

SEStran are pleased to respond to the call for ideas for NPF4 and have produced the following inline with the five main questions posed. SEStran's aim remains aligned to the Vision statement for the Regional Transport Strategy agreed in 2007:

'South East Scotland is a dynamic and growing area which aspires to become one of northern Europe's leading economic regions. Essential to this is the development of a transport system which enables businesses to function effectively, allows all groups in society to share in the region's success through high quality access to services and opportunities, respects the environment, and contributes to better health.'

As with the RTS, the NPF4 will only be delivered effectively in partnership with multiple organisations. Working together a balance must be struck in producing the best results from infrastructure planning and investment that meets the aspirations for economic benefit, sustainability and inclusion.

1. What development will we need to address climate change?

Development by its very nature is somewhat set against the ambitions of reduced emissions. In order for the economy to grow and encourage more jobs, further development is required. Mitigation can be made in as much as developments must meet high standards of sustainability for housing quality, quality of life, areas of nature and exploration of the outdoors, high quality workplaces that can be made flexible to growing trends, and transport connections that limit the ease of car use in favour of mass transit and physical exercise options.

As identified in the Infrastructure Commission for Scotland Report 2020¹, an infrastructure first approach must be taken towards development. Appropriate infrastructure must be in place to be more than capable of handling long term impacts of climate change and climate events in increasing frequency in new developments and appropriate measures should be undertaken to address existing development. Planning guidance for green and blue infrastructure should be updated, (current policy dates from 2006² to 2011³), to reflect the increased impact of climate change and move to regulation of implementation rather than best practice. Adopting these infrastructures will improve resilience for climate impacts whilst offering opportunities to encourage carbon capturing and boosting biodiversity in all communities.

It is no secret that much residential development over the last ten years has favoured car above other transport modes, and while this is now being addressed through better development and street guidance there are opportunities to enhance neighbourhoods with sustainable solutions such as mobility hubs. SEStran through its partnership in the INTERREG Share North programme⁴

¹ [Infrastructure Commission Scotland](#)

² [PAN79 Water & Drainage](#)

³ [Green Infrastructure](#)

⁴ [INTERREG Share North](#)

has shared learnings from other EU nations implementing options that provide choices for travel and convenience, such as parcel collection points and shared vehicles (cars, e-bikes, e-cargo bikes). SEStran are developing a Mobility Hub Strategy that will aid the South East of Scotland regional partners in establishing hubs throughout the region following best practice. Opportunities should also be sought to implement these options in existing high-density developments. All developments both residential and commercial, need to develop from a presumption of access by public transport and active travel, in order to provide opportunities for all.

At a regional level, one key impact from the evident population shift in Scotland towards major cities, and of re-settlement from areas on west to areas on the east of Scotland, is that the levels of demand for transport will increase quickly across the entire SEStran area, impacting on transport system capacity. These trends in population movement are anticipated to continue for the next 20 or so years

In a period where rapid decarbonisation of transport is required, yet the demands for transport are increasing, strategic decisions around sustainable infrastructure investment need to be taken a regional level, to ensure objective assessment of different infrastructure and other transport investments - thus supporting overall positive outcomes across an entire region, rather than locally positive changes that have negative consequence in neighbouring areas. This is particularly relevant to the provision and standardisation of EV charging infrastructure, with opportunities to support existing re-fuelling businesses to provide for the transition to EVs and support a behaviour that is prevalent in favour of widespread neighbourhood charging locations.

Regional co-ordination of transport development and delivery is the most effective way to ensure a high level, objective approach across expanding 'travel to work' areas, during a time critical time window for achieving Scotland's Climate Change (Emissions) Act 2019 targets. The need to formally strengthen the link between RTPs Regional Transport Strategies (Statutory), and local development planning and Regional Spatial Strategies development is also time sensitive.

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

As with many areas within the United Kingdom there is continued evidence of a desire for home ownership. In Scotland in 2017, owner occupier and buying with a mortgage represented 63% of all households⁵. What this figure expresses in terms of type of home is harder to determine. In the United Kingdom there is an 80% bias for houses rather than flats for all tenure types. There remains a desire for those with family to seek housing that provides space for play and leisure in a safe environment. This continues to work against the need for higher density living when population trends continue towards urban living. This pressure is compounded by the increasing trend of smaller households, putting further demand on the stock required per head of population.

⁵ [UK Housing Review 2019](#)

As discussed in the previous question, more green and blue infrastructure in developments and towns provide a multiplicity of benefits as expressed in the 2011 guidance documents, some of which would address the social desire for safe spaces for play and leisure. Currently there remains a desire to maximise brownfield sites for development to reduce urban sprawl, but the resultant effects often mean a less attractive location with higher living concentrations and associated externalities. Often where there is a desire to utilise a brownfield site, full consideration is not given to the wider impacts on utility demand and public services through increased density. Where a brownfield site becomes available options should be explored for green and blue infrastructures, which provide greater opportunities for permeability in towns and places to rest, enhancing the accessibility of our communities, and opportunities for carbon capture.

New settlement areas provide the opportunity for greater wholistic planning across all directorates, however while they can provide for housing, healthcare and education, there is less influence on employment to reduce the need to travel. Additionally, connections between settlements are not often planned in advance resulting in further reliance on private cars. Greater sustainable transport provision needs to be implemented prior to the completion of developments to enable communities to access services with more travel choices. In order to facilitate this, there needs to be greater Regional governance by statute, and alignment of strategic plans across policy.

3. What does planning need to do to enable development and investment in our economy so that it benefits everyone?

To be effective, the planning system must be capable of dealing not only with land use but with the broader social, environmental and economic aspects of urban ecosystems and strike a balance, in which the development needs are met in the most sustainable way. In addition, successful urban revitalisation needs an integrated long-term strategy that includes measures related to several policy areas such as mobility, housing, cultural heritage, start-up support. This can be achieved through effective, regional governance of these policy areas.

There is clear evidence that a lack of accessibility to transport options has a limiting effect on opportunities and that those who are least skilled, or remote from the labour market have the least location flexibility in seeking new job or training opportunities. Therefore, SEStran views transport and accessibility/affordability of transport as integral to an inclusive economy. The links between transport, health and employability are complex but it is clear from academic evidence that mental and physical health are negatively affected if an individual is not able to participate fully in society, and a lack of transport options can be a contributory factor. Active travel, however, could be part of the solution in breaking down such barriers.

In supporting the ambitions of the new National Transport Strategy, existing road infrastructure must be optimised for the use of sustainable transport modes, creating a viable option for mode shift. This could be achieved by consideration for more bus only routes to address congestion on strategic movement corridors. Further opportunities from this prioritisation would arise for autonomous bus use along such routes, drawing lessons from the forthcoming Project CAV

Forth⁶. Critically these supporting infrastructures need to make connections with transport hubs including access to airports, to facilitate public transport and active travel, ensuring connections from all surrounding areas.

In recognition of the gateway role to the South East of Scotland, the SEStran region is home to a large concentration of freight operations. A detailed assessment of the necessary infrastructure, operational financial and contractual requirements needs to be undertaken to ensure buy-in and commitment to a sustainable freight strategy. It must be linked to policy development at a local, regional and national level whilst sustaining economic activity.

NTS2 recognises the importance of freight to the success of Scotland's economy, but also urges to ensure that the negative impacts generated by the movement of goods vehicles are addressed "The freight sector will have to respond to the increasing need to decarbonise through the use of new technologies and business models, as well as adapting to changing demands of consumers." Planning decisions nationally need to support opportunities to maximise freight by modes other than road, while at regional and local levels freight hubs on the periphery can service towns and cities with ULEVs and e-cargo bikes.

To aid the transition of freight from reliance on road transport, opportunities should be sought to optimise sea transport where practical. Planning decisions to reduce congestion around ports would make this option more attractive to operators and allow for action on tackling emissions in these areas.

SEStran through its partnership in the INTERREG SURFLOGH⁷ programme has shared learning from other EU nations and direct experience in Edinburgh supporting first and last mile delivery through the use of cargo bikes and urban consolidations centres (UCCs). Planning decisions will require mixed use developments to facilitate such freight hubs and consolidation points in strategic locations around cities and towns.

Regional Transport Partnerships provide the necessary framework to ensure adequate investment into public transport provision, intermodal hub development and other regional transport investment decisions that support sustainable movement in the region.

Without Regional coordination of interventions there is a significant risk of poor connectivity between neighbouring local infrastructure investments or overreliance of car / road use. This could potentially constrain economic productivity across city regions and around key NPF4 development sites.

Local Development Plans and Regional Spatial Strategies should be required to demonstrate how they reflect and help to achieve the aims and outcomes outlined in Scotland's seven Regional Transport Strategies - which provide the framework for all sub regional transport policies, plans or interventions across Scotland.

⁶ [CAV Forth](#)

⁷ [INTERREG SURFLOGH](#)

4. What policies are needed to improve, protect and strengthen the special character of our places?

In 2017, 40% of dwellings fell below the Scottish housing Quality standard and, while this marks a near 30% improvement over 15 years, it continues to highlight that there are inequalities in the places where people live. Of particular note is that almost 9000 homes were deemed to be not healthy, safe or secure. This represents more than half of all housing completions in Scotland for that year (UK housing review 2019). While this represents a clear shortage of quality housing, the continued delivery of housing that takes no cognisance of historical design weakens the character and heritage of our places.

For a number of years, the Scottish Government has had the ambition to integrate policy across portfolios to best utilise investment and produce a holistic and integrated solution. SEStran would continue to advocate for this approach but to date there has not been a suitable framework to act on. Effective, statutory regional governance can elicit collaboration from multiple local authorities across a spectrum of policy areas. If such bodies are fully resourced, they can add capacity to their respective regional areas in the direct delivery of initiatives to address gaps on the policy fringe. Examples of joined up policy can arise from innovative flood prevention schemes where infrastructure enhances public realm for places to dwell, places to play, provision of safe walk and cycling routes, and enhancing biodiversity which could easily be replicated in Scotland.⁸

5. What infrastructure do we need to build to realise our long term aspirations?

The different categories of infrastructure all have a role to play with respect to the identified drivers. However, it must be reiterated that good quality transport provision is fundamental to support all of these categories: the built environment of housing; public infrastructure such as education, health, justice and cultural facilities; safety enhancement such as waste management or flood prevention; and public services such as emergency services and resilience. This is because all these categories require people, goods and services to move freely to enable the delivery of their services. Therefore, a balanced approach is required which should reflect the importance of investment in transport infrastructure that delivers low carbon solutions to promote economic growth and the other key overall objectives.

⁸ [Aarhus Surface Water Project](#)