

Item:

7



Report to Partnership Meeting of 4 April 2008

NATIONAL PLANNING FRAMEWORK FOR SCOTLAND – 2

SUMMARY

The report sets out some of the key elements contained in the Draft National Planning Framework (NPF) recently published by the Scottish Government. The NPF will be scrutinised and approved by Parliament in autumn 2008. It will provide the spatial policy for future plans and strategies prepared by Councils and Regional Transport Partnerships. It identifies the key economic development corridors and strategic transport routes where investment will be targeted. It also identifies international gateways and deep water opportunities. Nine infrastructure developments are listed as national projects which will be fast tracked through the planning system and given priority for funding. Responses must be made by 15 April.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Board is asked to respond by requesting that the west coast route from Glasgow to Western Isles (A82/A87 and ferry connections) is included as a strategic transport route. We should also request that the air service from Inverness to Heathrow and Gatwick be included in the NPF as a strategic external link. And we should request that the Inverness to Aberdeen and Perth transport corridors and the A82 Loch Lomond to Fort William be added to the national projects for priority treatment.

The importance of this document is such that a combined response requesting these changes should be made from Councils; HIE; and HITRANS. A meeting should be sought with Highlands and Islands MSPs to raise these concerns before the NPF is scrutinized in Parliament.

DETAIL

1. The first National Planning Framework was published by the Scottish Executive in 2004. It is an informal document but it has been used as background policy for development plans and planning decisions for the past 4 years. The Planning (Scotland) Act 2006 sets the Framework on a statutory footing and requires it to be reviewed every 5 years and to set out the strategic spatial policy context for decisions by the Scottish government and its agencies. It is also required to identify “National Developments” for infrastructure investment which will have a

fast track through the planning process. The National Planning Framework for Scotland 2 (NPF2) has been published as a discussion draft and a stakeholder consultation meeting was held in Inverness in February 2008. Comments on the FPF2 draft must be submitted by 15 April.

2. It identifies **key drivers of change**. The need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from transport (currently 20% of Scotland's total and growing) will require limiting car dependence and transferring freight from road to rail. It also suggests reducing the need for air travel to London and other UK centres by developing faster rail services. The decline in world oil production and the rise in oil based fuel costs will require improvements in public transport, rail and sea freight as car travel and road haulage becomes more expensive. Economic growth in the east of Scotland will require improvements to the transport infrastructure on this economic development corridor and traffic congestion will need to be eased in the central belt. The city regions will increase in importance as Scotland's economic drivers and transport links between them will be a priority for improvement. For environmental and health reasons walking and cycling will take over more of the short journeys and more priority will need to be given to investment in infrastructure for these modes. It identifies the need to continue to target support to HIE's fragile areas in the islands and the remote mainland in order to regenerate these economies. This will include improving the quality and affordability of transport to these remote areas.
3. It looks at **where we will be in 2030**. The main elements of the **NPF2 strategy** include higher sustainable economic growth; reducing the country's carbon footprint; supporting cities as key economic drivers; supporting sustainable rural economic growth; and promoting more sustainable patterns of transport and land use. Inverness is listed as a key economic driver which requires better connectivity to other cities. Place competitiveness will ensure that all parts of Scotland can participate in sustainable economic growth. Investment in transport infrastructure to tackle congestion, strengthen intercity links, support rural communities and improve international connections will be vital to deliver this competitiveness.
4. It identifies **national transport corridors** which include Perth /Inverness; Aberdeen/Inverness; Inverness to the north and Orkney; Inverness to the west and Western Isles; and Glasgow to Argyll and the islands. It intends to focus transport infrastructure improvements on these national corridors by improving rail journey times to the central belt and improving the A9 and A96 trunk roads. In the long term it proposes electrification of the strategic rail network on these corridors.
5. For **Scotland's external links** it encourages the growth of air services direct to European centres to reduce the need to connect through London. And it proposes to strengthen cross border land transport links to England including a new high speed rail line. It also proposes improving port capacity for freight.
6. Its **spatial perspective for the Highlands and Islands** includes a population target of 500,000; a zone of co-ordinated action between Inverness and Nairn which includes improved connectivity on the Aberdeen corridor; more transport of freight by sea and also on the Caledonian Canal; the Scapa Flow container

trans-shipment facility; Fort William waterfront development; innovation on ferry routes with shorter crossings and road equivalent tariffs.

7. It identifies **9 National Developments**, infrastructure projects which Ministers propose to designate as essential to delivery of the NPF2 strategy. These comprise:

- Replacement Forth Crossing – four lane road crossing west of the existing bridge (2008 – 2018)
- Edinburgh Airport Enhancement – expanded terminal and operational facilities, new rail station at Gogar and Dalmeny chord, relocation of Royal Highland Showground, new international business gateway (2008 – 2013)
- Glasgow Airport Enhancement – expanded terminal and operational facilities, new rail link (2010 – 2015)
- Grangemouth Freight Hub – expanded freight storage and handling facilities, electrification of the rail link, better connections to M8 via improved A801 to Bathgate (2008 – 2010)
- Rosyth International Container Terminal – container terminal with deep water access, improved road and rail connections (2008+)
- Scapa Flow Container Trans-shipment Facility – land based development at Lyness on Hoy and facilities in Scapa Flow (2008+)
- Grid Reinforcement to support renewable energy – new sub-sea cable links to Orkney, Outer Hebrides and Shetland, reinforcing Beaulieu to Dounreay and Beaulieu to Keith overhead lines, upgrading east coast transmission lines and Scotland England inter-connectors (2008+)
- Glasgow Strategic Drainage Scheme – replacement trunk sewers, pumping stations and treatment works especially on the east side of the city (2008 – 2010+)
- Commonwealth Games Facilities – athletes village, indoor sports arena, velodrome, hockey centre and new transport infrastructure (2009 – 2015)

Possible response to Scottish Government

8. The designated national transport corridors do not include the west coast corridor from Glasgow to the Western Isles via A82 and A87. The strategic importance of this route to the economy of the Western Isles as well as Argyll and Lochaber was recognised in the HITRANS economic appraisal published in 2005. This corridor should be included in the NPF2 strategy because of its importance in targeting support to fragile areas.
9. The air service from Inverness to Heathrow and Gatwick is a vital external link for the Highlands. High speed surface links between Central Scotland and London will not provide a competitive replacement for this air link. It should be specifically included in the NPF2 strategy.
10. The national developments identified in the Highlands and Islands are the Scapa Flow trans-shipment facility and the grid reinforcements. The improvement to transport on our three main corridors, Inverness to Perth, Inverness to Aberdeen

and the A82 are essential to the delivery of the strategy. No doubt the Scottish Government will argue that priority for these transport corridor improvement must await the outcome of the Strategic Transport Projects Review. But the NPF2 must inform this Review. There is a case for adding our three corridors to the list of national developments which will be fast tracked through the planning process.

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Background Papers: National Planning Framework for Scotland2 Discussion Draft