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## **CSGNT submission to the National Planning Framework (NPF4) consultation**

Further to our submission regarding the continued National Development status of the Central Scotland Green Network, we would like to take this opportunity to provide some additional feedback relating to the importance of green infrastructure and green networks in delivering against the Purpose of Planning and Scotland's National Outcomes.

### **Climate**

Multifunctional green infrastructure and wider green networks have a crucial role to play in Scotland's response to the challenges of tackling climate change.

#### **Mitigation and the route to net zero carbon**

Green networks and green infrastructure contribute to climate change mitigation through a range of mechanisms, for example:

- By offering carbon sequestration opportunities (e.g. through woodland creation and management, peatland restoration and wetland creation and management)
- By reducing our reliance on motorised transport - a high quality green network will include attractive, usable green active travel routes which connect people to the places they need to go and which encourage and support walking, cycling and wheeling as travel options. By providing high quality green infrastructure on people's doorsteps and connections to the wider network, we also reduce the need to travel for recreation purposes.
- By increasing the energy efficiency of our buildings using green roofs, green walls and local greenspaces to reduce heating and cooling demands.
- In combination with other green technologies, green infrastructure offers the potential to generate renewable heat and energy.

#### **Adaptation and reducing the impacts of climate change**

Similarly, green networks and green infrastructure contribute through a range of mechanisms to reducing the impacts of the climate change which is already happening.

Flooding:

- At a landscape scale, green infrastructure includes natural flood risk management approaches including increasing riparian woodland and re-naturalising river corridors.
- More locally (particularly in urban areas) rain gardens, green roofs and other sustainable drainage systems increase permeability of surfaces and reduce flood risks from surface water runoff.
- Coastal realignment and the creation and management of coastal wetlands will increase the resilience of coasts to flooding due to rising sea levels.

Temperature and air quality:

- Green infrastructure in and around our streets and buildings has a major part to play in reducing urban temperatures (the 'urban heat island' effect). This includes small scale local greenspaces, street trees, rain gardens and green walls. Reducing the temperature in streets and buildings will make urban areas more comfortable for those who live, work and visit there and will reduce demand for air conditioning.
- 'In street' green infrastructure also has the potential to reduce air pollution including particulates.

Natural systems:

- By creating an ecologically coherent network of habitats, with improved management and increased connectivity, green networks increase the resilience of natural systems to climate change.
- Species are able to move more easily in response to the changes in climates and larger populations are more resilient to change.
- Well-managed, large areas of habitat are also more likely to be able to survive in the face of climate change.

## **Increasing the resilience of people, communities and local economies**

There is strong evidence that shows that individuals, communities and businesses that feel that they are involved in any process of change are better able to adapt to, cope with and recover from the challenges of change. Our approach to developing a green network is built on co-creation and partnership working which is designed to involve all stakeholders in developing and delivering solutions. It also ties local priorities and solutions to wider outcomes increasing understanding and buy-in.

### **Multiple benefits, awareness and support**

Crucially, multifunctional green infrastructure combines climate solutions with other functions and other societal priorities – delivering wider benefits and increasing buy in to the changes which we all need to make. Through delivering solutions close to where people live and work, green networks offer an important opportunity to increase understanding of climate change, its global and local impacts and its direct and indirect effects on people's day to day lives and livelihoods.

### **Health and Wellbeing**

There is a wealth of evidence linking quality, accessible green spaces to both physical health and mental wellbeing. This has been recognised in governmental responses to the current Covid-19 restrictions.

- Green spaces provide safe and soothing locations for physical activity and mental relaxation and the current crisis has highlighted the need for quality, accessible and usable spaces close to home. Green networks provide these spaces and link them to others to allow for wider access and travel.
- It is also important to note the negative impact of poor quality, functionless and unsafe environments on people's health and wellbeing. These environments deter people from taking exercise and increase stress levels with an associated impact on mental health and wellbeing. Tackling these 'negative' environments is a priority in developing green networks.

### **Tackling the inequalities within our society**

Our approach to developing a green network recognises the disproportionate impact of poor quality, functionless and degraded environments on disadvantaged areas and communities. We seek to target action in the areas worst affected by post-industrial dereliction and urban/peri-urban decline; with the associated problems of high levels of vacant and derelict land and other underused greenspace. Success is greatest where it is possible to work with people living and working in these areas to develop and deliver solutions.

## Green Recovery

The Scottish Government has indicated that it wishes to see a green recovery(post Covid-19). Green networks and green infrastructure have an important role to play in this process. At its simplest, local greenspaces are likely to be the first places where communities can begin to come together while maintaining social distancing. Moving forward, greenspace and green infrastructure projects offer a quick win for developing stronger community cohesion and identity. Co-creation and collective action based on the local environment have often been the starting point for much more ambitious and long-lasting community and social enterprises. Longer term, increasing investment in green infrastructure solutions will highlight new skills requirements and generate employment opportunities which can be filled by existing employers, emerging social enterprises or new entrepreneurs.

## Delivering these benefits through Planning

While we made the case for a strong focus on Central Scotland in our earlier submission, there is still a need for green infrastructure and green network thinking across the rest of the country. We would argue that this is best achieved through the inclusion of a strong green infrastructure strand throughout Scottish Planning Policy (SPP) and at all scales of spatial planning from NPF4 to Local Place Plans. This could be based on the CSGNT and Scottish Government commissioned work which proposed exemplar or model green infrastructure policies.

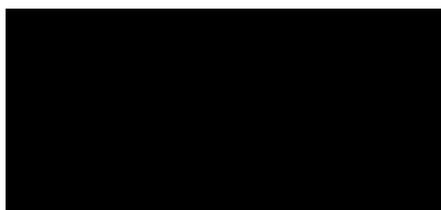
This work was largely carried out in 2017/18 and will therefore need to be expanded to encompass the new tiers of the Planning System (both regionally and locally) and the Scottish Government's more recent commitments to action on the climate emergency and biodiversity crisis and to developing a green recovery post Covid-19.

We would wish to see specific reference to green infrastructure policy within the SPP coupled with a more diffuse profile for green infrastructure throughout all relevant areas of the NPF. For example, we would hope to see green infrastructure recognised as a productive use for vacant and derelict land and an explicit component of placemaking. Similarly, we would recommend that green infrastructure/green networks (and where appropriate the CSGN) as a component of all national developments and other spatial priorities highlighted in NPF4.

It is critical that, in line with the aspirations of the Planning Act, the NPF drives delivery as well as informing consistent and coherent policy. This is particularly important in relation to green networks and green infrastructure which are often treated as optional extras rather than core infrastructure requirements. [Strong green infrastructure policy within the SPP will also be extremely helpful in furthering the development of the Central Scotland Green Network].

Please feel free to contact me for clarification on any of the above points. CSGNT staff would be happy to engage further in developing these ideas and the relevant sections of NPF4 and SPP. We are happy for this feedback to be shared with others (in line with the respondent form submitted with our national development submission).

Yours



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