

REPORT TO: Cabinet

MEETING DATE: 11 June 2013

BY: Executive Director (Services for Communities)

SUBJECT: Scotland's Third National Planning Framework (NPF3)
– Main Issues Report

1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To advise Cabinet that the Scottish Government has published for consultation the first formal stage (Main Issues Report) in the preparation of its third National Planning Framework (NPF3), and to provide a summary of its main provisions. The Scottish Government has allowed for a 12 week consultation period on the MIR which ends on 23 July 2013.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 It is recommended that Cabinet:
- 1 Notes the publication of NPF3's Main Issues Report and this summary of its content, and
 - 2 Delegates to the Executive Director (Services for Communities) in consultation with the Spokespersons for Environment, Transportation & Roads and Economic Development and Tourism, the preparation of the Council's formal response to the consultation.

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The National Planning Framework (NPF) is prepared by the Scottish Government. It sits at the top of the hierarchy of Scottish development plans and provides a framework for the spatial development of Scotland as a whole. When approved, NPF3 will set out the Scottish Government's strategic development priorities over the next 20-30 years.

- 3.2 NPF3's Main Issues Report (MIR) sets out the Scottish Government's preferred spatial strategy and a suite of national developments to support it. It also identifies alternative approaches. National Developments, which are considered by Ministers to be essential to Scotland's strategic spatial development. These might include major strategic transport, energy, water and drainage and waste management infrastructure projects. Designation in the NPF establishes the need for such developments in the national interest.

Vision

- 3.3 The preferred strategy for NPF3 is to build on Scotland's opportunities. In moving from NPF2 towards NPF3 the MIR acknowledges that the process is an evolutionary one. It's vision for Scotland is

- **A low carbon place:** for example, prioritising offshore renewables infrastructure; facilitating carbon capture and storage; reinforcing the grid, and supporting further onshore wind farms (while protecting nationally important landscapes and residential amenity).
- **A natural place to invest:** for example: focussing on Scotland's environment as a ecosystem; understanding key natural and cultural assets; supporting tourism, and balancing zero waste ambition with local delivery of waste and resource services;
- **A successful, sustainable place:** for example, highlighting how planning can help ensure that Scotland is a great place to do business; promotes high quality, distinctive, sustainable and healthy places; reflects the importance of cities as drivers of the economy, and maintains a flexible approach to housing provision;
- **A connected place:** for example, world class digital infrastructure; make best use of existing infrastructure; support decarbonising transport sector; identify enhancements to specific port facilities and further new freight capacity on the Forth as national developments, and identify a high speed rail service between Edinburgh and Glasgow and, in time, south to London as a national priority.

A low carbon place

- 3.4 In this context, the need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions is a key issue. The MIR notes that draft Scottish Planning Policy makes clear that the Scottish Government does not wish to see new wind farms in National Parks and National Scenic Areas. It is proposed that key onshore infrastructure requirements arising from key offshore renewable energy projects should be identified as a national development in NPF3.
- 3.5 The MIR proposes to identify the key onshore infrastructure requirements arising from offshore projects such as the offshore wind energy projects off the Firths of Forth and Tay as national development in NPF3. The

MIR recognises the need for co-ordination between projects, focussing connection on a limited number of key hubs. It further notes that this would be consistent with the recognition of key locations such as **Cockenzie** and Peterhead within the preferred spatial strategy.

- 3.6 There is further reference to **Cockenzie** under NPF3's intention to retain Cockenzie as a national development for non-nuclear, baseload generating capacity, either as a new or refurbished electricity generating plant, to be fitted with carbon capture technology by 2030.
- 3.7 The MIR confirms there will be no nuclear new build in Scotland (ELC had requested that **Torness** be designated as a national development safeguard for future baseload capacity. However, the MIR advises that the Scottish Government has not ruled out extending the operating life of Hunterston and **Torness** to maintain security of supply while the transition to renewables and clean thermal generation takes place.
- 3.8 As part of the National Renewables Infrastructure Plan (NRIP) sites have been identified with the potential to become hubs for development and investment in renewable energy. Such sites require to be well-connected by land and sea. Within the Forth and Tay area, the ports of Leith, Methil and Dundee are identified as Phase 1 sites. Additional Phase 2 sites with potential are also identified, Burntisland being the only one currently identified in the Forth and Tay area.

A natural place to invest

- 3.9 The MIR notes that draft Scottish Planning Policy indicates that assets like prime quality agricultural land, woodland and deep peat should be protected, and that this protection should be balanced against the need for new development and infrastructure. The scenic qualities of Scotland's landscapes and the importance of tourism are recognised. An enhanced network of long-distance paths is encouraged.
- 3.10 East Lothian's agricultural plain has extensive areas of prime quality agricultural land. Both the John Muir way and the National Cycle Network cross East Lothian.
- 3.11 A continuing requirement for locally sourced minerals for construction is recognised, particularly in the Central Belt. A continuing need for sources of coal for Longannet power station is also recognised. The potential resources of shale gas and coal bed methane in the Central Belt are noted.
- 3.12 On waste, the MIR notes that NPF3 does not intend to provide a more specific steer on the locations and types of required nationally significant facilities. Rather, given the pace of technological change, there is a need to maintain a flexible, market-driven approach to provision for the waste and resource management sector.

A successful, sustainable place

- 3.13 Draft Scottish Planning Policy emphasises place making, including the key qualities of successful places: distinctive, welcoming, adaptable, resource efficient, safe and pleasant and easy to move around and beyond. The principles are to be applied to the national spatial strategy and are seen as equally applicable to development planning.
- 3.14 Settlement strategy should facilitate climate change adaptation. The importance of cities and city-regions will continue to be a key theme in NPF3. The need to develop a different approach to planning for town centre revitalisation is recognised, including a broader mix of land uses and full assessment of town centre assets and sites when considering new investment.
- 3.15 The Central Scotland Green Network, of which East Lothian is a part, continues to be supported as a national development. The MIR considers it should focus on active travel networks and bringing vacant and derelict land back into use, and focus projects in areas where there is economic disadvantage and poor health.
- 3.16 The MIR advises that the total number of households in Scotland is expected to increase by 23% by 2035. This growth is projected to be highest in Edinburgh, Perth and Kinross, Aberdeen/Aberdeenshire and **East Lothian**. It notes that the economic downturn has led to lower than expected house completions. However, the MIR advises that there is a need for a significant increase in housebuilding rates to ensure housing requirements are met. NPF3 advises that it can play its part by ensuring that infrastructure is better co-ordinated with planned development.
- 3.17 The MIR advises that strategic and local development plans must focus on the requirement for a generous supply of effective housing land. The Scottish Government wishes to see a more concerted effort to deliver a generous supply of housing land in South East Scotland, noting that the future spatial strategy for delivering this land will need to acknowledge or address the infrastructure constraints that exist here.
- 3.18 It is noted that NPF3 does not intend to set regional targets for housing development. An earlier ELC submission suggested that this be considered. Indeed, there is an argument that in a small country like Scotland there is perhaps no need for three levels of planning. NPF3 could undertake the high level, strategic planning functions of the four SDP authorities, particularly since the Scottish Government has a more direct control over investment in, and delivery of, much of the necessary infrastructure required to support strategic development.

A connected place

- 3.19 On the matter of transport infrastructure, the MIR notes that NPF3 does not intend to revisit the transport infrastructure priorities within the Strategic Transport Projects Review (STPR). East Lothian Council recommended that the dualling of the A1 and capacity improvements to

its junctions, and improvements to the A720 City Bypass should be identified as national developments – neither of these features in NPF3’s preferred strategy, presumably because they are not included in the STPR.

- 3.20 The MIR does note that, around Edinburgh, the capacity of the strategic and local road networks, particularly the A720, has implications for housing and business development in the surrounding area. Strategic and local development plans will have to take due account of potential impacts on transport infrastructure and address any capacity issues this raises. Given the importance of SE Scotland to the Scottish economy, and the acknowledged infrastructure constraints here, it is disappointing to note that no more direct interventions appear to be planned by the Scottish Government, other than non-specific intelligent transport systems and targeted road congestion relief.
- 3.21 The MIR notes investment plans to accelerate the roll out of the next generation broadband to all parts of rural Scotland over the next five years.
- 3.22 In relation to international ports, the expansion of Aberdeen Harbour, the Grangemouth Investment Zone and additional container freight capacity on the Forth are the MIR’s preferred approach. Their designation as national developments is the MIR’s preferred strategy. Interestingly in this regard is the comment that there is potential for port-related development at **Cockenzie**. This is clearly something that ELC should pursue with the Scottish Government and relevant agencies.
- 3.23 On high speed rail, the preferred strategy is to retain a high speed rail link to London as a national development but to broaden this to incorporate plans for a high speed link between Glasgow and Edinburgh.

Next Steps

- 3.24 This report is intended to provide Cabinet with a summary of NPF3’s preferred strategy and its main proposals. Given that the consultation period ends on the 23rd July 2013, it is suggested that the Council’s response be delegated to the Executive Director, Services for Communities, in consultation with the Spokespersons for Environment and Economic Development and Tourism.

4 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 None at this stage, although an approved NPF3 may have policy implications for strategic and local development plans.

5 EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 5.1 This report is not applicable to the well being of equalities groups and an Equalities Impact Assessment is not required.

6 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Financial - None
6.2 Personnel - None
6.3 Other - None

7 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 7.1 NPF2, the Scottish Government, 2009
7.2 NPF3, Main Issues Report, the Scottish Government, 2013

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