

Central Chapter NPF4 Workshop

27 February 2020, Falkirk Business Hub, Falkirk

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Background and Attendance

This event was organised as part of a series of NPF4 events with RTPI Scotland Chapters organised for Scottish Government across Scotland in early 2020. The purpose of each two hour event was to give planning professionals an opportunity to voice their suggestions for National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) in a workshop setting, as well as discuss the issues and challenges in taking these ideas forward. This allowed Scottish Government to gather professionals' views to support them as they draft NPF4. Representatives from Scottish Government Planning and Architecture were on hand to outline the background, timeline and main goals of NPF4, and answer any questions.

Participants took part in facilitated discussions, having been asked to come up with a policy or project for NPF4 that would contribute to achieving Scotland's becoming a zero carbon society by 2045. These policies or projects were fit under the theme of People, Work or Place. Presentation of ideas, discussion and voting followed, to pick the 'best' project – judged on innovation, effectiveness and deliverability.

The Central NPF4 Chapter event had 21 participants from a range of professional backgrounds. The main ideas generated are discussed below:

People

Group 1 – Town centres first for salvation of the world

- The role of the town centre has diminished so this group focussed on the potential of town centres and their contribution to cultural life
- NPF4 should include strict policy wording in relation to out of town developments to bring both people and economy back to the town centre
- E.g. Falkirk college could and 'should' have been built in the centre of town but instead it was developed between an industrial park and the outskirts

This was the 'winning' idea in the world cup. Positives include:

- It reduces social isolation by making town centres busier
- Allows for congregation opportunities meaning towns are more welcoming
- Challenges include that there would be noise/air pollution impacts and perhaps a lack of quality open space



Group 2 – Low carbon investment area

- Focused on CSGN (Central Scotland Green Network) and the Grangemouth & Falkirk investment zone
- Looked into ensuring a just transition into a low carbon investment area (i.e. how to promote low carbon within this development)
- This energy intensive area would be made a national priority within NPF4

Positives include:

- Creating jobs and investing in people
- Creating a sense of place with CSGN
- Creating a more resilient energy network
- Reducing risk of Grangemouth hazard
- Creating tourism and supporting Scottish Planning Authorities

Work

Group 3 – Transport problems and energy opportunities

- Transport causes emissions, congestion and inefficiency – all of which are part of the climate emergency problem
- This group focussed on the net zero carbon goal and how energy could be honed in on to achieve this
- NPF would act as an enabler for local authorities to be 'given teeth' to set their own achievable energy goals and supply their own energy by local power generation
- This would allow for local authorities to push for cultural change by understanding their energy use and limiting wasteful behaviour as a result
- Developers would have to use micro-renewables on site or pay a sum of money towards an energy source for the area in order to enforce a 'polluter pays' practice
- Suggestions within this included heat networks and energy storage

Positives include:

- Local solutions
- Lower transmission
- Encouraging a switch to alternative sources

Challenges include:

- Developer apathy
- Lack of resources
- Local priorities

Group 4 – Low carbon investment area (this was a joint idea with Group 2)

Place

Group 5 – Zero carbon place

- This idea was created with the intention to think local and create a zero carbon place with various different elements
- New developments would have to submit a carbon statement with their planning application and would be given an energy score → NPF4 would make this a policy





- Housing units with electric car points
- National fund for tree planting
- Have higher standards for new builds and encourage renting
- Free public transport
- Better rail connections, including strategic town/city links and home to work connections
- Work hubs in different areas
- Make green belt policy more flexible

Positives include:

- Air quality improvement through carbon capture
- Heat networks are a regional solution
- Employment opportunities for the longer term

Challenges include:

- May not be financially viable
- Reduces energy choice

Group 6 – Flooded with ideas

- This group focused on flooding and the methods of protection, prevention and adaptation
- They talked about how there should be a much greater focus on the value of land as a resource to hold and slow the flow of water
- They wanted more radical and ambitious upper catchment schemes to slow water down at the source, e.g. planting trees and rewilding, as well as defence for infrastructure and housing from flooding, pumped hydro storage, research into identifying locations for reservoirs and a potential land/roof tax to fund flood defences and infrastructure
- They wanted there to be designated land to implement these ideas and for flood risk to drive land allocation
- More national research is needed to support and implement this
- In terms of the urban situation, there should be smaller scale sites in flood management as well as better integration between flood risk management plans, Local Development Plans and Regional Spatial Strategies.

Positives include:

- Flood defence schemes tie into existing national developments and biodiversity/wellbeing goals
- Attractive to place-making perspectives (people love water)
- It can be done now

Challenges include:

- We are in an era of budget pressures and this idea would have considerable cost
- Functional conflict with our weather
- A robust policy framework is needed to support goals yet nearly all development is privately led
- Using agricultural land for flood prevention/protection may cause conflict

