

Draft National Planning Framework 4**Summary and Recommendations**

The draft, fourth National Planning Framework (NPF4) was laid in the Scottish Parliament on 10 November 2021. The Scottish Parliament will consider the draft NPF4 for a period of up to 120 days. In addition to Parliamentary scrutiny, the Scottish Government is conducting a consultation which will last until 31 March 2022. It is proposed in this paper that COSLA responds to the both the Parliamentary process and the consultation, with the Environment and Economy Board having an initial chance to discuss the draft NPF4 on 3 December and at its first meeting of 2022. The draft NPF4 follows the publication earlier this year of a position statement setting out the Scottish Government's initial thinking on the Framework. COSLA submitted comments on the position statement, and we will be analysing the draft NPF4 against the position we agreed earlier this year as well as scrutinising the detailed proposals with councils and our planning professional partners.

Leaders are invited to:

- i. Note the publication of the draft National Planning Framework 4 and the scrutiny and consultation processes established by the Scottish Parliament and the Scottish Government;
- ii. Agree that COSLA responds to the consultation and seeks an opportunity to provide evidence to the Scottish Parliament; and
- iii. Agree that the response be developed through the Environment and Economy Board initially, with a further report to Leaders likely in the first quarter of 2022.

References

Previous relevant reports:

- Environment and Economy Board February 2020 – Planning Fee Consultation Response
- Environment and Economy Board June 2020 – Covid-19 – Planning Update
- Environment and Economy Board December 2020 – Planning Update
- Environment and Economy Board February 2021 - National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) Position Statement Response

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Purpose

1. This paper provides Leaders with an initial overview on the Draft National Planning Framework 4, with information on the scrutiny and consultation processes established by the Scottish Parliament and the Scottish Government.

Current Position

2. COSLA supports the development of a NPF which is consistent with supporting our existing policy priorities, most importantly the Just Transition to a Net Zero Economy no later than 2045. The response which we submitted as part of the consultation on the Scottish Government's earlier position statement stressed that our priorities for the NPF4 were fair decarbonisation; recovery from the pandemic; consistency with the goals and outcomes of other national strategies and programmes, including the National Transport Strategy and Strategic Transport Project Review 2; digital infrastructure, and place making and community empowerment.

What is Changing?

3. The draft, fourth National Planning Framework was published on 10 November 2021¹, having been delayed for over a year because of the Covid-19 pandemic. The draft has been laid before the Scottish Parliament, which will need to approve a 'resolution of support' for the NPF before it can be adopted by the Scottish Government. The Parliament has 120 days to consider the draft. The Parliament determines its own process to do that, though it is likely that certain stakeholders will be invited to provide views. We will therefore explore with the Parliament an opportunity for COSLA to submit evidence.
4. At the same time the Scottish Government has started a consultation on the draft Framework which is open until 31 March 2022. Following this period, the Scottish Government will consider responses before presenting a final draft to the Scottish Parliament. We expect the final Framework to be agreed later in 2022.
5. At 131 pages the draft Framework is a substantial document, but the following paragraphs provide information on its broad structure, themes and spatial focus.

Part 1 - National Spatial Strategy (Page 3)

The national spatial strategy sets out a shared vision where each part of Scotland can be planned and developed to create: Sustainable, Liveable, Productive and Distinctive places. Underpinning the national spatial strategy are a series of spatial principles. The spatial strategy also highlights five action areas, namely:

- North and west innovation based on the Islands and Northern/Western coasts
- Northern revitalisation – based on the Highlands and parts of Argyll and Bute
- North east transition – based on the north east area
- Central urban transformation – based on the Central Belt and Ayrshire

¹ [Draft NPF4](#)

- Southern sustainability – based on the Borderlands area.

Part 2 - National Developments (page 44)

National developments are significant developments of national importance that will help to strongly support the delivery of the spatial strategy. Designation as a national development establishes the need for it but does not remove requirements for relevant consents to be obtained before development can begin.

Part 3 - National Planning Policy (page 68)

The NPF4 will incorporate Scottish Planning Policy which will contain detailed national policy on a number of planning topics. For the first time, spatial and thematic planning policies will be addressed in one place.

Part 4 – Delivery (page 112)

Delivering the NPF4 strategy and realising collective ambitions will require collaborative action from the public and private sectors and wider communities. Actions will range across different scales and include a mix of strategic and project investments. This section will be developed into a standalone, live delivery programme once NPF4 has been approved and adopted.

Part 5 – Annexes (page 115)

Annexes provide information on how statutory outcomes are being met, Minimum All-Tenure Housing Land Requirement (MATHLR) for each planning authority in Scotland, along with a Glossary of terms

6. The consultation period will include several online sessions to take place during January and February 2022. These will be facilitated to give stakeholders opportunities to hear more about the content of NPF4. The events will be informal and will focus on giving information to support the preparation of consultation responses. There will be five locational events, each focused on one of the action areas, and four events on the spatial themes of Sustainable, Liveable, Productive and Distinctive places.

COSLA Position

7. We have had a limited time to analyse the draft NPF4, but its broad thrust appears in line with what we would expect, and it references the COSLA priorities highlighted in paragraph 2 above. However, the detail is important and will need considerable scrutiny. Its importance must not be underestimated as it is viewed as one of Scottish Government's central policies for the delivery of a more equal, net zero economy and society. It is crucial, therefore, that we get the Framework right, which is why we welcome the scrutiny and consultation processes put in place. The Local Government response to these processes will need to be developed at local, regional and national levels to ensure that we give due consideration to the detail of the Framework, including what it means for different parts of Scotland. At the same time, we wish to continue to emphasise the importance of properly resourcing the planning system and that we must make progress toward full cost recovery for planning fees as a way to support the delivery of the NPF4.

Next Steps

8. We will develop our detailed position on the NPF4 through the Environment and Economy Board and with our planning professional partners - Heads of Planning Scotland and the Royal Town Planning Institute. However, we would welcome views

from individual local authorities and groups of local authorities to ensure that we also properly reflect the spatial strategy element of the Framework. We will therefore look to engage councils specifically in the finalisation of a COSLA response.

9. Our initial approach will be to prepare evidence to the Parliament on the draft Framework before submitting a response to the Scottish Government's consultation in time for the closing date. This will require consideration at the Board and Leaders in the first quarter of 2022.

