



REGIONAL SPATIAL STRATEGIES

The [Planning \(Scotland\) Act 2019](#), establishes a duty for a planning authority, or authorities acting jointly, to prepare and adopt a regional spatial strategy.

Regional Spatial Strategies (RSS) are long-term spatial strategies which specify the area/s to which they relate, and identify:

- the need for strategic development
- the outcomes to which strategic development will contribute
- priorities for the delivery of strategic development
- proposed locations, shown in the form of a map or diagram.

Scotland has a long history of strategic and regional planning. Recent changes to the system build on this to ensure strategic planning can realise its full potential. It is expected that the new arrangements for strategic planning will strengthen planning's influence and better align it with wider strategies and decisions at a regional scale such as economic development, transport and other strategic infrastructure investment programmes.

Recognising that Scotland is a diverse country, the new arrangements for strategic planning will allow planning authorities to develop a tailored approach to strategic planning for their area that best reflects their local and regional circumstances. It is expected that different approaches will be developed for different parts of the country, and that RSS will evolve and change over time.

RSS groupings will be voluntary, self-assembled and flexible around the bespoke requirements of particular areas. How RSS will happen, and who will be involved, will be determined by authorities with an expectation that they will develop through collaboration and partnership working.

In the future, Scottish Ministers will have to have regard to adopted regional spatial strategies in the preparation, revision or amendment of the National Planning Framework (NPF). Planning authorities must also have regard to them in the preparation of local development plans.

It is recognised that it may take some time for fully finalised RSS to emerge. Some authorities have established ways of regional working, whilst for others

this may involve new partnerships and development of a fresh perspective on strategic planning matters.

The review of the NPF presents an opportunity for early thinking on RSS to be developed to help inform NPF4, so that initial priorities can be built into the statutory development plan. The timescale to produce a draft NPF4 for consultation in September 2020 recognises that whilst RSS may not yet be fully formed or adopted, there is opportunity for indicative RSS to be developed, should authorities wish to make early progress ahead of the statutory duty coming into force.

In October 2019, the Scottish Government hosted an event to explore opportunities for strategic planning to inform NPF4. In the coming year, we look forward to working with authorities to ensure a collaborative approach to strategic planning and how this can help to shape the emerging NPF4.

Regional Spatial Strategies - questions answered

What is the requirement to produce regional spatial strategies?

The [Planning \(Scotland\) Act 2019](#), establishes a duty for a planning authority, or authorities acting jointly, to prepare and adopt a regional spatial strategy. This duty has not yet been enacted, and in the first instance the Scottish Government is committed to working with authorities to explore the opportunities arising from this new duty, to take a collaborative approach to NPF4, and to develop statutory guidance that will inform implementation of the duty.

What is a regional spatial strategy and what will it contain?

Regional spatial strategies are long-term spatial strategies in respect of strategic development of an area/s which must specify the area/s to which they relate, and identify:

- the need for strategic development
- the outcomes to which strategic development will contribute
- priorities for the delivery of strategic development
- proposed locations, shown in the form of a map or diagram.

Why are regional spatial strategies being produced?

The production of regional spatial strategies recognises that Scotland's strong tradition of strategic planning is evolving in new ways that are flexible, adaptable and responsive to varied circumstances. This is particularly relevant given the emerging context of regional economic partnerships and opportunities to integrate with other policy areas such as transport and infrastructure

investment in order to support inclusive economic growth and improved outcomes across a range of scales.

Who will produce regional spatial strategies and how will it happen?

Planning authorities can decide whether they want to produce regional spatial strategies individually and/or in collaboration with other authorities. The expectation is that work will be developed through co-operation and partnership. How this happens, and who will be involved, will be determined by the planning authority/ies.

What is the process for producing a regional spatial strategy?

The Act requires that before adopting a regional spatial strategy, a planning authority/ies must publish a draft of the strategy, a summary of the information taken into account in preparing the draft, and a statement inviting representations. As soon as practical after publication, a copy must be sent to the planning authority for any area in which future development is likely to be significantly impacted, the key agencies, and any other person as appropriate. As soon as practical after a strategy is adopted, the planning authority/ies must publish the strategy and submit it to the Scottish Ministers.

Will regional spatial strategies link with other policy initiatives?

In producing regional spatial strategies there may be opportunities to take account of (and potentially integrate with) other emerging initiatives. These may include for example: City and Regional Growth Deals, the Strategic Transport Projects Review, the Infrastructure Investment Plan, the Land Use Strategy, etc. It will be up to the authority/ies to determine how this might be realised.

What are implications of integrating regional spatial strategies in the NPF4?

Embedding regional spatial strategies in the National Planning Framework means that they will have enhanced status as part of the statutory development plan which will be scrutinised and adopted by Parliament.

What is the process for integrating regional spatial strategies in the NPF4?

It will be up to planning authorities to decide whether they want to produce regional spatial strategies individually and/or in collaboration with other authorities. Regional spatial strategy groupings will be voluntary, self-assembled and flexible around the bespoke requirements of particular areas. Any indicative strategies will feed into the draft NPF4.

UPDATED JANUARY 2020 – clarifications regarding indicative RSS (iRSS)

How indicative are “indicative” Regional Spatial strategies (iRSS) meant to be?

It will be for authority/ies to determine how indicative the iRSS should be. The statutory duty to produce RSS has not yet been enacted and it is recognised that it may take some time for fully finalised RSS to emerge. The review of the NPF presents an opportunity for early thinking on RSS to help inform NPF4, so that initial strategic priorities can be built into the emerging statutory development plan. The timescale to produce a draft NPF4 for consultation in September 2020 recognises that whilst RSS may not yet be fully formed or adopted, there is opportunity for indicative RSS to be developed, should authorities wish to make early progress ahead of the statutory duty coming into force. Proportionality and a focus on key issues and priorities is encouraged.

Are the provisions set out in the Planning Act to be followed in preparing iRSS?

Authority/ies will self-determine how to prepare an iRSS. As described above, the statutory duty to produce RSS has not yet been enacted and there is therefore no formal legislative requirement to guide this stage. However, authority/ies may wish to follow the provisions set out in the Planning Act, albeit proportionately within the timescale, as this exercise would form a basis for formalising the eventual fully formed and adopted RSS.

What format should iRSS be?

The legislation states that the long-term spatial strategies should include a map or diagram. We would anticipate that early iRSS diagrams could be supported by a brief supporting narrative and that this would suffice to help inform the preparation of the draft NPF4.

Is the iRSS a new vision and strategy or simply a rewording of existing LDP's?

It will be for authority/ies to self-determine what their iRSS will comprise and how they will collaborate in their production. There is an opportunity for iRSS to help inform the preparation of the NPF4 which is a long term plan for Scotland to 2050 that sets out where development and infrastructure is needed to support sustainable and inclusive growth. Fully constituted Regional Spatial Strategies (RSS) will be long-term spatial strategies which identify the need for strategic development. They will identify the outcomes to which strategic development will contribute and the priorities for the delivery of strategic development. It is perfectly reasonable to build on existing strategies, though authorities may want to take the opportunity to consider their longer term evolution and how this might inform the NPF4 vision for 2050, and to focus on issues which are clearly ‘strategic’ in nature.

Given the timescales for progressing iRSS to incorporate into the Draft NPF, what is the role of elected members and public consultation?

It is acknowledged that this will be a focused piece of work, given the timescale to produce iRSS to help inform the preparation of the draft NPF4. How stakeholders, agencies, elected members and the wider public are involved in the preparation of iRSS will need to be addressed by the relevant authority/ies. It is noted that the Scottish Government has made available grant funding to assist the process and that this might be used to assist a ‘charrette-style’ event that may help the preparation of an iRSS. We would encourage engagement to build shared ownership as far as possible within the timescale.

How easily can iRSS be changed going forward if the draft RSS is incorporated into NPF and given national status?

The iRSS will help to inform the preparation of the draft NPF4 which is intended to be laid in Parliament in September 2020. After a formal consultation period of up to 120 days all responses will be considered and a final amended draft will be laid in Parliament for approval in 2021. There will therefore be opportunities to propose amendments prior to being adopted by Scottish Ministers, although if they are substantial, further public consultation would be required and so essential changes should be made at that stage. In tandem with this, guidance and regulations will be produced (informed by the process of producing iRSS) to enact the duty to produce RSS. Future versions of the NPF will have to take into account adopted RSS.

How prescriptive is the approach to preparing iRSS?

Authorities have considerable leeway to decide for themselves how best to develop their iRSS to allow them to ensure their regional priorities can be reflected in NPF4. In starting with something new, it would not be appropriate to be prescriptive about expectations and perhaps inadvertently stifle creativity or opportunities to shape future approaches / guidance on RSSs.

What is the timescale to input strategic thinking into the preparation of NPF4?

It would be helpful if draft “indicative” RSS ideas could be offered and shared in the spring (end of March), and iRSS submitted by the summer (end of June) at the latest to help inform preparation of the draft NPF4. A ‘share and tell’ session is proposed to be held towards the start of April to support collective learning across all participating ‘regional groupings’.

The opportunity to inform the preparation NPF4 provides a chance to:

- Collaborate on developing RSS regulation / guidance
- Offer “indicative” RSS - regional views of nationally important strategies
- Embed “indicative” thinking about RSS in the NPF4/Development Plan

- Help to shape strategic thinking in advance of the duty to prepare RSS

What might iRSS consider?

As the iRSS will help to support the preparation of the draft NPF4 it may be worth bearing in mind that National drivers / considerations will include:

1. Scotland's National Performance Framework outcomes incorporating the UN Sustainable Development Goals
2. Alignment with other current and emerging strategies and programmes as set out in Section 3AB of the 1997 Act (as amended) for NPF to have regard to a range of policies and strategies.
3. Statutory Outcomes set out in Section 3A of the 1997 Act (As amended): meeting the housing needs of people living in Scotland including, in particular, the housing needs for older people and disabled people; improving the health and wellbeing of people living in Scotland; increasing the population of rural areas of Scotland; improving equality and eliminating discrimination; meeting climate change targets.
4. Main themes for NPF4 as reflected in the questions for the early engagement:
 - a. What development will we need to address climate change?
 - b. How can planning support our quality of life, health and wellbeing in the future?
 - c. What does planning need to do to enable an economy that benefits everyone?
 - d. How can planning improve and strengthen the special character of our places?
 - e. What infrastructure do we need to plan to realise our long term aspirations?

What is the relationship between RSS and LDPs?

RSS are not part of the statutory development plan but planning authorities must have regard to them when preparing, revising or amending their local development plan. Similarly, the Scottish Ministers must take them into account in preparing or revising the National Planning Framework. The forthcoming Statutory Guidance will specify how this is to be achieved.

Ahead of the duties under section 4ZA being enacted, it should be noted that indicative RSS are being prepared on a voluntary basis and will not constitute formal RSSs under the terms of the legislation. Whilst the Scottish Ministers have indicated they will be used to inform NPF4, this is on a voluntary basis, and the requirements for planning authorities do not yet apply.

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