

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

**Date: 10 September 2010**

**Title: SDP Main Issues Report – Early Engagement**

**1 Purpose of Report**

1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform Members of the early engagement taking place in advance of the preparation of a main issues report (MIR) for the strategic development plan (SDP) for consultation in mid-2011. The report also seeks approval for a response from the Strategic Development Planning Authority (SDPA) to the comments received from the consultation authorities on the strategic environmental assessment (SEA) Scoping Report.

**2 Background**

2.1 The publication of a main issues report (MIR) is a statutory requirement and a key stage in producing a strategic development plan. Guidance on the form and content of a MIR is provided in Scottish Government Circular 1/2009 (Development Planning).

2.2 Main issues reports are key documents in terms of front-loading effective engagement on the plan. They are the principal opportunity within the plan preparation process for productively consulting stakeholders on the content of the plan and for involving the wider public. Main issues reports are not draft versions of the plan, but should concentrate on the key changes that have occurred since the previous plan and on the authority's big ideas for future development. They should identify a preferred option and reasonable alternatives, and be informed by a sound evidence base.

2.3 The development plan scheme published in March 2010 sets May 2011 as the target date for consultation on the Aberdeen City and Shire MIR.

**3 Strategic Environmental Appraisal – Scoping Report**

3.1 The first stage of the strategic environmental appraisal (SEA) process for the preparation of a strategic development plan requires the production of a scoping report. The purpose of the scoping report is to:

- set out the level of detail to be considered in the environmental report;
- set the framework to be used in assessing the environmental effects of the SDP; and
- specify the period the responsible authority intend to consult on the environmental report.

3.2 The scoping report was submitted to the Consultation Authorities (Scottish Natural Heritage, the Scottish Environment Protection Agency, and Historic Scotland), through the SEA Gateway on 2 July 2010 and was made available

on the SDPA website (<http://www.aberdeencityandshire-sdpa.gov.uk/CurrentWork/CurrentWork.asp>). The opinion of the Consultation Authorities was received on 3 August 2010, within the five-week statutory consultation period, and a table of their comments and proposed responses is attached at Appendix 1.

- 3.3 The Consultation Authorities expressed contentment with the quality, clarity and thorough nature of the scoping report. The majority of the comments received had already been addressed in the scoping report therefore only a few minor amendments have been proposed as attached at Appendix 1. However, commitment has been made to update the baseline environmental information and relevant Plans, Programmes and Strategies when preparing the interim environmental report.
- 3.4 The scoping report specified a 12 week period for consultation on the environmental report, as detailed in the development plan scheme. The Consultation Authorities confirmed that they were content with this. In accordance with the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005, and following receipt of agreement to this timescale from the consultation authorities, a letter will be sent to Scottish Ministers, through the SEA Gateway, to confirm the period for consultation on the environmental report.
- 3.5 It should be noted that although the Aberdeen City and Shire Strategic Development Planning Authority prepared the scoping report, Aberdeenshire Council assumed the statutory role of responsibility. Section 2 (3) (a) & (b) of the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005 requires that only one authority should act as a responsible authority on behalf of others.
- 3.6 Now that approval from the Consultation Authorities has been received and their comments have informed changes to the interim environmental report, it is possible to start assessing the environmental effects as the preparation of the main issues report progresses.

#### **4 Key Agency / Stakeholder Meeting**

- 4.1 As specified in the development plan scheme, a meeting of the six statutory Key Agencies and other key stakeholders took place on 30 August 2010.
- 4.2 The purpose of the meeting was to explore the views of attendees regarding the potential areas to address in the MIR, areas where improvements could be made to the current structure plan and expectations over future engagement and participation in the SDP process.
- 4.3 It is planned to have at least one more joint meeting of this group prior to the finalisation of the MIR. Meetings with individual agencies and stakeholders will continue throughout the process.
- 4.4 Meetings of a similar nature will be held with development management and local development plan services of both councils over the coming months.

## **5 Climate Change**

- 5.1 With the passing of the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 and associated statutory targets for the reduction in emissions of greenhouse gasses, climate change is likely to be an important consideration in the preparation of the strategic development plan. In light of this, the development plan scheme (March 2010) highlighted the proposal to prepare a climate change study to be published alongside the MIR.
- 5.2 In terms of climate change mitigation, Scottish Enterprise approached the SDPA with the suggestion of taking forward work jointly as part of their national project using the Greenhouse Gas Regional Inventory Protocol (GRIP) model. This proposal appeared to fit in well with the timing and needs of the SDPA so the North East Scotland Climate Change Partnership was subsequently approached to gauge their interest. The project is now being taken forward by these three parties, with funding coming from Scottish Enterprise.
- 5.3 The GRIP study is likely to comprise two or three workshops between September and December 2010 and the preparation of a written report. A scenario-based process is used, with participants from key agencies and stakeholder groups informing greenhouse gas emission reduction strategies to meet the statutory targets.
- 5.4 It is proposed that this work will form an important component of the climate change study to be published alongside the MIR.

## **6 Transport Appraisal**

- 6.1 Assessing the transport implications of development is an important consideration in the preparation of a development plan.
- 6.2 At the last meeting of the SDPA it was reported that work was progressing with Nestrans around the nature and extent of assessment required for the strategic development plan (including the MIR), taking into account the work already carried out for the structure plan and two local development plans.
- 6.3 A meeting took place in early August 2010 with Nestrans and Transport Scotland which examined the likely requirements for the MIR of the SDP.
- 6.4 It was agreed that the work already undertaken provided a useful basis from which to move forward, with a few areas to be investigated in more detail. It was concluded that the level of additional work was dependent on the likely scale of change from the current structure plan.
- 6.5 This work will be taken forward with Nestrans and Transport Scotland over the next few months.

## **7 Briefing Note for Community Councils and Councillors**

- 7.1 In line with the development plan scheme, it is proposed to prepare a briefing note for Community Councils. This is programmed to be sent out after both

councils have completed their consultations on their proposed local development plans so as to minimise potential confusion between the two processes. This is likely to take place in January 2011.

- 7.2 A briefing note will also be prepared for all Councillors in both councils later this year to keep them up-to-date with progress. This will be circulated to each Councillor as well as attached as a bulletin item to relevant committees.

## **8 Financial Implications**

- 8.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report as all proposed actions and processes can be undertaken within the existing budget.

## **9 Recommendations**

- 9.1 It is recommended that the SDPA:

- a) agree Appendix 1 as the SDPA's response to the consultation authorities response to the Scoping Report; and
- b) note the actions being taken to facilitate early engagement on the SDP MIR.

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