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Planning for a Post Covid Recovery

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Editorial

Greetings for the first edition of Scottish Planner of the year and a warm hello from me as I return back to post at RTPI Scotland.

It's been a really busy start to the year for RTPI Scotland, and things won't be slowing down as we have some really important work on the horizon. So far we have been gearing up for the Scottish Parliaments elections in May publishing our manifesto and meeting with the political parties to discuss our key asks. We have also led on a series of roundtables to feed into the response for the National Planning Framework 4 Position Statement.

Looking ahead we have the publication of the draft NPF4 in autumn and a plethora of consultations on secondary legislation and guidance as Scottish Government continue the implementation of the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019. It doesn't stop there. Scottish Governments Digital Planning Strategy is picking up momentum and RTPI Scotland is delighted to be one of the delivery partners.

We also have the exciting prospect of COP 26 in Glasgow looming on the horizon and RTPI Scotland are setting out our strategy to engage with the event.

Of course I couldn't finish an editorial without mentioning the COVID-19 pandemic. This edition is themed around post-pandemic recovery and the important role planning can play to support this. We have a great set of contributions setting out what neighbourhoods of the future will look like, how COVID-19 will have effected regional inequality and rural areas and how it has shaped the future of community engagement through digital consultations. We also hear about a ground-breaking project in Falkirk looking at the Carron Dams Local Nature Reserve and put a spotlight on the UK Collaborative Centre for Housing Evidence research on design value.

As ever stay safe and enjoy this edition.
– Robbie Calvert - Co-Editor

Convenor's Comments: Planning Ahead in 2021



Barbara Cummins
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Barbara Cummins, Convenor of RTPI Scotland 2021

I am going to continue with the theme that my predecessor, Irene Beautyman, ended last year with; thinking before we simply slip back into old lifestyle habits. Actually given the fact that those old habits ended over a year ago for most of us you would have to wonder what's wrong with us if we do simply drift back to relying on car journeys for everything from dropping kids to school, going to the office, meeting colleagues and doing the shopping, for goodness sake I live in an area where some of my neighbours drive 5 minutes up the road to take their dog for a walk!

Covid has presented us with a unique set of circumstances to reset the clock. It has accelerated the pace of change in the working environment, and a lamentably fast decline for some of our town centre retailers, life has changed in ways that no-one could have predicted. Not only is it not realistic to expect things to get back to the way they were before March 2020 – we shouldn't want to. I don't miss the commute, over congested roads, and long days spent racing around the countryside to get to meetings and events. The things I miss are human interaction, but I don't need to go back to how things were to get that post recovery. I loved what Irene had to say in her last piece in December "we will choose to travel less when our local areas offer us more". What kind of normal do we want? And if we can decide that, are we willing to keep some of the changes we have been forced to make? I hope so.

Covid-19 has highlighted the importance of having well-designed, attractive, healthy and sustainable communities where people have local access to the services, shops and facilities they need on a daily basis. The planning system in Scotland sets the context for development and create the enabling conditions for a sustainable and healthy built environment. It shapes the environments where people work, live and interact. It can address potential negative impacts of

development which can be harmful to human health. The planning system underpins economic, social, environmental and health outcomes across Scotland.

If you are wondering where you might have already read what I have just written – it's in the RTPI Manifesto. The manifesto sets out what we already aspire to; planning for a green recovery based upon an economy and society that focuses on delivering wellbeing, sustainability, and equity.

It is important we set out our stall to politicians who will ultimately take the decisions that influence our places. If you haven't read the Manifesto already please do – it sets out our aspirations for what planning can deliver in Scotland and this year, with the election of new parliamentarians, the development of NPF4 and SPP and having the eyes of the world upon us at COP26 we planners have a key role to play in shaping a post Covid Scotland.

While we still operate with all the uncertainties around lockdown, emergency home schooling, restrictions on travel and our daily lives generally, we have cause to hope with the roll-out of the vaccine now well underway. Planning is an inherently optimistic profession, even if we planners can sometimes appear a bit grumpy. Everything we do is about looking ahead; planning ahead even. We lament the past, but we don't dwell in it – it's always about the next thing we need to do, be that policy plan or development. I hope we can harness that optimism to [#PlanTheScotlandWeNeed](https://twitter.com/PlanTheScotlandWeNeed). ■

“Covid-19 has highlighted the importance of having well-designed, attractive, healthy and sustainable communities where people have local access to the services, shops and facilities they need on a daily basis”

Article: RTPI Scotland Manifesto, Plan the Scotland We Need

Barbara Cummins FRTPI, Convener of RTPI Scotland, discusses the RTPI Scotland Manifesto, published ahead of the Scottish Parliamentary 2021 election in May.

The Scottish Parliamentary Election is due to take place on May 6 this year. It provides an opportunity for the Institute to put forward its priorities to the political parties and the future Scottish Government. Given this, at the end of January, RTPI Scotland published our manifesto 'Plan the Scotland We Need', setting out some key asks of the planning profession of any future Scottish Government. The current Covid-19 pandemic has brought into focus the need for a planned recovery for Scotland which delivers net-zero carbon reduction, targets health inequalities, supports a wellbeing economy and ensures that a quality and affordable home is available for everyone who needs one. The manifesto calls on the next Government to commit to 7 asks. These key asks are supported by a strong evidence base from a range of recent publications produced by the RTPI, including our Plan the World We Need research, 10 Big Ideas for the 4th National Planning Framework, our Invest and Prosper work, our research papers on the benefits of investing in a digital planning service and measuring the outcome of planning.

Plan for a Green Economy

Planning needs to play a central role in the transition to a low-carbon society. This includes prioritising emissions reductions, integrating land use and transport, facilitating design innovations and promoting nature based solutions. Our manifesto highlights the clear opportunity for the 4th National Planning Framework (NPF4) to support a green recovery. To tackle the climate emergency and achieve net zero carbon targets, NPF4 needs to be ambitious, deliverable, connected and influential. This includes embedding the NPF4 as a 'First Minister's document' and supporting it with a capital investment programme.

"The current Covid-19 pandemic has brought into focus the need for a planned recovery for Scotland which delivers net-zero carbon reduction, targets health inequalities, supports a wellbeing economy and ensures that a quality and affordable home is available for everyone who needs one"



Barbara Cummins
MRTPI
Convener
RTPI Scotland

Create Places for People

Covid-19 has highlighted the importance of having well-designed, attractive, healthy and sustainable communities where people have local access to services. Central to this will be embedding 'twenty minute neighbourhoods' into planning policy and practice and through collaborative place-based action. Whilst their definition is not universally agreed upon, the basic premise is a model of urban development that creates neighbourhoods where daily services can be accessed within a 20 minute walk. The aim of such neighbourhoods is to regenerate urban centres, enhance social cohesion, improving health outcomes and support the move towards carbon net-zero targets through reducing unsustainable travel. RTPi Scotland believes there is a clear opportunity to integrate emerging Local Place Plans with the aspirations of 20 minute neighbourhoods.

Invest in Planning Services

For a number of years RTPi Scotland have highlighted concerns over the large cuts that planning departments have experienced. This could be compounded by the implementation of the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019, which places many additional and unfunded duties on planning authorities. We have set out a case for investing in planning by creating enabling conditions for a sustainable and healthy built environments. This includes our continued support for investing in the digital planning service in Scotland supported by our research that estimates it could generate up to £200m in economic benefits directly to users of the planning system in the next ten years.

Support Communities to Shape Where They Live

To provide an opportunity for communities to set out what their places should look like in the future RTPi Scotland see a clear opportunity for Local Place Plans (LPPs), introduced by the 2019 Act. LPPs sit within wider changes to community empowerment including a new enhanced role for engaging a broader range of people in the planning process, including children and young people. However, there is currently no designated funding in place to support LPPs. For this new form of community led planning to be successful we have called for sufficient resources to be allocated.

Integrate and Invest in Infrastructure

To increase the number, affordability and quality of homes whilst meeting net zero carbon targets, the next Government needs to prioritise, integrate and invest in infrastructure. This will be achieved through the careful alignment with the Infrastructure Investment Plan and embedding an infrastructure-first

approach to development. We have set out how planning can integrate infrastructure investment with a range of place-based interventions. As a part of this we have called for the establishment of an independent, specialist body to coordinate and provide strategic, upfront and long-term infrastructure advice to Scottish Government and identifying the resources necessary to deliver it.

Measure Planning Performance through Outcomes

Traditionally performance assessments have tended to be narrowly centred on process metrics such as the speed of processing planning applications, the number of consents given and the amount of housing units delivered. There is a need to move towards a better understanding of how to measure performance in terms of quality placemaking. We have identified a role for the Improvement Coordinator to change how we measure performance across stakeholders involved in the planning process, including the development industry and community interests.

Increase the Number of Planners to Support a Green Recovery

Planning departments have a challenge in the near future in terms of succession and demographics, with an ageing workforce coupled with a lack of younger workers and graduates entering the sector. To ensure the continued performance of the planning system RTPi Scotland have stressed the need to ensure that we have a strong pipeline of planners coming through the system. RTPi Scotland believe that developing new opportunities and opening up different entry routes, especially through an apprenticeship scheme, will help support the sector meet the replacement and expansion demand for new talent and address the identified skills shortages.

Next Steps

The RTPi Scotland manifesto has also been complemented by RTPi, Royal Incorporation

of Architects in Scotland, RICS Scotland, Landscape Institute Scotland, Institution of Civil Engineers and Built Environment Forum Scotland issuing a joint statement calling on the next Scottish Government to co-ordinate legislation, strategies and funding to allow the built environment professions to help deliver the vision of a sustainable, resilient and inclusive future

Since having published our manifesto RTPi Scotland has been busy meeting with all the political party spokespersons and researchers to discuss how our key asks can fit into, shape and influence their respective manifestos. Across the board there was a positive reception to our proposals and clear acknowledgement of the importance of proactive planning to support a post COVID-19 recovery. Moving forward we will build upon these relationships and continue to press the need for political buy-in with the planning system with new MSPs and Ministers after the election. This is especially pertinent when considering that the draft NPF4 is



Agree and deliver a funded, forward-looking, ambitious and influential **4th National Planning Framework** to support a green recovery



Support communities to shape where they live by providing resources for them to develop **Local Place Plans**



Introduce a **planning apprenticeship** and skills development programme to increase the number of planners able to support post-COVID recovery



Ensure the **Planning Improvement Coordinator** can provide independent advice and introduce outcomes-based performance management



Embed **20 minute neighbourhoods** into decisions on policy, practice and investment



Establish an independent body to coordinate and provide strategic, upfront and long-term **infrastructure advice** to Scottish Government



Create a world-leading planning system through **increasing planning fees** and making sure they are used to support planning services

due for publication in autumn, so we expect this to be one of the first things to land on the newly elected MSPs desks. Therefore we will spend the summer recess sending a range of briefings supporting our key asks and making sure that politicians have a clear understanding of the value planning can have in rebuilding society in the post-pandemic world. ■

Q&A

Public Enquiries



Forbes Barron MRTPI,
Head of Planning
and Building Control,
Glasgow City Council

Forbes Barron, Head of Planning and Building Control, Glasgow City Council answers our questions.

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

I was educated at a time of great structural change for society and the economy. I was fascinated by some of the great challenges I observed as facing our towns and cities. Like many of my peer group I was the first of my family to have access to University education, and I used that opportunity to study in Edinburgh at Heriot Watt.

I am a great believer in supporting younger people into our profession. I have been fortunate to work with a range of individually inspirational colleagues. I believe the broad range of challenges faced and shaping of solutions through our activities are fundamental to all our lives. I am also inspired by the range of Planning and related practitioners across Scotland and some of their intellect and achievements.

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

We have a declared climate emergency, and are in the midst of a global pandemic. Causal factors and impacts will require a more sustainable greener recovery, with more equal outcomes in Scotland and globally. Planning and the National Planning Framework 4 are important tools for clarity on outcomes, and place outcomes. An ongoing challenge is the lack of government funding for local government (which translates into less resources for planning) and additionally the seemingly ad hoc nature of government funding for specific projects, which means it is harder to implement in a joined - up manner. Delivery Plans associated with Development Plans are a key spatial tool for informing intelligent aligned spatial investment and require be fully utilised.

3 Why is planning important?

Everything happens somewhere. Protecting our natural and built environment and delivering development in the right place is hugely assisted by good planning and collaboration. The qualities of our places determine how resilient, successful and healthy they are for people, support a vibrant economy and fundamentally impacts the lives people live. A plan led approach allows all the stakeholders a point of clarity around how they contribute to good developing and adapting good quality places. Those Plans and Planning should seek to be inspirational and influential.

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

Glasgow has some of the best built and natural environments in the country but also faces challenges to drive healthy sustainable environment for all. In modern times the New Gorbals has proven to be a successful example of urban regeneration with a healthy mix of housing tenure, human scale modern interpretation of the Glasgow tenement form and a new community park at the heart. This underlines the importance of planning and genuine community involvement to inform a masterplan approach that has delivered on the ground – an excellent example of a 20 minute neighbourhood within 5 mins walk of Glasgow City Centre. More recently Dalmarnock (Commonwealth Games village) is well known and another good examples of 20 minute neighbourhoods. Others are delivering around the City Centre. Work through the Canal Partnership has delivered substantive improvements to life outcomes and lifespan in some of the Country's most deprived communities, whilst also adapting the canal as smart infrastructure to unlock regeneration.

Planning support for the programme of design and community led housing across the city has resulted in some of the best quality housing and place outcome achieved anywhere internationally.

5 How can the NPF4 support planners in delivering great places?

The four emerging policy themes (Net Zero Emissions, Resilient Communities, Wellbeing Economy, Better/Greener Places) provide a clear direction of travel for planning policy in a modern Scotland and context for the emerging Development Plans. This will allow focus for engagement with our communities and stakeholders, assisted by digital investment, and ongoing implementation of our new Act. There will be lessons learned since our world changed last March, so there is much for us to consider together. ■

In Practice:

Mental Health and Town Planning: Building in resilience



Mandy Brown
MRTPI
Planning Officer
Falkirk Council

Mandy Brown, Planning Officer at Falkirk Council, looks at the Carron Dams Local Nature Reserve project, winner of the 2019 Scottish Award for Quality in Planning.

When Carron Dams Local Nature Reserve was voted People's Choice and Overall Winner of 2019's Scottish Award for Quality in Planning, you may have been forgiven for assuming this was just another small, urban greenspace that had little to do with planning and place-making.

You'd have been wrong of course; Carron Dams is so much more than just a convenient place to walk the dog. And the story of how this relic from a bygone industrial era became a valuable haven for people and wildlife alike has everything to do with planning and place-making. In short, this project owes its success to good planning, effective partnership and the creativity and innovation of those involved. This is our story.

Carron Dams Local Nature Reserve was once home to the world-renowned Carron Company, an ironworks of global significance and claimed by many as the birthplace of Scotland's Industrial Revolution. Our aim has always been to encourage more people to discover and enjoy this wonderful place.

The project itself is embedded within the area's planning strategy – from safeguarding the site and creating supportive policy, to drawing everyone together to deliver this inspiring project. Our winning partnership brought together Falkirk Council, Central Scotland Green Network Trust (now Green Action Trust), Scottish Wildlife Trust, Larbert

High School, Buglife and many members of the local community.

Planning policy and other key strategies proved crucial in securing the funding and support we needed so people could safely access and enjoy the site. Positive partnerships were formed and strengthened over time with a good deal of active involvement from those living and working nearby brought our plans to fruition. It became clear very early on that we needed to create a more welcoming feel to entice people off the streets and into the Dams and

“...we need to create a more welcoming feel to entice people off the streets and into the Dams and farther reaches of our well-connected woodlands and open spaces.”

the farther reaches of our well-connected woodlands and open spaces. A simple art project with Larbert High School soon became a cross-curricular initiative, involving pupils from all year groups. Creative writing and poetry merged seamlessly with art and design, humanities and science – a mini Scottish

enlightenment for the 21st Century!

The breadth and depth of research and thought that pupils put into creating their entrance sculpture designs was so inspiring that we wanted to capture and share it more widely. And so “Spark and Grit!” our immersive on-site promenade theatre production was born. This was set in Carron Dams using light, sound, music and drama to tell the story of Carron Company, its ultimate demise and how the nature reserve has since flourished.

Together we have created a real community asset – a great place to visit, and a dam fine place to discover, learn, conserve and explore. In the words of SAQP judges, we “creatively engaged people of all ages, with drama, history, sculpture, photography and nature bringing a depth of impact rarely seen in a planning initiative of this scale”.

And in this era of restricted travel and limited social contact, the outdoors has become our meeting place of choice. Having good quality greenspaces on our doorstep has never been more important, or valued, by so many. If ever there was a time for creating more “dam fine places”, then that time is now. With its focus on place-making, the planning profession is in a great position to make this happen, working with our communities for the health and wellbeing of everyone.

If you're not lucky enough to live in the Falkirk Council area, you can still “visit” us at Carron Conversations <https://blogs.glowscotland.org.uk/fa/sparkandgrit/2017/06/28/carron-conversations/>, “Spark & Grit!” <https://www.soleproductions.co.uk/portfolio/p4969/spark-and-grit> and Carron Unveiled <https://vimeo.com/321122830> to hear more about our journey. ■

In Focus: From Designing Streets to Designing Neighbourhoods?

In this article, **Dr James T. White** and **Dr Gareth James** call on the Scottish Government to adopt design value standards to help achieve the target of net-zero emissions and improve the design quality of housing and neighbourhoods in Scotland.



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COVID-19 presents significant socio-economic challenges, but climate change poses a greater threat to people's health and the economy in the longer term. It is essential that post-pandemic recovery plans also respond to the climate emergency by promoting action that will ensure Scotland meets its climate change targets and transitions to net-zero emissions. Research has long shown that good design has a positive impact on health and wellbeing, the economy and environmental sustainability.¹ Improving the design quality of our homes and neighbourhoods is therefore critical.

The value of design has long been foregrounded in *Scottish Planning Policy*, which emphasises the critical role that a 'design-led approach' should play at each stage of the planning process. It reads:

The design-led approach should be applied at all levels – at the national level in the NPF, at the regional level in strategic development plans, at the local level in local development plans and at site and individual building level within master plans that respond to how people use public spaces.²

Yet, as our 2020 research on housing design outcomes, *Delivering design value*³, reported, there is little evidence of this 'design-led approach' in practice. In Scotland and the rest of the UK, the overall quality of new-build housing remains poor and design is consistently undervalued during the planning and design process.

In *Delivering design value*, which was published with the support of RTP1 and the Scottish Government, we identified a series of barriers that prevent the delivery of consistent well-designed housing. We have characterised these as the 'leaky bucket of design value' to illustrate the social, economic and environmental design values that are so often lost (see Figure 1). Our research clearly demonstrated that a significant gap

exists between the type of national planning policy ambitions set out in *Scottish Planning Policy* and the reality of planning and design outcomes on the ground.

The emerging changes to the planning policy landscape in Scotland do appear focused on addressing this 'housing design quality conundrum'. Following the introduction of the new Planning (Scotland) Act 2019, *Scottish Planning Policy* is soon to be merged with the new *National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4)* and, as outlined in the September 2020 edition of the Scottish Government's 2020 programme for government, the new consolidated NPF4 includes plans to encourage the development of '20 minute neighbourhoods' that are "...liveable, accessible places, with thriving local economies, where people can meet their daily needs within a 20 minute walk".⁴

It is encouraging to see that the *NPF4 Position Statement* recognises housing and neighbourhood design quality not as optional extras but as fundamental to addressing the climate emergency and creating just places that support people's long-term health and wellbeing. In principle, we support



Figure 1: The leaky bucket of design value

"The value of design has long been foregrounded in *Scottish Planning Policy*, which emphasises the critical role that a 'design-led approach' should play at each stage of the planning process."

this ambition because the concept has the potential to drive the type of behaviour required to reduce emissions. If it can be achieved, it should significantly reduce the reliance on motorised vehicles to reach essential day-to-day places including, for example, schools, health services, open space, and shops.

The urgent challenge is how to translate this positive policy rhetoric into actionable, measurable and well-funded solutions that lead to the creation of sustainable places, while simultaneously addressing the

dilution of design value that so often occurs during the planning and development process. These are not easy challenges to overcome, not least because the dominant models of real estate development for new housing in Scotland are poorly positioned to deliver the type of well-designed, mixed use places that need to be built in the future to meet the target of net-zero emissions. A radical shift is required to alter the status quo which, unfortunately, continues to facilitate greenfield or edge-of-settlement development that is mono-use, poorly connected to local services and built at densities that are far too low to function as ‘20 minute neighbourhoods’.

While national planning policy itself cannot change the *modus operandi* of the housing and development sector overnight, it is our view that the national planning policies contained in NPF4 must do more than merely ‘facilitate’ design solutions that deliver net-zero emissions. With this in mind, our *Delivering design value* report recommends that the design principles of a ‘20 minute neighbourhood’ be established as a regulatory

design value standard. This would allow the Scottish Government to enforce (rather than merely recommend) neighbourhood urban form principles and layout parameters that local planning authorities and developers must meet if new development is to gain planning approval. Far too often, design quality – and by extension the potential for more sustainable, net-zero development – is seen as an ‘optional extra’ easily trumped by other concerns such as local economic development or development viability.

A regulatory standard would give planners more confidence to say ‘no’ to poorly designed places, while providing developers with a clearer sense of the design quality benchmark for new housing in Scotland.

A key recommendation from our research is that design value standards should mirror the status of building standards, which have already been tightened to ensure that new-build housing in the private and social rented sector are better insulated and more air-tight than in the past. We would argue that the same regulatory weight should apply to neighbourhood design principles if the Scottish Government is truly serious about planning for net-zero emissions. It must be simple and concise so it can be readily translated by local planning authorities into more detailed and contextually-sensitive design policies that are appropriate for the diverse towns, cities and rural areas of highland and lowland Scotland. Design value standards must also leave room for design creativity and diversity and thus avoid straying into prescribing the external architectural appearance of new homes.

“A key recommendation from our research is that design value standards should mirror the status of building standards.”

Local authority officers must still be able to judge matters of local context and fit, and architects, landscape architects and urban designers must still feel creatively empowered to propose innovative design solutions for new development. *The NPF4 Position Statement* notes the aim to ‘refresh’ *Designing Streets*. It is our view that this document provides just the right template to begin developing a design value standard which might be renamed, *Designing Neighbourhoods*.

Our proposal for a national design value standard is all well and good, but it won’t be successful without additional investment in local authority planning and design functions. This should be a key priority of the Scottish Government. New investment should directly support design-led plan-making, masterplanning, improved community engagement and leadership positions within local authorities. Investment should ultimately be understood as a critical route to making better planning decisions in the context of the housing crisis, the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the climate emergency. A more efficient and certain planning process with better design outcomes benefits everyone and should be recognised as a critical step on Scotland’s journey to net-zero emissions. ■

¹ For example: Kliener and Horton (2016). Urban design: an important future force for health and wellbeing. *The Lancet*, 388 (10062), pp. 2848-2850. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(16\)31578-1](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(16)31578-1); Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (2016). Placemaking and value. Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors, available online: https://www.rics.org/globalassets/rics-website/media/upholding-professional-standards/sector-standards/land/placemaking_and_value_1st_edition.pdf (Accessed 29th October 2020); Carmona, M. (2019). Place value: place quality and its impact on health, social, economic and environmental outcomes, *Journal of Urban Design* (24) 1, pp. 1-48. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13574809.2018.1472523>

² Scottish Government (2014). Scottish Planning Policy. Scottish Government, p. 11. Available online: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-planning-policy/> (Accessed 17th September 2020).

³ White, J. T. et al. (2020). Delivering design value: The housing design quality conundrum. UK Collaborative Centre for Housing Evidence. Available online: <https://housingevidence.ac.uk/publications/delivering-design-value-the-housing-design-quality-conundrum/>

⁴ Scottish Government (2020a). Protecting Scotland, Renewing Scotland: The Governments Programme for Scotland 2020-2021. Scottish Government, p. 37. Available online: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/protecting-scotlandrenewing-scotland-governments-programme-scotland-2020-2021/> (Accessed 2nd November 2020).



Examples of typical housing developments in Scotland





Article:

Twenty minute neighbourhoods

Robbie Calvert, Policy, Practice and Research Officer at RTPI Scotland, discusses the recently published briefing looking at how planning policy and practice can help implement the 20 minute neighbourhoods.

On the 24th of March RTPI Scotland published our briefing on 20 minute neighbourhoods. The purpose of this briefing is not to provide a rigid definition for 20 minute neighbourhoods or to discuss their evolution in policy and research, but instead to focus thinking towards delivering their ambitions and how the planning system can support this. 20 minute neighbourhoods are a planning concept and urban growth model that has gained significant traction across the world, catalysed by the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions which have limited many populations to their near vicinity. Whilst their definition is not universally agreed upon, the basic premise is of a model of urban development that creates neighbourhoods where daily services can be accessed within a 20 minute walk.

An array of interventions need considered to support the implementation of 20 minute neighbourhoods including active travel interventions, public realm and greenspace enhancements, traffic reduction or calming methods, service provision and considerations of densification. The fundamental tenets of a 20 minute neighbourhoods are not necessarily new in planning. However with the renewed political and societal focus on neighbourhoods resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, an opportunity has been created for planning to reposition itself and be seen

as a proactive and visionary discipline vital in supporting post-Covid recovery.

In Scotland, 20 minute neighbourhoods have already made their way into policy and political spheres, with inclusion within the Programme for Government 2020-21 and explicit mention in the recently published National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) Position Statement. The Implementation of the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019, the impending draft of the NPF4 and a shift in many other policy areas to more a placed-based approach provide a range of opportunities which have been identified in this work. In particular, the briefing looks at embedding 20 minute neighbourhoods in planning policy, implementing at development management and finally discusses collaborative delivery through place-based partnership approaches.

Embedding 20 minute neighbourhoods in planning policy

With the NPF4 now forming part of the statutory development plan, incorporating Scottish Planning Policy, the opportunity to embed 20 minute neighbourhoods in national policy is clear. Research on the



Robbie Calvert
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“...an opportunity has been created for planning to reposition itself and be seen as a proactive and visionary discipline vital in supporting post-covid recovery .”



developments but consideration also needs to be made about servicing from a retrofit lens, whether it is supporting the provision of new services in areas deficient of them, or encouraging residential developments in areas well serviced such as town centres. Consideration needs also made for any proposals for car dependent out-of-town retail and leisure that are not closely located to populated areas, which may necessitate a blanket presumption against such developments.

Development management

Development management will be an important process of pro-actively managing development in local areas to support 20 minute neighbourhoods. Our briefing looks at how a refreshed pre-application process could help support 20 minute neighborhoods with, for example, a general criteria framework checklist process, requiring developers to show how proposals meet envisioned outcomes. Planning obligations could play a role in setting out infrastructure requirements to create or reinforce successful 20 minute neighbourhoods. There is also an opportunity to utilise the impending Infrastructure Levy, provisions from which are set out within the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019. Outcome-focused performance measurement is also discussed in the work, with the idea of incorporating Design Quality Audits into the process, with explicit consideration given to principles of the 20 minute neighbourhood.

Place-based partnerships

The successful operationalisation of 20 minute neighbourhoods will require collaborative working across a wide range of stakeholders in the public sector, private sector, third sector and in the communities themselves. RTPI Scotland believe that there is a clear opportunity to deliver 20 minute neighbourhoods with new place-based ways of working especially through operationalising the Place Principle and with new approaches to community engagement through Local Place Plans.

Whilst not intended to cover every single element of 20 minute neighbourhoods, we hope this briefing moves the conversation forward towards how we can implement them. And most importantly we wanted to make clear that, given the right tools, planners and planning can be pivotal in shaping our future neighbourhoods. ■

1 Scottish Government (2019) Adoption of Scottish planning policy in local development plans: research
 2 RTPI (2018) Settlement Patterns, Urban Form and Sustainability
 3 Improvement Service (2020) Comparing the 20 Minute Neighbourhood and Traditional Scenarios in Edinburgh Local Development Plan: a Rapid Scoping Assessment. September. Available here: <https://bit.ly/2P1cql9>

adoption of Scottish Planning Policy in Local Development Plans recommended greater emphasis on placemaking at the forefront of development and recognised a need for more direction in ensuring principles are implemented with planning policy becoming more prescriptive to ensure that placemaking principles are carried through to development management. Therefore our report has identified the possibility for the principles of 20 minute neighbourhoods to be integrated as part of an enhanced policy emphasis on placemaking. The NPF4 also provides an opportunity to start embedding, at a policy level, a broader place-based approach to the delivery of public services. There is a range of other national policy statements our work has highlighted as opportunities to embed 20 minute neighbourhoods in policy, including a revamped 'Creating Places' and 'Designing Streets'.

Local Development Plans (LDPs) are essential documents to help shape infrastructure investments and determine the future pattern of development in areas. Preparation of LDP strategies and policies needs to be informed by a robust and up-to-date evidence base. Therefore, in order to support the formation of policy and delivery of 20 minute neighbourhoods, clear consideration needs made as to collection, analysis and visualisation of data relevant to achieve their output. To achieve this RTPI Scotland see a role for the Scottish Government's Digital Planning Strategy. Within the new LDP preparation process set out by the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 our work has recognised the potential role for Open Space Strategies, Forestry and Woodland Strategies and Play Sufficiency Assessments to support and reinforce 20

minute neighbourhoods. Our briefing has identified three policy areas where changes could be particularly helpful, including transport, density and local services.

Transport

The planning system has an important role to play in delivering active travel networks, reducing congestion and thereby creating more liveable streets. We have recommended that Transport Appraisals be looked at afresh to support 20 minute neighbourhoods. This could include more emphasis on identifying active travel infrastructure needs and traffic calming measures such as Low Traffic Neighbourhoods.

Density

Compact settlement patterns help to reduce the distances between homes and jobs and makes more efficient use of existing transport infrastructure. Research has shown that larger settlements with higher densities can provide a critical mass of population to support local services, improve economic productivity, reduce transport emissions, better public health, and achieve greater social interaction. It is estimated that to support 20 minute neighbourhoods, an average density of at least 65 dwellings per hectare in new developments may be required, although it could be higher in some areas. A stronger policy steer in terms of density will be necessary to add more weight in the planning balance to the consideration of compact settlement form. This may include readdressing existing neighbourhoods with low densities with an appropriate policy response.

Local Services

When considering the provision of services in localities development planning can provide a policy support for service access to new

Article:

Post Covid Recovery for Rural Areas



Fergus Murray
MRTPI
Head of development
and Economic
Growth, Argyll and
Bute Council

Fergus Murray, Head of Development and Economic Growth at Argyll and Bute Council looks at how the Covid-19 pandemic has impacted upon rural areas in Scotland and how we can support their recovery.

This time last year I was looking forward to the onset of Spring and warmer weather. Feedback from the local tourism industry, which had enjoyed record growth across Argyll and Bute in recent years, was things were looking very promising. Lots of bookings were coming through and multiple events associated with the Year of Coast and Waters were all well advanced.

This optimism changed virtually overnight with the first cases of the pandemic in Scotland. The first lockdown brought with it complete closure with almost everything stopped and a lack of clarity on what was going to happen next. Indeed at that time there was a lot of talk on how the economy would recover. Would it be a v shaped recovery, or a u, or a w even, but I do not think there is a letter in the alphabet that describes the situation we are now in.

In any case the coming of the pandemic has simply exacerbated many of the issues rural Scotland was already struggling with. This has been confirmed through the numerous virtual conversations we have had with our partners including local communities. The same discussion points come up every time and this has shaped the economic priorities of the council as we look towards economic and social recovery.

In Argyll the top priority for local people and businesses remains transport connectivity. Whilst we have travelled much less than we did previously lifeline routes for essential supplies, health care and routes to market are more important than ever. The pandemic has revealed vulnerabilities in our rural transport system with public transport running at a substantial loss and not being flexible enough to respond to the changing needs of local people. The situation in Argyll

has also not been helped by the frequent closure of the A83 at the Rest. This road is the equivalent of the M8 to many people living in Argyll and it now has a semi-permanent convoy system on it and closes when it rains. If that was the case with the M8 connecting Glasgow to Edinburgh I do not think the people in the central belt would put up with that. As part of the recovery process we are continuing to press for a permanent solution for this and also increased investment in rural transport connectivity through the STPR2 process.

The pandemic has also shown how important digital connectivity is now to the future of rural communities. What would we have done without access to modern broadband and mobile signals? Not a lot,

but the situation is far from perfect as digital infrastructure in many parts of rural Scotland is simply not fit for purpose. It was good to see the contract being signed for R100 and there now seems to be a greater urgency amongst mobile operators to cooperate and tackle the dreaded not spots but this has to be a priority with full fibre rollout and looking beyond 4G before it is considered obsolete. As equally important as the availability of modern digital infrastructure is having equal access to it. Too many people cannot afford broadband or even having a device that can access it. This has been clearly shown by many children struggling to learn remotely. A situation that needs to be addressed as a matter of urgency through Government targeted investment.





Another key issue is actually having the digital skills to make the best use of available technology as is access to learning opportunity across rural Scotland. People need the choice on acquiring new skills, no matter where they live, and this will also help address the rural de-population issues.

Another unforeseen consequence of the pandemic has been the demand for rural houses. Throughout 2020 there was exceptional demand for houses in Argyll and Bute and it will be interesting to see if this continues in 2021. This trend is very welcome but we hope that people moving to our area bring their work and employment opportunities with them. One thing is certain is that house prices have continued to rise more and more local people are being priced out of the local housing market. For this reason we have embarked on the biggest social house building programme for decades across Argyll and Bute and we are for the first time looking to build housing for key workers. One thing we have to look at though is the huge cost of house building in rural Scotland, particularly on our islands, where we cannot achieve any economies of scale.

One new issue that has developed due to the economic impact of the pandemic is

a dramatic rise of the claimant count. In rural Scotland it was often a lack of a skilled workforce that was the main issue and while this remains the case today there are a lot of people now without a job. This situation is likely to get worse in the short term as furlough ends so there an urgent need to

address this issue nationally to get people back to work.

In Argyll a lot of this unemployment relates to the tourism and hospitality industry not being able to employ a workforce so we are focussing on Tourism recovery looking at a 10 point recovery plan, targeted marketing and also dealing with the issue of staycation pressures including reducing conflict with visitors and communities as they

return. As they did in droves for a short time in the summer. This will be very challenging as much of the tourism industry is in survival mode right now and there is still considerable uncertainty for the journey ahead.

Another area of focus is fisheries particularly live fish/shellfish exports. The pandemic has reduced demand across the globe for our outstanding products but this situation has recently been compounded by leaving the EU and changes to export certification. The industry is now in crisis and an urgent need is required for a taskforce to

be set up to ensure its survival and to map a way through to a sustainable future. It needs to be remembered that fisheries are Scotland's biggest food export and many rural communities rely on the income generated from it.

All of these issues and more, including town centre recovery and better placemaking, are being addressed through the Argyll and Bute Rural Growth Deal that has been negotiated with both the UK and Scottish Governments over a number of years. We have again tested the project themes given the economic and social impacts of the pandemic but we consider them to be robust aligning to both Government's priorities going forward.

Importantly, we are going to have greater emphasis on inclusive growth throughout the deal and also ensuring everything we do takes full account of the need to reduce our carbon footprint and help deliver a green recovery for our area. A summary of the deal can be found at the following link <https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/rgd> and we are looking to accelerate elements of the deal asap to address the economic and social impacts of the pandemic and the ever changing needs of a modern rural economy. We certainly live in interesting times and as my Dad was often heard to say "please give me a break". ■

“Throughout 2020 there was exceptional demand for houses in Argyll and Bute and it will be interesting to see if this continues in 2021. This trend is very welcome but we hope that people moving to our area bring their work and employment opportunities with them.”

Article: Regional Inequality and COVID-19



Bill Lindsay
MRTPI
Service Manager
of Policy & Place,
Fife Council

Bill Lindsay, Service Manager of Policy & Place at Fife Council, looks at the consequences of COVID-19 on regional inequality and considers how planning may address them.

Regional inequality is a recurring discussion in the UK. The full effect of a year in a global pandemic has yet to be understood. What does that do to regional inequality and what role can planning play?

Think about what we mean by inequality. Economic circumstances and disposable income is a default measure; but having the opportunity and skills to be economically active in the first place are just as much a consideration. In the last 12 months health – both physical and mental – has been affected, jobs have been lost or put on hold, education and skills development has been interrupted.

Reports from the Office of National Statistics (ONS) record a reduction in the UK's gross national product and economic activity in the services, manufacturing, and construction sectors between early 2020 to the year end¹. In Scotland, an analysis of the impact of COVID-19 on Scotland's health, economy, and society published jointly by the Scottish Government and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA), confirms that people already suffering disadvantage are being hardest hit².

This presents challenges for Regional Spatial Strategies and Regional Growth Frameworks in setting a post-pandemic

recovery and delivering the strategy through local policies. Planning can play a role to support regional strategies and local outcome improvement plans. At a practical level, this can be about cross-sector collaboration to place facilities for health care, community services, education, and employment opportunities in accessible locations, and making a case for infrastructure to be in place and funded to make that happen.

Design and the public realm can also positively contribute to better health and wellbeing. The challenge at present is one of balancing the demands to provide good quality green infrastructure and opportunities for recreation and exercise where they are needed most on the one hand, and, on the other, hard-pressed local authorities balancing capital and revenue costs after 10 years of austerity and the as yet unknown impact of post-COVID budget pressures. That said, smart design and good quality environment need not cost more in the

strategy, public health, and transportation to support a greener, lower carbon economic (and social) recovery.

The last 12 months has shown how fleet of foot the planning system has been in providing immediate solutions to emergencies arising from the pandemic:

“...smart design and good quality environment need not cost more in the long run and whole-life costing should be investigated to show the long term benefits.”

long run and whole-life costing should be investigated to show the long term benefits.

I suggest the new era of development planning can shift towards community planning territory by exploring how land use planning policy works with other public sector policies such as economic

flexibility in dealing with urgent COVID-related developments, being pragmatic about enforcement, and adopting an approach which takes away some of the bureaucracy normally associated with planning system to ensure short-term solutions are delivered.

Looking ahead, we can consider how we can apply those lessons in the longer term so that planning policy can become less prescriptive and less of a development management rule book and, instead, provides a practical and flexible framework where basic principles around amenity and compatible land uses are applied. Explore how planning policy can avoid becoming an unintended barriers to achieving solutions for future problems which may not have occurred to us (12 months into living a way we wouldn't have thought likely a year ago, we should be humble in our assessment of how well we can think scenario plan for development plans that will run for 10 years). ■

¹<https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/grossdomesticproductgdp/articles/coronavirusandtheimpactonoutputintheukconomy/october2020>
²<https://www.gov.scot/news/impact-of-covid-19/>



Article: Neighbourhoods of the Future



Jonathon Clarkson
Placemaking
Practitioner

Jonathon Clarkson, Placemaking Practitioner, looks at what constitutes a neighbourhood and how different approaches to people and place can nurture their future.

I'm sitting in front of my computer, but looking out at a dark, grey, Winter's day during 'lock-down'. Like so many others, we're all having to dig deep to find the resolve to get, not only through the dark days of Winter, but also through the dark days of a Global Pandemic. We **need** reasons to be cheerful...

One of our 'feel good' family films, is 'Patch Adams' starring Robin Williams, amongst others. For those who don't know this story, it's based on a real-life character - Hunter Doherty "Patch" Adams. He was a truly remarkable man who had the courage to see the world differently, looking beyond 'problems', crossing disciplines to find innovative ways to help cultivate real-world solutions. And by seeing, through different lenses, what really matters: **People**.

I won't give too much away, for fear of spoiling the film. But there's a specific scene, where the character of Patch, while self-referred as a patient in a 'mental institution', takes the time to **reach out**, to try to understand a fellow patient called Arthur. The

"If you're focusing on the problem, you can't see the solution"

"look *through* the problem. Look, at me."

Now, by this stage, you may be asking what all this has to do with Planning, Placemaking and the 20-minute Neighbourhood? Clearly, **we need** more than just optimistic, 'feel good' movies to get us through our current, very human, crisis.

But *through* this crisis, is *such* opportunity. And that opportunity is partly to reshape the places we live and re-cultivate the relationships we hold dear. To nurture something *better* than before. To see solutions through: **Place**. To understand: **People**.

How can we 'heal', in a way which creates the conditions to help communities, and enterprise, to thrive? And what is a *neighbourhood* anyway?

In simple terms, neighbourhoods are where we have human relationships with our neighbours. To be able to help, and to be helped. These are democratic environments where we can be the best we can collectively

be. Achieved in part, by walking, wheeling or cycling, meeting neighbours, unsealed, open and not 'on-mute' behind glass and steel screens. To create neighbourhoods, is therefore, to create the interconnected habitats for people to

live healthy, sustainable, lives.

As the 'x-rays' of our cities and settlements, pre the automobile show, our most cherished places emerged as pragmatic responses to basic human needs. They appear often as 'urban villages'. They usually take the form of mixed use centres, with higher built



density at their core and reducing density at their edges. And all, within a 20 minutes' walk or so. For these are not redline legal boundaries. They are messy and blurred at the edges. And yet these are the conditions we know can help keep us well, to help with neighbourliness, cultivating the natural conditions for community and communities. Historically, they have helped allow us to thrive as a rich network of individuals, families, enterprising organisations. We can re-learn this by listening, by collaborating as caring people, revealing the richness of: **Place**.

Are 20-minute neighbourhoods new 'concepts' to be imposed? Or were they always there, embedded in the DNA of *people and place*? Perhaps the opportunity is to co-learn and to share that process - local experts collaborating with specialist experts? For there is nothing more inspiring to me, than people and place, pulling together. ■

"As the 'x-rays' of our cities and settlements, pre the automobile show, our most cherished places emerged as pragmatic responses to basic human needs."

connection is made when Patch demonstrates humility and kindness, by solving an utterly mundane problem, using the pragmatic resources at hand. He helped, his neighbour.

Thus, a human connection was made. And Arthur, by return, shares his wisdom through a simple example:-

Article: Consultation During a Pandemic - It can be done



Alisa Anderson
MRTPI
Senior Policy Planner,
Aberdeenshire Council

Ailsa Anderson, Senior Policy Planner at Aberdeenshire Council discusses innovative approaches recently adopted with digital consultation in the Local Development Plan Preparation process.

Incorporating digital means of engagement into your consultation strategy is by no means a new concept. However, due to restrictions associated with controlling the transmission of Covid-19, our reliance on engaging online

The opportunity was taken to hit the reset button. Whilst all the reasons why not to continue were considered, i.e. barriers to digital engagement or potential resistance, we did not consider these risks to outweigh the overall benefits of pursuing online engagement. We reacted quickly to pull together a suite of engagement tools that could be easily accessed online.

A dedicated webpage was created to act as a “one stop shop” for the consultation. An interactive ‘story map’ version of the PLDP was provided to enable users to view detailed boundaries of proposed allocations. Activities were created for young people which could be integrated

into home learning and resources were provided for communities to share within their own networks locally. Three short films on the Plan-making process were also produced receiving over 3,300 views during the 10-week consultation.

A virtual drop-in ‘room’, designed to look like a public hall, was created in lieu of face-to-face events. This interactive web-based tool was developed in partnership with AECOM and offered a like for like replacement for real world events. During the consultation period our virtual drop-in ‘room’ received 3,279 individual visitors. By way of comparison 427 people attended 13 drop-in events held for the PLDP consultation in 2015.

Our online presence was available 24 hours, 7 days a week. Users could access and digest the information available at their leisure. A ‘Live Chat’ function was

also made available to allow users to speak directly with a Planning Officer. The online tool removed the need to travel by car to be at a public hall at a particular time and date. We believe we were able to reach a broader audience and tap into a new appreciation that people are having for places and spaces during this extended period staying at home.

Social media proved to be vitally important at directing people to the consultation and the resources available.

Notwithstanding our focus on engaging online, several non-digital means of engagement were also pursued through issuing of press releases, neighbour notification letters and radio interviews.

Delivering a more resilient way of working against the backdrop of a global pandemic has accelerated the adoption of digital tools and innovations. By continuing with the consultation in a digital format provided certainty to both communities and the development industry that a new LDP was being progressed. This would also ensure that Aberdeenshire was in the best place to support economic recovery post Covid-19 by having an up-to-date LDP. ■

“We believe we were able to reach a broader audience and tap into a new appreciation that people are having for places and spaces during this extended period staying at home.”

has been elevated to new heights. Covid-19 has sped up our thinking on what is possible and allowed innovative engagement methods to come to the fore.

In Aberdeenshire, a large rural authority, we have traditionally relied on face-to-face engagement through drop-in events or public meetings. These have often been held with mixed success, but providing a physical presence was perceived to be vitally important to gaining buy-in in the Plan-making process.

In early March 2020, the Proposed Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan (PLDP) was agreed alongside a Development Plan Scheme that clearly set out what we intended to do to promote the PLDP. On 23 March 2020, the UK entered into “lockdown” throwing our whole consultation strategy into doubt. Letters subsequently issued by the Chief Planner, John McNairney, stressed the importance of ensuring the planning system continued to function as far as reasonably practical during the pandemic.



Article:

A Digital Planning Strategy for Scotland



Craig McLaren
FRTPI
Director of RTPI
Scotland, Ireland &
English Regions

Craig McLaren, Director of Scotland, Ireland and English Regions in the RTPI, discusses the Scottish Government Digital transformation programme and RTPI Scotland's involvement as a delivery partner.

The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted every aspect of society since early 2020. Almost overnight our lives, our work, how we talk to each other and many of our services shifted online, just to get by in these difficult and unprecedented times. In planning, as in most walks of life, the pandemic has accelerated the widespread adoption of digital technology and new ways of working. To understand, reinforce and expand on this change last summer Scottish Government undertook a series of workshops involving planning authorities from across Scotland, focused on operating through the COVID-19 restrictions; exploring the difficulties, how to resolve them and how to ensure a more resilient planning system for the future.

This showed the value that digitising the planning service can have to the economy, to users and to those who manage the system and we believe that this partnership with the Scottish Government can be a real catalyst in making the system more accessible, transparent and collaborative. There are lots of things we can do with digital planning that we are not already doing, the potential is enormous and this could be transformational for the profession. Moving forward it's important we think about spatial data, both in terms of how we gather, how we interpret it and how we visualise it. There are also lots of new and exciting ways we can harness digital technology to engage with communities and reach audiences that we don't currently reach.

Additionally Scottish Government commissioned the RTPI to undertake to explore the evidence base in implementing a Digital Planning Strategy through examining the economic and societal benefits arising from digital transformation; efficiencies that accrue within the planning system from investment in new technology and validation

of the estimated cost and time savings; and the costs (financial and other) of not taking forward digital approaches across the planning service. This resulted in the Benefits of Investing in a Digital Planning Service research <https://www.rtpi.org.uk/find-your-rtpi/rtpi-nations/wwwrtpiorgukscotland/our-publications/policy-and-research/> that outlined that over the next 10 years digital planning can generate up to £200m of economic benefits directly to users of the planning system; up to 1,600 jobs in the construction and development sectors and their supply chains; and up to £50.5m generated in economic benefits for the broader construction sector.

All of this has informed the Scottish Government Digital Planning transformation programme <https://www.transformingplanning.scot/digital-planning/delivering-the-programme/> which was launched in March. This five-year transformation programme follows the publication in November 2020 of Transforming Places Together: Scotland's digital strategy for planning <https://www.gov.scot/publications/transforming-places-together-scotlands-digital-strategy-planning/> which highlights the vision, missions and deliverables to be delivered across the next 5 years with partners across the planning and technology sectors. The set out five missions are to:

- unlock the value of planning data
- deliver an end-to-end digital planning experience with new digital services, platforms and tools
- create the conditions for digital to flourish
- use digital tools to drive collaboration and engagement
- embed a culture of digital innovation

The strategy is supported by a funding commitment of £35m that highlights the importance placed by the Scottish Government on maintaining and improving a resilient and responsive planning system and one which builds on the lessons learned during the pandemic.

We are very pleased that the Scottish Government has announced that the RTPI Scotland will be an early delivery partner for the Digital Planning transformation programme. This will look to gain an understanding of the 'digital readiness' of planners working in the Scottish Government, planning authorities, planning consultancies and other organisations by undertaking research to assess the level of skills and knowledge on digital planning; identify the needs, challenges and opportunities to upskill planners; and test what an effective skills development programme could look like. It will inform the drawing up of a programme to support planners across Scotland to share best practice and learning; network and connect with others involved; shape practice; and champion digital planning and challenge stakeholders to embed it into their work. The RTPI will deliver this programme, in association with relevant partners, between now and March 2025.

As part of the launch, Craig McLaren and Programme Director Diane Rennie discussed the digital planning programme and the benefits of working collaboratively to transform planning – watch the video now on YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0SkZ9kd-QAE>. ■



Update: RTPI Policy Update

Policy Consultations

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

- Guide to appeals and other casework handled by DPEA, DPEA
- A Consultation on the Digital Strategy for Scotland, Scottish Government
- Scotland's Third Land Use Strategy, Scottish Government
- Climate Change Plan update written call for evidence, Scottish Parliament Local Government and Communities Committee
- Cleaner Air for Scotland 2 - a consultation on a draft new air quality strategy for Scotland, Scottish Government
- Call for Views - Short Term Letting Draft regulations, Scottish Parliament Local Government and Community Committee
- Councillors' code of conduct: consultation 2020, Scottish Government

- National Planning Framework 4: Position Statement
- Planning system - promotion and mediation: draft guidance – consultation
- Draft Public Engagement Strategy for Climate Change

Consultations currently under considerations are:

- The Low Carbon Infrastructure Transition Programme - Call for Evidence to Support Development of Future Programme
- Consultation on Scottish skills requirements for energy efficiency, zero emissions and low carbon heating systems, microgeneration and heat networks for homes
- Local Place Plan Regulations consultation

There is no Scottish Government update as we move into the Scottish Parliament

pre-election period but the regular feature will return in the next edition. Instead we will highlight some key pieces of work being taken forward, much of which has been discussed in a letter recently issued by the Minister and Chief Planner - <https://www.gov.scot/publications/chief-planner-letter-stakeholder-update---march-2021/>

Coronavirus Acts

The Scottish Parliament has agreed to extend both Scottish Coronavirus Acts to 30 September 2021. This is the final six-month period by which the Acts can be extended. This extension includes continuing the provisions which have (i) extended the duration of planning permissions, listed building consents and conservation area consents*, (ii) enabled publication of planning documents online rather than at physical locations, and (iii) allowed committee meetings to happen without public

attendance. Extension of the Acts will also roll forward the current arrangements for pre-application consultation public events.

*Through associated regulations those consents which are due to expire between now and 30 September will be extended to 31 March 2022.

Launch Of Digital Transformation Programme

Following on from Scottish Government's publication last November of Transforming Places Together: Scotland's Digital Strategy for Planning, work on the digital transformation programme is underway. They are at the beginning of an exciting and transformative 5-year programme supported by £35m of funding, working across sectors to deliver new systems and services that build on and support the wider changes across the planning reform programme.

The systems and tools being developed throughout this programme will help meet the vision outlined in the Digital Strategy; for Scotland to have a world-leading digital planning system that helps connect people with their places, with improved access to data and strengthened decision-making.

Over the last year the Digital Transformation team have been supporting initiatives across the Scottish Government and beyond, demonstrating the important role geospatial data will increasingly have in planning future development, delivering inclusive economic growth and getting everyone involved in shaping great places.

They are now starting off with some priority deliverables; partly about building the foundations for the future systems and also in solving the challenges which emerged through our user research to date. Within the first 12 months work will begin to develop a data platform to unlock the value of data across the planning system.

The digital transformation of planning is going to take a collaborative programme of work. There are going to be many opportunities for people to get involved throughout the 5-year programme, from sharing expertise and ideas in user research and testing, to becoming early adopters that help Scottish Government shape the systems and transformation to come. You can find out more about the latest opportunities to get involved at www.transformingplanning.scot/digital-planning/

Local Place Plans

Enhancing community engagement and influence has been central to the planning reform programme from the outset. And one important element of that is the introduction of Local Place Plans (LPPs).

The places we live, work and play, the connections we have with others, and the extent to which we feel able to influence the decisions that affect us, all have a significant impact on our health and wellbeing.

Scottish Government know that people want to be involved in the decisions that shape their communities. Many have already been actively doing that through community-led design processes and the preparation of community-led plans. LPPs offer the opportunity for a community led, but collaborative, approach to creating great local places. LPPs can support community aspirations on the big challenges, like responding to the global climate emergency and tackling inequalities. The 2019 Planning Act now enables LPPs to help shape local planning policies and priorities in local development plans.

The Act has provided the framework for LPPs taking their place in the planning system. Now Scottish Government are consulting on how regulations will clarify the arrangements for producing and working with these new plans. The consultation runs until 25 June 2021. <https://consult.gov.scot/local-government-and-communities/local-place-plan-regulations/>

With the timing of the pre-election period, Scottish Government will be focussing our stakeholder engagement after 6 May 2021. They hope that this will allow people some time to consider the proposals in depth and be ready to engage over the second half of the consultation period.

Alongside the consultation paper, Scottish Government have published a report and literature review of community led planning prepared by Scottish Community Development Centre / Nick Wright Planning. They have distilled that research into a draft 'How to' Guide which sets out how an LPP might be developed from its inception to the delivery of its aspirations <https://www.gov.scot/publications/local-place-plans-guide-literature-review-final-report/>

Planning Reform Implementation

Some recent and ongoing progress with Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 implementation and other planning reform legislative changes:

- **Pre-Application Consultation:** New regulations will come into force on 1 October that will make changes to the statutory requirements, including adding a second public event.
- **Short-Term Lets:** The Act's provisions and related regulations come into force on 1 April, setting the arrangements for planning authorities to be able to designate Short-Term Let Control Areas.

- **Permitted Development Review (Phase 1):** New and extended permitted development rights will take effect on 1 April, relating to digital infrastructure, agricultural developments, peatland restoration, development supporting active travel and aquaculture. Scottish Government will update the relevant circulars alongside the measures coming into force.
- **Mediation in Planning:** Following the recent consultation, and with the assistance of independent analysis, Scottish Government will be considering the responses. Finalised guidance will be published over the summer in line with the statutory timetable.
- **Next consultations:** The cross-sector working groups looking at development planning, open space strategies and play sufficiency assessments have been very active recently, helping to shape proposals for new guidance and regulations. Scottish Government are preparing to consult on the proposals after the Scottish Parliament election.

You can keep up-to-date and view all planning reform consultations and legislation at www.transformingplanning.scot/planning-reform/.

National Planning Framework 4

The consultation on the NPF4 Position Statement attracted over 250 responses. Scottish Government have published all responses and will publish a consultation analysis report in due course. <https://consult.gov.scot/planning-architecture/national-planning-framework-position-statement/>

As part of their engagement programme, RTPi Scotland were invited to host 4 roundtable sessions on key themes. The outputs along with other NPF resources are available at www.transformingplanning.scot/national-planning-framework/position-statement/.

The Scottish Government's Chief Planner and Director for Housing and Social Justice have written to local and national park authorities on the next steps for meeting statutory requirements on land for housing in NPF4. The letter seeks the input of authorities and stakeholders over the next few months, and provides housing land figures that are a starting point for local considerations. www.transformingplanning.scot/national-planning-framework/resources/. ■

Update: PAS

Sustaining Choices: community-led active travel plans



Paul Ede
MRTPI
Project Manager,
PAS

“It just seems like now, despite everything that is going on, is the right time for us to be encouraging change around walking and cycling in our community.”

Sustaining Choices is a pilot project designed to support and train local communities to develop their own sustainable and active travel action plans. Through lockdown, our minds have been focused like never before on the need for change in how we get about our local neighbourhoods. Linked to an upsurge of community connection and solidarity, the zero-carbon agenda and a national drive for ‘post-pandemic recovery’, and suddenly new opportunities are opening up, along with a local appetite for getting on with it. Sustaining Choices is about grabbing that moment.

Barriers and constraints remain structurally, relationally and in terms of resource, like annoying cul-de sacs that force us to walk 20 minutes further past the industrial estate just to get our messages. However, joining the dots in different ways with our neighbours, local elected members and councils just now could see new paths opening up... literally.

One of those barriers is language. Out with ‘multi-surface bi-directional nodal connectors’: active and sustainable travel means electric busses, walking, cycling...and wheeling, as Jon Barron one of our community facilitators has helpfully added: “let’s not leave scooters in the ditch”. Technical language has its place, but not when citizens are collaborating in community space to bring the gift of their wisdom to shape the conversation.

Enabling those community spaces and establishing that baseline understanding of what nine communities across Scotland say is needed, is at the heart of what Sustaining Choices is all about. Funded by Smarter Choices, Smarter Places (SCSP), the Paths for All fund, groups are collaborating in Anstruther, Bishopbriggs, Cumnock, Garve, Kinning Park, Peterhead, Rattray, West Fife Villages and Westerhailes to figure out what needs to change.

Links are being made to elected members and local authority departments, and as the process continues priorities will emerge that will be articulated in Action Plans for each place. These can then be used for advocacy, to enrich local place and community plans, or developed, refined and voted on to start new projects either by the communities themselves, or with local authority support.

While PAS is helping each community by initially delivering a bespoke digital online engagement session in a format and to an audience decided on by the community themselves, a group of around 30 local community facilitators have stepped forward and taken part in PAS training on how to facilitate their own additional online sessions. These will be framed around relevant questions from the Place Standard tool.

PAS sees growing the confidence of citizens to take part in and run their own consultations as critical for expanding the capacity of our communities to bring about change for themselves. In one community, this has presented an opportunity for citizens to co-produce an engagement alongside local authority community development workers from the very start, for the first time.

Of course, we are all learning together. And from my perspective as Project Manager, it has been a privilege to learn from the significant wisdom in the room as the project has progressed. How do we do citizen-led consultation across such diverse communities under Covid while our wifi cuts in and out, kids hover in the background, and we all scramble to get used to new software? But it’s being in the thick of it together that makes it so rewarding.

For updates follow [@sustchoices](https://twitter.com/sustchoices) on Twitter or visit pas.org.uk/sustainingchoices/ Or email: paul@pas.org.uk. ■



Immaterial Considerations

An irreverent look at the world of planning...

Hats Off for Planning!

Those of you who follow RTPI Scotland Convenor Barbara Cummins @HeritageBarbs on twitter will be aware that in the precious few moments when she isn't working she relaxes by knitting. Barbara regularly shares her fascinating and impressive array of work that inspires the knitting community across the world. She has also taken on a new challenge and has designed and knitted a hat with a pattern using the RTPI logo, which you can see in the picture below. We think it looks fab and should be de-rigueur for any planner out on a site visit, or an ideal thinking cap for developing planning policy to tackle those difficult issues facing the world!



Twitter Ye Not...

Staying in the theme of social media we wanted to report on our most recent trawl of interesting and frankly sometimes weird twitter accounts that may be of interest to planners. For all you urban design fans out there you want to consider following:

Name: World Bollard Association
Twitter: @WorldBollard
Description: The official Twitter account of the World Bollard Association. 24/7 Support at 0800 BOLLARD. #WorldBollardAssociation
 Life President - @tanni_GT
Joined: February 2018
25 Following
19.1K Followers



Name: My Favourite Bench
Twitter: @MyFaveBench
Description: Welcome to @MyFaveBench a place to share your Favourite Bench and a Twitter page to enjoy each others company. WARNING! Benches are totally addictive
Joined: March 2016
17.2K Following
15.7K Followers

Update:

RTPI SCOTLAND UPDATE

Research Awards

Entries are open now for this year's Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) Awards for Research Excellence. These prestigious annual awards reward and promote planning research from RTPI-accredited planning schools and RTPI members from the UK and around the world. There are four award categories this year:

- Sir Peter Hall Award for Excellence in Research and Engagement
- Student Award
- Early Career Researcher Award
- Planning Practitioner Award

This year also sees the return of the biennial Practitioner Research Fund - two grants of £5,000 to enable planning practitioners to conduct new research over the next 12 months. All RTPI members can apply, except those employed by, enrolled at, or affiliated to, an academic institution at the time of submission.

RTPI President Wei Yang FRTPi said: "The RTPI continues to play an active part in recognising thought leadership in planning and is at the forefront of encouraging and promoting potentially game-changing planning research. With the pandemic bringing into sharp relief the urgent challenges facing our communities, I believe that the RTPI Awards for Research Excellence are more important now than ever before. There is no doubt that innovative planning research will have a vital role to play in shaping a sustainable future for our urban and rural environments.

See <https://www.rtpi.org.uk/researchawards>

Media

The following press releases have been issued:

- 25 January - RTPI Scotland cautiously welcomes short-term let proposals <https://www.rtpi.org.uk/press-releases/2021/january/rtpi-scotland-cautiously-welcomes-short-term-let-proposals/>
- 26 January - Communities must be empowered to reimagine their neighbourhoods post-Covid, says RTPI Scotland <https://www.rtpi.org.uk/press-releases/2021/january/>

communities-must-be-empowered-to-reimagine-their-neighbourhoods-post-covid-says-rtpi-scotland/

- 27 January - Vital role of planning missing from climate change plan, MSPs told <https://www.rtpi.org.uk/press-releases/2021/january/vital-role-of-planning-missing-from-climate-change-plan-mmps-told/>
- 3 February - RTPI Scotland welcomes town centre review report <https://www.rtpi.org.uk/press-releases/2021/february/rtpi-scotland-welcomes-town-centre-review-report/>
- 17 February - RTPI Scotland welcomes apprenticeship proposals <https://www.rtpi.org.uk/press-releases/2021/february/rtpi-scotland-welcomes-apprenticeship-proposals/>
- 19 February - NPF4 must be 'deliverable, connected and influential', says RTPI Scotland <https://www.rtpi.org.uk/press-releases/2021/february/npf4-must-be-deliverable-connected-and-influential-says-rtpi-scotland/>
- 9 March - Co-ordination will unlock the vision for building communities <https://www.rtpi.org.uk/press-releases/2021/march/rtpi-scotland-co-ordination-will-unlock-the-vision-for-building-communities/>

RTPI Scotland managed to stimulate an article in the Sunday Herald on 31 January that highlighted key manifesto asks on 20 minute neighbourhoods and local place plans which can be read at <https://www.heraldscotland.com/news/19051213.gorbals-can-inspire-scotlands-town-centres-future/>

Engagement

RTPI Scotland has met with, attended or presented to the following:

- Royal Incorporation of Architects in Scotland
- RICS Scotland
- ICE Scotland
- Landscape Institute Scotland
- Built Environment Forum Scotland
- Scottish Policy Conference: Next Steps for Planning Reform
- Scottish Government research on developer contributions roundtable
- Scottish Land Commission
- Scottish Liberal Democrats
- Scottish Conservatives

- Scottish National Party
- Scottish Labour Party
- Scottish Green Party
- Holyrood conference on Decarbonising Cities - speaker
- Heads of Planning Scotland
- Scottish Government Digital Planning
- Brownfield Land conference
- Scottish Green Party
- Planning Aid Scotland
- Scottish Alliance for People and Places
- RIAS Planning Committee
- Partners in Planning

Parliament

The Convenor presented to the Parliament's Cross Party Group on Architecture and the Built Environment where she put the case of supporting twenty minute neighbourhoods. She said: "Covid-19 has allowed us to appreciate the importance of the places we live in. A more coordinated approach across government will allow us to create the 'twenty minute neighbourhoods' that people need so that they live in well-designed, attractive, healthy and sustainable communities where they have local access to the services, shops and facilities they need on a daily basis."

This came as RTPI Scotland joined other built environment professional bodies Royal Incorporation of Architects in Scotland, Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors in Scotland, Built Environment Forum Scotland, Landscape Institute Scotland and Institution of Civil Engineers Scotland in issuing a joint statement ahead of the Scottish Parliament election. It said there must be a shift from overlapping and disjointed strategies to complementarity and synergised policy making and from an opportunistic, reactive approach to development, to a planned, proactive approach and focussed around three areas – Professionalism, Prioritisation and People.

The Director of RTPI Scotland gave evidence to the Scottish Parliament's Local Government and Communities Committee on the Scottish Government's Climate Change Plan update which was published in December. He said that planning's vital role in achieving ambitious emissions targets was not fully recognised in the plan as it currently stands, with only one page on planning in the 255 pages of the entire document. ■

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The opinions stated are the contributors' own unless otherwise stated. The RTPI is not responsible for statements made or views expressed in this journal.

For further information, please visit

www.rtpi.org.uk/scotland

[Twitter.com/RTPIScotland](https://twitter.com/RTPIScotland)



Empower others...

**... from the comfort
of your own home**

Become a PAS Advice Service volunteer!

Your expertise as a planner can have an enormously positive impact on people's lives. Our Advice Service volunteers help individuals and community groups across Scotland to understand and participate in planning processes.

Often a short email or phone call can make all the difference to a member of the public who has no knowledge of the planning system.

We have a large number of volunteers who take part in our wider activities and place-based projects, however, we are specifically looking to recruit MRTPI planners to volunteer for our Advice Service.

As an Advice Service volunteer you can count your volunteering hours toward your Continuing Professional Development. We'll also invite you to our Advice Service Forum to share experiences, network and learn something new.

**For a chat with our Volunteer Manager to find out more,
please get in touch with Erin Fulton:**
erin@pas.org.uk - 0131 659 9778



Planning Aid for Scotland, known as PAS.
Registered Address: 3rd Floor, 125 Princes Street, Edinburgh, EH2 4AD.
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