

SCOTLAND'S NATIONAL PLANNING FRAMEWORK 4 THINK PIECE – BLOG – ENJOYING THE FRUITS OF COLLABORATION

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 twenty-ninth in a series of Think Pieces, Tammy Smith-Adams, Director of Planning at Homes for Scotland, sets out her thoughts on Scotland2050 and specifically on enjoying the fruits of collaboration. The opinions expressed are that of the author and we hope that they will stimulate debate and discussion.

Think Piece

Collaboration: The situation of two or more people working together to create or achieve the same thing¹.

In 2019, no-one is blind to the fact that a local development plan produced by a council, making few concessions to market realities, is unlikely to be delivered to the letter. Especially when it comes to planning for the delivery of new homes.

Councils are rooted in duty and governed by politicians who must be sensitive to the fears and ambitions of their electorates. Private companies have a bottom line to consider, staff to pay and, in some cases, shareholders to answer to. If a home builder can't build and sell homes, and stay in profit, they can't sustain their business.

Both sides need something from the other if they are to succeed in achieving their ambitions, but the culture that has developed around Scotland's planning system has been more successful at bringing the two into conflict than it has in uniting them around any common purpose.

Now – with work beginning on NPF4, on Regional Spatial Strategies and on 10-year local plans – is the perfect time to begin the new age of collaboration with a bang. So far, no bangs have been heard.

Homes for Scotland (HFS) and our members can play a responsible and effective role at the heart of plan-making and share some of the burden. We have spent years deconstructing policies that have been drafted without us – so why not invite us to have a go at drafting or co-producing policies which say what they mean and achieve what they say?

There's no real impediment to that approach. The planning authority must govern and take ownership of its emerging plan, but it could lean on anyone to help shape and strengthen it. Real collaboration would help ease the resource pressures. A plan that is alive to the ambitions and potential of home builders with confidence in the

area has more scope to lead what happens in practice and reap the benefits of private activity.

Despite all that, collaboration isn't happening quite yet. So HFS is taking a proactive approach by contacting local authority Chief Executives to offer our time, and the insights we glean from our members, to shape Regional Spatial Strategies that build a bridge between traditional planning and economic, community and corporate planning – free of the red tape that has kept development planning so constrained and one-sided for so long.

Partnerships take a long time to mature and become effective. Effective collaboration in NPF4, Local Development Plans and Regional Spatial Strategies won't just happen overnight, but the sooner it starts the sooner Scotland will benefit.

Collaboration in plan-making means something more than consultation or engagement. It means working together to create plans and achieve outcomes. That has to extend beyond the public sector and invite the private and third sectors, communities and citizens to really work together.

The plans produced now take up a disproportionate amount of public sector time, money and expertise when compared to the consensus outcomes they achieve. The plans we produce in 2050 must be different. They must deliver what Scotland needs.

NPF4 will be the first of the new plans and strategies to emerge. This gives Scottish Ministers a golden opportunity to walk the walk on cross-sector collaboration and co-production of policy. They have the chance to show real leadership in setting an ambitious and shared planning strategy for Scotland, supported by policies and targets for housing in every part of Scotland that adds up to more than the sum of their parts. That achieved, NPF4 would earn its place in a World Class Planning System.

Biography

Tammy Swift-Adams is a planner with 20 years' cross-sector experience. As Director of Planning at Homes for Scotland she harnesses the experience, ambitions and insights of Scotland's home builders to ensure policy and decision makers have the information and collaboration opportunities they need to make sure enough new homes are delivered in their areas.