

**ABERDEEN CITY & SHIRE
STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT PLANNING AUTHORITY**

Date: 18 September 2009

Title: National Planning Framework 2

1 Purpose of Report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to advise the Strategic Development Planning Authority (SDPA) of the publication of the National Planning Framework 2 (NPF2) and associated proposed Action Programme, indicating how it relates to the Aberdeen City and Shire Structure Plan before outlining the SDPA's role in implementation.

2. Background

2.1 The National Planning Framework 2 (the executive summary of which is attached as appendix 1) is a strategy for the long-term development of Scotland and is concerned with how Scotland develops over the next 20 to 25 years. NPF2 identifies key strategic infrastructure needs to ensure that each part of the country can develop to its full potential, mapping out key policies, strategies and developments that are required. It provides a robust framework for development planning in Scotland, and provides the context in which the Aberdeen City and Shire Structure Plan is situated.

2.2 Development plans are legally required to take into account the NPF. Both Councils and the SDPA have previously responded to the draft and proposed NPF.

2.3 The full NPF2 and proposed Action Programme can be found at <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Built-Environment/planning/National-Planning-Policy/npf/nfp2>.

3 Key Message

3.1 NPF2 identifies Aberdeen City and Shire as an area that enjoys a good quality of life with full employment, high incomes and a growing economy. The framework sets out the challenges and opportunities facing the city region, and states that the primary aim is to grow and diversify the economy, maintain and improve the quality life in the region; making sure there are enough people, jobs and facilities. Aberdeen City is viewed as taking a key role in the achievement of this, acting as both an international gateway and Scotland's 'Northern Gateway' developing its city centre, cultural and recreation facilities to enable the growth of the knowledge economy and sectors such as tourism, services, and financial services. NPF2 also details that strategic growth is being focused into Aberdeen, the Huntly to Laurencekirk and the Aberdeen to Peterhead corridors. The importance of the 'Energetic project' is also emphasised in consolidating and building on the energy expertise in the region.

- 3.2 NPF2 reinforces the importance of the city region concept and the role of the East Coast corridor in stimulating development. To achieve this it is recognised that there is a need to reduce travel times in the corridor to Dundee, thus making connections to the central belt quicker. This will increase connectivity and underpin the opportunities that exist in the knowledge economy in the East Coast Development Corridor. The NPF2 also notes the importance of reducing travel times north to Inverness and discusses specific transport projects within the City Region, such as the Cross-rail project and the Aberdeen Western Peripheral Road. Additionally the importance of Peterhead harbour is also emphasised as a deep water opportunity, building on the existing importance of fishing and oil related industries. Other developments mentioned include the new prison planned for Peterhead
- 3.3 There are very strong links between the strategy for development promoted in the structure plan and the NPF2 throughout the framework, and particularly within the Spatial Perspective section. There is agreement between the two documents both in terms of the challenges and opportunities facing Aberdeen City and Shire till 2030 and this is particularly welcome.
- 3.4 The NPF2 represents a positive and optimistic reflection of the city region in its framework till 2030. NPF2 will provide synergy with the structure plan and together present a shared vision to tackle the challenges and opportunities of the City and Shire.

4 National Developments

- 4.1 NPF2 designates 14 projects as 'national developments' which Ministers consider essential to the delivery of the spatial strategy in NPF2. They will contribute to the Government's objective of building a Scotland that is wealthier and fairer; greener; safer and stronger; smarter and healthier.
- 4.2 Three of the national developments detailed in the framework are located in Aberdeen City and Shire:
- Enhanced facilities at Aberdeen Airport and supporting improvements in surface transport and other infrastructure;
 - New non-nuclear baseload capacity at Boddam Power Plant; and
 - Upgrading the East Coast electricity transmission line to 400kV.
- 4.3 These are all identified in the Aberdeen City and Shire Structure Plan.

5 NPF2 Action Programme

- 5.1 A Proposed Action Programme was published alongside NPF2 (an extract of which is attached at appendix 2). It sets out in broad terms how the NPF2 national developments and strategies will be implemented, and identifies the lead partner/s and delivery bodies that are responsible for doing so. It is currently being developed in consultation with key stakeholders, and it is recognised that effective monitoring of the Action Programme will be

fundamental to the delivery of the NPF. The Programme will be reviewed annually in liaison with lead partners and delivery bodies. The 2011 National Planning Framework Monitoring Report will assess progress made in delivering the overall strategy and help inform preparation of the third National Planning Framework.

5.2 The proposed Action Programme contains:

- High level actions necessary to deliver the national developments and key elements of the strategy;
- Key projects, including those from the Strategic Transport Projects Review;
- Measures to avoid, minimise or mitigate adverse effects on the environment, including Natura 2000 sites;
- How actions contribute to the strategy;
- Milestones; lead partners and delivery bodies; and
- Progress reporting to allow effective monitoring.

5.3 The Aberdeen City and Shire SDPA is identified as either a lead partner or delivery body under five actions, while all four SDPAs are identified generally under a further twenty. Nestrans is identified under three actions and Regional Transport Partnerships generally under a further four. Both Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire Councils are also identified both by name and generally on numerous occasions.

5.4 The Action Programme does not contain detailed information on the actions needed to implement the NFP2 and the role of the SDPA in the process remains relatively unclear.

5.5 It is understood that the Scottish Government intend to arrange a series of regional seminars in the autumn to unpack the actions and seek agreement on how these will be taken forward. One of these events is likely to take place in Aberdeen, to which all named lead partners and delivery bodies will be invited. This should be a useful event in clarifying roles and responsibilities to take the actions forward.

5.7 The Scottish Government requested any initial comments on the proposed Action Programme. It is suggested that the following six observations be made in response to this request:

- a) It would be helpful if the Action Programme on the Scottish Government website were available in a different format as the current document is difficult to use and impossible to print;
- b) Referencing actions would be easier if they were numbered;
- c) As of 1 April 2009 the North East Assembly in England ceased to exist. It is understood that a similar but distinct role is now performed by the Association of North East Councils (<http://www.northeastcouncils.gov.uk/>) and One North East (<http://www.onenortheast.co.uk/>);
- d) References to ACSEF need to consistently reflect the partnership's change of name from 'Forum' to 'Future';
- e) It is suggested that Nestrans and/or Regional transport Partnerships should be identified as delivery bodies under a number of additional

actions, particularly “promoting active travel” (15) and “improving air quality” (22); and

- f) The milestones for the delivery of the upgrade to the East Coast transmission line to 400kV are extremely vague and yet the delivery of this project is critical to the generation of renewable energy in Scotland.

6 The Strategic Development Planning Authority’s Role

6.1 Appendix 2 contains an edited extract from the NPF Action Programme which identifies those actions relevant to the area where the SDPA and Nestrans are identified:

- a) by name (appendix 2a); and
- b) generically (appendix 2b)

6.2 Two columns (‘Current Progress’ and ‘Future Plans’ have been added to the template and it can be seen that the SDPA and Nestrans are already progressing many of the actions identified in the programme or are preparing to in the near future.

6.3 The SDP team and Nestrans will work with the Scottish Government and the other partners to take forward the identified actions, and it is proposed to report on progress on a six monthly basis to the SDPA to monitor its input to the delivery of NPF2.

7 Recommendations

7.1 It is recommended that the SDPA:

- a) welcome the publication of the NPF2 and Action Programme;
- b) pass on the observation outlined in paragraph 5.7 to the Scottish Government;
- c) engage with partners to further define and deliver the actions;
- d) receive reports on a six monthly basis which indicate the status of the five actions attributed to the SDPA by name.

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