



Programme for Government: Framework Consultation

RTPI NI Response to Outcomes Framework, March 2021

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The '[New Decade New Approach](#)' (NDNA) document set out the process and approach for developing the Executive's Programme for Government (PfG). The key points were that the Programme should be developed through engagement and co-design, using an outcomes-based approach; focus on prosperity and wellbeing for all; establish a shared and ambitious strategic vision for the future; and provide for accountable and transparent monitoring and reporting arrangements. The Executive's approach to the PfG begins with a draft Framework of Outcomes – statements of societal wellbeing which, taken together, are intended to capture the range of things that experience and research suggest matter most to people. It is these Outcomes and their Key Priority Areas which were consulted on.

Our children and young people have the best start in life

RTPI NI agrees that this Outcome should be included in the PfG framework. The Key Priority Areas under this Outcome are:

- Access to Education
- Capability and Resilience
- Care
- Early Years
- Skills and Attainment

Town Planning should be included as a Key Priority Area as it is an essential tool in supporting education and play services. Town planning plays an important role in supporting children and young people. Access to green space is particularly important for childhood development; having high access to green space in childhood can reduce the risk of developing mental health diseases later in life by up to 55%. The decrease in the quantity and quality of independent play in children has been linked to increased inequality and a looming skill crisis. We would welcome the recognition in the PfG of the importance of play areas. See research at:

www.rtpi.org.uk/research/2019/december/understanding-and-supporting-the-play-experience-in-cities/

We live and work sustainably – protecting the environment

RTPI NI agrees that this Outcome should be included in the PfG framework. The Key Priority Areas under this Outcome are:

- Natural Environment
- Green Economy
- Built Environment
- Housing
- Active and Sustainable Transport
- Waste Management
- Water and Wastewater Management



Town Planning should be included as a Key Priority Area. Town Planning is key to green growth and resilience. A well-resourced, plan-led, positive and transparent planning service, which is proactive in engaging local communities, can bring together objectives across services and help achieve inclusive development and climate action goals. The planning system and planners have an important proactive role as a driver of change. A strong and engaged plan-led system is essential if developers and communities alike are to have confidence that development will be successful and sustainable.

We have an equal and inclusive society where everyone is valued and treated with respect

RTPI NI agrees that this Outcome should be included in the PfG framework. The Key Priority Areas under this Outcome are:

- Inclusion and Tackling Disadvantage
- Rights and Equality
- Legacy
- Tackling Sectarianism, Building Respect and Identity

Town Planning should be included as a Key Priority Area. Town Planning is key to inclusive growth. A well-resourced, plan-led, positive and transparent planning service, which is proactive in engaging local communities, can bring together objectives across services and help achieve inclusive development. The planning system and planners have an important proactive role as a driver of change. A strong and engaged plan-led system is essential if developers and communities alike are to have confidence that development will be fair and equitable. Planning of the built environment is key to ensuring inclusion of all, especially those who experience barriers because of age, mobility difficulties or neurodiversity.

We all enjoy long, healthy, active lives

RTPI NI agrees that this Outcome should be included in the PfG framework. High quality homes, safe living environments and access to opportunities for exercise and recreation enable population health. Public health agencies prioritise environmental and social conditions which affect public health. Well-planned places, particularly those with access to green infrastructure and that enable community cohesion, are important for supporting the mental and physical health of residents. The Key Priority Areas under this Outcome are:

- Access to Health
- Inclusion and Tackling Disadvantage
- Mental Health and Wellbeing
- Older People
- Physical Health and Wellbeing



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services

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Town Planning should be included as a Key Priority Area. The quality of the built environment is a determining factor for mental health, with noise, pollution levels, quality of green space, access to services and even 'beauty' all playing a part. Therefore, planning decisions can have an impact on mental health and wellbeing. Creating an accessible, inclusive built environment that enables everyone to play an equal role in society is important in protecting and enhancing everyone's well-being and mental health. Planning of the built environment is key to ensuring inclusion of all, especially those who experience barriers because of age, mobility difficulties or neurodiversity (including dementia). Access to play space for children also deserves a mention as a Key Priority Area, with its important links to mental and physical wellbeing, as well as reducing anti-social behaviour.

Everyone can reach their potential

RTPI NI agrees that this Outcome should be included in the PfG framework. The Key Priority Areas under this Outcome are:

- Capability and Resilience
- Better Jobs
- Skills and Attainment
- Sports, Arts and Culture

Our economy is globally competitive, regionally balanced and carbon-neutral

RTPI NI agrees that this Outcome should be included in the PfG framework. There needs to be clarity on what the Government's strategy is in respect to economic development and its spatial implications. The Department of Finance has recently launched work hubs for employees in more rural locations as part of the reaction to COVID with the decentralisation of civil service jobs assisting in the reduction of the need to travel. However the Regional Development Strategy, planning policies and the City Region bid promote Belfast as the regional driver. What is the geographical objective: is it the promotion of growth of the major urban centres, or is it growth in pockets everywhere in the province? The answer has significant implications for sustainable travel and service delivery and there needs to be some specificity about what economic success would look like spatially. The Key Priority Areas under this Outcome are:

- Competing Globally
- Green Economy
- Growth
- Food, Farming and Fishing
- Infrastructure
- Innovation



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Town Planning should be included as a Key Priority Area. Planning is key to growth and resilience. A well-resourced, plan-led, positive and transparent planning service, which is proactive in engaging local communities, can bring together objectives across services and help achieve inclusive development, investment and climate action goals. The planning system and planners have an important proactive role as a driver of change. A strong and engaged plan-led system is essential if developers, investors and communities alike are to have confidence that development will be successful and sustainable.

Everyone feels safe – we all respect the law and each other

RTPI NI agrees that this Outcome should be included in the Programme for Government framework. The Key Priority Areas under this Outcome are:

- Access to Justice
- Address Harm and Vulnerability
- Early Intervention and Rehabilitation
- Tackling Sectarianism, Building Respect and Identity

We have a caring society that supports people throughout their lives

This Outcome is repetitious of the previous one 'We all enjoy long, healthy, active lives'. Do we need both Outcomes? Are they sufficiently different? The Key Priority Areas under this Outcome are:

- Disability
- Housing
- Inclusion and Tackling Disadvantage
- Mental Health and Wellbeing
- Older People

As with the Outcome earlier, 'We all enjoy long, healthy, active lives', Planning is missing from this list. The quality of the built environment is a determining factor for mental health and the quality of life of all, with noise, pollution levels, quality of green space, access to services and even 'beauty' all playing a part. Therefore, planning decisions can have an impact on mental health and wellbeing. Creating an accessible, inclusive built environment that enables everyone to play an equal role in society is important in protecting and enhancing everyone's well-being and mental health. Planning of the built environment is key to ensuring inclusion of all, especially those who experience barriers because of age, mobility difficulties or neurodiversity (including dementia and autism). The provision of quality and affordable housing is also essential to this Outcome.



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People want to live, work and visit here

RTPI NI agrees that this Outcome should be included in the PfG framework. The Key Priority Areas under this Outcome are:

- Competing Globally
- Better Jobs
- Growth
- Housing
- Tackling Sectarianism, Building Respect and Identity
- Sports, Arts and Culture
- Planning

Town Planning is vital for this Outcome. Planning has a role in delivery of almost all of the objectives listed in the PfG. A well-resourced, plan-led, positive planning service can deliver corporate objectives, which, if effectively organised, can help achieve local and regional sustainable development and make NI an attractive place to live, work and visit.

We also welcome the inclusion of Housing as a key priority area. Housing is a key need for NI as a whole that planning can have a strong role in influencing and delivering.

Consideration of the Historic Environment, as an asset to promote and to protect, is missing as a Key Priority Area under this Outcome.

Additional Comments

There seems to be relatively weak recognition of the cross-cutting nature of some of the outcomes and the potential for any particular function of Government to contribute to multiple outcomes. This is very apparent when it comes to Town Planning, which would have a role in achieving a number of the outcomes. Planning has an overarching role in setting the strategic direction for growth, balanced with environmental protection and a more inclusive society.

In addition, as noted, some of the proposed outcomes are very similar to each other, such as 'We all enjoy long, healthy, active lives' and 'We have a caring society that supports people throughout their lives'.

There is also a lack of recognition in this document of the partnership working that Government must do with other bodies to achieve the PfG outcomes. It is surprising that there is no mention of the other stakeholders that Government will need to work with to deliver the PfG outcomes. How do the PfG outcomes align with other sets of public sector outcomes?



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