

REPORT TO: ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES COMMITTEE 16 APRIL 2008

**SUBJECT: NATIONAL PLANNING FRAMEWORK FOR SCOTLAND 2 –
DISCUSSION DRAFT**

BY: DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

1. REASON FOR REPORT

- 1.1 To respond to the Discussion Draft of National Planning Framework 2 (NPF 2) by the deadline date of mid April.
- 1.2 This report is submitted to Committee in terms of Section D(1) of the Council's Administrative Scheme relating to exercising the statutory functions of the Council as Planning Authority.

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 **To submit the response to National Planning Framework 2 as outlined in paras 4.11 – 4.15 of this report.**

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 NPF 2 follows on from the Scottish Government's commitment to update its National Planning Framework on a 5 yearly basis; NPF 1 was published in 2004.
- 3.2 The Framework sets the national development objectives for Scotland, for a timeframe of 25 years ahead, into a spatial context, linking the Government's related objectives in its Economic Strategy, Transport Strategies, Climate Change Bill, new Planning legislation, SPPs, PANs, public agency commitments, etc.
- 3.3 It sets down what is already committed in terms of the environmental protection of landscapes and habitats and the principal socio-economic trends in the economy, population, employment, and housing since the first NPF.
- 3.4 The Framework proposes 9 key strategic developments of national importance, and is inviting comments on these and on the overall strategic direction of the document. Responses are to be submitted by mid April, with a view to finalising it before the end of the year.
- 3.5 A copy of the NPF 2 document has been lodged in the Members' Library.

4. The National Planning Framework 2 Proposals

- 4.1 In general terms, the Framework sets out the land use/planning implications of strategic commitments that have already been expressed in other

Government pronouncements, such as the renewables targets, CO₂ emissions targets, more sustainable transport initiatives, waste reduction and diversion, and a 'greener' economy.

- 4.2 The proposals follow the Government's stated aims for Scotland – to be 'wealthier and fairer'; 'greener'; 'safer and stronger'; 'smarter'; and 'healthier'.
- 4.3 The words 'sustainable' or 'sustainability' appear frequently, and there is some conflict in equating for example, reductions in CO₂ emissions (down by 80% by 2050) with increase in airport capacities (up by 50% by 2030) for which planning provision is to be made. Future studies and reports on such issues are committed in the document.
- 4.4 The Development Strategy is predicated on a growing economy:-
- To raise Scotland's GDP growth rate to UK level by 2011;
 - To match the growth rate of the small EU countries by 2017;
 - To match average EU population growth over the period 2007-2017.
- 4.5 These translate into specific aims of a population increase of 200,000, and a housebuilding programme of 35,000 new houses per annum, 25% of them 'affordable' (i.e. subsidised), although there is little in the way of explanation as to why the Government is aiming to achieve a household ratio of one house for every two people within the next 10 years.
- 4.6 There are significant commitments to transport improvements, in road, rail and airports, with port expansions in Grangemouth, Orkney and the Clyde Estuary; the A96 however (with the exception of the Inverness-Nairn build-up) gets scant mention.
- 4.7 The nine National Developments (i.e. for which planning permission is required, but which may, at any time, be 'called in' by Ministers) are proposed as:-
- A replacement Forth crossing;
 - Edinburgh Airport enhancement (with rail links);
 - Glasgow Airport enhancement (with motorway improvements);
 - Grangemouth Freight Hub;
 - Rosyth Container Terminal;
 - Scapa Flow Container Trans/shipment;
 - Grid Reinforcements;
 - Glasgow Drainage;
 - Commonwealth Games Infrastructure (Glasgow).
- 4.8 There is a notable absence in the Framework of any proposals for Defence facilities in Scotland (Defence being a UK responsibility) this being a matter of profound significance to the economy of Moray, (and indeed of Rosyth, Faslane, Leuchars, Benbecula, etc) and with the vital contribution by the RAF locally, it is therefore an unfortunate gap in the national strategy.

The NPF 2 Proposals as they affect Moray

- 4.9 With the exception of the Grid upgrade from Keith to Beaully, none of the nine National Developments impact directly on Moray.
- 4.10 Significant strategic developments, of importance to Moray, named in the Framework, are:-
- The Inverness-Nairn corridor (including Dalcross and A96 enhancements);
 - The Aberdeen Western peripheral, linking the A96 to the A90;
 - 'General' upgrades to the A96, the A9, and the rail network between Inverness and Stonehaven.

Proposed Council Response

- 4.11 In principle, the Council welcomes the Government's commitment to regularly review its strategic framework and both NPF1 and NPF2 have been very useful documentation of national objectives.
- 4.12 The Council would wish to see a more rigorous appraisal of the potential of the north of Scotland to capture more investment from the over-heated housing and labour markets of the Central Belt, especially around Edinburgh. In this respect, the document tends to endorse of the economic status quo; it could have shifted more of the balance of public investment in infrastructure northwards where housing, lifestyle and environmental benefits are well established.
- 4.13 The document is ambiguous about Climate Change, in that it is consistently optimistic about economic growth, while endorsing stringent targets on CO₂ emissions, energy reduction, waste transfer, etc. An example is the commitment to increase housebuilding rates, well in excess of present household formation levels in the knowledge that housing, and the construction industry are significant consumers of energy. Most of Scotland's recent population growth has been occasioned by in-migration (and this is also the case in Moray) and it can therefore be extrapolated that the planned increase in housebuilding will continue this trend.
- 4.14 The strategic role of Defence Reviews should be included in the National Planning Framework.
- 4.15 The cases for some of the national priorities are not always clearly set out – as to why, for example, Glasgow's drainage problems are judged to be a more pressing issue than, say Aberdeen's Western Peripheral, nor is the explanation of Grid upgrades wholly satisfactory, where the environmental impact of windfarms and power lines in the north of Scotland is for the benefit of the ever-expanding demand for energy to the South. It is not apparent from the list of nine priorities, how these in particular, assist the overall aim of dispersing growth and wealth more equitably around Scotland.

5. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

(a) Corporate Development Plan/Community Plan/Service Improvement Plan

The finalised NPF 2 will require to be reflected in the Council's Development Plan.

(b) Policy and Legal

None: this is a Consultation Response report.

(c) Resources (Financial, Risks, Staffing and Property)

None: this is a Consultation Response report.

(d) Consultations

None for this report.

6. CONCLUSION

6.1 NPF 2 is a useful national overview of strategic development proposals, for which planning provision must be made; it exemplifies the difficulties in accommodating global/international prerogatives (such as Climate Change, or EU environmental measures) with national objectives to achieve equitable growth rates.

6.2 While commendable in its assessment of what is happening where in Scotland, and what needs to be done to meet present shortfalls, it does not essentially question the status quo of Central Belt dominance of the Scottish economy; the North (with modest exceptions at Orkney and Inverness) remains peripheral to the main thrust of the national priorities.

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Background Papers:
Ref: DL/JC