

Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee

30th Meeting, 2022 (Session 6)

Tuesday, 29 November 2022

National Planning Framework 4

Introduction

1. On 8 November 2022 the Scottish Government laid the revised draft of fourth National Planning Framework (NPF4).¹
2. This was accompanied by an explanatory report, which provides a summary of the representations made to the consultation on the draft National Planning Framework 4 and sets out the changes made in response to those representations.²
3. In addition, the Scottish Government laid a document setting out a delivery programme for NPF4.³
4. The Scottish Government also wrote to the Committee on 8 November explaining how the revised draft has responded to the Committee's report.⁴
5. At its meetings on 22 November the Committee took evidence from stakeholders. The Committee is now taking evidence from Minister for Public Finance, Planning and Community Wealth.

Background

6. The National Planning Framework is the spatial expression of Scottish Government policy.

¹ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/national-planning-framework-4-revised-draft/>

² <https://www.gov.scot/publications/national-planning-framework-4-explanatory-report/>

³ <https://www.transformingplanning.scot/media/3136/national-planning-framework-4-delivery-programme-for-publication-2-november-2022.pdf>

⁴ <https://www.parliament.scot/chamber-and-committees/committees/current-and-previous-committees/session-6-local-government-housing-and-planning/correspondence/2022/laying-of-npf4>

7. The Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997, as amended by the Planning etc. (Scotland) Act 2006 and the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019, provides the legislative framework for the National Planning Framework (NPF).

8. It requires that a strategy for spatial development be created and should include a statement of what Scottish Ministers consider to be priorities for development. It should also contain—

- Targets for the use of land in different areas of Scotland for housing
- An assessment of how proposed national developments and the strategy as a whole will impact on the achievement of greenhouse gas emission targets;
- An indication of how the strategy will meet housing needs improve health and wellbeing repopulate rural areas improve equality and secure "positive effects for biodiversity".

Parliamentary scrutiny of the draft NPF4

9. The Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 (as amended by the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019) sets out the procedure for Parliamentary scrutiny of the NPF4. It—

- provides that a draft of the NPF must be laid in Parliament for 120 days, not including recesses of more than 4 days, for scrutiny;
- states Parliament must approve by resolution “a draft” of the revised NPF;
- prevents Scottish Ministers from laying a revised draft NPF until they have—
 - Consulted in accordance with the participation statement;
 - Laid a “copy of the draft” of the revised framework in Parliament;
 - Had regard to representations of the draft revised framework received within the 120 days
 - Provided Parliament with an explanatory statement explaining how they consulted and took into account the representations received within the 120 days.

10. In the early part of this year the Committee applied detailed scrutiny to the original draft of NPF4, taking oral evidence, working with partners to engage with stakeholders and communities at informal events, undertaking visits and issuing a wide-ranging call for views. The Committee also worked closely with the Health and Sport Committee, Net-Zero, Energy and Transport Committee and Rural Affairs, Islands and Natural Environment Committee to ensure that all aspects of NPF4 were scrutinised.

11. Informed by this work the Committee published its report on 30 March⁵ 2022 and then subsequently held a committee debate⁶ on it.

12. In its report the Committee welcomed the ambition of NPF4, but questioned the capacity of the current planning system to deliver on its laudable ambitions. In particular, the Committee questioned whether planning departments are sufficiently well resourced. The Committee also questioned whether in some respects NPF4 provided sufficient clarity to planners to give proper effect to it and whether it was sufficiently well joined up with other strategies.

13. Further information on the Committee's scrutiny of the original draft of NPF4 can be found on the Committee's website.⁷

Parliamentary scrutiny of the revised draft NPF4

14. The Scottish Government has committed to giving the Parliament six weeks to consider the revised draft of NPF4.

15. This process will conclude with Parliament being invited to approve the revised draft of NPF4.

16. At its meeting on 22 November, the Committee took evidence on the revised draft of NPF4 and the delivery programme. In addition, the Committee has committed to undertaking an annual review of NPF4 and at last week's meeting it explored with stakeholders the issues it should be monitoring as part of that annual reporting process.

17. At that meeting the Committee heard from:

- Heads of Planning Scotland
- RTPI Scotland
- Planning Democracy
- Scottish Environment Link
- Community Land Scotland
- Scottish Renewables
- Homes for Scotland

⁵<https://digitalpublications.parliament.scot/Committees/Report/LGHP/2022/3/30/06f7ad35-d92e-4558-ab1b-d94d9ef6c230-1#3d8e7871-9e32-4c97-b2d8-4b173c733f32.dita>

⁶<https://www.parliament.scot/chamber-and-committees/official-report/search-what-was-said-in-parliament/meeting-of-parliament-19-04-2022?meeting=13694&iob=124246>

⁷<https://www.parliament.scot/chamber-and-committees/committees/current-and-previous-committees/session-6-local-government-housing-and-planning/business-items/national-planning-framework>

- Dr Caroline Brown
- Professor Cliff Hague

18. The Committee is now taking evidence from the Minister for Public Finance, Planning and Community Wealth.

19. Following its session with the Minister the Committee will consider how to inform Parliament's debate on the motion to approve NPF4.