SHAPING THE FUTURE OF SCOTLAND: 
A PLANNING SYSTEM TO DELIVER SUSTAINABLE CHANGE

Shaping the Future of Scotland
Nothing stands still. There is always a need to look ahead. That is why planning is important. A properly resourced planning system, working within the right framework, is key to achieving ambitions for sustainable development, economic growth and successful places. It can highlight pressures for change, identify opportunities and build appropriate safeguards. It can provide the long term vision for Scotland through integrating and future-proofing development. And it can allow people across Scotland to have a say in the future of the places where they live, work and relax.

This manifesto sets out the four cornerstones of good planning which need to be key priorities for any future Government. It does not call for radical and fundamental change but, rather, aims to build upon the significant changes that have been made to the planning system over the last few years. There has been considerable progress in this time and these evolutionary changes must continue. A world-leading, facilitative and plan-led planning system is within our grasp and but this will require future MSPs to:

1. ensure that the planning system has a central role in providing visionary, integrated, cost saving and democratic approaches to shaping the future of Scotland.
2. support the planning system to have a key role in delivering outcomes such as sustainable development, economic growth and successful places.
3. provide the right framework for planning at national, regional, local and community levels.
4. provide adequate resources to deliver good planning and to ensure that we have an effective workforce now and in the future.

I urge all involved in the election campaign for the Scottish Parliament, and those who are elected to it, to take these on board as we help to shape the future of Scotland through sustainable change.

We would be happy to discuss any aspect of the manifesto with you. If you want to do this please contact Craig McLaren, National Director of RTPI in Scotland on 0131 229 9628 or email us at scotland@rtpi.org.uk.

David Suttie, Convenor, RTPI in Scotland
March 2011

1. ENSURE THAT THE PLANNING SYSTEM HAS A CENTRAL ROLE IN PROVIDING VISIONARY, INTEGRATED, COST SAVING AND DEMOCRATIC APPROACHES TO SHAPING THE FUTURE OF SCOTLAND.

Planning is all about looking to the long term and coordinating activity. It can therefore be a key agent for helping to achieve coordinated and sustainable change. For this to happen, there is a need to:

- ensure that the planning system is a key mechanism to help communicate and achieve the ambitions of Scotland’s people and communities, in setting out the long term vision for shaping the future of Scotland.

- improve links between planning and key programmes and strategies on infrastructure provision, economic development, regeneration, housing, transport
and rural development which are fundamental parts of Single Outcome Agreements and Community Planning.

- take approaches which recognise that good planning can save costs in the longer term in being ‘early intervention’ which aims to assess and ‘design out’ future issues which often occur later down the line. For example, well designed and maintained places can help to promote better health and wellbeing and environmental sustainability.

- commit to the redefined role for councillors and the public in the planning system. This requires continued support for Planning Aid for Scotland to help people and communities to participate fully in the process.

- commit to the need for professional input to the planning process through having a Cabinet Secretary with overall responsibility for planning; establishing a new Planning Committee for the Scottish Parliament and a new Scottish Planning Forum to act as a sounding board on issues; and retaining a professionally qualified Chief Planner at Director level in Scottish Government.

[Case Study]

2. ENSURE THAT THE PLANNING SYSTEM HAS A KEY ROLE IN DELIVERING OUTCOMES SUCH AS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT, ECONOMIC GROWTH AND SUCCESSFUL PLACES

Although the planning process is important, we must realise that it is geared to producing successful places. This ‘end product’ is what planning is for. To support there is a need to:

- commit to addressing climate change through achieving sustainable development. It should be recognised that the planning system enables this through working to balance environmental, social and economic needs. In doing this it has an important role in helping achieve climate change targets, to develop renewables and to build sustainable communities. The RTPI has already set out 7 commitments to sustainable development.

- commit to using the planning system when promoting and delivering economic growth. CBI Scotland recently said that “An effective land-use planning system is vital for economic growth”1. This can be done by, for example, identifying and making provision for employment opportunities, allocating land for housing, taking holistic approaches to town centre regeneration and promoting economic development opportunities.

- ensure that the value of successful places is recognised in policy and investment decisions. This depends on planners and other built environment professionals being supported to improve approaches to design and master planning through guidance, advice and appropriate leadership.

- look at new ways of providing infrastructure up front to support new development and, in doing this, work with public sector agencies to help them ensure that their land and property assets are used to deliver better places.

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1 CBI Scotland “Energising the Scottish Economy: A business agenda for reform and recovery, June 2010
• recognise that the success of planning should focus on the **outcomes** it provides, as well as the speed of decision making.

[Case Study]

3. PROVIDE THE RIGHT FRAMEWORK FOR PLANNING AT NATIONAL, REGIONAL, LOCAL AND COMMUNITY LEVELS

The framework for planning has undergone fairly radical change over the last few years. We need to let these changes bed down and build on what is there. Given this, there is a need to:

• build upon the existing **National Planning Framework 2**, looking towards developing an 3rd National Planning Framework linking this with the National Land Use Strategy and marine spatial planning, recognising the spatial dimensions of infrastructure and resource planning for the benefit of Scotland.

• ensure that **guidance, advice and interventions** from Scottish Government balances the need to provide direction on planning issues with the ability of local authorities to make planning decisions based on their needs and circumstances.

• build on the **plan-led system**. In doing this there is a need to support the ongoing development of strategic development plans to ensure that they provide the right framework for investment decisions and for future development. There is also a need to support the local development plan process and supplementary planning guidance to provide the context for decisions on future development and add certainty for developers.

• build on changes made to the **development management** service and continue to support the implementation of new parts of this such as Local Review Bodies.

• ensure that **local people and communities** are given the opportunity to be involved in the planning process, particularly at the early stages of development planning and through the neighbour notification process for planning applications.

• ensure that the **power to decide on planning issues** remains at a level that will allow professionally qualified planners to use their skills and knowledge to frame recommendations that take account of the need to balance local and strategic needs and short and long term issues.

• explore what new **tools and powers** will support planners to lead positive, sustainable approaches which deliver development, regeneration and economic growth

[Case Study]

4. PROVIDE ADEQUATE RESOURCES TO DELIVER GOOD PLANNING AND TO ENSURE THAT WE HAVE AN EFFECTIVE WORKFORCE NOW AND IN THE FUTURE

We must guard against losing the expertise and experience currently contained in the planning service. And we need to make sure that we continue attract fresh talent to planning which can help us take forward new approaches. Given this, there is a need to:
ensure that there are adequate **resources to deliver** all parts of the planning service effectively and timeously including development planning, development management and enforcement, all with full community participation.

- review **planning fees** and ensure that these are used to resource and support the delivery of the planning service

- provide continued support and **resources to help the planning service to improve** its effectiveness and adapt to the changes in process and culture required to deliver the Planning Act. This requires continued investment in the planning development programme, currently provided by the Improvement Service, for both officers and councillors.

- celebrate and **learn from success** and invest in research and analysis that provides a good understanding of what is happening, evidence of what works and possible innovation.

- invest in **planning education** to ensure that there is a continuing cadre of skilled and knowledgeable people entering the profession. This will require safeguarding funding for accredited planning degree courses and providing support for planning graduates to find jobs and experience.

**[Case Study]**

**About Us**
The Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) is the champion of planning and the planning profession. We work to promote the role and practice of planning for the public benefit. We have around 2,200 members in Scotland and a worldwide membership of some 23,000. We are committed to:

- maintaining the professional standards of our members
- supporting our members, and therefore the majority of the planning workforce, to have the skills and knowledge they need to deliver planning effectively
- maintaining high standards of planning education
- supporting policy development to improve approaches to planning for the benefit of the public
- developing and promoting new thinking, ideas and approaches which can improve planning
- supporting our membership to work with others who have a role in developing places in Scotland
- improving the understanding of planning and the planning system to policy makers, politicians, practitioners and the general public

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