

Young Planners NPF4 Roundtable 2 – Climate Change

6 August 2020

This event was organised as part of a wider engagement programme undertaken by RTPI Scotland and commissioned by the Scottish Government for the National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4). The four young planner roundtables aimed to engage planners in the first ten years of their career and enable them to provide new thinking and ideas for the new NPF.

Context

This session was based on climate change and was 'kick-started' by Diarmaid Lawlor to initiate creative thinking on the topic and challenge and expand the ideas from the young planners during the discussion. Craig McLaren provided an overview of important changes to the National Planning Framework format and content.

Kick-starter Introduction

- Covid brought new geographies of disadvantage so we need a three dimension strategy to create resilience – place, inclusive growth and low carbon. You cannot divorce the three so NPF4 needs to bring a system transformation.
- It also highlighted the demand for immediate resources and purchasing dependability on food and our economic development system, which in turn highlights our dependencies on other factors such as energy, transport and local resources. Climate change is caused by a demand on resources.

Place Principle

- NPF4 should enshrine the place principle. At present, the place principle has not been monitored or enforced but Covid has highlighted the importance of our local surroundings and sense of place.
- Having legal footing will help enforce this as it makes the place principle visible to parallel investment opportunities and provides an opportunity to rethink developer contributions. However, scale needs to be considered and NPF4 needs to include visibility on the requirements that need to be met with the place principle in place.

Urban Design

- Covid has created a need for better urban design as the outside spaces we have been using for social gatherings and daily exercise have been relatively badly maintained which means NPF4 should have a prioritising of development.
- Outside space links closely to the resilience of the population's health; housing estates must be part of an investment network to join it with surrounding greenspaces; more people are working from home therefore there are changes to space utilisation. NPF4 should take a place based approach and encourage discussions between designers and developers.

- NPF4 should create strategic allocation of developments and take a strong approach to low carbon buildings, community and places.

Food and Planning

- Hydroponics - creating a land use change in an area that provides social/community aspects.
- Vertical farming – brings food into the centre of town, can reuse existing buildings and create jobs/employment for people.
- Community kitchens – creating a new form of public space to gather people together.
- These type of developments should be featured in NPF4 to create community cohesion, utilise vacant & derelict land and instil a healthy understanding of food and its associated systems.

Energy

- NPF4 needs to take a localised approach to energy distribution and generation, i.e. look at the demand in the area and assess how the local assets can meet this demand. Disused sites could be used for storage and generation of energy. A good example is the Nerve Centre project in the Highlands¹, which uses its wind farm energy to put back into the local energy grid and capitalises on the community benefit.
- It is important that the community should see how their area is contributing to the national net zero carbon goal as currently, the success of national scale targets are not really shown on a local level. Many areas often do not see or enjoy the benefits of their local energy source. Future planning statements should therefore show how developments fit within the community and how they benefit from it.
- Developers need to work with local authorities to maximise the local community benefits e.g. reduced bills, using local businesses, creating jobs. Developer contributions would be required or structured. NPF4 should have a requirement for collaborative working between the energy sector and the community.

Transport

- NPF4 should prioritise creating better connections between settlements to reduce travel time and transport. This could be in the form of an active travel network or a 20-minute neighbourhood initiative.
- NPF4 should re-profile the geography of work by creating a national network of community hubs or digital studios that allow immersive work to take place.

Big Ideas from roundtable:

- NPF4 should enshrine the place principle.
- NPF4 should take a place-based, sustainable approach to development.
- Feature food planning developments in NPF4.
- NPF4 should take a localised approach to energy distribution and generation and ensure it benefits the community.
- NPF4 should create an active travel network throughout Scotland.

¹ <https://www.beatricewind.com/>