

National Park Authority Planning & Access Committee



Agenda Item 5

Paper for decision

Summary

Submitted By:	Director of Rural Development & Planning
Subject:	2020 Development Plan Scheme and Indicative Regional Spatial Strategy
Lead Officer:	Kirsty Sweeney, Development Planner and Susan Brooks Development Planning and Communities Manager

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This paper presents Members with a revised Development Plan Scheme for 2020, which updates the anticipated timetable for preparing the next Local Development Plan for the National Park. The rationale for revising the Plan's timescales is explained within this report and a revised Development Plan Scheme is contained within Appendix One to this report.
- 1.2 This paper also presents Members with the headline draft strategic themes proposed for inclusion in an indicative draft Regional Spatial Strategy for the National Park, to be drafted and submitted to the Scottish Government in September in order to help inform the context of the next National Planning Framework for Scotland (NPF4).

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 Members are asked to:
- a) **Consider and Approve** the updated timescales to prepare the next Local Development Plan that are set out in the Local Development Plan Scheme (Appendix One) and
 - b) **Consider and Approve** the identified draft strategic themes proposed for inclusion in a draft indicative Regional Spatial Strategy and
 - c) **Delegate any final minor changes or corrections** to the Local Development Plan Scheme and the indicative Regional Spatial Strategy to the Development Planning and Communities Manager.

3. Background

Current Local Development Plan and Development Plan Scheme

- 3.1 The Local Development Plan (the Plan) shows what development is needed in the National Park and where this will be supported. It is a statutory document and a key tool for the Park Authority to help deliver important national outcomes and priorities in our National Park Partnership Plan such as sustainability, climate emergency and place making. It is a statutory requirement and is reviewed and updated every five years under current planning legislation. Members should note the new Planning (Scotland) Act 2019, has changed the plan period to a ten year cycle, however this will not come into force until secondary legislation is prepared.
- 3.2 Our current Plan is three years old and, since adoption, significant effort has been put into monitoring its effectiveness, in order to measure the achievement of its long term vision and development strategy. The Plan is performing well and monitoring of 2019 data evidences continued strong development activity in line with the Plan's vision and strategy with delivery across the following themes:
- *Housing* - 63 new homes were built, with developments in Callander and Balloch providing 49 affordable flats and houses. Permission was also granted for 182 new homes (97 of these will be affordable homes).
 - *Visitor Accommodation* – Permission was granted for nine self-catering units, 19 stances for pod-style static caravans and 188 new bed spaces, including extensions to Cameron House Hotel and The Loch Lomond Arms Hotel at Loch Lomond.
 - *Rural economy* - Permission was granted for a variety of new developments, such as bike hire, an art and sculpture studio and expansion of smokehouse storage space. In Tyndrum, construction commenced on the Cononish Gold Mine.
 - *Environment and Climate* - Through our planning service, enhancements to biodiversity were secured at a total of 26 new development proposals. Four hydro and three biomass applications were approved and there was a significant increase in the extent of new development that included low and zero carbon technology.
 - *Active travel and wellbeing*: 3km of new paths were constructed and a further 8.4km of paths were approved, providing enhancements to both local and strategic path networks.

- 3.3 Our current timelines for preparing the new Local Development Plan are set out in our current [Development Plan Scheme](#) published in 2019. Last year we pushed the new Plan timescales out by one year (to 2023) to ensure these aligned with the enactment of the new Planning Act and, importantly to ensure the new Plan complied with new national guidance to be contained in the new National Planning Framework (NPF4) and Scottish Planning Policy.
- 3.4 In accordance with the current time plan, we should be preparing our draft evidence report this year under the new regulations/guidance which includes:
- Undertaking early engagement with stakeholders (i.e. Community Councils) to inform the evidence report
 - Trialling more Place Plans with communities and considering opportunities for Rural Development Frameworks.

However, due to COVID-19 pandemic this work has been progressing at a slower pace, with slippage in all planned work streams at both national and local level.

- 3.5 By way of example, the second workshop for Strathard Land Use and Rural Development Framework, planned for the end of March 2020, was cancelled. Many Community Councils have been focused on handling pressing matters either relating to lockdown and, more recently the route map out of lockdown. Inevitably it was not a good time to engage with Community Councils or stakeholders on a new Plan. This also applied to working with communities on Local Place Plans. Our aspiration was to do so this year however some communities are advising that they wish to revisit their plans next year once things are more settled. To date we have confirmed support to Killin, Balquhidder, Strathyre and Locheearnhead communities.
- 3.6 At national level, all Scottish planning authorities are dealing with the same delays in the progress of preparation of secondary legislation under the new Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 and also the preparation of the new NPF4 (due to the COVID-19 pandemic). This secondary legislation is needed as it will provide guidance on how to prepare a new Local Development Plan in the 10 year cycle and also on how Local Place Plans are to be prepared. NPF4 is also to include Scottish Planning Policy which must be taken into account when preparing a Local Development Plan.
- 3.7 At present, the Scottish Government is developing a revised work programme for which it is understood that development planning regulations will follow similar timescales to NPF4 preparation. Advice from the Scottish Government's Chief Planner, John McNairney, is that a draft NPF4 is

anticipated to be laid before parliament in September 2021, with adoption anticipated in Spring/Summer 2022. This is one year later than anticipated.

- 3.8 Given that many planning authorities are programming their new local development plan preparation timescales to align with the new regulations and NPF4, concerns have been expressed and questions asked as to how best to update Development Plan Schemes given the delays in preparing these. Advice from the Scottish Government is that planning authorities should still update their Development Plan Schemes however should be pragmatic in doing so and, whilst not possible to be precise on timescales, provide an indication of how they intend to progress work and the types of engagement that will be undertaken.
- 3.9 As was the case last year when the new Plan's timescales were reviewed, it is still considered that there are significant risks of progressing with preparing a new Plan in advance of national guidance and legislation being prepared, in that the Plan could prove non-compliant with the changing guidance. Further information on the changes and Scottish Government work programme are provided at www.transformingplanning.scot.

4 Local Development Plan Scheme Timescales

- 4.1 Based on the changes proposed by the Planning Act 2019 and timescales to implement these, as well as the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, we have reviewed the timescales to prepare a new Plan and aim to now adopt in 2024, rather than 2023. This is a year later than the current Development Plan Scheme timescale.
- 4.2 From this analysis, the key benefits of delaying consulting on a new draft Local Development Plan until 2022, which are very similar to our assessment last year, are as follows:
- i. Ensures that the new Plan aligns with the national planning strategy and guidance within the next National Planning Framework 4 and new Scottish Planning Policy,
 - ii. Reduces the risk of the uncertainty or changes in statutory requirements during the Plan making process,
 - iii. Allows the Plan to be in a style and format that aligns with any new published guidance,
 - iv. Allows staff more time to pro-actively deliver the current Plan and undertake more work directly (and also for some work areas, in place of consultancy support given reduction in project revenue budget) with

- some of the Park's communities to develop Place Plans, Rural Development Frameworks and undertake early stakeholder engagement,
- v. Allows staff and stakeholders to consider the impact of the COVID-19 emergency on how we plan for the future and a green recovery,
 - vi. Finally it allows staff to engage with the Scottish Government and other planning authorities on strategic planning and land use matters for inclusion in NPF4 and regional spatial strategies (further detail in Section 5 below)

4.3 There is a risk in allowing the Plan to run beyond its five year statutory timeframe, including potential appeals and challenge. It is therefore important that close scrutiny of the Plan's performance is maintained and that the evidence base is continually monitored to check for any new and emerging issues or areas where policy guidance may be needed. More effort is being placed on these areas at present by the team with a draft programme for preparing new planning guidance developed and currently being revised to prioritise any new areas requiring attention in response to COVID-19, climate emergency and green recovery work. Housing Land supply is not anticipated to be an issue given that the Plan originally included, and retains, a generous supply which is still sitting at present at a seven year effective land supply.

4.4 During discussions with the Scottish Government and other planning authorities it is anticipated that a number of Development Plans will need to run beyond their five year lifespan. This is a key marker in the annual Planning Performance Framework returns to Government and it should be noted that performance will be marked down in this regard. This has been flagged with the Scottish Government by us and other planning authorities.

5 Indicative Regional Spatial Strategy

5.1 In addition to changes to development planning and the introduction of a statutory right for communities to prepare Local Place Plans, the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 also established a duty for a planning authority, or authorities acting jointly, to prepare and adopt a Regional Spatial Strategy.

5.2 Regional Spatial Strategies (RSS) are long-term spatial strategies which are to identify:

- the need for strategic development
- the outcomes to which strategic development will contribute
- priorities for the delivery of strategic development
- proposed locations, shown in the form of a map or diagram.

- 5.3 Regulations and guidance are still to be prepared for RSS's however all planning authorities across Scotland are currently considering these and what the strategic opportunities and challenges are at regional level up to 2050. This early consideration (in advance of the regulations being issued) has been prompted by the Scottish Government which has asked for indicative draft RSS's to be submitted by September 2020 in order that these can help guide and inform preparation and content of the new NPF4.
- 5.4 These indicative Regional Spatial Strategies (iRSS) are not intended to be fully fleshed out documents, they are to show the Scottish Government what the regionally strategic issues are across Scotland and to highlight where regional joint working may be required. iRSS preparation provides an opportunity to prompt fresh thinking and partnership working across many areas in order to identify the strategic development needed to support transition towards net zero by 2045. The Scottish Government advice is that iRSS's should be diagrammatic maps supported by brief narrative.
- 5.5 Much discussion has therefore taken place over the summer months to share thinking and ideas across planning authorities on the strategic issues to be identified in these iRSS's, including workshops, themed sessions and videos (including one where we shared our approach in the National Park). Thinking has been very much framed within a long term framework to 2050 that considers the strategic development needs for future generations, responds to the global climate emergency, supports a green recovery from COVID-19, inclusive growth and is place specific.
- 5.6 The National Park already has various plans and strategies, including the National Park Partnership Plan (NPPP), so is in a perhaps more advantageous position than other planning authorities in that there is already good coverage of up to date and endorsed strategic plans and strategies, as well as good working relationships with partner bodies and constituent communities, from which to develop an iRSS from. The NPPP already provides strong strategic guidance for the National Park, however as the declaration of the climate emergency and the current recovery from COVID-19 pandemic occurred post approval of the NPPP, this has necessitated further consideration of its vision and strategy in terms of strategic land use and development content in the iRSS.
- 5.7 Through our discussions internally and externally we have identified a number of key strategic themes for the National Park iRSS in terms of its positioning regionally and nationally. This has also identified a number of cross boundary issues where joint working can support neighbouring regions to support their priorities and help achieve our aspirations. This is particularly the case for the

Forth Valley area (including Stirling, Clackmannan and Falkirk local authorities) where catchment scale regional working could help support climate resilience, flooding, decarbonisation of the region and the rural economy through tourism, whilst discussions with Glasgow and Clyde Valley region have again highlighted the strategic role of the National Park in relation to central Scotland (50% of Scotland's population is within one hour of the National Park) and the opportunities this presents for health, wellbeing and inclusion, particularly given some of the health and deprivation issues faced within the West of Scotland.

5.8 A summary of the challenges and opportunities within the National Park includes:

- Key Strategic Challenges
 - Climate and ecological emergency and urgent need for transition to net zero carbon
 - Changing climate impacts on specific areas, communities and strategic infrastructure within National Park
 - Current dominance of car based tourism and journeys to and around the Park
 - Visitor pressures, insufficient infrastructure/capacity and environmental degradation at certain locations
 - Declining and Aging Population
- Key Strategic Opportunities
 - Natural capital, carbon sequestration and climate resilience – catchment scale joint working opportunities that integrate development and land use (particularly with Forth region). Opportunities for land use and development to support biodiversity gains, peatland restoration, woodland expansion, natural flood management and integrated land management via Regional Spatial Strategies and Regional Land Use Partnerships.
 - Tourism and green recovery - tourism opportunities (existing strategic investment opportunities at Arrochar, Balloch and Callander identified in Local Development Plan), new opportunities linked to recreation and nature based tourism, visitor infrastructure investment required at key locations, transition to low carbon economy and digital growth to support low carbon living and working.
 - Active and Low Carbon travel - travel to and around the National Park requires regional joint regional working. Opportunities to increase active travel (significant walking and cycling network) and improve infrastructure to facilitate more low carbon travel.

- Recreation, Health and Wellbeing - The National Park is a huge resource for all of Scotland but especially nearby central Scotland for recreation, health, wellbeing and engaging with nature. To accommodate visitors successfully requires continued investment in infrastructure and active and low carbon travel opportunities.
 - Retention and attraction of young people and working age households- there may be opportunity to consider opportunities for low and zero carbon living and working within some remote rural areas of the National Park to support the re-population of rural areas in Scotland.
- 5.9 This work is currently being brought together for sharing with the Scottish Government in September. Please note that at present we are not preparing a formal Regional Spatial Strategy – this would require more time, engagement and consultation (internal and external) and cannot commence until more guidance is in place. At present our aim is simply to ensure that the National Park Authority submits a draft report that highlights the key strategic opportunities and challenges (outlined above) for the National Park, as well as to highlight the strategic role that National Parks have for all of Scotland. As this work is currently being progressed, staff are seeking Member views on the emerging and proposed key headline themes to enable a draft report to be prepared and submitted by the September deadline.

6 Conclusion

- 6.1 In light of the revised timetable for the implementation of the new Planning Act and subsequent guidance due to COVID-19 emergency we have amended the anticipated timetable for the preparation of the new Local Development Plan for the National Park. The revised timescale would see the expected adoption of the next Local Development Plan move from the end of 2023 until 2024. These new timescales and likely key processes are set out in the revised Development Plan Scheme shown in Appendix One.
- 6.2 The current Plan is considered to be operating very well with no major issues identified. Besides the issue of having a Plan which will be more than five years old, it is considered that any new issues arising can be addressed via the preparation of additional Planning Guidance as required with resources focussed on gathering and reviewing the evidence base and supporting the delivery of the current Plan.
- 6.3 The preparation of an indicative draft Regional Spatial Strategy for the National Park offers an opportunity to frame our thinking around strategic planning issues within the wider green recovery context and to consider the role of National Parks as strategic locations nationally. Thinking to 2050 this is

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a key opportunity to help map our transition towards zero carbon within the National Park.

7 List of Appendices

Appendix One: Development Plan Scheme 2020/21