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RTPI Scotland
Royal Town Planning Institute



The Future of Rural Planning

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Editorial

It has been a busy year for planning in Scotland cumulating in the publication of the draft 4th National Planning Framework last month. Although there is still much work to be done in scrutinising the document, at first glance the direction of travel appears to be a good one with strong messages on planning tackling climate change and working to achieve net zero.

The keener-eyed amongst you will have seen that in September RTPI Scotland published a series of thinkpiece papers to stimulate discussion and debate on topics areas which we feel need further exploration to support Scottish Government to develop and advance proposals to improve the planning system. One of these looked at how the NPF can support rural planning across a number of key thematic areas including repopulation, housing, infrastructure, economic development, renewables and

transport and this edition of The Scottish Planner aims to unpack some of these issues further. Given this we have a series of articles on these issues as well as some reaction to the thinkpiece. Hopefully these will stimulate your thoughts on what are very important issues so we would welcome thoughts on them as we begin to pull together our response to the draft.

So, as we reflect on the year which has brought us a draft NPF, a Scottish election, a new Planning Minister in a new portfolio and the implementation of the parts of the 2019 Planning Act there is also much to think about for next year. We look forward to continuing to engage with you on this.

We would like to wish all our members and friends a happy Christmas and a good new year.

- Craig McLaren, Co-Editor

Convenor's Comments: Winter Reflections



Barbara Cummins
MRTPI,
Convenor,
RTPI Scotland
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As our focus in this issue is on rural Scotland I started to think about my own experiences growing up. My parents moved from town to a rural area outside it when I was 12. There was a small grouping of houses and the local filling station and shop as well as a primary school. To get there, however you had to walk part of the way on roads without pavements or street lighting. I got the bus to the high school in town; there were two a day, one at 7am, so I was always hanging around before classes started, and one home again at 4.30 – so joining in social activities was only possible if I got a lift. I did own a bicycle and cycled to part time jobs in the summer, and occasionally to school, but it really wasn't safe to do so in the dark; there were no off-road routes.

Everything we did other than going to and from school involved getting in a car, my parents travelling to work, shopping and leisure activities and meeting friends. To be honest, as a teenager I resented the fact that I was missing out on the things my town-based friends got to do without needing to ask their mum or dad to drive them.

We were lucky in that a local landowner really wanted to increase biodiversity, even in those days, so fields opposite us were planted with trees, improving our landscape outlook, but that was only one landowner acting on their own, otherwise it was all grass fields with livestock.

We had a nice big house, and there was a small amount of social housing in the area but there wasn't really what you would call a diverse range of housing. That and a lack of local services meant when my parents decided it was time to downsize they felt their only alternative was to move back into town.

I don't remember anyone ever trying to talk to the local community about what would make the place better, indeed I didn't really know there was a career that thought about these things. I did take Geography at A level and my dissertation was based around my local community and its land uses; I dread to

think how simplistic that might have been but in hindsight it was probably my first inkling of what I wanted to do.

I did work in rural authorities during my career, but Edinburgh has been my Scottish home for all the time I have lived here and it's easy to forget the privilege that city dwelling comes with. Visiting my Mum back in NI recently I was reminded of all the things I take for granted that others don't have access to at all or, because of age and circumstance, have limited means to access. I don't think earlier in my career I gave enough thought to that. I hope that the thinkpiece that RTPI produced has made you think more about the issues facing the people of rural Scotland; we can make a difference and as planners we have a critical role to ensure we are successful in our efforts to [#PlanTheScotlandWeNeed](https://twitter.com/PlanTheScotlandWeNeed).

As a postscript to this, my last article as your Convenor, I just wanted to say thank you to all of you who have supported me over the past year. Particular thanks go to Craig, Robbie, Annette and Jennie at RTPI Scotland; a fantastic team who do so much to support and promote our profession – making my job as Convenor so much easier. ■

“I don't remember anyone ever trying to talk to the local community about what would make the place better, indeed I didn't really know there was a career that thought about these things.”



Article: Planning and Public Health

We sit with a “Triple Win” opportunity to make sure the places we are creating for our future generations are enhancing the wellbeing of our planet and our people and create greater equity across Scotland. **Irene Beautyman** and **Susan Rintoul** share a little of what they are doing to help us all achieve that Triple Win.



So we all have a purpose right? While many may agonised over that on a personal basis, if you're a planner... then you do. Managing the use of land and buildings in the long term public interest is our purpose. Not my opinion, but enshrined in the 2019 Planning Act.

I have a question about our purpose. How do we decide the long term public interest? After endless rounds public consultation on policy, whether it be sitting in a community hall on a rainy Tuesday evening or a Public Library on a Thursday afternoon, I share the views of so many of my colleagues that this doesn't give us anywhere near a clear picture. We can't determine the long term public interest by only speaking to those who have the time, desire and capacity to talk to us in a shopping centre on a Saturday morning. So how do we get a better insight on that long term public interest? Enter, public health.

What is the purpose of public health and those that work in it in? Have you ever gone to your doctors or attended a hospital

appointment to say, “Hi doc, I'm feeling great and I'd like to continue feeling that way, could you please get everyone working together to ensure that happens?”. I'm thinking not. Yet that is the purpose of public health. Our National Health Service with its doctors'

surgeries, medical centres and hospitals will treat us once we are ill but the purpose of public health is to prevent us becoming ill in the first place. A significant part of this is about getting everyone to work together to shape the places where we live, work and play to enable everyone in a community to thrive.

I don't know about you, but that ticks my box for what planning's “long term public interest” needs to be about.

Decades of writing development plans and conversations with planners across all of Scotland have highlighted that we have lost sight of the fact that planners and public health practitioners share this same ambition. So often when I talk of public health the conversation jumps immediately to the provision of doctor's surgeries and medical

centres when a place's population is growing. Too infrequently there is an understanding of the opportunity to work with our public health colleagues to understand the long term public interest in every place and, more importantly, to evidence the impact of our policy and implementation interventions. Evidence led policy, it's what we're about isn't it? If the primary evidence for policy is population growth and household forecasts then its little wonder we spend so much time to debating housing numbers rather than what the long term public interest looks like. To know the latter we must broaden our evidence base and understand better the expertise that sits with our public health colleagues.

And there's the issue. While we share the same ambition our organisational backgrounds, geographies and jargon create 6ft high brick walls between us as we look to work together. ■

Have you ever gone to your doctors or attended a hospital appointment to say, “Hi doc, I'm feeling great and I'd like to continue feeling that way, could you please get everyone working together to ensure that happens?”



Irene Beautyman,
MRTPI Planning for
Place Programme
Manager at the
Improvement Service



Susan Rintoul,
Place and Wellbeing
Project Officer at the
Improvement Service

There is currently a lack of explicit links between planning and public health and a lack of understanding of each other's roles. Recently the Improvement Service and Public Health Scotland published a briefing paper: **Place and Wellbeing: integrating land use planning and public health in Scotland**. This aims to provide the starting point for better collaboration. It introduces public health to the planning system and land use planners to public health, setting out who the key organisations are, how both the systems work and where key legislation and policy requirements overlap. While also highlighting opportunities for integrated working to help us deliver this shared ambition and providing the practical steps for achieving this.

The National Planning Framework 4 position statement states that "National Planning Framework 4 will be redesigned to support the population's health and wellbeing and address the longstanding health inequalities". We need to make sure this provides the policy foundation for closer collaboration between planning and health. National Planning Framework 4 will also introduce new outcomes and we need new ways of measuring their success to be developed. This provides an opportunity for stronger cross working on measurement and performance between planning and public health. With this there is also an opportunity for more 'on the job' interaction to better understand each other's roles.

The Covid-19 pandemic is still forefront in our minds and the briefing highlights how it provides an opportunity for us to rethink our current ways of working and we need to take this as an opportunity to learn from our communities on how their relationship with place has changed.

What do we need to make sure we are working towards this same ambition? We need to know all the characteristics of a place that make it successful for those who live, work and relax there. A set of outcomes to guide us, this is where the **Place and Wellbeing Outcomes** come in. These outcomes are introduced in the briefing and have been developed by the Spatial Planning, Health and Wellbeing Collaborative. They support local government and their partners in focusing decision making and implementation on the features that make up every place. They are underpinned by the principles of equality, net-zero emissions and sustainability creating that triple win, and split into five themes Movement, Space, Resources, Civic and Stewardship. By embedding these outcomes in planning and public health it will help us achieve a more joined up approach.

We need to start delivering on preventative interventions in partnership with public health to reduce Scotland's health inequalities while also delivering on climate action and Covid recovery. As planners we have the opportunity to make sure the places we are creating for the future generations are resilient to climate change but also contributing to positive impacts on our community's health. ■

“What do we need to make sure we are working towards this same ambition? We need to know all the characteristics of a place that make it successful for those who live, work and relax there”

Place and wellbeing:
integrating land use
planning and public
health in Scotland

Shared ambition to
improve health and
wellbeing and reduce
inequalities across
Scotland's communities

Public Health Scotland

is.
improvement service

Q&A

Public Enquiries



Dr. Fiona Simpson MRTPI, Chief Planner at Scottish Government

Dr. Fiona Simpson MRTPI, Chief Planner at Scottish Government

1 Who has been the biggest inspiration or influence on your career and why?

Jim Mackinnon and John McNairney both taught me a huge amount about the unique role of professional planners in Government, and I've worked with many other amazing civil servants whose commitment to planning and the public interest is inspiring. And Professor Cliff Hague, who had the patience to put up with me as a student, lives and breathes the planning principles and values that I'm still trying to live up to every day.

2 What do you feel is the biggest issue facing planners and planning at the moment?

Choices we're making today and in the coming months could make or break our recovery from the pandemic and our efforts to tackle the global climate and nature crises. These are big issues – and meeting expectations might feel a bit daunting, but it's exciting too. It's our time to shine, when we can lead change, help society rethink how our places work and make decisions that really are in the long-term public interest.

3 Why is planning important?

Planning is important because our places are important. The quality of our places can define our life chances, shape our health and wellbeing and enable us to realise our full potential. Because of the pandemic, more people are realising just how important planning is too. Our profession is uniquely well placed to work across boundaries, bring people together and see the bigger picture. Our plans and decisions change lives. They affect future generations for decades to come, and that long term spatial perspective is what makes our profession important, and so exciting.

4 Where do you think best exemplifies planning's role in creating great places for people?

There are so many places to choose from, but to pick one I think that our canals neatly encapsulate the role that planning can play by taking an unwelcoming and unused asset and reinventing it as a place which has real hope for the future. Canals support our health, and provide a green networks, active travel and recreation within and connecting cities, towns and countryside. They are a sanctuary for wildlife, help us to remember and celebrate our heritage and demonstrate what can be achieved with a strong vision and commitment to delivery. I regularly walk there and find the work that has been done inspiring – from Bowling Harbour to the ongoing transformation of communities like Clydebank and North Glasgow, the Falkirk Wheel, Helix Park and the Kelpies. All aided by brilliant planning.

5 What are the greatest challenges and opportunities for the profession in creating great places for people?

Finishing the wide-ranging procedural and structural reforms in the year ahead will be challenging – there is still a lot to do. But we have prioritised and phased that work, and once we have the key parts of the new system in place we will be able to really get on and deliver more. Our Division doesn't hold all the answers but we already have great working relationships with people who can share their different perspectives, and we want to keep working collaboratively to put the new system into action. I also want us to do more to open up the conversation about planning to a much wider range of people and interests, because our places matter to everyone.

Immaterial Considerations

An irreverent look at the world of planning...

Planning Playlist, Part 1

It was good to see our colleagues in Barton Willmore celebrate World Town Planning Day by curating the WTPD #PlanningPlaylist on Spotify. The consultancy asked their teams, clients and peers to contribute ideas for planning orientated songs resulting in a playlist comprising 74 songs and lasting 5 hours and 20 minutes. There some old favourites in there such as We Built This City by Starship, Our House by Madness and These Streets by Paulo Nutini, but we were especially taken by some, err, less optimistic tunes such as On The Brink of Extinction by Napalm Death and then very pleased to see some lesser know but very relevant songs including Council Houses by Denim, Mid-Sized European Cities by Alan Lauris and There are Listed Buildings by Los Campesinos! Have a listen [here](#).



Planning for Christmas

Our annual search for the ultimate Christmas present for the planner who has everything continues. The best of the bunch identified this year is from www.redbubble.com and is great message for us all...



Call the COP26!

Glasgow has been very much in the world's spotlight recently given the COP26 summit taking place in the city. You will see from the article by RTPI Scotland Director Craig McLaren on page 9, that the Institute put a lot of time and effort into engaging with it to highlight the important role that planners and planning can play in tackling climate change and reaching net zero. Given this it was good to see that the hard work paid off almost instantaneously with the Royal Bank of Scotland's stand at the summit proudly promoting the need to plan! If only it was that easy...



Planning Playlist, Part 2

And in other planning and music related news we were both fascinated and bemused by the tweet from @UrbanistPlat proclaiming that Glasgow venue SWG3 was converting body heat generated by gig goers and dancers into renewable energy. We wonder if this could be a feature of future developments and may need a site visit to check out any planning applications...



In Practice: SEPA'S new flood map zoom function will assist planners



Elaine Fortheringham
MRTPI, Senior
Planning Officer at
SEPA

Elaine Fortheringham MRTPI, Senior Planner at the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA), looks at new flood map functions and how they will benefit planners.

The science is clear, in Scotland we currently use the resources of three planets where we only have one. We are very much living through more extreme weather patterns – and one does not balance out the other. This is just one of the many consequences of climate change Scotland is facing, and it is becoming more common.

As a statutory consultee and key agency in planning, SEPA has a vital role in promoting flood risk avoidance. There are currently around 284,000 homes, businesses and services at medium to high risk of flooding in Scotland and, by the 2080s, this could increase by around 110,000 if little or no action is taken to tackle climate change (SEPA, 2018).

The science on climate change is clear and flooding is likely to increase in Scotland, making it more important than ever to ensure planning decisions avoid putting people at risk by building in places that could flood, both now and in the future. Managing this risk will take a co-ordinated effort, therefore it is important that everyone has access to the same information to make decisions.

To help in this effort, SEPA's flood maps have recently been updated to increase the scale at which they can be viewed, making it easier for users to identify whether a site or property sits within an area that is at risk of flooding. The maps can now be viewed at roughly a 1 to 2,500 scale – previously the zoom was restricted to 1 to 20,000. New planning guidance has been produced to support this change.

We see this as a significant step forward, allowing everyone - individuals, communities, and businesses access to the same information to make decisions about the use and development of land. It will ensure avoidance of flood risk is embedded early by all of those involved in the land use planning process, particularly developers, so that new development is safe from flooding now and in the long term.

It will also help identify whether further assessment may be needed before progressing with development. We hope this will give everyone more certainty, with less risk of delay later in the planning process.

Whilst SEPA's flood maps have been available for years, accessibility for certain purposes was limited by controlling the zoom at which the maps could be viewed. In making this change, SEPA recognises the public and industry demand for improved access to its flood risk management, including land use planning.

Necessity means we need to work urgently in new, innovative ways to build sustainable places. Scotland's land use planning system has a vital role to play, and SEPA has a role in supporting that process.

Together, we need to a system which quickly and efficiently assesses developments, saying yes to the right developments in the right locations, and an early no to those which need reconsidered or are unlikely to be supported.

“Managing this risk will take a co-ordinated effort, therefore it is important that everyone has access to the same information to make decisions.”

Vincent Fitzsimons, Head of Hydrology and Flooding at SEPA said: “As Scotland's statutory consultee in land use planning, we are transforming the way we deliver flood risk advice and evidence to ensure flood risk is avoided at all costs. “We hope Scotland's planners agree that increase in scale on the flood maps is a positive step forward in enhancing understanding of flood risk in Scotland.

“By making our data and information available to all users, we will ensure that flooding is a fundamental consideration in the design of great places in the future, creating a resilient Scotland that avoids developments in flood risk areas.” ■

The changes to the zoom function on the maps have been made here: <https://map.sepa.org.uk/floodmaps>.

Land use planning guidance to support using the maps can be found at <https://map.sepa.org.uk/floodmaps/FloodRisk/Landuseplanning>.

If you have enquiries about the flood maps and would like to discuss, please get in touch by email, elaine.fortheringham@sepa.org.uk.

Ref: SEPA, National Flood Risk Assessment (2018): <https://www.sepa.org.uk/data-visualisation/nfra2018/>



In Focus: A Good COP

RTPI Scotland Director **Craig McLaren** discusses the RTPI's engagement in COP26

At its outset COP26 had set itself goals:

- Secure global net zero by mid-century and keep 1.5 degrees within reach where countries were asked to come forward with ambitious 2030 emissions reductions targets that align with reaching net zero by the middle of the century.
- Adapt to protect communities and natural habitats by protecting and restoring ecosystems and building defences, and resilient infrastructure.
- Mobilise finance where developed countries were challenged to make good on their promise to mobilise at least \$100bn in climate finance per year by 2020.
- Work together to finalise the detailed rules that make the Paris Agreement operational and accelerate action to tackle the climate crisis.

Planners and planning systems can play an important role in these so the RTPI was keen to engage with COP26 to increase understanding of the role planners and planning can play in tackling climate change; to increase the profile of planning, planners and to highlight good planning practice to international audiences and UK governments.

In doing this RTPI President Wei Yang attended various meetings and events in the Blue Zone, the area where the negotiations took place. RTPI also attended around 40 events that took place in the Green Zone



raising questions or making points about the importance of planning where appropriate. RTPI Scotland was fully involved with his through Convenor Barbara Cummins, Policy Officer Robbie Calvert and myself.

A COP26 fringe event was held on “The Race to Zero: Plan the World We Need”. This hybrid face-to-face and webcast event was organised by RTPI in partnership with the Global Planners Network, Commonwealth Association of Planners and ISOCARP. Speakers in the room included Maimunah Sharif, Executive Director of UNHABITAT, RTPI President Wei Yang, Kelley Moore, Secretary General of the Commonwealth Association of Planners and Martina Juvara, ISOCARP whilst video presentations were given by Leo Asuncion, President, American Planning Association; Martin Lewis, CEO, The South African Council for Planners; Dan Huang, President, Canadian Institute of Planners; and Darren Crombie, National President, Planning Instituted Australia.

We published a new research paper Urban Planning after Covid-19 that examines how planning can contribute to the calls for a sustainable, resilient and inclusive recovery from the current health and economic crisis. It reviews the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic across the themes of housing, urban production and consumption and travel in global cities and reflects on their implications for fostering a just, inclusive and sustainable recovery.

The RTPI was a delivery partner in the UK Green Building Council virtual pavilion which was live through the summit. As part of tis we curated an event “How do we build holistic net-zero and resilient places of the future?” and participated in an event on “Empowering young people to become the climate-aware built environment professionals of the future”.

The RTPI and the Global Planners Network published a joint statement “A Plurality



of Voices for Effectively Planning Our Way Out of the Climate Crisis” which calls for urgent action to timely turn the tide of a rapidly unfolding climate crisis compounded by biodiversity-loss and increasing social inequality.

A COP26 hub has been created on the RTPI website to highlight RTPI activities and to act as a ‘library’ of any publications, events or media channels that have been recorded as part of our work on COP26. It includes 12 blogs that were published in the run up to, during or after the summit with contributors including David Mudie form Highland Council and Robbie Calvert from RTPI Scotland.

We are now exploring the opportunities and challenges that the high-level Glasgow Pact presents for planners and as part of this are examining the report published by Committee on Climate Change’s that assesses COP26 and outlines key outcomes and next steps. Watch this space... ■



Craig McLaren FRTPi,
Director of RTPI
Scotland, Ireland and
English Regions

Article: RTPI Scotland Rural Thinkpiece



Robbie Calvert
MRTPI, Policy,
Practice and
Research Officer at
RTPI Scotland

Robbie Calvert, Policy, Practice and Research Officer at RTPI Scotland discusses his recently published thinkpiece on the future of rural planning policy

Let us not forget: rural Scotland accounts for 98% of the land mass in Scotland with around 17% of the total population. If the purpose of planning is 'to manage the development and use of land in the long term public interest'

well that's a lot of land and a lot of public whose interest needs upheld.

Undoubtedly rural Scotland faces many unique opportunities and challenges over the next decade and I believe planning can and will play a fundamental role in addressing these. This has been clearly recognised in the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 with, for example, one of the six outcomes

of the National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) to increase the population of rural areas of Scotland and in its preparation, the Framework is to have regard to the desirability of resettling rural areas that have become depopulated. Therefore, to spotlight such an important area of planning, in September this year RTPI



Scotland published the first in a series of thinkpiece papers looking at the future of rural planning and we are delighted to theme this current edition of Scottish Planner on the matter. The aim of publishing the thinkpieces

was to stimulate discussion and debate on topics areas which we feel need further exploration, to support Scottish Government to develop and advance proposals to improve the planning system. This work was also intended to complement and run alongside a wider transnational RTPI research project 'Rural Planning in the 2020s'. This project

is due for publication next year and is being led by a consortium of prominent academics to investigate the challenges facing planning within rural communities.

I'm really looking forward to reading this work and whilst I assume it will identify significant regional and national variation I am also sure that there will be many commonalities too; for example the impact of second homes. To produce this work, I looked at a wide range of recently published research conducted in Scotland but also did a full appraisal of current rural planning policy approaches in England, Wales and Ireland. I also drew upon and reflected on my own recent experience, where I was fortunate enough to be able to live and work in rural Scotland.

The thinkpiece tries to provide workable ideas, or at least get the discussion going

as to how we can potentially improve the way in which the planning system supports the development of rural communities in Scotland. To do so I had to cover a wide range of issues that need specific approaches tailored to rural settings including areas such as housing, infrastructure, economic development, transport, land-use policies, renewable energy, community-led planning and skills development.

Since the thinkpiece's publication of course we have now had the publication of the draft NPF4. I hope this work offers a useful contribution to an important discussion going forward, not only in terms of the retained rural policy section in the draft NPF4 but also in terms of how 'rural-proofed' the rest of the framework is.

In the spirit of stimulating debate for this edition we have asked for various responses to the work from professionals working in rural development across the private, public and third sector. We also encourage members to contribute to the debate, so please give the work a read and send any comments and views either direct to scotland@rtpi.org.uk or through social media using the hashtag [#rtpithinkpieces](https://twitter.com/rtpithinkpieces). ■



Article: Rural Planning's Golden Carriage?

Debbie Mackay, Director of Planning and Community Engagement at Savills Scotland, discusses her response to the thinkpiece from a private sector perspective.



Debbie Mackay MRTPI,
Director of Planning
and Community
Engagement at Savills
Scotland

Rural Planning has long been the Cinderella of our profession. Neglected and left behind while her urban sisters get all the attention, and wearing their cast-off, ill-fitting policy clothes. So the entrance “stage left” of the RTPi's NPF4 Rural Planning Thinkpiece is a timely invitation for rural planning to come to the Ball.

I welcome this well-researched paper and its innovative set of recommendations. However, I would encourage broader thinking on the housing topic in particular. Scottish Government Rural Planning Policy 2050 (Savills/Inherit) research report¹ found that “Housing” was the most significant and “transformational” form of rural development, having a significant ripple effect on other activities and land uses.

While specific “affordable” housing is unquestionably a huge part of this provision, housing of all tenures is important to rural Scotland. Indeed private housing experiences market failure most acutely in rural areas. Our rural planning system should be geared to assisting all forms of housing in order to increase overall supply.

Higher levels of developer obligations and higher percentage affordable housing policies in rural areas are blunt weapons in the policy armoury and can deter all forms of housing, increasing overall housing shortages. Savills study for the Scottish Land Commission (SLC)² sets out the challenges of providing any form of housing in rural areas. The already onerous infrastructure costs make

any increased requirements for affordable housing above national benchmarks just another deterrent on development.

The SLC study identified innovative possibilities such as the use of the premium that high-end self-build properties can secure, particularly in “hot spot” locations, as cross-subsidy for affordable housing. Scaling up this approach, to a Local Place Plan geographical area, could create win/wins for both market and affordable housing accelerating the growth of self and custom build with all the consequent benefits for smaller local construction firms.

Directing housing to existing key settlements will not be sufficient to counter depopulation in areas where facilities have already been undermined through lack of growth. This will merely continue a pattern of depopulation. We need local planning authorities to be ambitiously focused on re-population. This could mean diverging from a traditional “settlement and existing facilities first” focus and considering a rural-centred approach to 20 minute neighbourhoods. Local Place Planning must be allowed to develop housing growth policies that work for specific rural circumstances. This may not look like a conventional settlement pattern, but it may be appropriate for an area where settlement has always had to respect challenging topography and ground conditions. Rural Housing Scotland’s “Smart Clachans” concept mentioned in Derek Logie’s commentary on the Thinkpiece could readily tackle

this very challenge. We also need to develop more sophisticated thinking about how rural areas can better absorb development into the landscape instead of seeking to either hide or refuse. A Landscape Officer recently stated that rural development should not seek to be screened or hidden but should be “fit to be seen”. I couldn’t agree more. Well sited and designed development, with intrinsic

high environmental credentials is surely the best way to address rural building in general.

Ultimately Local Place Plans could be the strongest approach to designing new development for rural areas. They

have the advantage of operating at a more granular level with local community buy-in around types and locations of development. This obviously needs focused resourcing and Planning Authorities to be supportive of locally diagnosed solutions.

To return to the Cinderella analogy, my hope is that NPF4 can be the Golden Carriage, giving rural planning its rightful place in driving rural re-population and regeneration, not to mention, allowing 98%³ of the country to play its rightful part in Scotland’s Green recovery. ■

¹ Inherit, Savills. 2020. Rural Planning Policy to 2050: Research to inform Preparation of NPF4
<https://www.gov.scot/publications/rural-planning-policy-2050-research-inform-preparation-npf4/documents/>

² Savills, 2020. The Role of Land in Enabling New Housing Supply in Rural Scotland
<https://www.landcommission.gov.scot/news-events/blog/new-approach-needed-to-deliver-houses-for-rural-scotland>

³ Rural Scotland accounts for 98% of the land mass in Scotland (70% in remote rural and 28% in accessible rural) Rural Scotland Key Facts 2021, Scottish Government
[file:///C:/Users/DMackay/Downloads/rural-scotland-key-facts-2021%20\(3\).pdf](file:///C:/Users/DMackay/Downloads/rural-scotland-key-facts-2021%20(3).pdf)



Article:

Radical Rural Repopulation



Derek Logie, Chief Executive of Rural Housing Scotland

Derek Logie, Chief Executive of Rural Housing Scotland, discusses his thoughts on the thinkpiece from a rural housing perspective.

The RTPi Thinkpiece contains many positive suggestions regarding how planning can support the future development of rural Scotland; support for rural exception site policies, more sophisticated thinking about rural development and rural infrastructure development. It is good to see planners engaging with rural development to suggest “workable ideas” for rural planning.

This is within the context of the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 and the Scottish Government’s NPF4 Position Statement which aim to increase the rural population and “produce policies that positively encourage rural development to help repopulate and sustain rural areas”

However, we need to be careful not to frame what is “workable” through an urban lens, with rural

areas seen as “fragile”; inherently unsustainable due to car use; somewhere where the need for affordable rural housing must be balanced with the need for social sustainability (sic), resource efficiencies, and is dependent on developers contributions.

The Scottish Government’s legislative and policy measures are a response to demographic change which threatens the social sustainability of our rural communities. Change driven by the out migration of young people due to limited affordable housing; and increasingly ageing populations due to endemic longevity and in migration of cash rich older people. These factors are common to many different types of rural area including remote places like South Uist, and accessible locations such

as East Lothian. The social fabric of rural communities in East Lothian and South Uist is fragile due to demographic change. So the identification of “fragile communities” is not a simple process - each will require a different set of rural policies to address their needs. By the way the gentrification of villages in East Lothian is driven by the artificial scarcity of land caused by planning and not having a sufficient land supply ends up with land speculators forcing executive housing development in far from ideal locations.

Despite the assertion of the Thinkpiece that the “demand for development is lower” in rural Scotland there is no lack of demand for housing in rural Scotland; according to recent headlines “Scots (are) paying daft money for rural housing in post-COVID frenzy”.

This escape to the country will continue to drive the gentrification and geriatricification of our rural communities until planning starts to think different about rural.

Far from being inherently unsustainable, rural areas offer opportunities to create housing which encompasses local food production, shared working

space, renewable energy generation, community heat, and mutuality. NPF4 can plan for net zero and, repopulate and sustain rural areas.

In the post COVID world more people are working at home and remote working provides huge opportunities for people living in rural areas as more organisations adopt distributed working models. People don’t need to commute and are less reliant on cars, and rural Scotland already has an extensive

EV charging infrastructure - Orkney alone has 40 charge points. Home charging is easily enabled in rural areas and costs less than £250, whilst utilising a range of renewables to provide EV power is more achievable in a rural context.

And many people, particularly young people, are looking for a connection with the land, they are looking for somewhere where they can grow their own or buy local food, support local jobs and the environment. Rural Housing Scotland have developed Smart Clachan as a model for sustainable rural development. They include sustainable, affordable and community led housing, workspace, growing space, and renewables to enable young to remain/return and counter depopulation and demographic change. Smart Clachan are being created by Comrie Croft in Perthshire and by Stòras Uibhist in South Uist: community organisations building affordable, sustainable and cooperative housing for the 21st Century as a radical route to address the climate emergency and to repopulate rural Scotland. ■

¹ The National Planning Framework 4 and Rural Planning RTPi Scotland Thinkpiece p1

² *ibid* p2

³ *ibid* p3

⁴ Drivers of Out Migration from Rural Scotland - Professor Lynn Jamieson and Dr Leslie Groves, Scottish Government Social Research 2008 p4

BBC Website More young people want to stay in Highlands <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-highlands-islands-46428092>

⁵ Demographic change in the Sparsely Populated Areas of Scotland (1991-2046) Andrew Copus and Jonathan Hopkins, James Hutton Institute 2020

⁶ The National Planning Framework 4 and Rural Planning RTPi Scotland Thinkpiece p2

⁷ *ibid* p3 “Some have argued that the planning system can be overly protective in rural areas, and a general lack of effective housing land constraining supply thereby placing upward pressure on house and land prices in hotspots.... An overly generous land supply can create uncertainty about where homes will be built in a community...”

⁸ *ibid* p4 “In rural areas, there tends to be a greater quantity of available land, but demand for development is lower”

⁹ The National 9th August 2020 <https://www.thenational.scot/news/18638181.scots-paying-daft-money-rural-housing-post-covid-frenzy/>

¹⁰ ChargePlace Scotland App - “This could prove challenging in a rural context...” NPF 4 and Rural Planning RTPi Scotland Thinkpiece p6

¹¹ <https://energysavingtrust.org.uk/grants-and-loans/domestic-charge-point-funding/>

¹² <https://www.nourishscotland.org/projects/access-to-land/> <https://ruralhousingscotland.org/news/smart-clachan-initiative-offers-sustainable-housing-solution-for-uist>

¹³ <https://ruralhousingscotland.org/news/tomduie-clachan-a-pioneering-project-to-help-tackle-%e2%80%a8the-rural-housing-crisis-and-climate-emergency>

Article: Rural Planning in Aberdeenshire- Ploughing Our Own Furrow?



Paul Macari MRTPI,
Head of Service of
Planning & Economy
at Aberdeenshire
Council

Paul Macari, Head of Planning and Environment at Aberdeenshire Council responds to the thinkpiece discussing how rural planning is shaping the future of Aberdeenshire.

Rural planning in Aberdeenshire is a complex process; a wicked issue with no silver bullet. However, after a decade of progressive revisions to rural planning policy and dedicated collaborative relationships, we've gained traction. More importantly we're growing places that meet the needs of our evolving communities.

The challenges of reversing the impacts of rural depopulation, addressing climate change, and living local introduced by the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 and NPF4 should

already enabled Council Services and partner organisations (Scottish Water, NHS etc) to transition to a place-based approach to asset management and investment. In doing so we have aligned capital investment and spatial strategy across Aberdeenshire to facilitate the viability and more importantly the deliverability of development. Consequently, this approach enhances the attractiveness of rural areas to developers and investors alike making the challenge of delivering rural housing and economic growth surmountable.

Land use strategy and infrastructure investment alone are not sufficient to sustain rural communities. Our regional partnerships with Aberdeen City Council and Cairngorms National Park Authority have enabled the co-design and co-delivery of an Aberdeenshire Land Use Strategy,

the survival of traditional industry, the evolution of new economic sectors and the establishment of networks of settlements, services and facilities that enable sustainable local living in rural areas.

Local Place Plans when combined with the Levelling Up, Community Renewal and Just Transition agendas present great opportunity to empower communities to build upon the success of regional partnership working and deliver intervention at a local level. Through the identification of strategic towns connected to a network of outlying rural settlements we can focus our place-based approaches to equip rural communities with access to services, facilities, education, employment, and essential retail. Rural economic development and the creation of employment opportunities capable of sustaining rural communities can also be achieved by investing in the digitisation and modernisation of traditional industry such as agriculture, forestry, fishing, and enterprises that are dependent on their rurality.

Such change to the way we Plan can deliver the ambitions of the Act and NPF4 to promote sustainable local living in rural areas and galvanise the place aspirations of local communities. ■

“Understanding the inter-relationship between population growth and decline, rural economic development, housing, the attainment gap, and infrastructure provision will be integral to the successful development and implementation of future rural planning strategies in Aberdeenshire”

send alarm bells ringing. But if the coronavirus pandemic has taught us anything it's that; out of adversity comes opportunity.

Understanding the inter-relationship between population growth and decline, rural economic development, housing, the attainment gap, and infrastructure provision will be integral to the successful development and implementation of future rural planning strategies in Aberdeenshire.

At a local level quantitative and qualitative data collection and curation will evidence the positive and negative attributes that characterise our rural places driving change in land-use policy formulation. Collecting, curating, and evaluating place data has

successive SDP's and an indicative Regional Spatial Strategy that align with the aspirations of the Aberdeen City Region Deal and Regional Economic Strategy. The key workstreams from these regional collaborations radiate throughout the northeast and permeate through our rural communities creating opportunities for learning, investment, growth, job creation and development. These workstreams include the provision of strategic transportation and digital infrastructure, net zero transition, tourism and food and drink to name a few. The links between rural land use and economic strategy are clearly visible. Digital and physical connectivity increasingly underpin



Article: Restoring Sgoil na Ladies – The Former Industrial Female School



Susan Rabé MRTPI,
Planning Officer in
Development Plans
& Marine Planning at
Comhairle nan Eilean
Siar

Susan Rabé, Planning Officer at Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, discusses is historic rehabilitation project has restored Category-B Listed Lady Matheson’s Seminary to its former splendour, providing affordable housing in the heart of Stornoway Conservation Area.

This project was nominated for the ‘RTPI Excellence in Planning for Heritage and Culture’ category alongside 5 other finalists including Liverpool’s Liver Building, the development, whilst not ultimately winner of the category, has created 6 affordable homes for rent and brought a key historic building back into use.

The Industrial Female School was originally built by Sir James and Lady Matheson in 1848 for the sum of £2,000, boosting the local economy and trades then. The current renovation led by developer Lewis Builders, cost approximately £1 million, funded by the Scottish Government through Hebridean Housing Partnership and the Comhairle, has deployed contemporary and traditional building skills. The development of this ‘difficult to treat’ building with planning intervention and support has created one and two-bedroom homes in the town-centre.

There had been a long-term dialogue endeavouring to find a sustainable use for the property, with people raising concerns over the poor state of the vacant building in the town-centre. The restoration of the building had been identified as a project during public engagement as part of a previous Townscape Heritage Initiative. Due to funding difficulties, this had failed, and no restoration scheme had materialised under the ownership of community landlord, the Stornoway Trust. Fortunately, a restoring purchaser was found, however, feasibility studies indicated that private housing development was unviable due to the low market value of property versus the high cost of construction on the

Islands. Subsequently Planning and Housing Services engaged with the developer to find an innovative funding solution with a positive outcome for the community and the historic environment.

A ‘difficult to treat’ building

The property was in significant disrepair due to neglect, consequently the building had to be taken back to its original stonework, little of the internal fabric could be preserved. Throughout the project Lewis Builders worked closely with Planning and Historic Environment Scotland to ensure that its exterior historic character was secured.

The ultimate scheme included complete removal and replacement of interior fittings to meet modern housing standards, including a new stair and entrance enclosure in the rear courtyard. Salvageable interior features such as doors, architraves, panelling, children’s graffiti, window bay panelling and flagstones were retained and re-used where possible.

Island housing needs

This project aims to reduce inequality by enabling social tenants to live in high-quality accommodation available at an affordable rent. Communities in the Outer Hebrides are becoming increasingly disadvantaged as house prices rise and opportunities for quality, affordable rented accommodation are being reduced by competing markets.

The project challenges the perception of affordable housing as lacking in quality and imagination. Good design should be available for all and should be independent of tenure.

By reversing the decline of this Listed Building and repurposing it as affordable housing, this project attempts to redress the fact that the Outer Hebrides has the second-highest percentage of houses failing Scottish Housing Quality Standard at 54%.

A new legacy

The project delivers tangible benefits for communities by providing inclusive design and affordable accommodation facilities in the town-centre. The superb architecture of the restored building can be enjoyed by the wider community.

Opportunities for apprenticeships in traditional building skills have arisen, and hopefully more restoration projects will benefit from these embedded skills. Now renamed Lady Matheson Court, Sgoil na Ladies has become a flagship project that communities can relate to as a symbol of regeneration in these challenging times. ■



After restoration



Article: Wild Land Assessments - Take a Walk on the Wild Side

Catherine Harry CMLI, NatureScot Landscape Adviser, looks at wild land and the NatureScot technical guidance ‘Assessing impacts on Wild Land Areas’

Wild land is a hot topic in the rural landscape and planning world, and its sensitivity to development is widely acknowledged. How can we help inform decisions to take account of wild land in a clear and robust way?

In late 2020 NatureScot published ‘Assessing impacts on Wild Land Areas – Technical Guidance’ to help inform decisions on land use change. NatureScot have over the past couple of decades produced a range of research, policy and guidance on wild land areas (WLAs). These recognise that our perception of naturalness, ruggedness, remoteness and lack of modern artefacts and land use found in these areas (the physical attributes), result in less tangible perceptual responses (a sense of sanctuary, solitude, risk, awe, arresting or inspiring qualities and the fulfilment from physical challenge). WLAs are the most extensive areas in Scotland where these aspects come together, in varying degrees of wildness, to evoke a sense of being away from the trappings of modern day life.

The guidance augments the widely applied ‘Guidance for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment’ (GLVIA). It is similarly aimed at landscape and planning professionals, to aid both those undertaking an assessment and those required to make decisions on the findings. It focusses on the attributes and responses that are most strongly expressed and evoke the special sense of place found in Scotland’s wildest places, place-making at its most rural.

Similar to GLVIA, it advocates assessing effects by following a set of logical steps:

defining a reasonable study area; verifying the baseline; assessing the sensitivity and magnitude of effects; and finally judging the overall significance. However the majority of the assessment requires the application of professional judgement which GLVIA acknowledge is a “particularly challenging” aspect of assessment. While there is a generally unspoken assumption that WLAs are sensitive to any built form, the assessor’s role is to consider, and crucially provide evidence on, if the development may be accommodated and how it may affect the qualities of the WLA.

Adopting a common approach to the assessment allows effort to be focused on guiding the right development, in the right place and of the right design. It should ensure that there is less time spent on challenging differing different methodologies and approaches (which can be the case particularly where a lengthy appeal process may be required). During the planning process for projects that may significantly affect the qualities of WLAs, we therefore encourage assessors to discuss with us key findings to ensure a focused assessment. This might include:

- Focussing on effects that are likely to be significant – it’s not just about all effects
- Relating the effects to the specific qualities of the area
- Understanding how proposals outside of wild land areas might affect them

- Considering what type and scale of change might result in a significant effect (from hydro schemes to space ports)
- Taking account of mitigation and opportunities for enhancing wildness

In support of the guidance a toolkit of material is available to aid assessors in their consideration of effects on WLAs. This includes a Webinar recording that introduces the approach (particularly useful for those new to the process), detailed descriptions of each of the 42 wild land areas (drawing out their key characteristics and qualities), and some good practice examples. All this information can be found on our website www.nature.scot. We welcome further good practice examples of wild land assessments that follow our 2020 guidance to illustrate the range of applications where the guidance facilitates the decision making process and supports good siting and design. Contact us if you would like to showcase your assessment. ■



Catherine Harry
CMLI, Landscape
Adviser at NatureScot



Article: Scotland's National Parks

Bob Reid, Development Director at Wildland Ltd, discusses the merits of establishing new national parks as pledged in the recently published SNP-Green party shared policy programme.

Do we need more? We already have Loch Lomond & Trossachs. We have Cairngorms too. These national parks were designated after decades of fiercely contested debate. One of the last substantive publications from the late Countryside Commission for Scotland was a report called 'The Mountain Areas of Scotland' which recommended the creation of National Parks in Scotland. That was in 1990, and I had a ringside seat. From 1990 to 1994 I was President of the Mountaineering Council of Scotland (as well as being a professional town and country planner).

In 1991, I travelled to the USA to visit the Rocky Mountain National Parks, courtesy of the Winston Churchill Memorial Trust. My purpose was to look at the arrangements that existed in those parks and experience how they affected the visitor to their parks. It was a salutary experience and led to the firm belief that 'light touch' visitor management

was the key. The in-vogue terminology at the academic level was 'subliminal' visitor management. You didn't notice that you were being managed and guided. Those principles contrasted markedly with some of the more interventionist practices I witnessed, such as the 'permit' systems which some parks operated.

Our new Scottish Parliament had National Parks high on its agenda following its first meeting in 1999. The National Parks (Scotland) Act was approved less than a year later. The sense of delivering a long absent component of Civic Scotland was immense. National Parks had after all been invented by Scottish emigré John Muir, son of Dunbar, and commemorated just along the coast from Holyrood. Yet the USA had designated the



Bob Reid MRTPI,
Development Director
at Wildland Limited

“With twenty years’ experience of Cairngorm and Loch Lomond national parks can we honestly answer the question whether our model has worked well?”

first National Park ever, over a century earlier in 1890; namely Yosemite National Park. Scotland was clearly late to the party.

There's perhaps some irony in the fact that the Scottish Parliament also saw fit to enact the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003, in its first term. In many respects the LRAS2003 brought about changes across the whole country, that national parks normally delivered. The thirteen national parks south of the border exist in part to deliver access for recreation in areas that are not renowned for freedom of access. So that aspect of National Park purpose is less relevant in Scotland, because our comprehensive approach has been accepted and universally welcomed. Indeed, it is hailed as one of the best in the world and, in contrast with National Parks, we can claim to be in the vanguard of such work.

However, in delivering both Acts, in its first term, the Scottish Parliament did something truly historic and significant. Those two Acts of Parliament stand monument to the ambitions of Civic Scotland at the time. There are few other Acts of parliament from that first term which stand out as being quite so memorable. We did have a new planning act in 2006, I seem to recall, but it has already been overtaken by another.

The genesis of this debate does go back much further and is steeped in reticence. The 1945 Ramsay Committee recommended eight National Parks in Scotland. I have commented elsewhere that the 1949 National Parks Act in England must have looked tempting from north of the border, but what transpired was a cold shoulder that persisted for nearly half a century. In 1974 the Countryside Commission for Scotland infamously decided 'we do not recommend that national parks in the internationally accepted sense are necessary to conserve landscape in Scotland' [A Park System for Scotland, CCS, 1974]. Officialdom continued 'there is a school of thought that the mere act of designation without the most stringent control policies effecting development and visitor use contains the seeds of destruction of the very resource it has sought to protect'. Whilst that sentiment is contextually understandable it is without doubt laden with an 'elitism' which just looks so misplaced when viewed from the 2020s. The whole ethos of our Scottish Nations Parks boils down to two simple terms. The first is 'National' – i.e., for the nation, of the nation, by the nation. These parks must have an unimpeachable importance at the Scottish level and be important to Scotland and to the people of Scotland, as a whole. The term 'iconic' springs to mind. That is not for one moment to be viewed as ignoring the local folk who live in our National Parks. The population of the Cairngorms NP is 17,000 (in

4,528 km²) and Loch Lomond & Trossachs NP is 15,600 (in 1865 km²). Those statistics just add perspective in the context of a country of 5.5 million people and 77,910 sq kilometres.

The second term is 'Park'. It is a concept we can all understand. A park is an area set aside for human enjoyment. We build them, plant them and hopefully maintain them in our towns & cities because we know that wall to wall urbanity oppresses the population that lives there. And humanity was building parks in our cities long before we looked to our precious countryside. Olmstead & Vaux won the competition to build Central Park, New York, in 1857 and began work soon thereafter. That was thirty-three years before Yosemite was designated. In a planning magazine such as this, the 'why' question should not need labouring but forgive an indulgence from a long sweep of such work. My own career started in earnest forty years ago in the east end of Glasgow. The question of levels of deprivation often arose. The worst in Western Europe and rationale if any were needed for those two terms National and Park.

Consideration has now arisen again about whether we need more National Parks in Scotland. The SCNP, APRS and NTS and others have combined to suggest we do need more. They have suggested seven candidate areas. The move to suggest seven candidate areas is a clever policy device insofar as it diverts the debate from why to where, and to how many. There is one question however that has not really been posed or answered. With twenty years' experience of Cairngorm and Loch Lomond national parks can we honestly answer the question whether our model has worked well? Having campaigned vigorously for their introduction, it must be said that there were high hopes from the outset. My view today is that both are here to stay though the experience of these past twenty

years suggests the task they were set was a bigger 'ask' than anyone imagined at the time. The political world in which they exist has not been straightforward by any yardstick.

In Cairngorm, the predominance of intensive grouse moorland persists. Working on Mar Lodge Estate in the late 90s, taking early 'rewilding' steps it remains astonishing the degree to which opposition to such work persists in Upper Deeside. The National Park seems powerless to carry that core, nature conservation message to an area which is so depleted of biodiversity.

In Loch Lomond and Trossachs the wealthy property interests within the Park have ensured that the proverbial great unwashed of Glasgow do no harm. Harsh words. But I well remember the debates about the powers that the Parks should have. These included powers to acquire land and provide services. So before wild camping was banned all the most basic visitor management expertise says first ensure you provide decent camp sites for the ordinary visitor. It could easily be witnessed in action in the Lake District whose earliest actions once designated in 1951 was to organise plenty of camping facilities for the ordinary visitors of the time.

Should we embark upon designating more National Parks? The rationale set out by the Campaign for National Parks is set out [here](#): And should you wish to indulge in that 'balloon debate' about the seven candidates put forward? You can see the list [here](#): I will conclude my 'jury's out' view on a more supportive note. We should all be better for the existence of more 'National Parks' for all the reason I've hinted at above and for the role they could play in all that has been agreed at COP26. But..... I must also observe that conspicuous by their absence from the list are Assynt and Skye. ■



Article:

GrowBiz Scotland

Jackie Brierton, CEO of Growbiz, looks at the inception of the charity and discusses the wide range of services it now provides to rural businesses.



Jackie Brierton, CEO
of GrowBiz

GrowBiz started as a small charity in Eastern Perthshire - founded by a group of local people in 2007 to support micro-businesses and social enterprises, across all sectors in rural areas. From one enterprise facilitator and a voluntary board of trustees, it now contracts a 25-strong team (who are all self-employed) to provide a range of services to individuals and groups starting or developing rural enterprises.

GrowBiz's unique community-based approach creates self-sustaining networks and is effective in raising awareness of enterprise and business potential across a diverse range of people and groups. As a leader in innovative rural enterprise support, the organisation actively advocates for change, and its vision is to promote and

support the development of a sustainable and entrepreneurial post-covid rural economy. It now provides support to rural businesses anywhere in Scotland, with specific services provided in Perth and Kinross and the Cairngorms National Park area.

Since the initial pandemic crisis started in March last year, GrowBiz has been able to support more than 800 people who were struggling to keep their enterprises afloat. Its team has ensured that telephone and online coaching and mentoring, and a wide range of peer learning and networking sessions, have been available to anyone who needed help, and latterly this has included increasing numbers of people, many of them under 30, who want to start a new enterprise or

become self-employed for the first time. This is sometimes because of necessity (ie unemployment or redundancy), but is also often an individual who wants to use a skill or talent they've developed, or to develop a social enterprise to provide essential local services.

One of the more positive things to emerge from the Covid crisis has been the increased 'shop local' drive in many communities – and

to encourage this within rural communities, GrowBiz established Rural Enterprise Directory Scotland (REDS) – which is an online map and directory highlighting the diversity of businesses operating across rural and island Scotland.

Since Covid, the way in which many small business owners have accessed

learning opportunities and increased their digital capability and know-how has altered significantly. When the crisis started, GrowBiz quickly adapted an in-person focused learning programme to online learning.

Many rural businesses have enthusiastically embraced online learning despite the inevitable and infrequent connectivity issues many experience. Feedback says that participating in learning sessions online enables participants to work more efficiently and in the long term will save time and obviate the need to travel, with the

environmental benefits this brings.

Video technology has enabled businesses to continue to trade remotely and in addition to providing e-commerce selling, has also proven invaluable to many service businesses. Dance classes, speech therapists, photographers and even dog trainers are just a few examples of enterprises which have successfully managed to flip their businesses to online.

And the creative community who would normally attend trade fairs, craft markets and open studio events have had to find new routes to market and ways to connect with their audience and customers. In Perth and Kinross, GrowBiz has developed Perthshire Artisans – a 'smart village' portal with a curated group of more than 30 artisans.

Despite the many challenges of the last 18 months, there is a high level of entrepreneurial energy in rural areas – with a growth in areas such as responsible tourism, niche manufacturing, digital design and health and social care.

But business and social isolation continues to be a real issue for rural enterprises, and people want to do more than just learn. They want to connect, hear from others and feel heard themselves. GrowBiz's relational model of support seems to provide what many businesses in rural areas are looking for.

For more information on GrowBiz and REDS: www.growbiz.co.uk. Information on Perthshire Artisans at: www.perthshire-artisans.scot. ■

“Despite the many challenges of the last 18 months, there is a high level of entrepreneurial energy in rural areas – with a growth in areas such as responsible tourism, niche manufacturing, digital design and health and social care.”



Update: Heads of Planning Scotland

I hope you were all able to catch up on some of COP26. Planners and Planning have an important role in addressing Climate Change. It is important that we have stronger planning policy to affect change, but also develop our knowledge and skills further to better understand the challenges and opportunities.

HoPS welcomes the publication of draft NPF4. It is important that HoPS, and others, carefully consider the draft and provide a robust response to assist the Scottish Government shape the final version. No policy plan gets it right on 1st draft, but we can collectively assist across the planning profession in shaping policies that are deliverable through the planning system. Planning is discretionary and to affect change that must happen, this is likely to be better placed through Building Regulations or other legislative means. NPF4 will be part of the Development Plan. Perhaps a title change is needed to reflect the Plan status rather than a framework?

The Performance and Fees Regulations is anticipated soon. There has never been a more important time in which to properly resource planning authorities. HoPS have been seeking a fundamental review of fees for over a decade, with the introduction of Planning Performance Framework 10 years ago which demonstrate the improved performance of planning authorities, now is the time to address resourcing. The proposed fees would provide an interim position to full cost recovery. HoPS is seeking for the Scottish Government to commit to a timescale on full cost recovery, which will also provide time to discuss across sectors and has written to Ministers. Ensuring there are different pathways for people into the planning profession is crucial, to ensure that we have the workforce to help address climate change and assist in growing Scotland's economy.

HoPs looks forward to engaging across sectors on the draft NPF4 and to securing further resourcing for Planning Authorities. Have a lovely Christmas and New Year when it comes. ■

Pam Ewan, Head of Planning at Fife Council

Update: Planning Aid Scotland

Two questions ...

First: how much time do you spend scrolling through social media? Just a few minutes a day can stack up.

Second: Is it rewarding?

My name is Fleur. I recently became Volunteers and Youth Programmes Manager at **PAS** (Planning Aid Scotland). My background is in the third sector, volunteer management and teaching. I studied at St Andrews, worked at Cancer Research and volunteered with YoungScot. One of the many reasons I am delighted to be at PAS is the chance to work alongside an amazing bunch of volunteers.

PAS volunteers come from all sorts of backgrounds and volunteering fits around their lifestyles. There are four main ways you can get involved: Advice Service, Projects, Training and CPD Events. You're welcome to do all of them.

Chartered planners from all sectors can volunteer in the **ADVICE SERVICE**, helping the public with planning. From home alterations to appeals - and everything in between - you can expect a wide range of enquiries. You can empower others with your knowledge from the comfort of your own home.

You can create a legacy by volunteering on **PROJECTS**. You use your skills and expertise to help others gain a deeper understanding. We recently finished the **Sustaining Choices** project, helping isolated and disadvantaged communities across Scotland produce their own active travel action plans. PAS volunteers facilitated discussions with communities to gather valuable information about the areas. Whether you're looking for a dab of confidence or wanting to do something that matters, Projects are a brilliant way to get involved.

You can use your skills and knowledge to deliver **TRAINING** events to upskill Elected Members, Community Councils and other community groups about planning. PAS has also in recent years delivered training for Access Panels, Cycling Scotland and many other community groups.

CPD EVENTS: Our volunteers are also invited to attend CPD events. We run events on various aspects of planning such as the Place Standard tool; and soft skills such as Facilitation and Public Speaking. You can develop your skills for PAS volunteering and take them with you in your professional career. It's also good for your CV!

Becoming a PAS volunteer - and maybe swapping a little bit of that social media scrolling - can boost your career, connect you with other professionals and make all the difference to people's lives.

Get in touch if you would like to know more: fleur@pas.org.uk, www.pas.org.uk, [@PAS_Tweets](https://twitter.com/PAS_Tweets). ■



Fleur Dijkman, PAS
Volunteer Manager





Update: Scottish Government

A regular update on planning at the national level from the **Scottish Government's** Planning and Architecture Division.

Nearing the end of 2021 and it has been another busy year for planning across Scotland, and it has been no different for us at the Scottish Government. Here we give an update on news and activity over recent weeks across some of the workstreams of the Planning and Architecture Division, and point to what you can expect to see soon.

National Planning Framework 4

We published our draft of [Scotland's Fourth National Planning Framework 'Scotland 2045'](#) on 10 November, and at the same time laid the draft in the Scottish Parliament for up to 120 days of parliamentary scrutiny. This is a significant milestone in the production

of NPF4, which will ultimately replace the current NPF and Scottish Planning Policy and take on a new enhanced status as part of the development plan.

Through NPF4, we propose a turning point for planning in Scotland; to set a bold and ambitious strategy for our future places, facing up to the challenges of the twin climate and nature crises and to our recovery from the pandemic. The Draft NPF4 sets out an overarching spatial strategy for Scotland in 2045, through our journey to net zero, and proposes 18 national developments to support the strategy. It also contains a revised suite of planning policies that will help achieve the key themes of sustainable,

liveable, productive and distinctive places. Development of the draft has built on two previous rounds of consultation and extensive engagement, along with the indicative regional spatial strategies produced by groupings of planning authorities.

We really welcome the high level of interest in NPF4 and are looking forward to some exciting discussions about Scotland's future through the [public consultation](#), which is now open and will run to the end of March 2022. You can look out for opportunities to get involved and access a range of materials to accompany the draft NPF4 and the consultation at: www.transformingplanning.scot/national-planning-framework/

Coronavirus (COVID-19): Relaxing Planning Control

Since March 2020, the Scottish Government has encouraged a relaxation of planning control where doing so can help businesses and services to diversify and continue to operate within our communities during the pandemic. In effect, we asked planning authorities to adopt a pragmatic approach and to exercise their discretion, particularly through choosing not to take enforcement action and allow for temporary breaches of planning control that are considered to be reasonable in response to the challenges presented by living through the pandemic. In a letter issued on 8 November by Planning Minister Tom Arthur MSP and Chief Planner Fiona Simpson, we advised that this temporary guidance remains in place for the time being and that we aim to withdraw it at the end of September 2022. Additional information is contained in the [letter itself](#).

Coronavirus (COVID-19) Legislation: Emergency Permitted Development Rights

In response to the pandemic, temporary permitted development rights (PDR) were created in 2020 to allow development by, or on behalf of, local authority or health service bodies, which allow the erection of temporary buildings or the temporary change of use of existing buildings or land for facilities associated with the pandemic. Examples include the provision of additional accommodation for patients/healthcare workers on hospital sites, the use of some public buildings as testing centres, temporary hospital provision etc.

Further temporary PDR were introduced in early 2021 to add similar provisions allowing for the use of Crown land for purposes related to the pandemic; for example, the establishment of drive-in test centres and vaccination centres.

In both cases, the intention of the temporary PDR is to facilitate a rapid and appropriate response to the pandemic by removing potential delay due to the need to secure planning permission. Both PDR have been used and continue to be used in a number of locations across Scotland.

In both cases the PDR are time limited, and had been due to expire on 31 December 2021 and with a requirement that the activities cease by a certain date or after a certain period, with the land being restored to its previous use and temporary buildings removed, unless planning permission was sought and granted for their retention. [Further legislation was laid in the Scottish Parliament on 12 November 2021 to extend the provisions of the emergency PDR to mid-2022.](#)

Notification direction to accompany the current review of the role of incineration in the waste hierarchy in Scotland

Further to the Minister for Green Skills, Circular Economy and Biodiversity's announcement of a review of the role of incineration in the waste hierarchy, on 17 November Ministers issued a [temporary notification direction](#). The direction requires planning authorities to make Ministers aware of any new planning applications that involve incineration facilities, and also to notify Ministers if they are minded to grant planning permission for incineration facilities. The purpose is to ensure that both the chair of the independent review and Scottish Ministers are aware of any ongoing and new planning applications that are submitted during the review process, and to give Ministers the opportunity to consider case by case whether to call in any applications that may raise national interests.

Planning Reform Programme

We recently published an updated [Transforming Planning in Practice work programme](#) for implementation of the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 and progressing wider planning reforms after much of the work had been paused during the pandemic. The updated work programme summarises progress to date and sets out a new schedule for the remainder of the implementation of the 2019 Act. Our intention is that most sections should be in force by the end of 2022.

In October, we laid the [Town and Country Planning \(Local Place Plans\) \(Scotland\) Regulations 2021](#) in the Scottish Parliament, due to come into force on 22 January 2022. Coming next, we will soon publish consultations on development planning regulations and guidance and on the arrangements for open space strategies and play sufficiency assessments.

You can keep up-to-date and view all planning reform consultations and legislation at www.transformingplanning.scot/planning-reform/.

Digital Planning

Work on our digital transformation programme is progressing, and last month we awarded a contract to Storm ID to explore and produce a prototype for a single payment system and fee calculator for planning and building standards applications. We anticipate this will result in the development of a full solution to be used initially within the current eDevelopment service.

Over the last few months we have made great use of GIS mapping and interactivity as an integral part of the production and publication of the draft NPF4. We are now

in process of awarding the first group of PlaceBuilder community engagement tool subscriptions. These coincide with the introduction of the Local Place Plan regulations and guidance early in 2022.

In other areas of the digital planning programme, our Programme Board has met for a second time, we are shortly to appoint a Technical Design Authority and Data Advisory Group, plus a further procurement opportunity was issued recently to explore the long term website brand and access, where the digital transformation will sit.

You can keep up-to-date with progress on this programme on our Digital Planning LinkedIn page and at: www.transformingplanning.scot/digital-planning/.

Staying In Touch

For the latest messages from the Planning and Architecture Division, follow us on Twitter [@ScotGovPlanning](#) and [@DigiPlanningSG](#) and register to receive our Planning and Architecture news updates.



Update: RTPI Update



Funding Planning Service

Ahead of the 21-22 Scottish Budget, RTPI Scotland has published an analysis to assess the resource needs of the planning system over the 2021 – 2026 Parliamentary term.

In total it is estimated that to undertake its core statutory functions the planning system requires at least £86 million over the parliamentary term. This would equate to an approximately 40% net revenue increase to the planning system over the next five years. The work identified that whilst much of this resource can be met with an increase in fees, over £24 million needs funded from the Scottish Budget over the parliamentary term.

Following on from the publication of the research, RTPI Scotland and HOPS sent a joint statement to Finance Secretary Kate Forbes asking her to address this in the forthcoming budget.

Policy Consultations

RTPI Scotland have submitted responses to the following consultations and requests for written evidence:

- Call for evidence on the ability of communities to influence planning decisions for onshore windfarms
- Call for evidence on the Aquaculture regulatory framework review

Consultations currently under consideration are:

- Draft Heat Networks Delivery Plan. Deadline 13th December
- Scotland's National Transport Strategy Impact Assessments. Deadline 5th January
- Local Government Housing and Planning Committee draft NPF4 call for evidence. Deadline 10th January
- Onshore Wind Policy Statement. Deadline 21st January
- Review of the Land Rights and Responsibilities Statement. Deadline 28th January
- Developing with Nature guidance NatureScot consultation. Deadline 4th February
- Guiding principles on the environment: draft statutory guidance. Deadline 8th February

Scottish Young Planner of the Year

Warmest congratulations to Jane Tennant on being announced as the inaugural Scottish Young Planner of the Year at the RTPI Scotland Annual conference. The judging panel – Barbara Cummins, Convenor of RTPI Scotland; Pam Ewen, Chair of Heads of planning Scotland; John McNairney who recently retired as Chief Planner in Scottish Government; and Ryan Walker the current UK Young Planner of the Year said “Jane, like many in planning, did not choose it as her first career, in fact she freely admits she did not know that planning existed. She started in sales and took several years before she found planning through going to university to study environmental management. However, she has truly found her niche and that background means she is never afraid to speak up - she says herself that it has been life changing. Jane has actively gone out, taken risks and made things happen for herself and she is now positively evangelical about planning, speaking to students in guest lecture spots at Glasgow University, inspiring the next generation. Jane is an inspiring and outstanding role model for anyone starting or considering a career in planning.”

This award seeks out the brightest RTPI members in the early stages of their careers. Potential candidates can work in any area of the industry. We look for outstanding Scottish Young Planners who can demonstrate a contribution to planning or significant career achievements in recent years. Entrants must be in the first 10 years of post-qualification experience and be a current member of the RTPI.



Thanks to Jan Lourens of TetraTech for making the announcement and for sponsoring the RTPI nations and regions awards.

- NHS Scotland climate emergency and sustainability strategy 2022 to 2026 - draft: consultation. Deadline 22nd February
- Draft National Planning Framework 4. Deadline 31st March

President's Visit

RTPI President Wei Yang visited New Lanark where she was delighted to meet New Lanark Trust Chair of the Board James Pow, Chief Executive Iain MacKenzie, Head of Heritage Jane Masters, and their colleagues. She very much enjoyed Jane's very insightful tour of the site. We look forward to having more future collaborations.

Communications

The following press releases have been issued:

- 18 November - RTPI Scotland and Heads of Planning Scotland Joint Statement to Kate Forbes MSP <https://www.rtpi.org.uk/news/2021/november/rtpi-scotland-and-heads-of-planning-scotland-joint-statement-to-kate-forbes-msp/>
- 10 November - RTPI Scotland hails opportunity for a national debate on planning for the future of the country <https://www.rtpi.org.uk/news/2021/november/rtpi-scotland-hails-opportunity-for-a-national-debate-on-planning-for-the-future-of-the-country/>

Social Media

The @RTPIScotland Twitter account has 4727 followers and the @ConvenorRTPI account has 1661. ■

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