

SCOTLAND'S NATIONAL PLANNING FRAMEWORK 4 THINK PIECE – BLOG – OUR FUTURE GREEN NETWORKS

Introduction

The Scottish Government is keen to bring together views and ideas from a wide range of sectors and to explore the priorities Scotland's fourth National Planning Framework (NPF4) should address.

In the nineteenth in a series of Think Pieces, Deryck Irving, Acting Chief Executive at Central Scotland Green Network Trust, sets out his thoughts on Scotland2050 and specifically our future green networks. The opinions expressed are that of the author and we hope that they will stimulate debate and discussion. Think Pieces will be published over the coming weeks.

The issues and opportunities

Green networks are connected networks of multifunctional green infrastructure which permeate urban areas and extend out into the wider countryside. The components of green networks are:

- **quality local environments** which contribute to the liveability and resilience of places
- **network connections** – green active travel and habitat network connections which link urban and rural areas
- **natural climate solutions** – within urban areas and more remotely; reducing carbon emissions, sequestering carbon and minimising flood risk

High quality green networks deliver a range of functions which include:

- **placemaking** – creating:
 - successful, inclusive places for people to live and work
 - an attractive environment for business investment and employment
 - sustainable tourism opportunities
- **climate change action**
 - sequestering carbon through woodland creation; peatland restoration etc.
 - reducing emissions through greater levels of active travel
 - natural flood risk management
 - sustainable urban drainage
 - reducing the impact of rising urban temperatures
- **restoring degraded landscapes** and vacant and derelict land
- protecting and enhancing **biodiversity**
 - reducing habitat fragmentation
 - enabling species to adapt to climate change

- individual and community **health and wellbeing**
 - increasing physical activity
 - supporting mental wellbeing
 - improving air and water quality
 - creating environments where communities come together
- local **food growing** - scaling up food production closer to the consumer

Planning solutions

Central Scotland Green Network (CSGN)

The CSGN was established as a National Development - initially in National Planning Framework (NPF) 2 - with a vision that *“By 2050, Central Scotland has been transformed into a place where the environment adds value to the economy and where people’s lives are enriched by its quality.”*

This focus on Central Scotland reflects:

1. Levels of population and economic activity
(3.8 million residents and 68% of Scotland’s Gross Value Added)
2. Concentrations of disadvantage
(87% of Scotland’s 15% most deprived datazones are in the CSGN area)
3. The environmental and social legacy of heavy industry across the area which has left a degraded landscape (78% of Scotland’s vacant and derelict land lies within the CSGN)

The CSGN offers an important exemplar for the rest of Scotland – demonstrating how to simultaneously deliver Scottish Government priorities including placemaking, inclusive growth and climate change action. We would, therefore, seek the retention and promotion of the CSGN in NPF4.

Green network approaches should also be promoted across the rest of Scotland through appropriate mechanisms and structures (see below).

Green network policy and delivery

The changes to the function and status of the NPF offer an important opportunity to develop and embed green network policies within Scottish Planning Policy. These should cover:

- providing multi-functional green infrastructure in new developments
- retrofitting green infrastructure into existing areas
- creating/enhancing green network connections based on active travel links, habitat connectivity and integrated climate change action

The NPF should clearly set out the processes for developing green networks within regional spatial strategies; local development plans; open space strategies and forest and woodland strategies. The development of green infrastructure and green networks should be included in guidance for local place plans.

Summary

Over the next ten years, we need to see green network policies and priorities embedded into spatial and land use planning across Scotland. We will see significant delivery of the Central Scotland Green Network with public, private and third sector partners working collaboratively to deliver a pilot for the whole country.

Longer term, all urban areas should have multifunctional green networks making our settlements resilient, liveable and successful. Coherent and connected habitat and access networks should be in place across urban and rural Scotland.

Biography

Deryck Irving is Acting Chief Executive at Central Scotland Green Network Trust. Deryck has over thirty years of work experience relating to urban placemaking, environment and climate change action. He has worked closely with national and local government on greenspace, green infrastructure and green network policy development and delivery.