

## SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT PLANNING FRAMEWORK

I would like all future developments to create a net environmental and biodiversity gain that would not be evaluated against the present environment but against the potential environment. For example, a company seeks planning permission to build houses on a field. At present the field is covered by one crop right to its wire fences, there is run off into the local burn and the farmer regularly sprays the crop with insecticide and herbicide. The field as it stands has little (or even negative) environmental value. However, that field has the potential to become a woodland of mixed native trees, a wildflower meadow or a field managed differently with hedgerows, a wildlife corridor and reduced insecticide use...The company would have to submit and carry out plans to enhance the environment over and above the *potential* environmental benefits of the field and that within a limited distance of the field.

As part of creating a net environmental gain, the development company should also have to offset predictable future environmental damage caused by its work. So, if the field is more than a mile from shops and there is no public transport, the company should make reparations for future emissions from inevitable car use. All new buildings should create net zero carbon emissions, taking into account the materials sourced, their transport to the site, the building process itself, the homes' heating, energy, transport etc.

As for social justice, no more ghettos! There should no longer be permission granted for fields to be turned over to developments of 3,4 and 5 bedroom houses on the outskirts of towns and villages. Instead, all future developments should be of mixed housing including social housing, cheap homes for those trying to get into the housing market, accessible housing for the disabled and some more expensive properties. Wherever possible new homes should be built within the existing boundaries of towns and villages to allow easy access to shops, GPs, leisure and other amenities. New developments should encourage cycling and walking with secure cycle sheds and safe and attractive paths. As an equality measure, pavements should be wider and smoother with sympathetic lighting and there should be public toilets and drinking fountains. In any larger development, developers should have to create playparks, outdoor gyms, dog parks and public amenities such as community halls. All public space should be designed around humans and nature, not cars. Everyone should have easy access to green spaces. Trees should be planted on all streets for human wellbeing, species' habitats, carbon reduction and flood prevention. Further flood prevention, as part of climate change mitigation, should include wider guttering, wet parkland and the

requirement to seek planning permission to pave over gardens. Wildlife corridors should be created. Peatlands and coastal habitats should be enhanced and marine conservation areas greatly enlarged.

The new Planning Framework should see Scotland as a whole. At present it is easy to grant planning permission to a small housing development but these piecemeal developments when taken together add up to huge environmental degradation. Planning permission needs to take the whole picture into account. At the same time, however, there needs to be much more power given to smaller units to decide on what best suits their local context. Perhaps community councils could play a greater role in planning. This could make the planning process more locally accountable and democratic. This again would help people's wellbeing by empowering them.

It is time to put peoples' health and wellbeing and the environment to the fore. There is still (just about) time to stop more drastic climate change and species extinction.

I commend the Scottish Government's intention to democratise its decisions by opening up debate and would encourage you to take this further in future.