverse effect on the integrity of any European protected site.

In Scotland we have less than 6GW of offshore wind with consent but bear in mind there is over 25GW of offshore wind with a seabed lease agreement yet to come forward. Given seabird population declines and pressures associated with offshore wind, development proposals in Scotland might trigger the same derogation consideration requirement. In the context of sustainable development in our seas, this element of upscaling offshore wind needs investigating further. It's a conundrum that, to me, suggests we need to think about our marine environment and marine planning strategically as well as consider what can be done outside the remit of planning. ■

Article:

RTPI Manifesto: The Importance of Planning in Local Government



Stephanie Fraser,
Project Intern Officer
at RTPI Scotland

Stephanie Fraser, Project Intern Officer at RTPI Scotland, looks at the important connection between planning and local democracy.

Scotland's local government election being held on 5th May 2022 comes at a time when there are increasing pressures faced by the planning system. The impacts of the pandemic on towns and cities as well as the twin crises of climate and nature make for an increasingly complex planning process for newly elected members. Alongside this, the Draft Fourth National Planning Framework (NPF4) due to be finalised in summer 2022 will set new policies to be considered as part of the statutory development plan. With all this in mind, elected members must be well enough equipped to deal with the complexities of the planning system while playing an important role in the democratic process.

“Planning is ultimately about people and the local government elections provide an opportunity to reconnect with communities and work towards the ambitions set out in the draft NPF4.”

With the purpose of planning in Scotland being ‘to manage the development and use of land in the long-term public interest’, elected members sitting on planning committees take

on a quasi-judicial role. The decisions made at planning committees will directly affect their communities and it is therefore in the interest of elected members to act accordingly. By law, elected members must consider professional advice from planning officers when making decisions on planning applications.

Nonetheless, the role of the councillor is to represent the voice of their local community in an impartial and unbiased manner to decide planning applications.

No doubt, in the run up to the elections candidates will take positions on key issues facing their communities as part of their campaigns. It is therefore important that they understand the important role planning plays in determining Scotland's future. Only a handful of elected members will be coming from a planning background and so training for councillors must be frequent and ongoing. The extensive jargon used in the planning system will require a detailed level of understanding so that elected members can make informed decisions

when it comes to the planning committee. At this stage, elected members have the opportunity to make recommendations contrary to professional advice from planning officers and this makes up a key part of the democratic process.

As part of their role, elected members must be acutely aware of the issues facing their communities and this will involve active public engagement. Acting as the voice of their local communities, elected members sitting on planning committees must exercise careful judgement and this includes stepping back from the planning committee should there be a conflict of interest on a particular application. Once administrations are formed after the elections, this will involve sitting down with newly elected members and their manifestos to address their various commitments.

In response, RTPI Scotland will be publishing its own manifesto ahead of the local government elections which calls on local government to commit to a better future for Scotland. Planning will play a central role in emerging from the pandemic and now is the time to harness Scotland's potential to transform its towns, cities, and rural areas. Planning is ultimately about people and the local government elections provide an opportunity to reconnect with communities and work towards the ambitions set out in the draft NPF4. In doing so, people will have the opportunity to influence the development of their places, fulfilling the purpose of local government.

Looking towards the future, I hope that planning fulfils its democratic process to create worthwhile change in communities across Scotland. After all, many of the answers to our current challenges lie beyond the confines of local government. ■



Article: Local communities are at the heart of democratic renewal



Petra Biberbach,
Chief Executive of
Planning Aid Scotland

Petra Biberbach, Chief Executive of Planning Aid Scotland, explores how communities can play a greater role in place-making, and why planning is key to democratic renewal.

It is often said that planning is the glue that holds everything together. If so, that glue has certainly been subject to significant tension between lofty ambitions and what is delivered on the ground. However, if we view planning as the spatial expression of all policy ambitions at local and national level, then planning is less of a glue and more a can of WD40, oiling the machine for the delivery of the public good. And we do have some squeaky wheels needing to be oiled!

I have often thought that planning should be taught in schools. It is after all the key decision-making process that decides what goes where, what needs are to be met, how to re-use empty buildings and vacant and derelict sites and deal with future challenges such as Climate Change. We have been working for more than ten years with our IMBY (In My Back Yard) and other young people's engagement programmes to encourage active citizenship through the planning system. The process of exploring, debating and weighing up decisions about our environment is one of the highlights that students and teachers tell us they find most enjoyable and instructive.



We have a representative democracy, with our elected members taking decisions on our behalf. We also have direct citizen input into the decision-making system. Planning is often criticised for its lack of public engagement but is in fact one of the areas of local government that offers the most opportunity for public participation. This conundrum suggests to me that despite more engagement over recent years, people want still more but also more options in how to participate in the decisions that impact them, especially at the most local neighbourhood level.

This year's local elections come at a time of intense pressures: mitigating the impact of the pandemic, tackling the climate emergency, catering to the growing needs of an aging population to name but a few. But it's also provides a unique opportunity for elected members to recognise the shifting needs and aspirations of communities and to champion those communities as they seek change – recognising the positive impact that citizen participation has on the democratic process.

One of the ways in which local elected members can do this is by actively supporting the emerging raft of Local Place

Plans. The legislation already sets out a role for elected members in this a new tier of community-led plans: the community body creating a Local Place Plan is required to send the proposed Local Place Plan and an information notice to their local councillors. This is quite late in the day in the plan making process. To make the process as open and inclusive as possible, councillors have a key role to play as champions and loudspeakers for Local Place Plans. In a way, bringing representative democracy and direct citizen participation together.

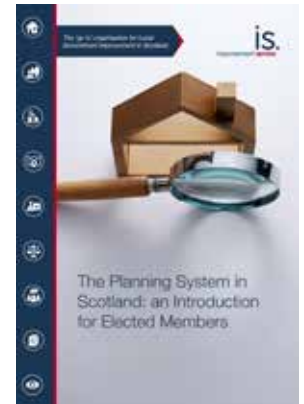
However, it is not just a question of more participation, importantly it's about the quality of the engagement processes. After all, who wants to sit in a draughty community hall on a dreich Tuesday night, when there are myriad possibilities to gather people's input in more creative ways – as we have experienced during the pandemic.

Over the years, I've noticed that the methods we developed to support seldom-heard voices to participate, such as children and young people and Gypsy/Travellers, helps more people to participate. Removing barriers to participation and trialling creative approaches can improve the planning process for everyone. If we do them right, Local Place Plans could help to spur innovative approaches to engagement that are not just good for planning, but also for democracy at the most local level. ■

“This year's local elections come at a time of intense pressures: mitigating the impact of the pandemic, tackling the climate emergency, catering to the growing needs of an aging population to name but a few”

Article: Elected Member Training

David Barr & Sarah Gadsden, Organisational Development Project Manager & Chief Executive at the Improvement Service look at the important role of elected member training.



The Scottish Government is consulting on the National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4), which it hopes will outline how Scotland can build sustainable, liveable, productive and distinctive places that help tackle longstanding challenges and inequalities in society.

The ambitions for spatial Planning in Scotland to positively contribute to six new national outcomes will require all actors in the system to understand their role in doing so. Elected members, particularly those who sit on Planning Committees, will be crucial to this.

So what does this mean for the training and development offered to elected members? Currently, most training is run by council's themselves, focussing on the regulatory role of elected members in the Planning System and their responsibilities to uphold the high ethical standards outlined in the [Councillors' Code of Conduct](#).

Councils, through their Planning department, are well placed to support members to understand their quasi-judicial responsibilities. They are aided in their efforts to train members by national [Introduction to the Planning System for Elected Members](#) guidance developed by the Improvement Service (IS) and Heads of Planning Scotland (HoPS), as well as national resources from the Standards Commission on the code of conduct.

It is vitally important that elected members receive this training, understand their responsibilities and uphold high ethical standards when acting as key decision-makers in the Planning System. However, this alone will not be enough for elected members to play their part in realising the ambitions of NPF4.

The NPF4 has identified qualities of effective places – places that are designed for health and wellbeing, safe and pleasant, well connected and easy to move around, distinctive, sustainable and adaptable.

The planning system has historically prioritised decisions on the future

development and use of land and buildings with regard to the contribution they can make to sustainable economic growth and investment. Whilst the economy is clearly important, particularly within the context of COVID-19 recovery, it is vital that elected members (particularly those that sit on Planning Committees), give equal consideration in their decision-making to the qualities of effective places.

Focusing on the needs and aspirations of communities will be critical to the delivery of the ambitions in the NPF4. All elected members have an important role in ensuring the communities they represent are able to shape the outcomes that are important to their place, as well as influence planning and investment decisions that affect them. The Scottish Local Government elections in May provide a fresh opportunity for councils to consider what training and development would be helpful for elected members. Over the last few years, the IS has delivered elected member briefing sessions to raise awareness of the role of place, place-based approaches and place making in service delivery. Because these are voluntary, we have had to use our influence, networks and powers of persuasion to encourage elected members to attend. Perhaps not unsurprisingly, we have found that those members who do participate already have a good grasp of place-based approaches and the contribution that planning can make.

We would therefore encourage councils to include place making and the contribution that planning makes, as part of their initial training to elected members on Planning Committees. We would suggest that this should include a focus on raising awareness

of the unintended consequences of decisions and the need to make decisions in the round, which focus on all aspects of place. For

“It is vitally important that elected members receive this training, understand their responsibilities and uphold high ethical standards when acting as key decision-makers in the Planning System.”

example, if planning decisions are made which prioritise the delivery of economic growth, but which have unintended consequences on health and wellbeing or delivering a just transition to net zero, ultimately those decisions will exacerbate the inequalities we are all seeking to reduce. One means of doing this is by raising awareness of the Place and Wellbeing Outcomes, which set out all the characteristics of a place that need to be considered to ensure communities thrive and inequality is reduced. ■



David Barr,
Organisational Development Project Manager at the Improvement Service



Sarah Gadsden, Chief Executive at the Improvement Service

Article: Politicians in Planning Network



Robin Hayden, Senior Public Affairs Officer at the RTPI

Robin Hayden, Senior Public Affairs Officer at the RTPI, looks at the recently launched Politicians in Planning Network.

In 2021, the RTPI launched the new Politicians in Planning Network (PiPN) for local elected politicians. Designed to help bridge the gap between planners and political representatives, the group contains some 500 members from across the UK. Membership of the network is free and the group enjoys events and a regular newsletter, with plans for in-person events in the near future.

The launch event (organised with Cratus) brought together local politicians from across the UK alongside local politics icon Jackie Weaver, Councillor David Simmonds MP and the RTPI Chair of the Board of Trustees Sue Bridge. Cllr Anna Richardson from Glasgow City Council shared her experience of working within the Scottish planning system to steer her city in a sustainable direction. Bringing together councillors from across the UK allows a sharing of knowledge between politicians across levels and geography. Lessons from achieving the best local outcomes in one planning system can spark ideas in other nations.

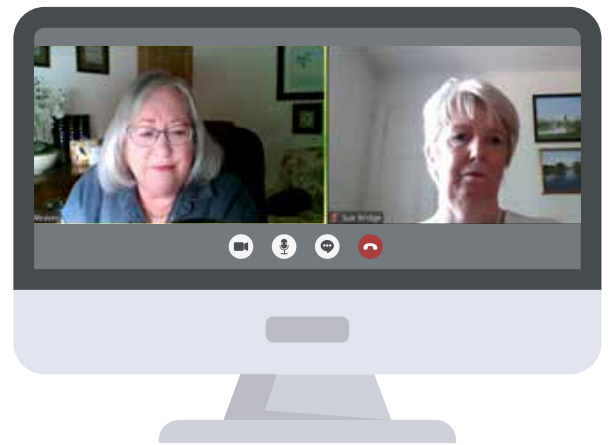
Both planners and local politicians often remark on the need for mutual understanding. Planning may seem at times to be a 'black box' and it is helpful for local leaders to understand the process. It is particularly helpful to have a strong understanding of how best to engage in the system constructively, so that local concerns are heard early and the best outcomes are reached. Conversely, planners also gain from understanding the perspective of local elected members.

Planning committees are particularly crucial. A well-run committee reflects the priorities and concerns of the local community, working constructively with planners to see acceptable solutions while being fair to all sides. Chairs and members have been given the opportunity through the network to learn what makes a committee successful and how to keep their procedure in line with best practice.

While many PiPN members are on planning committees, it is important the group also contains councillors working across all issues as planning has much wider relevance. Understanding how the planning system fits into discussions of transport, the environment and local highstreets ensures councillors understand how to work with the system and not against it.

“Understanding how the planning system fits into discussions of transport, the environment and local highstreets ensures councillors understand how to work with the system and not against it.”

PiPN has an opportunity to help the practical functioning of planning by ensuring all parties work with mutual understanding and respect for the other's position. It will also be able to serve as a forum for celebrating the fantastic collaborative achievements of planners and local politicians. And sometimes it will reflect the challenges and difficulties faced in working together, with advice and learnings to help others in a similar position.



The period after these Scottish local elections is an opportunity to reset these relationships and build a strong new understanding to ensure all sides are heard. That's why we need newly elected members in Scotland welcomed to the PiPN network as they get their feet under the table. Likewise, planners who have something to say about these relationships, or lessons of what to do (or even not to do!) are invited to share their experience with the network administrators. PiPN is a fantastic opportunity to create this bridge together, to make working in the planning system both a more constructive and more enjoyable experience

Membership of PiPN is free and open to all: <https://www.rtpi.org.uk/find-your-rtpi/networks/politicians-in-planning-network-pipn/>

If you would like to contribute to PiPN please [email publicaffairs@rtpi.org.uk](mailto:publicaffairs@rtpi.org.uk). ■

Article:

Councillor Code of Conduct



Rob McIntosh,
Principle Solicitor
at Aberdeenshire
Council

Rob McIntosh, Principle Solicitor at Aberdeenshire Council, looks at the recently revised Councillor Code of Conduct.

Councillors, when involved in applications or making decisions at planning committee are acting in a Quasi-judicial role, and there is clear guidance on this in the councillors code of conduct.

This is produced by the Standards Commission, an independent body whose purpose is to encourage high ethical standards in public life, including the promotion and enforcement of Codes of Conduct for councillors. The latest code of conduct was published in December 2021 and applies to all councillors in Scotland.

The relevant part of the code which deals with quasi-judicial decision making, including planning, is Section 7 but unlike the previous version, it covers all such decision making and no longer has a specific section on planning. It has been amended to explicitly list all the matters councillors will and will not do, when making a decision and can be summarised as :-

They will

- a. act fairly and be seen to act fairly;
- b. declare interests
- c. deal fairly and impartially with all parties
- d. advise anyone asking that they can't formulate an opinion until all information is available and considered at the relevant meeting;
- e. take into account professional advice given by council employees; and seek advice of council employee if in doubt as to any material or relevant considerations

They will not

- a. pre-judge or demonstrate bias or be seen to do this;
- b. indicate their voting position prior to the meeting;

- c. attempt to influence employees to adopt a particular position
- d. lobby other councillors;
- e. express any view on the application before the appropriate meeting.
- f. come to a view until all available information has been duly considered at the meeting;
- g. express any indicative or provisional views in any aspect of the application and withdraw if they have.
- h. act improperly or do anything which could reasonably create a perception that they have acted improperly.

The code also deals in more detail with two of these listed matters and which often arise for councillors, conflict of interest and lobbying.

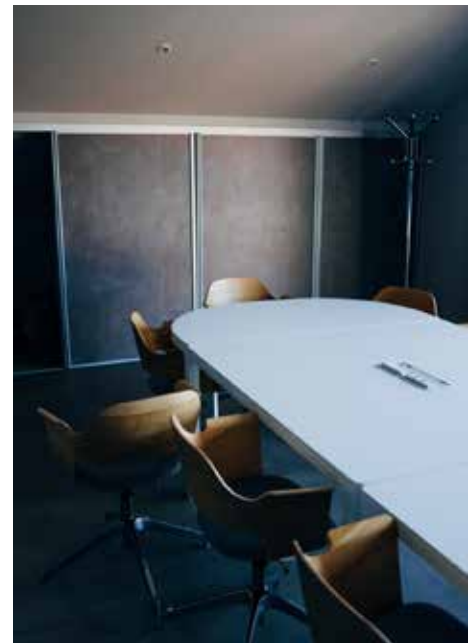
The conflict test has a new, three-stage test :-

- **Stage 1- Connection** – Is there any link associated with a councillor.
- **Stage 2 - Interest test** – This is an objective test as to whether you

can reasonably regard the councillors connection to the application as being sufficiently significant as to be likely to influence the discussion or decision-making.

- **Stage 3- Participation** – If there is a declarable interest a councillor cannot participate in the discussion or any voting on the matter and must leave the physical or virtual meeting room. This is to ensure that they do not influence other members or to avoid any perception they could be doing so.

The decision on conflict rest with the Councillors who once declared are only



required to provide enough information for those present to understand why they consider they have a declarable interest. The rest of the committee can but are not required to set out why they do not consider they have a conflict.

The provisions on lobbying have also been made clearer to differentiate between acting in a normal constituency role and where a councillor is approached by an individual or organisation who is seeking to influence them for their gain. Once so approached, a councillor will advise that individual or organisation that they cannot formulate an opinion or support their position prior to taking part in the committee.

Breaches are investigated by the Ethical standards commissioner who can clear, sanction, suspend or remove a councillor and could also have a bearing at any subsequent appeal or legal challenge. ■

Article: Local Government and Planning: A Councillor's Perspective

Councillor Steven Heddle, COSLA Spokesperson for Environment and Economy, looks at the important role planning will play in the next 5 critical years.

In the 5 years since the last Local Government Election it is not just planning that has seen wholesale changes. The outcomes of the Independent Review of Planning, the Planning Act and National Planning Framework 4, not to mention a myriad of consultations on everything from performance and fees to LDP Regulations, have all taken place against the backdrop of fundamental shifts in the policy landscape - adoption of place-based models of working, wellbeing economics, and perhaps most significantly our response to the climate emergency. Some of these are easier for planning to accommodate, but others will be more of a challenge.

Committing to deliver a just transition to a net zero carbon, wellbeing economy by no later than 2045 sees us face up to the defining challenge of our times, but it will be a long and hard road with difficult decisions if we are to be successful. 30 years ago nobody knew what a windfarm was. When I took on the role of COSLA's Environment and Economy Spokesperson in 2017, Fracking (or Unconventional Oil and Gas Extraction to use its Sunday name) was top of the agenda. Now exploring how to decarbonise heat and energy,

and how to evolve transport beyond private car ownership top the agenda. We are legally committed to reduce carbon emissions to net zero by 2045, with a more pressing interim target of a 75% reduction by 2030. Planning in itself may not be an emitter of carbon, but it is hard to see how we could possibly make inroads to the priority sectors like transport, heat and energy without good planning at the core.

A refocus on towns and town centres has also characterised the shifting policy landscape of the last 5 years. This has recently culminated in the new Town Centre Action Plan and a reaffirmation of COSLA Leaders commitment to the Town Centre First Principle, which calls for "the health of town centres at the heart of decision making." It is hoped this will be achieved through policies and investment which target town centre living, digital infrastructure and limits on out of town developments.

These ambitions have something in common - they cannot be achieved without good planning at their heart. But to achieve these ambitious goals we need more than just good planning, we need the resource and

the skills to deliver these changes and ambitions. I often hear the phrase "Cinderella service" used to describe planning, intended as a compliment for the results planning can produce despite the ever-dwindling resources.

The fact is that it takes more than compliments to address the increasing demands on the planning system. Between the 91 new duties introduced by the Planning Act, the skills required to implement and deliver NPF4, the refreshed SPP and budgets which have diminished in real terms 42% since 2009 according to the research by the RTPi, the service is on a razor's edge and facing a resourcing crisis. The recent fee increase goes some way to addressing a decade with little change to planning fees, but it falls far short of what is needed.

Much of the work of the next 5 years will be in the pursuit of the powers and flexibility required for planning authorities to realise full cost recovery, giving them the resource needed to deliver on the ambitious aims for the future, and to ensure the workforce is equipped to meet the demands placed on the sector.

The next time we are preparing for a Local Government election will be in 2027, less than three years away from the interim net zero target of 75% reduction in carbon emissions. By then we'll have a very clear view of how successful we have been in working towards that target. If the last 5 years has been about realising our priorities for the future, the next 5 will be about delivering those priorities, with planning at the heart of the decision to make it happen. ■

"Committing to deliver a just transition to a net zero carbon, wellbeing economy by no later than 2045 sees us face up to the defining challenge of our times, but it will be a long and hard road with difficult decisions if we are to be successful."



Councillor Steven Heddle, COSLA Spokesperson for Environment and Economy



Article: The Future of Local Government

Richard Kerley, Emeritus Professor of Management at Queen Margaret University, looks at the future of planning and local government



Richard Kerley,
Emeritus Professor of Management at Queen Margaret University

In a matter of a few weeks, we will all [and I certainly hope 'all'] be voting in local elections. The result of these elections, the manner and extent to which the soon to be elected councils will interact with the Scottish government will affect planners and planning over the next five years.

This article will not offer predictions about exactly what the political balance in East Lothian or Angus will be after those elections, though if you are really interested in the possible outcomes for the council you work or live in, then [Ballot Box Scotland](#) can offer you some thoughtful and well-argued speculation on where to watch.

Given our current circumstances and the ever-present tension between marginal losses and victories in particular wards, along with voting on some balance of local issues and national party preference then any attempted prediction of overall party balance and council 'control' becomes a forlorn hope. In any event the shaping of our planning arrangements is always a balance

between various powers of the Scottish Government at the centre and what your council/councillors think they would like to do locally – and how citizens react to both those forces.

My concern here is to consider some of the likely prospects for our planning systems and for our planners over the next few years, against a backdrop of formal changes and those already made decisions that have brought us to where we are now.

“Of course, where we are now is not that easy to chart; the impact of continuing budget uncertainty; our aspiration for carbon reduction alongside energy security; the long haul through on/off Covid restrictions; and of course, the impact of the Ukrainian invasion, will all impact on planning now and over the next few years.”

Background

Of course, where we are now is not that easy to chart; the impact of continuing budget uncertainty; our aspiration for carbon reduction alongside energy security ; the long haul through on/off Covid restrictions; and of course, the impact of the Ukrainian invasion, will all impact on planning now and over the next few years.

The Scottish government is **clear** that a “ ... high quality planning system is essential to create quality places with the homes , infrastructure and investment that people need .”

As many readers of this piece will know , the government has introduced legislative change through the **2019** Act with the intention on improving the planning system **and to** “... strengthen the contribution planning can make to inclusive growth... housing and infrastructure.... climate change ...and empowering communities .”

However, as various observers have commented over recent years , this aspiration has not been matched by effective government financial support for the bedrock of the planning system , local authority development control planning.

There have been annual variations both up and down in the financial support provided to local government by the central government budget over past years. There are however two key factors to take account of . Over a **multi-year period** while Westminster transfers to the Scottish parliament increased by some 2.6%, the transfer through to local government decreased by 3.8%. If the long-term aggregate trend is clear, then it appears even more starkly in the general grant element of ‘Planning and Development Services’ taken from the annual publication of local government financial statistics [LGFSS].

Year	2010-11	12-13	14-15	16-17	19-20
£ M [cash]	308	279	278	206	188

Of course, the Scottish government is fully entitled to do this , reducing spending on local government services if they have other priorities , though [as all governments] they have been loath to state this publicly. Equally, councils can choose to maintain spend on planning services as they are entitled to do . However, the **recorded reductions in numbers** of council planning staff suggest such cuts will have a long term impact on the service and therefore on the local environment and communities.

Prospects

As it happens, the reduction in council planning staff has simultaneously seen improved – or at least speedier – treatment of larger planning applications in business and industry, as the regular publication of data from the Improvement Service shows . From 2012 through to 2019 there was a continuing annual reduction in the average number of weeks taken to process such ‘large’ applications Scotland wide. Unsurprisingly, of course, the time frame ticked up again as we entered the two years of intermittent Covid restrictions. Whether the improvement trend can be resumed is impossible to project, particularly as the new Planning Act will increase the load placed on council planning departments.

I would suggest there are several challenges facing planners and planning as they go into a new 5-year term for councils in May this year.

Perhaps curiously I’d argue that the least important of these will be the composition of the new council. It is probably the case that apart from a few – typically much smaller - councils where there is often extensive local knowledge and contact, committee decisions are quite constrained by scale, the quasi-legal status of planning committees and the confines of broader planning policies required by government.

Councils will be pressured, as they have been for some time, to increase the provision of housing, and through the new Act to take account of specific categories of potential residents – older people, disabled people, and those in FE&H. I anticipate that in some instances, for some councils, some of the decisions made will be tested by government call in and even legal cases. In some council areas, the growing provision of ‘student accommodation’ (I live in Edinburgh, and some good while ago was a member of a planning committee) will increasingly be a cause of dispute.

I am not persuaded that the new legal framework will remove some of the often confusingly adversarial nature of some planning applications. Ministers “...must lay before the Scottish

Parliament ... a statement setting out the circumstances in which they consider it appropriate to give directions ...”. An underlying aspect of many disputed applications, whether large scale or domestic, is implicitly – and even

sometimes explicitly, ‘We don’t like it...’ and some ministers have, as with proposed school closures, devised ways to pander to such views. Equally to blame have been those involved in council decisions based on a similar sentiment – ‘We don’t like it ...’.

Another challenge for council planners in the next few years is that planning legislation has

increasingly tended to emphasise wider, desirable though perhaps more amorphous considerations. The ‘health’ provisions of the 2019 Act, and its referencing in the National Planning Framework 4 is clearly desirable; however, all the discussion around this suggests that clearly defined agreements on this and therefore certainty for applicants and planners is proving hard to achieve.

At present however, it seems highly possible that the energy shock of the Ukraine war will drive the prospect of some very large-scale energy related developments in parts of Scotland and we will all be surprised by the development implications of energy self-sufficiency. It need not be nuclear as we have traditionally known it, but that could take other forms. It will certainly mean more and probable even larger on shore and offshore wind arrays. Councils, planning committees, and local planners may sadly find they have little part to play in such developments. ■

“Another challenge for council planners in the next few years is that planning legislation has increasingly tended to emphasise wider, desirable though perhaps more amorphous considerations.”



Article:

Chief Planning Officers & Elected Members



Pamela Clifford
MRTPI, Planning,
Building Standards
and Environmental
Health Manager at
West Dunbartonshire
Council

Pamela Clifford MRTPI, Planning, Building Standards and Environmental Health Manager at West Dunbartonshire Council, looks at the important relationship between the Chief Planner and elected members.

The local elections in May will bring a new wave of Councillors and new Council administrations for all local authorities. These elections will see a fresh batch of newly elected Councillors with a high number of existing Councillors with extensive experience not seeking re-election, a pattern which is being followed throughout Scotland.

It is an exciting time to be a Councillor as NPF4 is being finalised and more weight is being given to sustainability and placemaking. Most councillors care passionately about the area they represent and the communities within it and want to make them a better place to live, work and visit.

The relationship between the Chief Planner and elected members is a critical one in any local authority as Councillors often face challenging decisions having to balance the needs and wants of their local community against the merits or otherwise of new development. Key decisions on the content of the local development plan will arise during the life of a council and these will be some of the most important decisions they will make during their time in the Council. Fostering a strong working partnership with elected

members is important to achieve successful planning outcomes.

New Councillors will often have little knowledge or dealings with the planning system prior to being elected and it will be one of various roles they will have to fulfil. The planning system can be a confusing and complex area of decision making for elected members and the role of the Chief Planner is to assist in streamlining the complexity and to give clear quality professional advice. This involves planning reports being clear and concise in order that open and honest decisions are made.

The New Planning Act has strengthened the training requirements for elected members, but guidance has not been brought forward yet. All elected members will have some dealings with planning matters and therefore all councillors should attend appropriate training in planning matters both at the beginning of the session and regularly throughout the life of the Council. It is important that elected members familiarise themselves with the planning process and are familiar with national planning policy and the

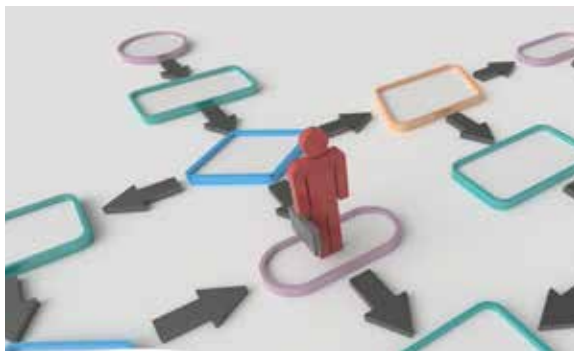
Local Development Plan. This will put them in a strong position to effectively engage with the planning process and participate in the decision-making process. Training can

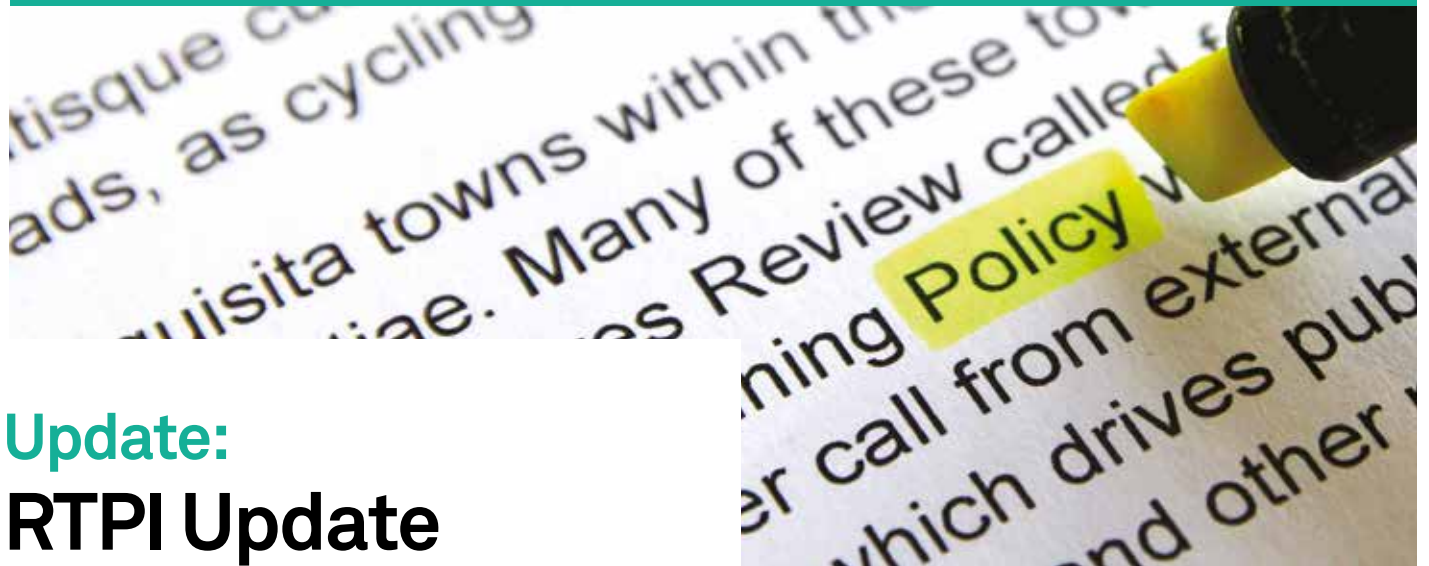
take many forms whether through formal training days, bitesize training before or after Committee on particular matters such as 20 minute neighbourhoods, health and wellbeing outcomes, briefings or site visits to particular developments such as wind farms, town centres or regeneration

schemes such as Kings Cross.

In West Dunbartonshire, developers of major developments are allowed to present to elected members through a pre application elected member briefing. This enables issues to be highlighted at an early stage rather than leaving it to the day of the Planning Committee and for members who are not part of the Planning Committee to put forward matters on behalf of their constituents, which they would not otherwise be able. Fostering a close working relationship between the Chief Planning Officer with the Convenor and Vice Convenor will result in the smooth operation of the Planning Committee. The strong leadership of the Chief Planning Officer working with Elected Members in a positive partnership will make the planning service the best it can. ■

“The planning system can be a confusing and complex area of decision making for elected members and the role of the Chief Planner is to assist in streamlining the complexity and to give clear quality professional advice.”





Update:

RTPI Update

New Members

We are delighted that the following have been elected as Members to the Institute:

- Andrew Hoolachan MRTPI, University of Glasgow
- Kerry Gibson MRTPI, Fife Council
- Amelia Smith MRTPI, East Lothian Council

Policy Consultations

RTPI Scotland have submitted responses to the following consultations and requests for written evidence:

- Local Government Housing and Planning Committee draft NPF4 call for evidence
- Onshore Wind Policy Statement
- Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee call for evidence on the role of local government and its cross-sectoral partners in financing and delivering a net-zero Scotland
- Draft National Planning Framework 4
- Open Space Strategies and Play Sufficiency Assessments
- Local development planning - regulations and guidance: consultation
- Economy and Fair Work Committee Inquiry into town centres and retail
- Consultation on the draft second Strategic Transport Projects Review (STPR2) for Scotland
- Finance and Public Administration Committee: Call for Views on Inquiry into the National Performance Framework.

Consultations currently under consideration are:

- DPEA Stakeholder discussion - hearings, inquiries and pre-examination meetings. Deadline 29th April.

Parliament

Robbie Calvert, RTPI Scotland Policy, Practice and Research Officer, and Jane Tennant, Chair of the Scottish Young Planner's Network have appeared before Scottish Parliament's Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee, and, the Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee to discuss the draft NPF4.

RTPI Scotland Director Craig McLaren presented to the Parliament's Cross Party Group on Housing which was discussing the draft National Planning Framework.

Planning Workforce

RTPI Scotland is working in conjunction with Heads of Planning Scotland and the Local Government Improvement Service to undertake research looking at how to increase the number of people entering the profession and on the need for short-, medium- and long-term investment in developing pipeline of planner, diversifying the profession, and promoting planning as a career. Work continues on this.

We are also in the early stages of exploring the possibility of developing a planning apprenticeship scheme with Skills Development Scotland.

Digital Planning

RTPI Scotland is working with Scottish Government to take forward its Digital Planning Transformation strategy. RTPI Scotland Director Craig McLaren sits on the project's Programme Board. We are also working to ensure that the profession has the capabilities required through undertaking research to explore the skills, knowledge and behaviour changes required to ensure that those working in the planning system can embed digital planning into their work. The research also looks at the opportunities and

barriers faced in implementation. We are also exploring with Scottish Government how best to develop the infrastructure required to support the delivery of a digital skills development programme in 2023/24.

Women in Planning launch Central Scotland Branch

Women in Planning is launching a new Central Scotland Branch. This is in direct response to growing interest in the Network within Edinburgh. To form the new Branch, the existing Glasgow Branch will expand to cover Edinburgh and surrounding areas, whilst continuing to serve Glasgow.

Women in Planning is a free network for the planning industry that is striving for diversity and inclusion in planning.

Rachel Mushet, Planner at Montagu Evans and Co-Chair of the new Central Scotland Branch Committee states:

"To ensure that our Branch continues to bring professionals together, we have made the decision to expand our geographical area and our name will soon be changing to become the Women in Planning Central Scotland Branch. We hope that this will clearly show that all interested planning professionals in the central belt of Scotland are welcome to join."

For more details about the branch please visit www.womeninplanning.org/branches.

To join the network, please email womeninplanningcentcot@gmail.com.



Update: Scottish Government

This continues to be a really important time for Scotland's planning system and for everyone who engages and interacts with it, while we continue through the wide-reaching reform of the system, policy priorities and digital transformation. Here we give an update on news and activity over recent weeks across some of the workstreams of the Planning and Architecture Division, and point to what you can expect to see soon.

National Planning Framework 4

We are at the end-point of the almost 5-month consultation period on the draft of [Scotland's Fourth National Planning Framework 'Scotland 2045'](#) and, at the time of writing, we are anticipating a report from the Scottish Parliament's Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee, as the lead committee on the statutory scrutiny of the draft.

There has been a great deal of interest in NPF4 and a lively debate across the planning community and beyond about the direction

we must take together to respond to the challenges and opportunities in front of us, and to recognise and fully embrace the value that planning can add in leading positive outcomes. We are grateful for the time and input that so many people and organisations have given through the consultation and engagement processes, drawing on a wealth of knowledge and experience.

As next steps, the Scottish Government is now going to carefully consider the outcomes from the public consultation and from the

Scottish Parliament scrutiny, including revisiting aspects of the drafting as raised by stakeholders, before producing a final draft NPF4. We want to get the detail right and make sure NPF4 provides a sound and reliable basis for future decision-making and is able to deliver on its ambition and objectives.

We are to lay that final version for Scottish Parliament approval, prior to adoption by the Scottish Ministers. We are working towards doing that this summer.

Planning Reform Programme

Running alongside the work on NPF4, public consultations have also just concluded in relation to closely linked new regulations and guidance for [Local Development Planning](#) and on [Open Space Strategies and Play Sufficiency Assessments](#). Again, we will now take some time to reflect on the outcomes from the consultations before finalising the regulations and guidance. We intend to bring these into force around the time of the adoption of NPF4 and the commencement of section 13 of the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019, which brings the National Planning Framework into the statutory development plan.

The [Transforming Planning in Practice work programme](#) summarises progress to date and sets out our schedule for the remainder of the implementation of the 2019 Act and progressing wider planning reforms. You can keep up-to-date and view all planning reform consultations and legislation at www.transformingplanning.scot/planning-reform/.

New Planning Fees Regulations

New [Regulations](#) were laid in the Scottish Parliament in February which will see planning fees increase from 1 April 2022, in most cases between 25% and 50%, providing much needed additional resource for planning services across Scotland. This follows a consultation in 2019 and is the first time in eight years that there has been an increase to the standard planning application fees. Local authorities will be able to decide how best to use any additional fee income to help improve locally delivered planning services.

Coronavirus (COVID-19) Legislation and Pre-Application Consultation

Regulations ([SSI 2022/66](#) and [SSI 2022/67](#)) have been laid before the Scottish Parliament. Subject to Parliamentary scrutiny, these are due to come into force on 30 March 2022.

These regulations relate to the modifications to the duration of planning permission, listed building consent and conservation area consent, and to pre-application consultation (PAC) requirements.

Where the duration of permission or consent expires before the end of the 'emergency period' (currently 31 March 2022) without development starting, the duration is extended by modification to the end of the 'extended period' (currently 30 September 2022).

The effect of the newly laid regulations would be to push each of the dates mentioned above forward by six months. The end of the 'emergency period' and 'extended period' for duration would become 30 September 2022 and 31 March 2023 respectively.

In PAC, currently the statutory requirement for a public event has been suspended until 31 March 2022, and new PAC requirements have been postponed until 1 April 2022. Information on transitional arrangement on PAC can be found on our Transforming Planning web site ([Development Management | Transforming Planning](#)).

Subject to transitional arrangements, the PAC requirements would change to the new PAC requirements after the end of 30 September 2022/ from 1 October 2022.]

These changes would be dependent on other regulations expiring and extending elements of the Coronavirus (Scotland) Act 2020 and the Coronavirus (Scotland) (No.2) Act 2020 being passed by the Scottish Parliament.

Digital Planning

The Digital Transformation Programme is reaching the end of Year 1 and progress is well underway.

Contractors Storm ID have completed the exploratory Discovery phase for the single payment system and fee calculator. A 'show and tell' session was held with local authority representatives in March, producing largely positive feedback. The next phase of the project, Alpha, includes constructing a first iteration of the new service for testing and refinement.

Meanwhile, the eDevelopment team is implementing changes to the ePlanning fee calculator to reflect the changes to the Scottish planning fee regime which come into force in April.

We recently carried out some engagement with potential suppliers as part of the early work on transforming the application process, to raise awareness of our forthcoming procurement opportunity and build interest across a broad range of possible delivery partners. Following that, we are now in the process of appointing a partner to undertake a fact-finding discovery and build an experimental prototype for a new, data-driven Smart Application service.

Another contractor, Stand, has been working closely with the Digital Planning team in a discovery process to establish the views and needs of a wide range of stakeholders relating to a future single online entry point to access future digital planning services.

Following on from this Year 1 progress, we held a series of prioritisation workshops with some stakeholders to outline and explore our thoughts on Year 2 priorities, shortly to be put to the Digital Planning Transformation Programme Board. We will update on that again soon.

You can keep up-to-date with progress on this programme on our [Digital Planning LinkedIn page](#) and at: www.transformingplanning.scot/digital-planning/.

Scottish Government Restructuring

We are delighted to announce that from 1 April the Scottish Government's Regeneration Unit will merge with us to form Planning, Architecture and Regeneration Division within a new wider Directorate for Local Government and Housing. We are excited about the opportunities this will bring for joined-up place based working, bringing together planning with our support for regeneration projects and communities across Scotland.

Staying In Touch

For the latest messages from the Planning and Architecture Division, follow us on Twitter [@ScotGovPlanning](#) and [@DigiPlanningSG](#) and register to receive our Planning and [Architecture news updates](#). ■





Update: Heads of Planning Scotland

What a busy few months this has been for many working in planning authorities, and beyond in private and public sector. Heads of Planning have met with Homes for Scotland, the Scottish Property Federation, and the Planning Consultants Forum as well as a number of other professional groups discussing challenges and how together we can achieve the outcomes that are intended through draft NPF4. A big thanks to colleagues across planning authorities who have listened to views, considered and helped shape HoPS response to draft NPF4, draft Local Development Plan Regulations, and more. In giving evidence to the Scottish Parliament's Local Government, Housing

and Planning Committee I expressed HoPS support for the direction and scope of draft NPF4 recognising the considerable work that has gone into shaping the draft. More work is needed to shape the national development plan into deliverable and enforceable policies, and HoPS considers it important to take the time needed to achieve this.

For over a decade HoPS has been seeking a review of the structure of planning fees. This, in part, has been achieved with the publication of the new Fee Regulations which HoPS welcome and look forward to continued discussion with the Scottish Government on their commitment to work towards full costs recovery.

This additional funding will assist planning authorities in firstly addressing budget gaps which have resulted from underfunding, and it is hoped provide investment into improving service provision and helping economic recovery. A joint study is also underway with RTPi, supported by the Scottish Government on Future Planners considering recruitment, retention, and promotion of planning as a career.

I look forward to speaking at the upcoming Scottish Young Planners Conference in Perth; always a top event full of energy, enthusiasm and professional pride - a reminder that the future of our planning profession is bright.

-Pam Ewen, Chair of HOPS. ■

Update: Scottish Young Planners Network

The Scottish Young Planners Network are working hard towards this conference which will be held in Perth this year on May the 12th. The conference will focus on the new planning system and how Young Planners can harness the opportunities in NPF4, looking at what we need to know and the skills we will need. We have confirmed speakers and are seeking sponsorship, and are very much looking forward to hosting our annual conference again. Tickets are on sale now!

The conference will take place in-person, the last SYPN Conference was in 2019.

We were successful in winning the bid for the UK Young Planners Conference in Edinburgh in October last year, after delays due to covid. The Steering Group worked very hard during this difficult time to pull this off, we took a breath and then jumped into organising the upcoming conference. The Steering Group has seen some great

members step down, and we have been lucky to fill all the positions. I would like to welcome our new members on board.

By the time you read this we will have held our NPF4 event, and are looking at other CPD events for the rest of the year. We are looking to collaborate with Chapters to host joint events and would also like to connect with other professional bodies. As always, if you have any event ideas please get in touch sypn@rtpi.org.uk. This is your network!

-Jane Tennant, Chair of SYPN. ■

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www.rtpi.org.uk/scotland
[Twitter.com/RTPIscotland](https://twitter.com/RTPIscotland)

Scottish Young Planners Conference 2022 - Harnessing the new planning system

12th May, Perth Concert Hall

BOOK NOW!

<https://www.rtpi.org.uk/events/2022/may/scottish-young-planners-conference-2022/>



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Ryden



HPS
Heads of Planning Scotland

geddesconsulting

2022 marks another significant year for the Scottish planning system. In November last year the Scottish Government published the Draft NPF4 for consultation. This marks a shift in thinking and focuses on the Climate Emergency as well as the Nature Crisis. The NPF4 is now to form part of the statutory development plan and will lead planning decisions until 2045 once adopted. There are challenges to be met, and opportunities to be had. How, then, do we harness the new planning system to ensure we shape places for people and in doing so contribute to reducing our impact on the planet? What are the opportunities for Young Planners, and what do we need to know?

This conference will explore our response to the NPF4 and the new planning system through four themes: sustainable, liveable, productive, and distinctive places. We will be joined by speakers from across Scotland who will discuss ways in which we can deliver on NPF4, achieve green recovery and respond to the climate emergency and nature crisis. The conference will explore the ways in which the new planning system can be harnessed, what opportunities young planners can grasp, and what we also need to know in order to address the challenges whilst shaping places for people.