

Question 1

What development will we need to address climate change?

Climate change, its causes, mitigation and adaptation is a complex issue which requires a complex considered response. A tendency towards a carbon & greenhouse gas only, siloed approach, risks trading off valuable ecosystems and habitats for carbon capture. We should consider that it is also an ecological/biodiversity crisis and our solutions for one should not exacerbate the other.

This emphasises the need for cooperation between government departments and unified policy response from government. Some of the potential solutions have negative impacts especially if they are not implemented with sensitivity and balance. There needs to be equity in sharing the burden of developments like renewable energy and commercial forestry across all the regions of Scotland

One of the central avenues for tackling climate change is land use and land use change. Land use will increase in pace over the coming years both as a response to climate change and because of climate change itself. This change will have potential big impacts on Biodiversity, communities, infrastructure and local economies, change needs to be planned and managed in order to achieve benefits rather than negative outcomes. Change should not be left to market forces.

A balanced approach is needed, both geographically and spatially, to renewable energy and commercial forestry as a response to climate change. The capacity of regions must not be exceeded in terms of unintended negative impacts on landscape, biodiversity, infrastructure and communities, focus must be on achieving equitable outcomes with multiple benefits. Developments need to add value to the region through, for example, increased tourism investment in response to biodiversity gain, increased access, growth and skills and training opportunities.

Local authorities' ability to achieve these outcomes is much reduced as diminishing resources have led to reduced expertise to engage with the planning consultation process.

The role out of new policy areas needs to ensure careful consideration and where necessary on the ground testing to ensure we avoid unintended consequences. Policy makers need the flexibility to quickly react and change policy as soon as any negative consequences are identified

Greater emphasis needs to be put on the principle of the 'polluter pays' but being very careful of concepts such as 'offsetting' (within strict parameters).

Through the concept of land use planning tree planting should not be seen as the only solution to climate change. A rigorous approach is required in applying the principle of 'Right tree in the right place for the right reason.'

The planning system should be a vehicle to achieve 'Biodiversity/Environmental net gain', emphasis should also be put on valuing multiple benefits from interventions and developments. Green infrastructure is an important tool to combat the impacts of climate

change and help people adapt to or to mitigate the adverse effects of climate change. The multi-functionality of green infrastructure is key to this. The Green Infrastructure objective should therefore be bolder and more robust, setting out a requirement for green infrastructure as part of all development rather than aspirational, promoting it as a component of place-making.

Support should be encouraged for development of the sustainable 'green economy' and nature-based solutions should be our first choice.

Planning policy should favour and promote the circular economy, reducing resources consumption with positive impacts on the environments communities and the economy

Going forward we need to address land use but in conjunction with the use of our seas. It is vital that the relationship between terrestrial and marine planning is fully integrated - NPF4, LDP, Regional Land Use Framework (and their associated partnership) and National and Regional Marine plans (and the Regional Marine Planning Partnerships). The ability of our seas to both sequester and store carbon is greater than our land, yet land use and developments often have impacts well beyond our shores.

Question 2

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

Dumfries and Galloway has a high-quality natural environment and our natural and cultural landscapes are vital for our quality of life, sense of well-being (both physical and mental) and economy. The natural environment underpins our existing economy through tourism and our land-based industry sectors.

Planning policy must continue to strengthen support for new development that conserves and enhances these benefits while creating new opportunities for innovation and sustainable economic development.

Through NPF4 planning can help protect and support the enhancement of sustainable access for residents and visitors to our region. Good quality and well managed green infrastructure and access to nature can be provided through robust green/blue networks connecting open space within settlements to core paths and wider access routes. The value and importance of the existing network has been demonstrated during the recent Covid-19 restrictions. More rural locations, especially in intensive agricultural areas, also need safe access opportunities to the wider green/blue network and this should be considered in any new development in the countryside. A strengthened and supported path/cycle path network will assist the move away from reliance on vehicles towards a healthier alternative, and planning policy should prioritise green and healthy travel options.

Achieving health and well-being and quality of life outcomes requires a collective approach. NPF4 should recognise and promote the need for planning to work collaboratively with key agencies and partners in health and social care, education, infrastructure provision, the environment and transport. Land based industry and landowners also have a role to play,

with Forestry (public and private) and farmland being key opportunities in developing green (and habitat) networks.

Cultural and local identity is also important to our quality of life and planning policy must continue protection and support for the historic environment.

Health and well-being are a national priority, therefore delivery through NPF4 and other national strategies needs to reference outcomes that are measurable and monitored.

Question 3

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

NPF4 provides an opportunity to ensure that there is more balanced and holistic approach to economic development and the benefits are more evenly spread across the population.

Planning should be the basis for guiding sustainable economic development and recognise equal importance to rural and urban Scotland.

Economic investment should be planned in a sustainable manner, which takes full account of the need to maximise positive environmental and social impacts and minimise negative impacts.

The south of Scotland is primarily a rural region and Dumfries and Galloway relies on a number of key rural industries, including agriculture, food & drink, forestry, tourism and renewable energy. Underpinning these industries is the region's natural capital which is fundamental to its continuing prosperity and growth. However, climate change is creating uncertainty. Extreme weather events are happening more often causing flooding, erosion and drought resulting in economic and social disruption, making longer term planning more unpredictable. The development of the Regional Spatial Strategy covering Dumfries and Galloway and Borders Council areas recognises that there is a requirement to plan over large areas, not confined by administrative boundaries, and ensure that resilience is built into any new developments to adapt to future climates.

The implementation of the Land Use Strategy and the establishment of Land Use Partnerships needs to be integrated into NPF4. The relationship between the Local Development Plan and Land Use Frameworks needs to be formalised and integrated into planning. This will be important to guide new developments and understand their effects at a landscape scale.

NPF4 needs to recognise the reliance on Natural Capital and the impact we have on it through policy and legislation.

Borderlands Inclusive Growth deal has a Natural Capital strand which has the potential to deliver real benefits to the south of Scotland .

Natural Capital is key to helping to deliver net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. An integrated, holistic Natural Capital systems based approach which combines top down

coordination with local delivery is critical in ensuring that targets and nature based interventions are designed in way that

- i) maximises the maintenance and enhancement of natural assets and the full range of ecosystem services that flow from them, including health and wellbeing benefits;
- ii) minimises costs; and
- iii) properly considers trade-offs.

NPF4 should contribute to the following outcomes:

- Healthy habitats, such as peatlands, native woodland, and fresh water, locking away carbon, filtering water, protecting against floods and supporting biodiversity
- Resilient green infrastructure supporting healthy and a happy community, benefiting biodiversity and strengthening the economy.
- Sustainably managed land delivering multiple benefits for people, the environment and the economy
- Healthy seas providing sustainable food and energy, locking away carbon, supporting biodiversity and tourism
- A circular economy, eliminating waste, saving natural resources and saving money

Question 4

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

Planning policy must continue to protect national designations and should also recognise and protect designations and features that are unique to each region. Regionally and locally valued landscapes are central to special character and to the sense of place of communities living within them. The Landscape Character Assessment approach to describing the particular qualities and characteristics of different landscape types is important and should be sustained and strengthened through planning policy.

The natural and historic environment underpins the special character of many of our places in Dumfries and Galloway. The value of these natural and historic attributes must be acknowledged and considered, and NPF4 should provide flexibility for Local Development Plans to recognise and support such attributes and regional/local designations, and plan proactively to ensure their potential is sustainably developed. In the natural environment this can be achieved through an ecosystem services approach.

There is a need to consider what assets will require more/future protection over next 50 years: open space, topsoil & productive farmland, hedgerows, peatland, flood plains, trees and woodlands, special character areas that are a consideration in planning but not protected (eg. Gardens & Designed Landscapes and regional landscapes).

The Climate emergency is a critical moment for nature and the environment. Nature has an essential role to play in how we reduce emissions, and how we adapt to changes which are already taking place. It is recognised that working with nature can help moderate the changing climate – and through a more stable climate, we can sustain a healthier and more

resilient environment. NPF4 policy should promote and facilitate the delivery of integrated climate change plans and catchment-scale approaches to environmental protection, flooding etc. using nature-based solutions as much as possible. It also provides an opportunity to consider the introduction of Biodiversity/Environment Net Gain approach (within strict parameters) for new development.

Question 4

What infrastructure do we need

In order to fully evaluate our climate change mitigation, we need to understand the impact our actions have on our stores of Natural Capital. We need comprehensive and up to date baseline Natural Capital data so we understand where we are starting from and can monitor progress.

A healthy and thriving natural environment, giving multiple benefits to our communities is vital to our future. However, this environment needs support to improve, needs to be managed and monitored going forward, our development process should facilitate this.

As land use is clearly an important tool to tackle climate change we need to implement and adequately resource Regional Land Use Partnerships and their actions on the ground.

NPF4 should reinforce investment in Green Infrastructure as explained in previous answers. Investment in access to nature for mental and physical health and well-being, supporting environmental education is key, in rural areas as well as urban. For example, the proposed South West Scotland Coast Path.