Finance and Constitution Committee Questionnaire

This questionnaire is being sent to those organisations that have an interest in, or which may be affected by, the Planning (Scotland) Bill — Financial Memorandum (FM).

In addition to the questions below, please add any other comments you may have which would assist the Committee’s scrutiny of the FM.

Consultation

1. Did you take part in any consultation exercise preceding the Bill and, if so, did you comment on the financial assumptions made?

Yes the Society did provide responses to previous consultations and our members participated in the workshops that were run as part of the Planning Review. The financial assumptions made at that point were not as specific as those set out in the Financial Memorandum and related to the costs associated with parallel processes such as RCC and acting as statutory consultees as well as the high level costs associated with the planning, design, delivery and maintenance of supporting infrastructure.

2. If applicable, do you believe your comments on the financial assumptions have been accurately reflected in the FM?

Not applicable as it is not possible to determine how our previous comments have been allowed for within Table 1 of the Financial Memorandum

3. Did you have sufficient time to contribute to the consultation exercise?

The timing of the consultation over the Xmas period was not ideal as this is when resources within the transport sector are typically very stretched.

Costs

4. If the Bill has any financial implications for your organisation, do you believe that they have been accurately reflected in the FM? If not, please provide details.

There will be financial implications for the members of SCOTS around the implementation of the Bill and in particular the introduction of LPPs and the work to develop and implement any infrastructure levy. It is not possible to determine whether these have been accurately reflected in the FM at paragraphs 55-61 even when the linked documents are inspected as these focus on the costs to the community groups. If a local authority area has 100 Community Councils who all develop a LPP and they require advice on roads, transport, drainage and traffic management advice for example then this will have to be resourced.

On the infrastructure levy as per paras 87-96 there is an overall figure estimated for Local Government that seems to be very light as compared to the costs incurred by those groups of authorities who have already brought variations on the levy forward under the current planning regime. These should be built into the work that COSLA and Scottish Government will take forward on this matter and SCOTS would wish to be involved in this piece of work.

5. Do you consider that the estimated costs and savings set out in the FM are reasonable and accurate?
No for the reasons set out above. As an example if the levy requires traffic modelling work then this by itself will require significant development, maintenance and running costs to ensure it is robust and up to date. If 10 areas are operating a levy then the estimated annual budget would seem to be £170k for all activities. This should be re-examined to allow for a more accurate set of figures. In addition the costs to Scottish Government should be broken down to show the costs that are likely to be incurred outwith the Planning Directorate eg within Transport Scotland.

6. If applicable, are you content that your organisation can meet any financial costs that it might incur as a result of the Bill? If not, how do you think these costs should be met?

As an organisation SCOTS will not incur direct costs but our member authorities will as reflected within this response. These costs should be directly allocated to planning, roads and transport authorities so that they can then be open to scrutiny by the private sector.

7. Does the FM accurately reflect the margins of uncertainty associated with the Bill’s estimated costs and with the timescales over which they would be expected to arise?
No. Further work needs to be done on this with local authorities to reflect the uncertainty and associated risks to individual authorities.

Wider Issues

8. Do you believe that the FM reasonably captures any costs associated with the Bill? If not, which other costs might be incurred and by whom?

See earlier comments. The costs to the private sector are likely to be challenging as although the sector generally is keen on the certainty that a levy would bring they are also tend to favour a system that is under regular review and flexible to the local markets.

9. Do you believe that there may be future costs associated with the Bill, for example through subordinate legislation? If so, is it possible to quantify these costs?

Yes through guidance and enabling powers but as per earlier comments further work is required on this.