Thank you for the invitation to provide written and oral evidence to the Committee’s roundtable session on Scottish Government’s Second Draft Climate Change Report on Proposals and Policies.

Our oral evidence will be presented on 20 February by Alistair MacDonald who is Convenor of RTPI Scotland. Our written evidence is set out below.

The Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) is the champion of planning and the planning profession. A charity registered in Scotland and England and Wales we work to promote the art and science of planning for the public benefit. We have around 2,200 members in Scotland and a worldwide membership of nearly 23,000. We:

- support policy development to improve approaches to planning for the benefit of the public
- maintain the professional standards of our members
- support our members, and therefore the majority of the planning workforce, to have the skills and knowledge they need to deliver planning effectively
- maintain high standards of planning education
- develop and promote new thinking, ideas and approaches which can improve planning
- support our membership to work with others who have a role in developing places in Scotland
- improve the understanding of planning and the planning system to policy makers, politicians, practitioners and the general public.

Our evidence is presented under four headings: the role of planning in supporting efforts to tackle climate change; the mechanisms that can be used; the subsequent needs of planners and the planning system; and the RTPI’s commitment to tackling climate change.

THE ROLE OF PLANNING IN SUPPORTING EFFORTS TO TACKLE CLIMATE CHANGE

Planning isn't about saying no; it is about implementing a positive vision of a sustainable future.

We welcome the references made to planning in RRP2, especially Section 3.6 on The Role of Planning System. However we are disappointed that the document doesn’t fully recognise the role and contribution that planning can make in tackling climate change, especially in the medium to longer term. A properly resourced planning system, working within the right framework, is key to achieving ambitions on climate change. It is an important lever to support approaches to sustainable development, including protecting Scotland’s environment.
Those countries that have successfully planned for sustainable economic growth - such as Netherlands, Norway and Sweden – have combined an approach which sets priorities and drives action from a national level down along with ‘bottom up’ community engagement and empowerment. They have explicitly embraced national and strategic planning as a mechanism to achieve this. They have used the planning system as a means of demonstrating national leadership through setting out their ambitions for the country and for making often difficult decisions that can bring short, medium and long term benefit. We are of the view that this approach needs to be embedded if we are to achieve the climate change targets.

**Development Planning**

Plan-making and development management can fully support the transition to a low-carbon future in a changing climate. Planning authorities can:

- Shape places so as to help secure radical cuts in greenhouse gas emissions. This requires the location and layout of new development to be planned to deliver the highest viable energy efficiency, including the use of decentralised energy; reduce the need to travel, particularly by private car; secure the highest possible share of trips made by sustainable travel; and enhance green networks.
- Actively support and help to drive the delivery of renewable and low-carbon energy.
- Shape places and secure new development so as to minimise vulnerability and provide resilience to impacts arising from climate change, and to do so in ways consistent with cutting greenhouse gas emissions.
- Ensure that local communities are given real opportunities to take positive action on climate change, in particular by encouraging community led initiatives to reduce energy use – for example, by securing land for local food sourcing and securing more renewable and lowcarbon energy.
- Increase sustainable transport use, local transport solutions and active travel.

Given this, priority should be given to supporting the retrofit of existing buildings, to the adaption of existing settlements, for densification of places where this is possible, to improving walkability in neighbourhoods, and for improving cycling and public transport facilities and services.

**Development Management**

In assessing planning applications planning authorities engage constructively with developers to deliver well designed, sustainable buildings and high-quality local environments suitable for low-carbon living in a changing climate.

Planning authorities also have a role in supporting innovation which secures well designed sustainable developments. Some features which are essential for securing a low- or zero-carbon building, or for adapting to impacts arising from changes in the climate, may give rise to concerns about incompatibility with an existing townscape.
MECHANISMS
There are a number of opportunities to influence how the planning system works to ensure that climate change is embedded. These opportunities include the 3rd National Planning Framework; the review of the Scottish Planning Policy document; and the forthcoming Architecture and Placemaking Policy for Scotland.

National Planning Framework 3 (NPF3)
The 3rd National Planning Framework provides a real opportunity to tackle climate change in Scotland. RTPI Scotland believes that NPF3 and the planning system in general can do more for Scotland. NPF3 should therefore be a truly ambitious national plan which establishes key objectives for Scotland in the short, medium and long term and how these will be delivered spatially. It should set out the spatial priorities we require if we are to achieve our climate change targets.

RTPI Scotland believes that there 10 principles that NPF3 should be built upon to achieve this:

1. It should be ambitious and provide a framework providing predictability for making often difficult decisions where there will be winners and losers.
2. It should prioritise by incorporate realistic options for growth, no growth, and negative growth across Scotland, which may not always require new development but rather make the best use of the assets that are already in place.
3. It should be integrative through bringing together and reconciling the objectives of various other strategies and objectives published by Scottish Government and its agencies.
4. It should be influential over priorities and resource allocation of Scottish Government and its Key Agencies as well as the plans and decisions of utility companies and private sector developers and investors.
5. It should be clear and holistic.
6. It should focus on delivery by linking infrastructure provision and development opportunities to make the most of development opportunities in a sustainable way.
7. It could be based around a number of key outcomes to provide a more holistic basis upon which to plan Scotland.
8. It needs to be directly linked to the revised Scottish Planning Policy.
9. It has a clear relationship with other policy, guidance, advice and good practice.
10. It needs to be based on sound evidence and needs to be monitored to ensure it continues to be fit for purpose.

Scottish Planning Policy (SPP)
The SPP is about to be reviewed and this presents an opportunity to embed the climate change targets into planning policy which can then be cascaded down to Strategic Development Plans, Local Development Plans and decisions over planning applications. RTPI Scotland is of the view that it is essential that there is a clear relationship between the new SPP and NPF3. Given this, it is felt that both documents
should have the same outcomes and targets with the SPP dealing with the ‘how’ and NPF3 the ‘where’.

RTPI Scotland feels that it is worth exploring the idea of the revised SPP containing a number of specific national targets, framed within a number of national outcomes. These could be derived from existing national targets and could cover, for example, housing numbers, energy, renewables developments, waste and derelict land.

The SPP must achieve a balance which provides enough detail to ensure that a consistent approach is taken across the country based on Scottish Government priorities, and allows decisions to be made which are relevant to local circumstances and based on professional judgement.

**Architecture and Placemaking Policy for Scotland**
Scottish Government is currently developing a new *Architecture and Placemaking Policy for Scotland* which provides the opportunity to influence the design and quality of our buildings and place and help to develop sustainable communities and settlement patterns.

**NEEDS OF PLANNERS AND THE PLANNING SYSTEM**
Planning, planners and the planning system should be recognised as important players in tackling climate change. For this to be effective we need to ensure that they are able to undertake their tasks properly.

**Roles**
There is a need for Scottish Government, and others, to give greater recognition of the roles planners, planning and the planning system can play in positively providing solutions and ideas on developing and managing places to make them more sustainable. This will show what Scotland needs to do now to function as a low carbon place in the future.

**Framework**
The right framework is required at national, regional, local and community levels to allow this to happen. The system we currently have in place is broadly acceptable but there is a need for politicians and others to use it to be best effect, to work with it, to make the ‘big picture’ decisions required to tackle climate change and to achieve sustainable economic growth.

**Resources**
Planning authorities need to be resourced to deliver effectively and efficiently, and, to support staff to develop and maintain the knowledge and skills required.

National targets must be developed in dialogue with planning authorities to ensure that they have the capacity and skills to undertake the required processes in the timeframes expected.
Leadership
If the planning system is to be effective in supporting ambitions on climate change, there is a need for it to be able to provide clarity, certainty and predictability. This requires planners having the confidence to make often bold or controversial decisions for the greater good. This in turn requires confident and clear political leadership at the local and national levels.

THE RTPI’S COMMITMENT TO TACKLING CLIMATE CHANGE
RTPI is fully committed to tackling climate change. Given this, we have engaged in a comprehensive debate about how we to tackle the challenge of climate change, leading to a defined programme for action and has, subsequently developed Seven Commitments on Planning to Live with Climate Change. The seven commitments are to:

1. Promote behavioural change – by promoting a better understanding of how effective spatial planning helps to meet carbon budgets and targets through managing demand for finite natural resources and energy usage. This involves reducing the overall demand for energy and particularly for carbon consuming travel; shifting increasingly to the use of renewable energy; and reducing the consumption of natural resources

2. Adapt existing places – by demonstrating how planning can help people adapt existing buildings and places to be more sustainable and working with governments and other partners to identify and disseminate new means by which planning can provide incentives for adaptive change to existing buildings and places.

3. Work towards responsive legislation and policies – by working with other professional disciplines, the development sector and other interest groups to undertake an integrated review and identify where further reform is required.

4. Improve current practice – by evaluating policies at the regional and local level, to develop a good practice tool-kit of effective spatial planning practices which address climate change imperatives.

5. Celebrate best practice – through identifying ideas and work that demonstrate inspiring responses to climate change as candidates for all of our awards. We will use our awards to provide case studies that represent inspirational practice in responding to climate change.

6. Compile a compendium of best practice – through setting out the results derived from the seven commitments and related actions in an on-line compendium of world class best planning practice and research, accessible to and owned by spatial planners but shared with everyone.
7. **Develop climate change education and skills** – by reviewing and changing our education and life long learning requirements to ensure that all members have the knowledge and skills to respond effectively to climate change.

**Craig McLaren**
National Director