

SCOTLAND'S NATIONAL PLANNING FRAMEWORK 4 THINK PIECE – BLOG – ADAPTING TO CLIMATE CHANGE

Introduction

Scotland's fourth National Planning Framework (NPF4), highlighted as a major commitment in response to the climate emergency in the Government's [2019-20 Programme for Scotland](#), is a long-term spatial strategy for Scotland to 2050. It will bring together policies and programmes to enable sustainable and inclusive growth across the country. As a result of the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019, NPF4 will have enhanced status as part of the statutory development plan. It will guide spatial development, align with infrastructure investment, set out national planning policies, designate national developments and highlight regional spatial priorities.

The Scottish Government is keen to bring together views and ideas from a wide range of sectors and to explore the priorities NPF4 should address. As a part of this, we have commissioned a series of think pieces on the theme of Scotland in 2050 to help inform development of NPF4,

They will cover a wide range of subjects from climate change to town centres, from accessible places to the future of rural Scotland.

The opinions expressed in the think pieces will be those of the author and we hope that they will stimulate debate and discussion. Think Pieces will be published over the coming weeks on.

In the ninth of these, Joseph Hagg and Anna Beswick on behalf of Sniffer set out their thoughts on Scotland2050 and specifically adapting to climate change.

The issues and opportunities

Scotland's climate is changing. It is getting hotter, wetter and the seas are rising. In the coming decades climate change will intensify – even as we transition to net zero – and we are going to have to find a way to live with the impacts. The planning system has a critical role in shaping the places that we live, now and in the future.

We need to act now. There are significant economic advantages of taking an early and planned approach when adapting to climate change. The Global Commission on Adaptation identifies a very high overall rate of return on investment with cost benefit ratios ranging from 2:1 to 10:1. NPF4 must include policies and mechanisms that enable 'climate ready' investment delivering long-term, lasting social, environmental and economic benefits.

How do we achieve this?

NPF4 should take a **place-based approach that is forward looking**, protecting Scotland's future by taking on the challenge of a changing climate.

1. Make adaptation strategies and plans a required consideration for planning policy at all scales. There are national, regional and local adaptation strategies and plans being adopted across Scotland. The identified priorities need to be reflected in development plans and enacted in development management decisions.

2. Planning decisions on development must assess potential climate risks. The planning system needs to integrate best available climate information into decision-making, for example with flood risk climate change allowances. Developers should be required to assess climate risks and design for long-term resilience of a site. This would also help satisfy investment climate risk stress-tests that are now required in the UK financial system.

3. Development planning decisions could be ‘time-limited’ by requiring change in use at climate thresholds. This may be appropriate for specific locations where the benefits of developing now is determined to outweigh avoidance of future climate risk, which is inherently uncertain as to when (and if) it will occur. It would avoid locking-in risk – and cost - for future generations. Adaptation pathways can identify key decision points, thresholds and options.

4. Build for change by fully adopting circular economy for development. This would enable a more dynamic, flexible approach that is able to adapt the built environment – allowing for efficient retrofit, repurposing and/or removal as climate conditions change.

5. Land Value Capture could fund investment in adaptation to create long-term sustainable communities. If Scotland adopts mechanisms to capture the private value of land created as a result of public investment – this could be used as revenue for adaptation, recognising that new development will need to operate in a future climate.

6. Nature-based solutions need to be implemented on the ground. We need to reinforce planning policy to require and prioritise the widespread introduction of nature-based solutions. Measures like green-blue infrastructure and natural flood management are more effective when widely adopted.

7. Land is a resource and we need to balance competing demands. Planning needs to ensure the right land is used for the right purpose. There is growing pressure to build on land, but development planning will need to balance this with securing essential services for climate adaptation including habitat, food production, carbon storage, and flood management.

8. Communities need to shape their future places. The involvement of communities both in the planning process and adaptation decision-making needs to be supported by enabling mechanisms and local collaborative governance. Specific support, training and trusted brokers will be required for climate informed and forward looking planning.

9. Ensure the adaptation response is fair and just. The impacts of climate change will not be spread evenly, with those already disadvantaged more likely to be

affected. The planning system needs to consider spatial aspects of disadvantage when prioritising action on adaptation.

Biography

This think piece was developed by Sniffer www.sniffer.org.uk

Lead authors: Joseph Hagg, Anna Beswick,

Contributors: Kit England, Ruth Wolstenholme, Jannette MacDonald, Ellie Murtagh, John Robertson and Melinda Morris.

Sniffer is a sustainability charity which brings people and ideas together, adding value through its own expertise and insights, to create a sustainable, resilient and just society.