

NPF4 Issues and Policies for inclusion in National Planning Framework 4. Greener Melrose, March 2020.

Introduction

1. The impact of climate change is accelerating and in several areas exceeding worst case scenarios which is very worrying. 200 year events become 75 year events or even more frequent, riverside communities find themselves repeatedly flooded in the same year, the hottest day on record is being exceeded with increasing frequency.
2. The drastic measures taken to cope with the current Covid-19 pandemic are an opportunity to explore and identify different ways of working and organising our lives which reduce GHG emissions and pollution. The public may be inherently conservative yet almost everyone has accepted exceptional measures in the face of the current threat once it became apparent demonstrating that our leaders can take bold measures where they present strong evidence of danger.
3. In setting out the overarching policies and priorities for development planning over the next 5 years National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) will need to specify ways to speed up our response to climate change otherwise we will be overtaken by events as has happened with the country's initial cautious incremental response to the current pandemic. Paradoxically government needs to adopt the precautionary principle in response to climate change and take bold action in order to minimise future damage.
4. The technology is largely well tried and tested from better insulated buildings to electric vehicles and 3 D printing. It is a question of political will not technology, nor market forces. It will require political leadership to guide the country through 20 years of radical transition.
5. The actions needed to create a new green economy that reverses years of environmentally (socially and spiritually) damaging economic development and creates a more inclusive and locally resilient living and working environment provide real opportunities for unleashing the creative energies of our younger generations, creating jobs, revitalising the regional economy and creating a world that is economically, socially and spiritually rewarding and exciting.

The 5 Consultation Questions

1. What development will we need to address climate change? Becoming a Carbon Neutral Country.

1. Scottish Government policy is that by 2030 Scotland will have reduced its GHG emissions by 50% or more from current levels and by 2040 they will have been reduced by 90% or more.
2. To achieve these targets we will have transformed travel with long distance and urban journeys being predominantly by carbon-free public transport, short distances by personal electric vehicles.
3. We will be growing and eating much more locally sourced food and living in well insulated houses heated by solar energy supplemented by other renewable sources.
4. Non-manual work will largely be conducted over the web from home or local office bases so empowering us to maintain a better life-work balance.

To achieve these aims NPF4 should adopt the following objectives and commit to the following actions:-

Energy:

Make significant reductions in our dependence on fossil fuels by :

- Disinvestment by the SG in oil and gas

- Stopping the issue of exploration licences, leaving fossil fuels in the ground.
- Introduce a new energy investment bank to invest only in renewable energy.
- convert public transport and private vehicles to renewable power (electric and hydrogen)
- Shift the balance towards greater use of public transport by minimising the price of public transport and making public transport free in urban areas.
- Commit to introduce a Citizens Assembly on Energy by mid-2022
- All new government projects to be carbon neutral by 2025
- Eliminate the necessity to pay energy constraint payments to renewable generators by increasing the efficient management of electricity use.
- Adopt the principle of the polluter pays and agree an action plan to implement over 5 years.

Housing:

- Revise and strengthening legislation for developers, landlords, households and commercial premises to bring all existing housing to meet high standards of energy efficiency
- Reduce the number of existing households and commercial properties reliant on oil by 60%
- Amend building regs. to require heating systems in all new housing and all replacement domestic heating to be from carbon free renewable energy. In rural areas clean wood burners in well insulated houses could be permitted.
- Amend building regs. for new built homes to be built to the highest insulation standards short of requiring 'passiv house' standards, increasing the use of timber in place of steel and cement and using only renewable carbon-free energy.
- District heating will be rolled out across Scotland by empowering each L.A. to require developers to establish at least three new district heating projects over the duration of the Planning Framework.
- Commit to all new housing developments to be provided with electric vehicle charging points at a minimum ratio of one charge point per 5 residential units.

Continue to provide grants for insulation, double glazing and heat pump technologies, with a particular focus on those who currently live in fuel poverty

Land Use:

- Government support for land management will move towards a much more sustainable model, with a strong emphasis on maintaining and increasing biodiversity, increasing soil carbon and soil fertility, and radically reducing carbon emissions from the agricultural sector.
- Set a target of reducing carbon emissions from farming by 30% by the end of NPF4 with a target of 70% reduction by 2030 measuring returns in terms of food output as well as cash.
- Develop much more woodland and forestry, especially in the uplands, substantially increasing the % of native woodland, to increase carbon sequestration. Commit to doing this without tenant evictions in harmony with local farming, cultural, community and local business interests.
- Require the forestry and construction industries to develop more quality timber for construction to substitute for steel and cement.
- Encourage much greater diversification of local food production for local consumption to substitute for food from distance sources which can be grown locally.
- Give notice of the prohibition of peat extraction for horticulture by the beginning of 2023 and increase funding for the restoration and subsequent preservation of degraded peat bogs.
- Build, in partnership with the local farming community, a network of research and demonstration sites that will allow a just transition from environmentally damaging agricultural practices to a food production system that brings healthy food to local markets, does not threaten biodiversity, does not contribute to climate change and results in equitable development opportunities in rural areas.

2. How can planning best support our quality of life, health and wellbeing in the future?

Maximising Well-being, Reducing Social Inequality.

2.1 Measuring progress in terms of well-being as well GDP, as proposed by the First Minister, is very welcome but that will require the growing inequality in society to be reversed.

2.2. Moving to zero carbon neutral is an opportunity to reduce inequality but at the same time risks reinforcing inequality if wealth becomes increasingly concentrated in fewer and fewer hands.

2.3. The Planning Framework and Policies can help address that by setting relevant conditions and requirements for public subsidies, grants and tax allowances for a wide range of activities from property development to agriculture.

2.4. Our landscapes will be improved by mosaics of rich and diverse woodlands, commercial forests, farmland and wilder uplands attracting us to spend time in them improving our health and well-being. To achieve these aims NPF4 should adopt the following objectives and commit to the following actions:-

- The Covid-19 pandemic highlights the value of the precautionary principle. The longer we hesitate in responding to climate change the greater the risk to people's well-being through economic and environmental damage leaving us with fewer resources to address rising needs. After the epidemic 'business as usual' should not be considered an option, the experience of the pandemic is an opportunity and a stimulus to change some common practices to make us more resilient and reduce our carbon emissions, eg working from home, reducing air travel.
- Take advantage of the present Covid 19 measures with far less cars about to sustain the significantly lower levels of pollution in towns and cities by supporting local councils in 'greening up urban open spaces and streets and significantly increasing active travel budgets
- The planning process can play an important part in reducing inequality by ensuring a diversity of ownership and investment when approving developments and, where appropriate, requiring community involvement and public benefit. Opportunities and examples abound where this could happen, eg when considering development proposals in essential services such as energy, housing, forestry and other changes in land use including large scale tourist developments.
- The Planning Framework should set out the Scottish Government's intentions to change the way in which grants, incentives and subsidies devolved to the Scottish administration are administered so that they level up the gross inequalities between communities, public services and the large corporations and between the wealthy and those living hand to mouth. At present huge sums are being paid out to the wealthiest landowners, property developers and multinationals reinforcing gross inequalities in wealth and income, concentrating an ever-increasing proportion of the country's resources in the hands of relatively few.
- Home Working : given the experience of the spread of Covid-19 government will strengthen its policies and incentives to enable and encourage businesses to expand home working and to facilitate the dispersal of employment opportunities across the regions of Scotland. This will contribute considerably to a reduction in carbon emissions by reducing commuting and the pressure on transport.
- Pollution - this is a critical area for health, especially children's' health. To address this effectively NP4 should give notice of the intention to put into practice the principle that the polluter pays to clear up their pollution.

3. What does planning need to do to enable an economy that benefits everyone?

Strengthening Community Cohesion, Enterprise and Skills

3.1 The current crises management over Covid-19 demonstrates very clearly the importance of co-operating with one another at all levels and across all sectors. Learning from this experience is essential in facing the developing challenges posed by climate change over the next 10-20 years.

3.2 Communities need to be empowered. This requires the Scottish Parliament and government at Holyrood to devolve appropriate powers, responsibilities and resources to local councils and communities in order to achieve the myriad of local actions and measures necessary to respond successfully to the climate change, environmental recovery and the health and well-being agendas.

3.3 The vision of a long-term future free of the threats from run-away climate change requires major economic shifts that are seen by some as a threat to current economic systems. This does not have to be the case. The investments required to make our homes energy-sound, our transport Carbon free and our food-systems environmentally safe bring significant income generation opportunities for large sections of the population – possibly larger than a business as usual economic development scenario. It is crucial that in the future the economy is not based on indiscriminate and everlasting growth on a finite planet. Economic activity must be genuinely sustainable, using renewable resources and re-using non renewable resources. One industry's waste must become another industry's raw material, thereby creating a circular economy.

3.4 These opportunities exist in both the rural areas (to help generate food production systems that bring diverse and healthy produce to local markets and manage the environment for carbon, water and biodiversity benefits) and local urban centres, many of which are beset by long-term economic decline problems (to house the businesses and skilled workers to build the home, transport and energy infrastructure required to build this carbon-free future).

3.5 The technical skills required to make those shifts happen are not yet available in sufficient quantity to bring about the changes we want, and this represents another real opportunity for investment in professional training and education and the establishment of technical and research support services that might convince a substantial number of young people to stay and attract others to come and live here.

To achieve these aims NPF4 should adopt the following objectives and commit to the following actions:-

- Initiate a consultation on what powers communities would wish to see devolved.
- Pilot the introduction of citizen assemblies on major areas of policy such as energy and transport taking care not to reinforce structural and social inequalities.
- Require major developments in rural areas such as renewable energy schemes and forestry to invest a share of their estimated returns in ways that favour and benefit the local communities requiring at least 60% p.a. to be spent on energy reduction measures, e.g. improved home insulation
- Engage with local communities and communities of interest from the beginning of a major development, not part way through when contract commitments may have already been made.

- Replace the presumption in favour of development by a presumption in favour of the community's views. Where there is disagreement the onus would be on developers and agencies making the case for overriding the community's views which the community should be able to challenge.
- Introduce third party rights of appeal into planning law.
- Incentivise training and the growth of small and medium enterprises in the skills required to make green development happen in rural and urban environments

4. How can planning improve, protect and strengthen the special character of our places? Making Better Use of Our Land - Reversing the decline in the state of nature.

4.1 Much of the land, especially in the uplands, is an under utilised resource. Grouse moors, deer forests and some livestock farming require very large areas for very little public benefit. Single purpose land management in these settings has very little economic benefit or environmental benefits, often negative for the latter, and provides social benefits to a declining population.

4.2 There are now plenty of examples of bare, impoverished valleys and hills being turned into rich and diverse habitats reversing species decline, improving ecosystem services, sequestering carbon and attracting a thriving visitor industry. There are also examples of food and timber production being integrated into these models resulting in reversing population decline, increasing considerably their contribution to climate change, reviving biodiversity and raising community confidence and well-being.

4.3 The Framework should commit to integrated land use for public benefit not driven solely by self-interest and market forces. The principle of multiple land use producing multiple public benefits, creating landscapes which are mosaics of integrated land, based on a land use strategy, should be adopted by NPF 4 as a fundamental policy objective. This applies to the greenbelt zone around population centres as well as the wider countryside.

4.4 Rural towns play an important role in the Scottish economy; however, many of them suffer from economic and social decline and many town centres have lost their appeal as thriving centres of commerce. At the same time, incentivising the emergence of a green economic development pathway will require scaling up the small and medium sized enterprises to provide the necessary services to build the new transport infrastructure, convert our homes and put agriculture on a more sustainable footing. Many young people also are looking for better opportunities for owning a house of their own and providing a living environment for their families that is safe and healthy. Rural towns could play a key role in this. Significant investment will be needed to help those rural towns in this transition.

To achieve these aims NPF4 should adopt the following objectives and commit to the following actions:

- Retain and confirm the constraints on large scale developments in Wild Land Areas that are included in NPF3 and the current Scottish Planning Policy 2014 as follows: *"Group 2: Areas of significant protection: Recognising the need for significant protection, in these areas wind farms may be appropriate in some circumstances. Further consideration will be required to demonstrate that any significant effects on the qualities of these areas can be substantially overcome by siting, design or other mitigation.*

SPP para 203

“Planning permission should be refused where the nature or scale of a proposed development would have an unacceptable impact on the natural environment. Direct or indirect effects on statutorily protected sites will be an important consideration, but designation does not impose an automatic prohibition on development.”

- Endorse SEPA's commitment to help business reduce water use, carbon-based energy and materials use and all forms of waste and pollution beyond and above the minimum standards of compliance.
- Make a firm commitment to implement the recommendations of the Deer Advisory Group Report, 2019
- Commit to the establishment of an Ecological Network as called for by all the major and many of the smaller conservation bodies in Scotland including Scottish Environment Link.

Set in train a programme of land use reform beginning with:

- The introduction of land use strategies and local land use plans to which all use and development must conform to secure any public funds, allowances and exemptions.
- The establishment of local land use plans outside urban areas across Scotland within the first two years of the Framework moving to integrated, multiple land use creating a mosaic landscape of wildlife rich and diverse woodlands, productive farm land, commercial forests, recreational routes and viewpoints, etc. with equity of benefits as the objective, not the greatest benefits to the largest landowners.
- Local land use plans would include a commitment to meet targets for increasing the percentage of woodland and forest cover generating multiple benefits increasing carbon sequestration, restoring biodiversity, aiding flood management and improving ecosystem services as well as supporting the continuing development of the forestry industry.
- Improve the diversity of habitats by encouraging landowners and the forestry industry to substitute native regenerating hardwoods, especially birch, for imported birch. Take this forward in partnership with local farmers and local communities as well as local landowners.
- Introduce the regulation of grouse moors including the phasing out of muirburn over a 3year transitional period.
- Commit to initiating a programme to restore organic soil fertility reducing the need for fertilisers which are major contributors to agricultural carbon emissions.
- Phase out peat extraction within 2 years with the exception of peat cutting in the W Isles for domestic use only.
- Integrate public sector funding streams for agriculture, forestry, conservation, water and flood management, leisure and recreation and other purposes for a landscape scale area, typically a river catchment, through a local land use planning process. Govt. grants, subsidies, (and tax allowances following further devolution) would only be awarded to proposals which conformed to the Local Land Use Plan for a given area.
- Initiate a major programme of rural town renovations that will convert them into thriving service hubs for the green economy and provide safe and healthy residential housing for the local community, especially the young and the elderly. Every High Street should have a Business Hub for small businesses and a Repair Centre for repairing everyday objects.

5. What infrastructure do we need to plan and build to realise our long-term aspirations? Sustainable Prosperity for All

5.1 Economic activity is intentionally last in this list of objectives because it is the means to deliver much of the preceding list, not an end in itself. Unsustainable economic growth must stop as soon as possible. An economy based on ‘doughnut economics’ is recommended. The doughnut sets a floor

of social justice and a ceiling within the earth's carrying capacity. Economic activity takes place between these two limiting factors.

5.2 Public and private investment in all the objectives listed in above will generate substantial economic activity. NPF4 needs to set out a framework to stimulate and encourage that activity and for much of it to take place in Scotland providing jobs and income to replace jobs lost in the fossil fuel based industries. The Planning Framework should also indicate clearly that public incentives and investment in the fossil fuel industries will be withdrawn over the first 4 years of the Framework to end by 2025.

To achieve these aims NPF4 should adopt the following objectives and commit to the following actions:-

- It will require the public sector and private investment and industry to work together to deliver this major transition within the timescale that the realities of climate change demands.
- Investment in retrofitting domestic and commercial buildings to the highest standards of energy efficiency and in converting public transport and private vehicles to renewable power (electric and hydrogen) will generate many jobs for which people will need to be trained and skilled.
- Achieve high speed broadband connectivity across the country for all by the end of 4 years at the latest. This will support businesses currently with poor or non-existent connectivity, rural economies and facilitate home working building on recent experience in many industries.
- The planning process can contribute to establishing a sustainable circular economy by encouraging
 - Investment in Reuse, Repair and Recycle of products.
 - Moves to a zero-waste economy eliminating landfill and incineration and single use plastics.
 - Shorter supply chains.
- Scotland has the most concentrated pattern of land ownership in the developed world and the Scottish Government is committed to reforming it. The Planning Framework and Planning Policy can help achieve greater diversity of ownership and better use of land by encouraging and supporting communities and new entrants to take on land and use it creatively, within the framework of land use plans once they are in place.
- A major investment programme in rural town renovation including Business Hubs and Repair Centres
- A major investment programme to establish a network of experimental and demonstration sites that show the potential of agro-ecology to produce the food the country needs in way that are environmentally sound and socially progressive.
- A major investment to support the scale up in technical service provision needed to enable the transition to the green economy in small towns and rural areas.
- Investment in safer routes within and between adjacent conurbations to encourage the use of bicycles, electric bicycles and micro vehicles.

J Thomas, D McPhilimy (Chair), Y Biot, D Lang, J McLennan.
Sustainable Development Committee, Greener Melrose.

About Greener Melrose .

'A Greener Melrose' is a Transition Group based in the Scottish Borders. We use the Transition Network model of a Steering group (trustees) which maintains the focus of a number of action sub-groups on the aims and objectives, and manages the resources, while the sub-groups get on with the day-to-day work. The trustees are all 'A Greener Melrose' members and membership is open to all residents of the postcode areas TD1-10. We have a direct link with Scottish Borders Council via their Economic Strategy Co-ordinator who is a member of the Steering Committee.

The action sub-groups supported by the Steering Group includes a Food group with a community orchard, allotments and a woodland, an Anti-Plastic group, a Film group, an Energy group and an Eco group based in the local high school. The lead person of every sub-group is also a Trustee and sits on the Steering committee to which the sub-groups all report.

We host a series of Winter Talks with other local green groups, with each group in turn providing a speaker. These groups include Eco-Congregations, Melrose Paths Group, Fair Trade Melrose, Borders Forest Trust, Borders Organic Gardeners, Tweedgreen, Royal Scottish Forestry Society and the John Muir Trust. The Scottish Uplands Partnership provided a speaker for one of our Winter Talks - we keep in close touch with them and joined them for the Green Meet in March 2019. The Scottish Wildlife Trust have a talks program of their own and we promote each other's talks. In the summer, we hold Cafe Conversations on environmental topics of interest to the community such as the use of fossil fuels, fast fashion, food, and single use plastics. Frequently these community events lead to actions being taken.