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# NORTH AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

18 March 2020

## Planning Committee

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**Title:** National Planning Framework 4

**Purpose:** To update Members on the preparation of National Planning Framework 4 and endorse the Council's response to the Scottish Government's early engagement.

**Recommendation:** It is recommended that the Planning Committee approves a response to the Scottish Government's early engagement on the preparation of National Planning Framework 4, as set out in Appendix 1.

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### 1. Executive Summary

1.1 The Scottish Government has launched a 'Call for Ideas' to seek views on the scope and content of Scotland's fourth National Planning Framework (NPF4). A draft response to this 'Call for Ideas' has been prepared, focusing on the themes of climate change, health and wellbeing, economy, place and infrastructure and the promotion of Hunterston as a national development.

### 2. Background

2.1 The National Planning Framework (NPF) is a long-term plan for Scotland that sets out where development and infrastructure is needed to support sustainable and inclusive growth. Alongside its wider programme for implementing planning reform and the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019, the Scottish Government has begun the process of reviewing NPF3, which was published in 2014.

2.2 The new Planning Act introduces a purpose for the preparation of the NPF: "to manage the development and use of land in the long-term public interest" and elevates the status of NPF4, from a material consideration to part of the development plan. Unlike previous versions, NPF4 will contain detailed national policy on a wide range of planning topics, currently set out in Scottish Planning Policy (SPP). This will mean NPF4 will have a stronger role in informing day-to-day decision making.

2.3 Scottish Government is undertaking intensive early engagement to seek views on the scope and content of NPF4 and has launched a 'Call for Ideas', which runs until 31 March, to gather thoughts and priorities for NPF4. Government are particularly interested on thoughts on the following issues:

- 1) What development will need to address climate change?
- 2) How can planning best support our quality of life, health and wellbeing in the future?
- 3) What does planning need to do to enable development and investment in our economy to benefit everyone?
- 4) How can planning improve, protect and strengthen the special character of our places?
- 5) What infrastructure do we need to plan and build to realise our long-term aspirations?

A response on these issues is set out at Appendix 1.

- 2.4 As part of the 'Call of Ideas' the Scottish Government are also inviting suggestions for projects to be considered for 'National Development' status in the NPF4. National developments are expected to make a significant contribution to national outcomes. Designation as a national development establishes the need for projects deemed to be of national significance.
- 2.5 North Ayrshire's adopted Local Development Plan strongly supports the inclusion of Hunterston in NPF4, in recognition of its clear strategic national importance as an energy hub and deep-water port and its inclusion within the Ayrshire Growth Deal. The Planning Service will work with relevant parties, including Peel Ports, to promote the inclusion of Hunterston as a national development in NPF4.
- 2.6 In addition to engaging with the 'Call for Ideas', the Council is currently jointly preparing with East Ayrshire and South Ayrshire Councils an indicative Regional Spatial Strategy for Ayrshire. This indicative Regional Spatial Strategy, to be submitted to Scottish Government in June 2020, will also inform the draft NPF4 and is therefore an important mechanism for highlighting Ayrshire's development priorities.

### **Next Steps**

- 2.7 Scottish Government aim to lay a draft of NPF4 in the Scottish Parliament in September 2020. Formal public consultation will then run alongside the Parliament's consideration of the draft. Thereafter, Government will consider all responses, amend the draft and lay a final version in Parliament. This is expected to be next year. NPF4 is required to be approved by Parliament before it can be adopted by Scottish Ministers.

### **3. Proposals**

- 3.1 It is recommended that the Planning Committee approves a response to the Scottish Government's early engagement on the preparation of National Planning Framework 4, as set out in Appendix 1.

### **4. Implications/Socio-economic Duty**

#### **Financial**

- 4.1 None.

#### **Human Resources**

4.2 None.

### **Legal**

4.3 Once adopted, National Planning Framework 4 will form part of the Development Plan for North Ayrshire. Decisions on planning application and the next Local Development Plan will be required to accord with NPF4.

### **Equality/Socio-economic**

4.4 NPF4 will be subject to a number of statutory and non-statutory impact assessments, which the Scottish Government aim to integrate where possible. To date, the Government has prepared an Integrated Assessment Scoping Report, setting out the Scottish Government's view on which impact assessments should be undertaken (known as 'screening') and information on the assessment method(s), and the baseline information on which the assessments will be based.

### **Environmental and Sustainability**

4.5 See above.

### **Key Priorities**

4.6 NPF4 will align with wider national priorities, programmes and strategies, including on infrastructure and economic investment. These align with many of the Council's key priorities, including a sustainable environment; affordable, modern and well-designed homes; and effective infrastructure.

### **Community Wealth Building**

4.7 None.

## **5. Consultation**

5.1 This paper responds to a Scottish Government consultation on a draft National Planning Framework. An officer workshop was held at the end of January in order to gather the thoughts of a number of services on the indicative Regional Spatial Strategy and NPF4 which has informed this response.

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For further information please contact **Alistair Gemmell, Strategic Planning Manager**, on **01294 324021**.

## **Background Papers**

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## Appendix 1

### National Planning Framework 4 - Call for Ideas North Ayrshire Council Response

#### **Climate**

What development will we need to address climate change?

North Ayrshire Council has been proactive in tackling climate change, achieving almost 40% emission reduction since the 2005 baseline year, by consuming less fossil fuels and producing less waste across North Ayrshire through a number of initiatives including energy conservation and increased use of renewable energy sources. A coordinated approach across all services has been key to the successful implementation of emission reduction projects. The focus on clean energy is a key element of the draft Ayrshire Regional Economic Strategy which aims to position Ayrshire at a nationally strategically important location for renewable energy power generation.

The Council's declaration of a Climate Emergency in June 2019 established an aspiration to become a net-zero emission local authority by 2030. This is an ambitious goal based on emission data available and is within the 10-year timeframe set by the IPCC to prevent irreversible climate change. Based on current annual reduction trends a 73% reduction in emissions is projected by 2030 (based on a 2005/06 baseline year); to address the shortfall, development and action is required around carbon absorption solutions, further renewable energy generation opportunities and new technologies to deliver low carbon heat and energy supplies across domestic, non-domestic and transport sectors.

The decarbonisation of heat and transport networks will be key to reducing emissions, in relation to both new and existing buildings. Currently the planning system – and developers – are falling short in delivering the roll-out of low-carbon through heat networks, which enable harnessing renewable sources of heat in rivers, sewers and the ground, and infrastructure for electric vehicle charging. Zoning areas most suitable for heat networks in existing buildings and land for development and potential sources of heat can promote the development of heat networks, however, like the implementation of Section 3F of the Planning Act, consideration needs to be given as to whether the planning system is the correct vehicle for mandating such solutions.

Development Plans are increasingly incorporating policies regarding heat networks and district heating but, to date, major housebuilders have tended to cite that such options are not feasible for technical or economic reasons and that legislation will be the main impetus for significant changes to the energy efficiency and carbon emissions from new housing.

The potential of Hunterston to contribute to the achievement of Scotland's target of net zero emissions is addressed in our nomination of the site as a national development (see Response Form).

#### **Health and wellbeing**

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

Ensuring North Ayrshire's residents and communities enjoy good life-long health and well-being is a priority outcome of the Council. The Council's Plan states that we will work with individuals and communities to support positive lifestyle choices which improve health and wellbeing.

Planning can support our quality of life and wellbeing in a number of ways, as part of Scotland's whole system approach to health improvement. Place, in particular, can play an important role in public health and is recognised in the first of Scotland's six public health priorities: "A Scotland where we live in vibrant, healthy and safe places and Communities". Good quality buildings, neighbourhood design, sustainable travel and opportunities for active travel, the provision and quality of green space and opportunities for play and sport are all within the remit of planning and can have a positive impact on health and wellbeing.

National planning policy on placemaking which supports development that is designed to a high-quality and demonstrates the six qualities of successful place is a good starting point for ensuring the consideration of health and wellbeing is integral to planning decisions. The articulation of these six qualities may benefit from a more specific focus on health and wellbeing, including around another of the public health priorities concerning healthy weight and the 'food environment'.

Housing is also a key component of supporting quality of life, health and wellbeing. In North Ayrshire, we have one of the biggest and most ambitious house-building plans in Scotland and will deliver 1,575 new Council homes by 2025. In addition, the recently adopted Local Development Plan seeks to stimulate private-sector house building. On a national scale, there is an argument that a rebalancing of the housing market is required, away from the south-east of Scotland to places like Ayrshire. This could potentially be supported through the distribution of any future infrastructure levy; increasing the attractiveness and de-risking sites in the west and enabling the benefits of the delivery of new homes, for example through regeneration, to be shared more equitably across Scotland.

## **Economy**

What does planning need to do to enable development & investment in our economy to benefit everyone?

An inclusive, growing and enterprising economy is another of the North Ayrshire Council Plan's priority outcomes. This broadly aligns with national outcomes for economy and fair work and business. The Council supports a 'Community Wealth Building' approach, a people-centred approach to local economic development, which redirects wealth back into the local economy, and places control and benefits into the hands of local people. This radical and bold approach which will see the Council – along with other established institutions - use the economic levers available to them in order to create a more resilient local economy, with more diverse businesses, to create more well-paid jobs for local people. The land and assets of 'anchor' institutions, who are often major land holders, can support equitable land development and the development of under-utilised assets for community use, and this could be encouraged by the planning system.

A key role for planning in enabling development and investment in our economy will also be to support city region and growth deals; both projects that are designated as national developments and others. Through the Ayrshire Growth Deal and other

means, we aim to attract investment, to support regeneration and job creation at our key development sites of i3 Irvine, Hunterston, Lochshore, Ardrossan Marine Quarter and the Irvine Great Harbour.

There is also a key role for planning in addressing long-term vacant and derelict land and making employment land more dynamic and responsive to demand, ensuring such sites become productive and benefit the economy and local communities. Promoting the redevelopment of such sites has long since been a priority of the planning system, however, more direct intervention using, for example, compulsory sales orders and looking at transfer values should be considered further.

## **Place**

How can planning improve, protect and strengthen the special character of our places?

Place, and placemaking, is central to the purpose of planning and integral to achieving many of the national outcomes. The planning system, as a component of related environmental protection and assessment legislation already does a good job in protecting our special places, including the historic environment and natural heritage. However, it is important that the planning system encourages the better use of assets, such as vacant and derelict land.

Town and city centres are places which are both fundamentally important to local communities but undergoing significant change, largely related to changes within the retail sector. The town centre first principle of directing uses which attract significant numbers of people, including retail and commercial leisure, offices, community and cultural facilities to town centres is more important than ever, as are aspiration to increasing residential uses with town centres.

## **Infrastructure**

What infrastructure do we need to plan and build to realise our long-term aspirations?

New development both relies on and can facilitate infrastructure improvements. Improving transport, digital and green infrastructure underpins the achievement of national outcomes, including through facilitating growth and enhancing accessibility. It is noted that Scottish Government expects NPF4 to look very different from NPF3, with improved alignment with wider programmes and strategies, including on infrastructure. The Council has promoted a number of projects through the second Strategic Transport Projects Review which seek to ensure travel and transport networks in North Ayrshire support our long-term aspirations, are resilient and reliable. This is of particular importance for our island communities.

Again, there is an argument that infrastructure investment – which up until now has been mainly focused on and between cities – should be redirected to benefit other areas, such as North Ayrshire.



## National Developments – Response Form

Please use the table below to let us know about projects you think may be suitable for national development status. You can also tell us your views on the existing national developments in National Planning Framework 3, referencing their name and number, and providing reasons as to why they should maintain their status. Please use a separate table for each project or development. **Please fill in a [Respondent Information Form](#) and return it with this form to [scotplan@gov.scot](mailto:scotplan@gov.scot).**

Name of proposed national development	Hunterston
Brief description of proposed national development	Deep-water port and Innovation, Energy and Blue Economy hub.
Location of proposed national development (information in a GIS format is welcome if available)	Hunterston Terminal, Fairlie, Ayrshire KA29 0AZ
What part or parts of the development requires planning permission or other consent?	Planning permission will be required for new infrastructure and built development related to new energy and new industry components of the overall strategy for the redevelopment of Hunterston,
When would the development be complete or operational?	A Strategic Business Case envisages the full re-development of the Hunterston site over 25 years.
Is the development already formally recognised – for example identified in a development plan, has planning permission, in receipt of funding etc.	<p>The strategic national importance of Hunterston as energy hub and deep-water port is recognised by the North Ayrshire Local Development Plan, adopted in November 2019, which identifies Hunterston as a Strategic Development Area. The LDP supports a range of uses at Hunterston, including renewables generation, manufacture, maintenance, research and development; maritime construction and decommissioning; and power generation. The LDP supports the inclusion of Hunterston in NPF4.</p> <p>The site has planning permission for the construction, repair and decommissioning of large marine related structures related to oil and gas and renewables industry and the erection of caisson gates.</p>

	Hunterston is included within the Ayrshire Growth Deal.
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Contribution of proposed national development to the national development criteria (maximum 500 words):

Hunterston provides a unique combination of energy generation, infrastructure and network accessibility.

**Climate Change**

The key contribution of Hunterston to national development criteria relates to climate change and the development’s potential role in achieving Scotland’s target of net zero emissions by 2045. This reflects Hunterston’s UK-wide importance as a principle location for energy production and distribution via the Western HVDC Link. The redevelopment of Hunterston will enable a key strategic site that will lead the transition of the energy sector in Scotland through the creation of an Innovation, Energy and Blue Economy strategic hub. The hub will support investment in facilities that support renewable power generation, including the offshore renewable sector; new innovative zero carbon processing techniques and activity related to the Blue Economy that aligns with low carbon emission targets.

**People**

A diverse range of quality jobs are envisaged from the redevelopment of Hunterston, with a high GVA/job ratio and capacity to support a skilled and dynamic workforce and diverse and integrated supply chain. This will address a number of North Ayrshire’s key challenges: high unemployment; lack of jobs; deprivation; and population decline, which can have positive effects on the health, wellbeing, sustainability and quality of life within the area.

**Inclusive Growth**

The circular economy is a major element in delivering Scottish Government’s aim of sustainable economic growth. Hunterston is a unique proposition with substantial and nationally significant competitive place advantages for the recycling of assets from legacy power generation in addition to the construction of next-generation offshore wind and new industry allied to the development of the Blue Economy. The development addresses market failure and additionality in terms of time, scale, innovation, infrastructure and quality and creates additional economic value, repositioning the North Ayrshire economy and delivering three of the great challenges of a modern, inclusive and equitable national economy.

**Place**

The redevelopment of Hunterston will address the legacy of the site’s previous role for coal import and storage becoming obsolete following the shift in favour of zero-carbon technologies and the closure of Scotland’s coal-fired power stations. This will have a positive impact on the local environment, bringing a significant land resource back into productive use.