

Infrastructure and Capital Investment Committee

3rd Report, 2014 (Session 4)

**Proposed National Planning
Framework 3**

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The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

**Infrastructure and Capital
Investment Committee**

3rd Report, 2014 (Session 4)

**Proposed National Planning
Framework 3**

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Infrastructure and Capital Investment Committee

Remit and membership

Remit:

To consider and report on infrastructure, capital investment, transport, housing, and other matters falling within the responsibility of the Cabinet Secretary for Investment and Cities apart from those covered by the remit of the Local Government and Regeneration Committee.

Membership:

Jim Eadie
Mary Fee
Mark Griffin
Adam Ingram (Deputy Convener)
Alex Johnstone
Gordon MacDonald
Maureen Watt (Convener)

Committee Clerking Team:

Clerk to the Committee

Steve Farrell

Senior Assistant Clerk

Ruth McGill

Assistant Clerk

Kelly Forbes



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Infrastructure and Capital Investment Committee

3rd Report, 2014 (Session 4)

Proposed National Planning Framework 3

The Committee reports to the Parliament as follows—

BACKGROUND

1. The Scottish Government laid its *Ambition, Opportunity, Place: Scotland's Third National Planning Framework – Proposed Framework* (NPF3)¹ document before the Parliament on 14 January 2014, as required by section 3B of the Planning etc. (Scotland) Act 2006. The Local Government and Regeneration (LGR) Committee was designated as lead Committee in the scrutiny of the NPF3 and Scottish Planning Policy (SPP) documents.

2. Given the significant range of issues covered in these documents, the Infrastructure and Capital Investment Committee (ICI), Energy, Economy and Tourism Committee (EET), and Rural Affairs, Climate Change and Environment (RACCE) Committee agreed to take oral evidence from stakeholders and report separately to the Parliament their findings on topics in the NPF3 document covered by their remits.

Infrastructure and Capital Investment Committee consideration

3. At its meeting on 18 December 2013², the ICI Committee agreed its approach to scrutiny of the draft NPF3 document in relation to the policy areas covered by the Committee's remit: transport, housing, water and broadband infrastructure.

4. To assist the Committee in developing its views on the document, the Committee invited written submissions from a wide range of stakeholders. The call

¹ Scottish Government. (2014) *Ambition, Opportunity, Place: Scotland's Third National Planning Framework – Proposed Framework*. Available at: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2014/01/3724> [Accessed 13 February 2014]

² Scottish Parliament Infrastructure and Capital Investment Committee. *Minute, 18 December 2013*.

for views³ opened on 14 January 2014 and ran until 30 January 2014. The Committee received 38 responses, links to which can be found at Annexe C.

5. The ICI Committee took oral evidence on the draft NPF3 at its meeting on 29 January 2014 from the following witnesses—

- Professor Glen Bramley (Heriot Watt University)
- David Connolly (Systra)
- Professor Michael Fourman (University of Edinburgh)
- Professor Geoffrey Gooch (University of Dundee)
- Derek Halden (Derek Halden Consultancy)
- John Lauder (Sustrans)
- Phil Matthews (Transform Scotland)

6. The Committee also took evidence on 5 February 2014 from Keith Brown, Minister for Transport and Veterans and Derek Mackay, Minister for Local Government and Planning.

7. The Committee is grateful to all stakeholders and witnesses for the evidence submitted to the Committee.

GENERAL REMARKS ON THE PROPOSED NATIONAL PLANNING FRAMEWORK 3

8. In scrutinising the proposed NPF3, the Committee heard from a range of stakeholders on the topics pertaining to its remit. Stakeholders also had a number of more general comments on the development, context and presentation of the document, which the Committee feels would be usefully reflected upon in the finalisation of the NPF3. These are discussed below.

Timescales for scrutiny

9. The Committee notes from evidence that the publication of the draft NPF3 has been widely welcomed by stakeholders, and that they have expressed contentment with its broad aims and objectives.

10. However, some stakeholders expressed concern at what was considered to be the short timescale available to respond to committees' calls for views on the document, especially those stakeholders responding to multiple committees. For example, Friends of the Earth Scotland commented in its written submission that—

“scrutiny of the framework [is] even more challenging for both stakeholders and MSPs in the context of the extremely limited 60 day scrutiny period.

³ Scottish Parliament Infrastructure and Capital Investment Committee. *Call for views on the proposed Third National Planning Framework*. Available at: <http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/parliamentarybusiness/CurrentCommittees/71965.aspx>

We continue to question whether this timeframe is sufficient to adequately scrutinise a framework of such critical national importance.”⁴

11. The Committee notes these comments and acknowledges the challenges presented to stakeholders by the time constraints applied to the consideration of the document by the legislative framework.

Coordination of national planning and investment documents

12. The Scottish Government has opted to closely coordinate the scrutiny of the NPF3 and the Scottish Planning Policy (SPP) refresh, a move which was welcomed in evidence to the Committee. Stakeholders believed that this approach gave a clearer picture of the Government’s vision for where and how development will be delivered.⁵

13. However, several stakeholders believed that this approach should be taken further, and that even greater coordination of related strategic planning and investment documents was to be encouraged. COSLA suggests in its written evidence that this coordination might include the National Transport Strategy, Second Report on Proposals and Policies (RPP2), and the Zero Waste Plan, amongst others.⁶ The Scottish Council for Development and Industry makes a similar suggestion in its written statement to the Committee.

14. Transform Scotland went further by suggesting that the Infrastructure Investment Plan (IIP) should also be included in coordinated scrutiny because—

“...those transport infrastructure projects which feature in the Infrastructure Investment Plan (IIP)...are effectively exempt from detailed consideration under the NPF3 process. These include most of the Scottish Government’s own major transport infrastructure projects (road and rail). We consider that this makes the NPF3 process a limited, partial, and, ultimately, unsatisfactory process.”⁷

15. However, in oral evidence, the Minister for Local Government and Planning, Derek Mackay, told the Committee that although the purposes of these documents were quite separate, they complemented one another, saying that—

“I stress that the proposed NPF3 supports rather than replaces the infrastructure investment plan and the strategic transport projects review.”⁸

16. The Minister then went on to highlight the specific value of the NPF3 document—

“NPF3 is not a spending document, but a planning document. For some people, it is an interpretation of what matters as a material consideration in

⁴ Friends of the Earth Scotland. Written submission, p1.

⁵ COSLA. Written submission, p 1.

⁶ COSLA. Written submission, p 1.

⁷ Transform Scotland. Written submission, p1.

⁸ Scottish Parliament Infrastructure and Capital Investment Committee. *Official Report, 5 February 2014*, Col 2543.

the planning system; for others, it is an investment document for Scotland. I think that it very helpfully outlines where planning can add value to the system and to individual projects, where necessary.”⁹

17. The Committee appreciates that the various documents which make up the framework for planning and investment in Scotland have different purposes, and exist within a hierarchy. However, the Committee sees the value to stakeholders, and to an effective scrutiny process, of ensuring that the various documents which form this hierarchy contain clear and unambiguous explanations of any relevant relationships which exist between them.

18. The Committee also recommends that the Scottish Government look at how the role that each of these documents plays in the planning and investment process, and information on where they sit in the hierarchy, can be clarified in a consistent and coordinated manner for the benefit of stakeholders, and to help improve transparency. It calls on the Scottish Government to provide an appropriate narrative to this effect in the final NPF3 document.

Population growth and demographic change

19. Several written submissions asserted that population and demographic change was highly likely to impact upon current and future transport, housing and other infrastructure provision. Some stakeholders expressed their concern that the Scottish Government may not be giving these issues full consideration during the development of the NPF3 and SPP documents and that this might impact on the effectiveness of the long term planning strategies across the range of subject areas covered by them. Nestrans stated in its submission—

“National Planning Framework 3 has an important role in setting the context for development plans in Scotland and ...to “inform future policies and investment decisions in areas such as transport, energy, health and wellbeing, climate change and land use” (Proposed Framework page iii). However, very little consideration is given in the Proposed Framework to the implications of the projected growth, particularly as it applies to infrastructure requirements to facilitate that growth.”¹⁰

20. Aberdeen City and Shire Strategic Development Planning Authority, Aberdeenshire Council, and Aberdeen City Council concur with this view in their written submissions.

21. This concern was raised in particular by local authorities, especially those in areas of current and anticipated population growth, for example, Aberdeen, Perth and Edinburgh.

⁹ Scottish Parliament Infrastructure and Capital Investment Committee. *Official Report, 5 February 2014*, Col 2544.

¹⁰ Nestrans. Written submission, p1.

National Development

22. In written evidence several stakeholders questioned why certain major developments were given national development status and others were not. Examples of developments cited by stakeholders included the proposed dualling of the A9, housing development in the west of Edinburgh, Edinburgh to Glasgow Improvement Project (EGIP) and rail freight infrastructure.

23. The Minister for Local Government and Planning responded to these questions in oral evidence to the Committee. He highlighted the fact that the process for the identification of candidates for national development status was an outcome from the second National Planning Framework. He added that—

“For the first time, we issued a call for national developments at the outset of the process, and more than 240 proposals were formally submitted.... Every proposal has been considered carefully, first against our published criteria and then in relation to the wider spatial strategy.... As a result, we have made choices and we have prioritised the projects that best reflect our spatial vision and which are considered to be in the national interest.”¹¹

24. Both the Minister for Local Government and Planning and the Minister for Transport and Veterans were keen to emphasise in evidence to the Committee that national development status was conferred where it was believed that the added status would benefit the project¹². The Minister for Local Government and Planning said—

“As well as that, we considered what benefit there would be from national development status—benefit could take the form of streamlining consent or of attracting wider interest, partnership or investment.”¹³

25. The Minister for Transport and Veterans explained, with regard to the dualling of the A9, that national development status was not required because the project was included in the IIP. He added—

“the substantive decisions have been taken on it and we will proceed with it and complete it by 2025.”¹⁴

26. The Committee also heard during this evidence session that, although the document focusses on 14 national developments, several of these are overarching developments covering a number of the smaller nominated developments. The Minister from Planning and Regeneration said—

¹¹ Scottish Parliament Infrastructure and Capital Investment Committee. *Official Report, 5 February 2014*, Cols 2542-2543.

¹² Scottish Government. (2014) *Ambition, Opportunity, Place: Scotland's Third National Planning Framework – Proposed Framework*. P 41.

¹³ Scottish Parliament Infrastructure and Capital Investment Committee. *Official Report, 5 February 2014*, Cols 2542-2543.

¹⁴ Scottish Parliament Infrastructure and Capital Investment Committee. *Official Report, 5 February 2014*, Col 2547.

“I emphasise that although we focus on 14 national developments, many of those bring together several individual proposals. Many other proposals are also recognised and supported within the wider strategy.”¹⁵

Current and future national developments

27. A recurring theme in stakeholder evidence to the Committee was a concern that the draft NPF3 focusses too heavily upon national developments which are already progressing, or are nearing completion.

28. City of Edinburgh Council suggested in its submission that the NPF3 document should be forward focussed—

“Whilst identifying areas for further growth, NPF3 does not contain any new infrastructure proposals. The Council submits that the NPF, in setting out its spatial vision for Scotland, should be leading the provision of infrastructure, not following it.”¹⁶

29. This was a sentiment echoed in the submission from the Royal Town Planning Institute, which stated—

“We do not want to comment on specific proposed national developments, but suggest that the long term nature of NPF3 means that it should be looking to identify those which are at the next stage to ensure that the planning system can enable them to be delivered.”¹⁷

30. However, other stakeholders suggested to the Committee that the NPF3 document should focus more on the enabling mechanisms which would allow development to take place. Derek Halden stated in evidence to the Committee—

“The major theme that is missing throughout the document is how the Government will enable the good things to happen; there is more about what the Government thinks that the good things are. It is the enabling mechanisms...that will make the difference in making connectivity happen in towns, cities, villages and islands. A lot more detail on those enabling mechanisms would help.”¹⁸

31. In oral evidence to the Committee, the Minister for Local Government and Planning responded to these concerns by noting that the NPF3 document takes account of national developments at various stages of progress—

“NPF3 expresses specifically in terms of infrastructure investment and transport what is required by the nation and where the planning system can add value and give certainty. For that reason, the iterative staged process of

¹⁵ Scottish Parliament Infrastructure and Capital Investment Committee. *Official Report, 5 February 2014*, Col 2543.

¹⁶ City of Edinburgh Council, written submission, p 2.

¹⁷ Royal Town Planning Institute, written submission, p 2.

¹⁸ Scottish Parliament Infrastructure and Capital Investment Committee. *Official Report, 29 January 2014*, Col 2493.

