

## **EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL**

**CABINET – 23 APRIL 2008**

### **NATIONAL PLANNING FRAMEWORK FOR SCOTLAND 2 DISCUSSION DRAFT**

#### **Report by Depute Chief Executive/ Executive Director of Corporate Support**

#### **1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 To inform Cabinet of the contents and provisions of the Scottish Executive's National Planning Framework for Scotland 2: Discussion Draft and to ascertain the views of Cabinet on the document.

#### **2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

- 2.1 In April 2004 the Scottish Executive published its first National Planning Framework for Scotland, setting out a strategy for Scotland's development to 2025, providing a national context for development plans and planning decisions and helping to inform the wider programmes of government, public agencies and local authorities. The Scottish Government has now subsequently produced, in January 2008, a discussion draft of its second National Planning Framework which is intended to guide Scotland's spatial development to 2030, setting out strategic development priorities to support the Government's central aim of promoting sustainable economic growth. Written responses to the discussion draft are requested by 15 April 2008. An extension of this period for the Council to submit its comments on the document has been sought and agreed.

#### **3 NATIONAL PLANNING FRAMEWORK 2**

- 3.1 It is intended that National Planning Framework 2 (NPF2) will provide the strategic spatial policy context for decisions by the Government and its agencies, complementing the statements of national planning policy set out in the Scottish Planning Policy series. Planning Authorities will be required to take the Framework into account in preparing development plans and will be a material consideration in the determination of planning applications.
- 3.2 The Framework has a strong outward focus, addressing the major challenges facing Scotland in terms of global competition, climate change and resource depletion. The document describes Scotland as it is in 2008 and identifies key issues and drivers of change, setting out a vision for the country to 2030. It also identifies priorities and opportunities for different parts of the country comprising the Central Belt, East Coast, the Highlands and Islands, Ayrshire and the South West and the South of Scotland. In addition, the Framework focuses strongly on priorities for the improvement of infrastructure to support Scotland's long term development with particular emphasis being placed on transport infrastructure, energy infrastructure, water and drainage, waste management, flooding and resource management and communications technology. In this regard, the Framework identifies a number of major transport, energy and environmental infrastructure

projects which Ministers consider to be essential elements of the strategy for Scotland's long term development.

#### **4 ISSUES OF RELEVANCE TO EAST AYRSHIRE**

4.1 Within the section of the National Planning Framework which gives a description of Scotland as it is today, a number of issues relate to Ayrshire / East Ayrshire. In particular, it indicates that:

- (i) part of East Ayrshire lies within the West Central Scotland Lowlands and part within the Southern Uplands;
- (ii) economic activity rates in Ayrshire remain significantly below the national average and parts of Ayrshire are failing to keep pace with the rest of Scotland in the creation of knowledge economy jobs;
- (iii) some former mining towns in Ayrshire have increasingly taken on a dormitory role and those with a narrow economic base have found it particularly difficult to adapt to change;
- (iv) in East Ayrshire, the decline in traditional industries has not been compensated by new employment in the service sectors;

4.2 The Framework addresses a number of key issues and drivers of change which will impact on future development within East Ayrshire. In particular;

- (i) East Ayrshire is identified as an area of up to 5% projected population decline between 2004 and 2024 and as an area with anticipated projected household growth of between 5 and 10% in the same period;
- (ii) the new European Structural Funds regime enables Competitiveness and Employment funding to be spent in the Lowland and Upland parts of Scotland within which East Ayrshire is located;
- (iii) improved connectivity can help unlock the potential of priority areas for regeneration such as Ayrshire, enabling more people to become economically active;
- (iv) investment in transport will be needed to enhance essential infrastructure, support urban expansion, improve access to facilities and services, facilitate sustainable economic growth and strengthen international gateways for passengers and freight;
- (v) with regard to renewable energy, hydro-power and on-shore wind are the renewable technologies likely to make the largest contributions;

#### **5 SCOTLAND'S SPATIAL DEVELOPMENT**

5.1 The key aims of the strategy for Scotland's spatial development to 2030 are:

- (i) to contribute to a wealthier and fairer Scotland by supporting sustainable economic growth and improved competitiveness and connectivity;

- (ii) to promote a greener Scotland by contributing to the achievement of climate change targets and protecting and enhancing the quality of the natural and built environment;
- (iii) to help build safer, stronger and healthier communities, by promoting improved opportunities and a better quality of life; and
- (iv) to contribute to a smarter Scotland by supporting the development of the knowledge economy.

5.2 The National Planning Framework contains a number of broad references which address how Ayrshire itself, or rural areas like Ayrshire which support the city regions, can contribute to meeting these key spatial development aims. These include:

- (i) a recognition that the rural areas (such as Ayrshire) which lie beyond the city regions have economic, environmental and cultural assets of enormous economic and community value and that good connectivity will be critical in realising the full potential of these assets.
- (ii) a recognition that by targeting investment in connectivity and environmental quality, each part of the country can be well placed to participate successfully in the modern economy. This includes the provision of additional opportunities in areas such as Ayrshire and ensuring that communities undergoing regeneration enjoy good access to strategic growth areas.
- (iii) a proposal to increase the rate of new house building in Scotland to at least 35,000 per year (10,000 more than the current level) by the middle of the next decade. As with all other parts of Scotland, this will undoubtedly have implications for East Ayrshire and Ayrshire as a whole.

5.3 The National Planning Framework recognises that the competitiveness of places depends on adequate investment in infrastructure and, in this regard identifies 9 specific projects as national developments. One of these projects, which relates to grid reinforcements to support renewable energy developments is likely to have a significant impact both on East Ayrshire and on Ayrshire as a whole. This issue is addressed in detail in paragraph 7.4 below.

5.4 On an Ayrshire wide basis, Prestwick Airport is recognised as having potential for further expansion and the establishment of associated service businesses. The Framework also recognises that the sheltered deep water location at Hunterston represents a substantial opportunity and that the area is safeguarded in the Ayrshire Structure Plan for the development of an international transshipment hub. With regard to rail services, the Framework also recognises the need to tie areas to the south and west of Glasgow more closely to the major centres of the Central Belt. The Government's commitment to making further improvements to nationally important trunk routes, including the A77, is also firmly stated in the document. These particular infrastructure projects will all have either a direct or indirect positive effect on East Ayrshire.

## **6 SPATIAL PERSPECTIVES**

6.1 The National Planning Framework addresses five specific perspectives for the following areas; the Central Belt, the East Coast, Highlands and Islands, Ayrshire and the South West, and Southern Scotland. The spatial perspective for Ayrshire and the South West is of importance to East Ayrshire and it is recognised, in particular:

- (i) that Ayrshire and the South West play an important role as Scotland's western gateway. On an Ayrshire-wide basis, the aim should be to build on the success of Prestwick Airport, strengthen strategic transport corridors between Ireland and the Continent and realise the potential of deep water assets at Hunterston. There is a need to improve rail and road links to secure better integration with the Central belt;
- (ii) that, to date, Ayrshire has been less successful than some other areas in securing knowledge economy investment to replace jobs lost in traditional industries. However, recognition is given to the fact that the Ayrshire Joint Structure Plan identifies a core area around the towns of Ayr, Irvine and Kilmarnock as having the greatest potential to attract new investment;
- (iii) that the improved link to the Glasgow Conurbation provided by the M77 has acted as a catalyst for new residential development in the Kilmarnock area. Transport Scotland is working with Network Rail to provide an extended loop between Dunlop and Stewarton to allow a half hourly rail service between Glasgow and Kilmarnock;
- (iv) that with the loss of its traditional industries, Kilmarnock is increasingly functioning as a dormitory for the Glasgow Conurbation. The challenge is to identify a new economic role for the town. The regeneration policy statement, 'People and Place', recognised the need to reinvigorate its town centre;
- (v) that action is needed to improve environmental quality in the former mining areas of East Ayrshire. Upland areas offer opportunities for renewable energy developments, including biomass production; and
- (vi) that the Ayrshire and Arran Woodland Strategy places emphasis on the potential for enhancing landscape quality and biodiversity and creating multi-purpose woodlands which benefit local communities and offer employment in planting, management and downstream activities.

## **7 GENERAL OBSERVATIONS ON THE FRAMEWORK**

7.1 Although specific mention is made of Ayrshire in various sections of the document and recognition is given as to the contribution that Ayrshire is making to achieve sustainable economic growth at the national level, this recognition has not been incorporated or reflected to the same extent in the National Development Strategy itself. The Development Strategy, as indicated on Map 19 of the document, simply recognises Prestwick Airport as an international gateway and Hunterston as a deep water opportunity. Consideration should possibly be given to specifically designating these facilities as national developments in the framework, Hunterston as a Transshipment Terminal and Prestwick Airport for specific enhancement.

- 7.2 The recognition previously given to Ayrshire in National Planning Framework 1, through the identification of the Central Ayrshire Economic Development Zone has not been followed through or reflected in NPF2. Bearing in mind the complexities involved in regenerating Ayrshire, which is recognised in the framework, consideration should be given to designating the Core Area, as identified in the recently approved Ayrshire Joint Structure Plan and comprising the three towns of Kilmarnock, Ayr and Irvine, as an Area of Co-ordinated Action.
- 7.3 It is disappointing that, although it is recognised that the strategic transport corridors between Ireland and the continent requires to be strengthened, no specific mention is made of the need to improve Ayrshire's links with the M74 and the South. Bearing in mind Ayrshire's strong connectivity with Ireland, it is considered imperative that onward links from Ayrshire to the rest of the country are developed in the national interest, in order to help deliver the stated aims of the NPF development strategy.
- 7.4 The only National Development Designation identified in NDF2 which pertains to Ayrshire is a Grid Reinforcement to support renewable energy development, comprising the construction of a new 275kV south west Scotland transmission line. This designation is of some concern, especially when the all but one of the particular renewable energy developments which the Grid Reinforcement is intended to support have not yet received planning consent. It is the opinion of the Council that if these wind farms do not get consent, the new grid reinforcement will not be required. Clarification is required as to how this particular proposal has been justified as a national development at this particular stage and whether this national designation pre-supposes and anticipates the approval of all future wind farm proposals in the area and those wind farm applications currently in the planning system or at scoping stage. In particular, the Council is concerned that the NPF2 designation of a new grid reinforcement line in the area should not unduly influence or be treated as a pre-determining factor in the consideration of any wind farm applications which may be required to connect to it.
- 7.5 In the previous National Planning Framework, NPF1, it was recognised that the environmental quality of the former mining areas of East Ayrshire required improvement and this national recognition was depicted on the strategy map. This designation has been removed from NPF2 and it is recommended that this particular provision should be reinstated in the document.

## **8 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 There are no financial implications for the Council as a result of the Framework.

## **9 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 There are no legal implications for the Council as a result of the Framework.

## **10 POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 10.1 There are no policy implications for the Council as a result of the Framework.

## **11 COMMUNITY PLAN IMPLICATIONS**

11.1 There are no community plan implications for the Council as a result of the Framework.

## **12 RECOMMENDATIONS**

**12.1 It is recommended that the Council agrees:**

- (i) to approve the contents of the report;**
- (ii) to authorise the Depute Chief Executive / Director of Corporate Support to send a copy of this report to the Scottish Government as representing the Council's views on the Discussion Draft of the National Planning Framework for Scotland 2; and**
- (iii) given the issues raised in the report are common to all of Ayrshire that a meeting be convened between appropriate elected members of all 3 Ayrshire Councils to agree a common response and a joint approach to lobbying to ensure that the draft NPF2 better reflects the needs and aspirations of Ayrshire.**

**Elizabeth Morton  
Depute Chief Executive / Director of Corporate Support**

16 April 2008 (JL/SA)  
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### **LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS**

1. National Planning Framework for Scotland 2

Anyone wishing to inspect the above paper please contact John Lilley on (01563) 576754.

***Implementation Officer: Alan Neish***

