

## **National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) – EIF submission**

### **Introduction**

The Edinburgh International Festival (EIF) welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Scottish Government's Call for Ideas on the National Planning Framework 4. EIF is the world's leading multi-genre arts festival; each year since 1947, Scotland's capital has hosted an unparalleled celebration of the performing arts which is an annual meeting point for people of all nations. Our impact extends beyond the annual Festival programme to our extensive community learning and engagement activity, as well as professional development programmes which run throughout the year. These reach the widest possible audiences and contribute to the cultural and social life of Edinburgh, Scotland, the UK and beyond.

Ensuring that Scotland's planning policy brings about material changes that will sustain the breadth, vision and ambition of events like the International Festival is essential if our country – and Edinburgh in particular – are to remain the world's preeminent hub for the performing arts. We present below comments for consideration in the Call for Views and we will look forward to further opportunities to contribute to the broader discussions about the role that effective planning policy could play in assisting the Scottish Government to achieve its vision of Scotland as a nation where culture is valued, protected and nurtured.

### **Planning for 2050**

Developing a planning system which supports the delivery of high-quality places must do so while supporting wider objectives such as the achievement of a sustainable economy, net zero carbon emissions and tackling inequality. Planning policy can also powerfully influence our creative economy by putting in place the right infrastructure, developments and built environment that can support the cultural sector to both flourish and contribute towards those objectives in its own right.

That is why EIF is keen to participate in the discussion around the development of NPF4 and to ensure that culture is embedded within planning policy in a way which recognises its significant social, civic and economic benefit to Scotland. Including clearer commitments on the value of culture and how it should be considered within national – and, by extension – local planning policy, will only serve to strengthen the sector's capacity to deliver services and improve wellbeing, as well as the simple pleasure and enjoyment of engagement with the arts for both participants and audiences alike.

Clearly, the present Coronavirus pandemic has made economic forecasting and predictions over what our future economy should look like even more challenging. It is uncertain what socio-political structure will emerge once the pandemic recedes and to what extent we should return to (or wish to return to) normality, given the inherent inequalities and fragility of current systems. The increased use of home and remote working has emphasised the immense importance of social connections, access to green spaces, opportunities for cultural engagement – as opposed to virtual connectivity which cannot sufficiently fulfil our innate need for physical, lived and 'real' interactions. While

these are extreme circumstances, the lack of options for many people has been brought into sharp focus as a result of the pandemic.

If we are to see an increased reliance on remote working with the potential of fewer opportunities for social interaction, it is essential that our communities – whether in towns or cities, rural or urban – genuinely support people by making available spaces to meet and enjoy a high-quality cultural life. That is why well-designed communities and developments, which have in mind facilities and amenities which contribute positively to quality of life, are essential. Cultural spaces, access to those spaces, and how our built environment works to enable the practical business functions of cultural practitioners, should be an important consideration for developers and local authorities to ensure that local plans genuinely serve that purpose.

## **EIF responses to themed questions**

### **Climate: What development will we need to address climate change?**

EIF's business plan commits us to making changes to how we operate in order to reduce our carbon emissions and to protect our environment. For Scotland's creative industries, and the festivals sector in particular, to play our part in achieving net zero emissions by 2045, it is essential that sustainable alternatives are available both with respect to the business, management and delivery of the festival and for the people who wish to travel to or within Scotland and the UK. This will mean better connectivity in terms of infrastructure, to allow people to choose more environmentally friendly travel solutions, such as rail and ferries. These must also be integrated both within UK infrastructure and with adequate links to and from EU terminals which will make these genuinely viable options for people who wish to visit Edinburgh, whilst simultaneously minimising the time spent in transit.

Clearly, reducing our carbon emissions will be a challenge for an international festival which involves the movement of artists, companies, instruments, sets, and audiences from around the world, as well as locally within and around Edinburgh. Nevertheless, we are determined to play our part and would welcome discussion on how bringing about positive change can be realised while maintaining the operational capacity of the Festival and without compromising on the excellence for which the Festival is internationally renowned.

City infrastructure which is designed with active travel in mind and which is intuitive for both residents of the city, and its visitors who may be unfamiliar with the layout, is essential if we want people to make the right choices when it comes to deciding on what mode of transport to use. These considerations are essential during the festival period, particularly in our busy city centre and with the added complexity of the architecture and layout of the Old and New Towns. EIF is also, however, continually expanding our reach across the whole of the city and a connected, integrated transport network which is environmentally friendly, safe and affordable is critical if we are to enable people from all social and economic backgrounds to fully participate and feel included.

**People:      How can planning best support out quality of life, health and wellbeing in the future?**

There is a growing body of work which asserts to the health and wellbeing impact of engaging with culture, either as a participant or as a consumer. This has been especially strongly noted amongst older people<sup>12</sup> and this is of particularly importance given Scotland's ageing population. These benefits significantly complement strategies across local and national government, most notably the Scottish Government's Culture Strategy for Scotland, which notes that:

*"Culture improves places for individuals and communities. It plays a key role in maintaining good mental health and wellbeing and it has been shown to reduce levels of social isolation, strengthen social networks and increase self-confidence and resilience. It can support good health and wellbeing for all ages."<sup>3</sup>*

The publication of the Scottish Government's Culture Strategy has at its heart a vision of the role of culture in positively affecting wellbeing. It is within the context of that strategy that the emerging NPF4 should transform how culture is considered within planning policy and how it is able to support wider public policy outcomes.

If we are determined to capitalise on the acknowledged benefits of cultural engagement, it is essential that policies adequately reflect this and appropriately compel officials to include the creative industries into early planning of service provision. Experience has consistently shown that, without an explicit compulsion to do so, the challenge for sectors such as those in the creative industries to engage across local and national government portfolios or departments is extremely challenging. Indeed, the Culture Strategy includes the aim of placing culture as a central consideration across all policy areas. EIF stands ready to support the Scottish Government in forming a clearer picture of how planning and cultural services can more effectively support its objectives with respect to wider policy outcomes like health and wellbeing.

For those living in less affluent neighbourhoods or where there is less immediate access to cultural services, the necessity of effective planning to ensure they can also benefit from these recognised impacts, is particularly important. EIF already undertakes significant outreach work with communities across Edinburgh on a year-round basis. This activity serves not only to increase participation in, and awareness of, culture and the arts – it also provides a powerful connection for vulnerable, lonely and isolated people from a variety of backgrounds who may not otherwise have the means or opportunity to meet.

At the start of this year, EIF commissioned Morrison Hargreaves McIntyre to create an evaluation framework for its activities. This will include an analysis of our learning and engagement work to allow us to add quantitatively to the existing feedback from service participants on the positive outcomes of our programmes and how these activities lead to improved feelings of wellbeing and connectedness.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.culturehealthandwellbeing.org.uk/appg-inquiry/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.ageuk.org.uk/our-impact/policy-research/wellbeing-research/creative-wellbeing/>

<sup>3</sup> A Culture Strategy for Scotland, P.35

## **Work – What does planning need to do to enable an economy that benefits everyone?**

It is positive that cultural facilities, culture and arts are present within the core themes of 'People, Work and Place'. It is essential, however, that this translates at a practical level to culture being an active consideration for local authorities with regard to planning. The optimal means of securing this would be to identify cultural provision as a necessary and required duty for councils within their local development plans. Furthermore, communities should be at the heart of decision making around how land in their area is used and ensuring that developments work with and for them, with local benefit being a primary objective.

The creative industries are acknowledged as a growth sector for the Scottish and UK economies. Culture adds substantially to economic growth and prosperity, with the festivals in Edinburgh alone adding £280 million to the local economy<sup>4</sup>. The importance of our sector is reflected in the widespread understanding of the creative industries as a growth area for the Scottish and UK economies. Strategies from the Scottish and UK Governments and leaders within the private sector<sup>5</sup> have clearly identified culture and our creative industries (of which the festivals are a sub-sector) as being the potential powerhouses of our future economy. This will not simply happen on its own, however; it will require sustained investment at all levels of government, both directly and indirectly through the levers which can determine the extent of our success in the years ahead.

If this past success is to continue, our built environment and the infrastructure necessary to power that economy must be in place. While councils can adopt positive strategies, this is not being done fast enough or to a degree that will either support growth in our sector or the full extent of growth that some have predicted may be achievable within the creative industries. The unique mix of skills within our sector and the demand from the public who consume what we produce mean that there is a resilience to the creative industries that is unique within the economy, not to mention the benefits to the country as a whole from the 'soft power' impact from a developed creative sector. This is all the more urgent in the context of the coronavirus outbreak, which will demand urgent planning across a range of timescales to ensure that Edinburgh is ready, when the time eventually comes and it is appropriate to do so, to confidently open its doors and once again welcome the many visitors to our city.

As the Scottish Government's culture strategy has stated, culture is something which should be valued in and of itself. There is, however, a broader acknowledgment that culture is "central to the future wellbeing and prosperity of Scotland", whether culturally, socially, economically or environmentally. Reflecting how cultural engagement and the arts reaches across multiple areas of public policy must therefore be adequately reflected in NPF4 if the vision of how Scotland should look like in 2050 is to be realised, let alone one which reflects the wishes of the people, serves their best interests and facilitates a positive contribution towards global sustainability and equality goals.

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<sup>4</sup> <https://bit.ly/3bo1m0t>

<sup>5</sup> [UK Government Industrial Strategy](#); [Scottish Government Creative Industry Policy](#); [Bank of England](#)

EIF is in the process of engaging with CEC on their Choices for City Plan 2030 consultation. While it is positive that the Plan includes culture, we have reflected in our response that the scale of this is not sufficient to reflect or respond to the cultural, social, economic or political ambitions of the city or, indeed, the ambitions of the Scottish Government's own Culture Strategy with respect to taking a more integrated approach to culture.

Local planning policy needs to fully embrace the multitude of ways in which culture complements growth within communities. Failing to do so means there is a risk that – even with localities like Edinburgh where cultural events are part of the fabric of the city and civic identity – we do not adequately design and deliver local authority planning policy in a way that ensures our communities have the capacity to secure long-term, sustainable livelihoods. That is why EIF considers that it is so essential for there to be a greater alignment of NPF4 and the vision and ambitions of the Scottish Government's Culture Strategy.

### **Place – How can planning improve and strengthen the special character of our places?**

Similar to our points above, land which is typically designated as 'vacant and derelict' tends to have been identified as such due to either failing business models or ineffective planning and assumptions based on economic forecasting which ultimately lead to property lying underused, if at all. Communities often have a strong sense of what land in their area could be used for and how this might serve them, from the availability of green spaces, supporting the emergence and growth of social enterprises or exploring cultural and heritage developments which have been used to good effect across Scotland as hubs for a wider, more holistic redevelopment and regeneration that is ultimately rooted in the needs, wishes and interests of the surrounding community. As noted throughout our response, EIF is keen to encourage the Government to adopt a requirement in the new Framework with respect to cultural provision. This would have the positive effect of ensuring that access to culture would be a necessary consideration for the development and management of community places in the same way as is currently required with, for example, amenities and green spaces.

Councils should also have a role of seeking to act in the spirit of such a measure rather than simply working to the minimum duties as required. Our places and spaces require a step change in how they are constructed and managed, which is why we would further encourage the Scottish Government and local authorities to adopt an expansive view of their capacity to bring about positive change for their communities. A place-based approach to local planning that is inclusive, integrated, and puts the needs of individual communities more to the fore would see social, cultural and environmental impacts put on an equal footing with economic benefit, irrespective of whether councils were simply compelled to do so by national priorities – these should be done because it is fundamentally the right thing to do and delivers real and positive outcomes for communities.

**Delivery: What infrastructure do we need to plan to realise our long-term aspirations?**

EIF considers that the purpose of the NPF should be on outcomes first, rather than assumptions on 'infrastructure first', starting with what will deliver and support the ambitions set out above. Infrastructure alone will not reduce emissions, for example expanding capacity on motorways and existing road networks, however, the right infrastructure which connects more sustainable travel choices will actively support reduced emissions.

Similarly, our economy should be designed around businesses which support and are compatible with the delivery of the high-level goals of the NPF and the Scottish Government's National Performance Framework and UN Sustainable Development Goals, with a priority on equality and human rights. Working towards a sustainable and circular economy will ensure we have a more robust social structure generally and, most importantly, at times of crisis as we are seeing in the current moment. The planning needs to support that must be consistent with wider strategies which are testament to the capacity of areas such as our cultural economy to profoundly and positively support the achievement of our shared ambitions.