

Regional Spatial Strategies (RSS) – a summary update November 2020

Background

The Planning (Scotland) Act 2019, establishes a duty for a planning authority, or authorities acting jointly, to prepare and adopt a regional spatial strategy.

Regional Spatial Strategies (RSS) will be long-term spatial strategies which specify the area/s to which they relate, and identify:

- the need for strategic development
- the outcomes to which strategic development will contribute
- priorities for the delivery of strategic development
- proposed locations, shown in the form of a map or diagram

The new arrangements for strategic planning allow planning authorities to develop a tailored approach to strategic planning for their area that best reflects their situation.

In the future, Scottish Ministers will have regard to adopted RSS in the preparation, revision or amendment of the National Planning Framework. Planning authorities must also have regard to them in the preparation of local development plans.

The timescale to produce a draft National Planning Framework (NPF4) presented an opportunity to develop indicative RSS (iRSS) ahead of the new statutory duty coming into force so that initial priorities can be built into NPF4 which will comprise part of the statutory development plan.

RSS groupings have been voluntary, self-assembled and flexible around bespoke requirements of particular areas. Some have based their approach on established ways of regional working, whilst for others this has required new arrangements. In all cases, engagement in developing iRSS has progressed through collaboration and partnership working which is helping to inform the development of the draft NPF4.

Progress

Following an introductory launch event in Stirling on 2 October 2019, authorities (individually or in groupings) have been taking forward early thinking on the development of their indicative Regional Spatial Strategies (iRSS).

An online support package has been facilitated with a series of outputs being made available as a learning resource to planning authorities on a forum on the Heads of Planning Scotland (HOPS) Knowledge Hub. This programme of activity has assisted the preparation of initial iRSS submissions that were provided in September 2020.

A summary of iRSS submissions has been published alongside the NPF4 Position Statement. The summary describes exploratory work in progress and gives an idea of emerging themes and priorities from indicative RSS (iRSS) that have been prepared to date.

Summaries are set out in a way that allows a degree of consistent 'read-across' between the diverse submissions and contained within each are links to a larger

format spatial strategy diagram and a short video presentation. The summary also notes the participating authorities in each of iRSS grouping and further information about each iRSS is available from the authority / grouping.

Next steps

The iRSS submissions provide a basis to start to think about how they collectively help to inform the development of a national spatial strategy. Work is therefore currently underway (as at November 2020) to translate the various, diverse iRSS submissions into an integrated, consistent mapping that provides a national overview of the various strategy diagrams.

The finalised iRSS submissions will inform the preparation of the Draft NPF4 that will be prepared over the summer and laid in Parliament in autumn 2021, following which there will be a period of formal consultation.

In tandem with this, lessons learned from engaging in this collaborative process will help to shape the preparation of statutory guidance which will be consulted on in autumn 2021 with the aim of enacting the Duty in spring/summer of 2022.

Q&A (as at November 2020)

We have submitted an iRSS, why is there a need for a further submission?

The iRSS submission in September 2020 allowed a chance to develop a baseline understanding; both in terms of helping to form a national overview, but also in enabling those for who this is a new area of activity to make some early progress. This has been valuable in helping to inform the NPF4 Position Statement.

Having completed this, there is now an opportunity to reflect on collective learning and to take account of wider public and stakeholder engagement along with feedback about how the early submissions are aligning with wider policy interests. Regional groupings may also wish to revisit their approach to reflect the wider objectives of the Position Statement.

The further submission by the end of April 2021 will help to inform the preparation of the draft NPF4 that will be laid in parliament.

Why is there a need to carry out further engagement?

Regional scale planning is a great opportunity for planning authorities to work with others to ensure spatial thinking is reflected in wider strategies and programmes, and to secure a broader perspective on strategic priorities. The early stages of developing an iRSS occurred against a backdrop of the Covid pandemic which limited the extent to which wider engagement has been possible. In many cases, the early work has allowed the opportunity to develop a baseline position that sets a basis for wider engagement with other stakeholder interests that are seeking to provide input to this process of developing the iRSS. We expect that the statutory guidance will emphasise the importance of an open and inclusive approach to preparing RSS.

How should we go about developing the iRSS?

It will be for authorities/ groupings to decide how they wish to go about developing their iRSS, to consider how and who they will engage with.

We are interested in feedback from this experience as the learning will help to inform the development of the statutory guidance which will enact the duty to prepare RSS.

Why is the SG carrying out a mapping exercise of the iRSSs?

The various iRSS submissions cover a diverse range of representation styles, with differing legends, formatting etc. Work is therefore underway to translate the various submissions into an integrated, consistent mapping that provides an indicative national overview of the various strategy diagrams that can help to inform the development of a national spatial strategy.

The SG interpretive mapping will be as accurate a reflection as possible of the original submissions, albeit that some judgement may be required in order to achieve the level of consistency that is being sought at this stage.

Is the RSS to link with major policy drivers, and what are these?

In the first instance, there has been an aim to align iRSS with major policy areas that include Strategic Transport Projects Review (STPR2), the Infrastructure Investment Plan (IIP) and Economic Development i.e. city and region growth deal proposals.

As the early work has identified, there are a range of other policy areas that RSS groupings may wish to consider and reflect in their developed iRSS. Some examples might include - Regional Land Use Partnerships, forest and woodland strategies, tourism strategies, flood management strategies that link with wider catchment areas and upland land use management. These are some of the suggestions that have been identified through the early process of preparing iRSS.

What will the SG feedback about the emerging iRSS comprise?

SG will seek to gather feedback from STPR2, IIP and Economic Development in the first instance and to make this available for the end of January 2021. The feedback is intended to assist the further refinement and development of the iRSS. The SG feedback will not be offering a judgement on the iRSS or how it should develop. How the iRSS develops is for the RSS authority/ grouping to determine.

What is the SG doing to support this further process?

The SG is considering how it can support the further development of the iRSS. An initial suggestion is to host an interim event in February 2021 and a further 'show and tell' session, towards the end of April 2021 in order to share learning and shape the development of the Statutory Guidance.

Any further support will be informed by HOPS input and will maintain the spirit of collaborative working that has been supported in the work to date.

We were asked to consider four major themes – carbon, people, work, place – but our strategy and/or projects doesn't neatly fall into these categories.

It is recognised that projects, programmes and strategies may not neatly divide into the four suggested themes and that in most cases they are influenced by, or affect,

each other. We would be keen to explore with you how this aspect of the work can be developed and represented in the joint mapping.

When will the statutory guidance be available?

It is anticipated that the statutory guidance will be in place by spring / summer 2022. An approximate timeline is that by end of April 2021 the SG will work with RSS groupings to share learning and develop a first draft of statutory guidance. This will be consulted on over the autumn / winter of 2021/22, with the final agreed in spring / summer 2022 when the Duty will be enacted.