

Item: 6

Development and Infrastructure Committee: 4 February 2020.

Regional Spatial Strategy/National Planning Framework 4.

Report by Executive Director of Development and Infrastructure.

1. Purpose of Report

To consider participation in a regional partnership to work towards preparation of a Regional Spatial Strategy and to provide input into development of National Planning Framework 4.

2. Recommendations

The Committee is invited to note:

2.1.

That the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 sets out a requirement for all local authorities, either individually or collectively, to produce a Regional Spatial Strategy.

2.2.

That the Chief Planner has written to all local authorities offering an opportunity for regional partnerships to work collaboratively with the Scottish Government to develop early thinking on strategic planning and also to provide early input into development of National Planning Framework 4.

2.3.

That the Scottish Government has confirmed that each planning authority will be offered a grant of £5,000 from the Planning Review budget to assist them in considering how to take regional strategies forward.

2.4.

That the Scottish Government has commenced early work on preparing National Planning Framework 4 and that in summer/autumn 2020 following a period of extensive engagement a draft National Planning Framework 4 will be published for public consultation.

It is recommended:

2.5.

That the Council actively engages in preparation of National Planning Framework 4 as an individual local authority rather than through a regional working group of local authorities.

2.6.

That, following publication of statutory guidance on regional planning by the Scottish Government, expected by the end of 2021, the Executive Director of Development and Infrastructure should submit a report, to the next available meeting of the Committee, on preparation of an Orkney Regional Spatial Strategy.

3. Background

3.1.

The Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 sets out a requirement for all local authorities, either individually or collectively, to produce a Regional Spatial Strategy.

3.2.

The provisions to prepare Regional Spatial Strategies were added late in the Planning Bill parliamentary process, so the detail is limited. However, the Regional Spatial Strategy is to identify:

- The need for strategic development.
- The outcomes to which strategic development will contribute.
- Priorities for the delivery of strategic development.
- Proposed locations for strategic development.

3.2.1.

“Strategic development” means development that is likely to have a significant impact on future development within the area of more than one planning authority.

3.3.

The Regional Spatial Strategy will not be part of the “development plan” however preparation of the National Planning Framework and Local Development Plans is to “have regard to” an adopted Regional Spatial Strategy.

4. Regional Working Groups

4.1.

The Scottish Government has indicated it will work with planning authorities and other stakeholders to explore and develop approaches to regional spatial strategies with a view to informing statutory guidance to be published by the end of 2021.

4.2.

Ahead of guidance being prepared the Chief Planner has written to all local authorities offering an opportunity for regional partnerships to work collaboratively with the Scottish Government to develop early thinking on strategic planning and also to provide early input into development of National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4).

4.3.

A collaborative event held by the Scottish Government in Stirling in October 2019 explored the arrangements for regional spatial strategies including what strategic groupings of local authorities might be appropriate to engage in preparation of NPF4 and provide a platform for a future regional spatial strategy.

4.4.

Since then there has been discussion between the various Highlands and Islands authorities at an officer level as to whether it would be appropriate to set up a regional grouping. Whilst there was support from Highland Council to establish a regional grouping covering the Highlands and Islands, other local authorities were less enthusiastic and indeed Shetland Islands Council has formally indicated to the Scottish Government that it does not see any benefit in participating in a regional grouping. In support of that conclusion Shetlands Islands Council cited the fact that the Islands (Scotland) Act 2018 has been enacted and subsequently the Islands Plan has been published as a strategic document which highlights areas of common interest and concern for the island authorities.

4.5.

Regional working can be effective in instances where it will deliver better outcomes than working in isolation; it provides a stronger voice to lobby and influence; it offers potential for mutual benefits, or where it reduces duplication of effort or provides a more consistent service. It is not clear that establishment of a Highlands and Islands Regional Planning grouping or Strategy would achieve any of these outcomes. The island authorities are not spatially linked, and experience suggests in establishing such regional geographies there is a risk that more remoter communities will get squeezed out when there is a large urban centre such as Inverness included. Regional planning issues for the Islands are more about how the Islands relate to surrounding marine regions (Shetland and the North Coast in the Orkney context) and how land and marine developments interact. It is concluded that there would be little to be gained from Orkney participating in a Regional Working Group at the current time.

4.6.

The lack of participation in a Regional Working Group is not an indication that it is not appropriate to prepare a Regional Spatial Strategy, but such a strategy would cover Orkney rather than being part of a Highlands and Islands Spatial Strategy. Further consideration would need to be given to this in light of emerging Scottish Government guidance and potential future development projects in Orkney which meet the definition of “strategic development”.

5. National Planning Framework 4

5.1.

The Scottish Government has commenced early work on preparing NPF4, which, as well as providing a long-term spatial strategy for Scotland to 2050, will also

incorporate Scottish Planning Policy and will have enhanced status as part of the statutory development plan.

5.2.

Following a period of extensive engagement early in 2020, a draft NPF4 will be published for public consultation in Summer/Autumn 2020. Taking account of representations made, the draft will be revised and presented to the Scottish Parliament for approval which is anticipated before the end of 2021.

5.3.

To start the early engagement stage, the Scottish Government have opened a “Call for Ideas” which runs until the 31 March 2020. They want ideas on what Scotland will be like in 2050 and the changes needed to achieve the vision which is established. It will be important to ensure that Orkney and any future strategic projects in the county feature in the emerging NPF4. Orkney features prominently in the current NPF3 with Orkney and Pentland Firth identified as an area of co-ordinated action in respect marine renewable energy development; recognition made of plans for a transshipment container hub in Scapa Flow which could benefit the opening up of northern trade routes; the role of key coastal and islands hubs such as Kirkwall and the identification of Scapa Flow as a key port, the need to capitalise on world-class environments such as the World Heritage Site; and the Orkney-Scottish Mainland electricity grid connection identified as a “national development”.

5.4.

The Scottish Government is organising a programme of roadshows across the country to provide opportunities to consider the development of NPF4. Unfortunately, none of the roadshows are to be held in Orkney. However, discussions are taking place with a view to holding a local facilitated event with stakeholders to gather ideas on the scope and content of NPF4. The costs of holding a workshop would be covered through the grant funding provided by the Scottish Government who have also indicated that they would be willing to send an official to the event.

6. Links to Council Plan

6.1.

The proposals in this report support and contribute to improved outcomes for communities as outlined in the Council Plan strategic priority of Quality of Life.

6.2.

The proposals in this report relate directly to Priority 5.19 – Establish and implement terrestrial and marine planning policy and environmental monitoring systems.

7. Links to Local Outcomes Improvement Plan

The proposals in this report support and contribute to improved outcomes for communities as outlined in the Local Outcomes Improvement Plan priorities of Strong Communities and a Vibrant Economy.

8. Financial Implications

The Scottish Government has confirmed that it is offering each planning authority a grant of £5,000 from the Planning Review budget to help them consider how to take regional strategies forward.

9. Legal Aspects

The production of a Regional Spatial Strategy will assist the Council in adhering to its obligations under the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019.

10. Contact Officers

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