



National Planning Framework 4 Early Engagement – Policies

TOURISM

Scottish Planning Policy (2014)

Paragraph 94 (Supporting Business and Employment) identifies tourism as a key Scottish sector with particular opportunities for growth and highlights the importance of development plans aligning with local economic strategies. Paragraph 100 goes on to confirm that development plans should be informed by the Tourism Development Framework for Scotland in order to maximise the sustainable growth of regional and local visitor economies. Strategic development plans should identify and safeguard any nationally or regionally important locations for tourism or recreation development within their areas. Development plans should consider the potential to promote opportunities for tourism and recreational facilities in their development plans. This may include new developments or enhancing existing facilities.

Elsewhere, SPP recognises the importance of tourism when developing policies for rural areas; the coast; the historic environment; renewable energy; the natural environment and aquaculture. Leisure and tourism facilities should also be included in Town Centre Health Checks.

What has changed since 2014?

- The Scottish Government's new draft Tourism Strategy Framework for Scotland was launched in October 2019. This has been developed in partnership with the sector and will be followed by an action plan in March next year. These will help to ensure that the tourism industry drives inclusive economic growth, enhances the wellbeing of those who work in it, benefits communities and strengthens Scotland's international reputation. It will also set out the high-level actions that will be taken to continue to support the tourism industry.
- Scottish Government commissioned research into the current challenges and the future opportunities for land use diversification in rural Scotland recommended that consideration should be given to how best to provide guidance to local authorities on supporting and managing the development of tourism facilities and infrastructure, and on balancing the need for tourist accommodation with the need to ensure there is adequate and appropriate housing for rural populations.
- Increasing visitor numbers has resulted in growth in the short term letting sector and reports of overcrowding in certain areas, with concerns raised regarding adverse impacts on the visitor experience, compliance with existing safety standards and negative impacts on local communities.
- The Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 enables planning authorities to designate areas where the use of a house for providing short term-lets is considered to be a change which requires planning permission.

- The Scottish Government established the Short-Term Lets Delivery Group to consider measures for regulating the short-term lets sector. Plans announced by the Minister for Local Government, Housing and Planning on 8 January 2020 include a package of measures that will support safety standards and enable local authorities to put in place additional controls on short-term lets appropriate to their area. This will also involve a review of the tax treatment of short-term lets, to ensure that they make an appropriate contribution to local communities and support local services. These powers will enable councils to better balance the needs and concerns of their communities with wider economic and tourism interests in line with our commitments made in the 18/19 PfG.
- The Scottish Government's Programme for Government 2019-20 includes a Transient Visitor Levy. The Bill will create a discretionary power for local authorities to apply a tax or levy on overnight visitor stays. The decision to implement any tax or levy created will be entirely at the discretion of individual local authorities and receipts will be to fund local authority expenditure on tourism.

Proposed key objective of NPF4: To support the inclusive economic growth of the tourism industry in a way that benefits and strengthens the resilience of local communities, including those in rural and coastal areas.

Issues to consider:

- The need to highlight and support the importance of tourism to the Scottish economy.
- How can our planning policies help to ensure that tourism benefits all parts of Scotland, particularly those areas that depend on the jobs and income that it creates?
- How best to afford protection to important tourism assets and ensure that local development plans and planning decisions recognise this importance?
- To encourage consideration and understanding of the impacts of tourism on the environment and communities to ensure that these are understood and responsibly managed so that our landscape, scenery and natural and built environments are cared for and protected for future generations.
- What policy criteria are needed to facilitate growth in the tourism sector in a way that is sustainable, particularly where activities will help support and sustain communities in rural and coastal areas?
- What is the best way to balance demand for tourist accommodation with the need to ensure there is adequate and appropriate housing for rural populations (taking into account associated policy developments around Short Term Lets)?
- How can policy best link tourism with other policy areas including active travel, green networks, leisure and recreation, economic development, transport, etc?
- Can NPF4 do more to support growing and dedicated tourism markets, such as marine, food and drink and active tourism?

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