

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

DEVELOPMENT SERVICES COMMITTEE - 29 JUNE 2004

NATIONAL PLANNING FRAMEWORK FOR SCOTLAND

Report by Executive Director of Development and Property Services

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To inform the Committee of the contents and provisions of the Scottish Executive's National Planning Framework for Scotland.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 In March 2004 the Scottish Executive published its National Planning Framework for Scotland, a key element in the Executive's package of measures to modernise and reform the planning system within Scotland. The Framework describes Scotland as it is in 2004, identifies key issues and drivers of change, sets out a vision to 2025 and identifies priorities and opportunities for different parts of the country through a number of spatial perspectives. The Framework is one of the factors that the Executive will take into account in deciding policy matters and identifying spending priorities and it is intended that the document will provide a context for the preparation of development plans and the making of planning decisions. It is also intended that the Framework will be updated every four years to reflect changing circumstances.

3. ISSUES OF RELEVANCE TO EAST AYRSHIRE

- 3.1 Within the section of the National Planning Framework which gives a description of Scotland as it is today, a number of issues relate to East Ayrshire. In particular:
- (i) recognition is given to East Ayrshire lying within an Objective 2 Area under the European Structural Funds Programme which provides assistance to areas facing industrial, urban or rural decline;
 - (ii) specific mention is made of the East Ayrshire Coalfield Area being identified as a Social Inclusion Partnership Area;
 - (iii) specific mention is made of former mining towns in Ayrshire, previously reliant on a narrow range of business and industry, now being vulnerable to economic change. In East Ayrshire, it is recognised that the decline in manufacturing has not been compensated by new employment in the service sectors and that some towns have many of the social and environmental problems more usually associated with cities; and
 - (iv) it is recognised that the construction of the M77 has strengthened the link between Ayrshire and the Glasgow conurbation.

3.2 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 projected population decline between 2002 and 2018 and as an area with little change in projected household growth to 2016;
- (ii) with regard to regeneration, an issue which is of prime importance to East Ayrshire, the framework recommends in general terms, closer integration between SIPs and community planning and supports area regeneration through Scottish Executive involvement with the Townscape Heritage Initiative;
- (iii) it is recognised that in some rural areas, improvements in transport infrastructure are needed to support economic activity and improve access to social facilities;
- (iv) with regard to renewable energy, the Executive expects the contribution from wind power to rise substantially over the next 10 years and encourages a mix of renewable energy technologies with greater use of fuel from wood and other energy crops;
- (v) with regard to water and drainage, lack of capacity in waste water or water supply infrastructure is specifically recognised in the framework as a significant constraint on development within East Ayrshire.

3.3 The Framework sets out a vision for Scotland in 2025, specific parts of which are of direct relevance to East Ayrshire. In particular:

- (i) Central Ayrshire, including the towns of Kilmarnock, Ayr and Irvine, is identified as an Economic Development Zone with potential to become the focus for key industries and clusters. It is indicated that the zone requires good links with both Scotland and the rest of the world and strategic business locations within the zone need to be well connected with each other and be readily accessible from residential areas.
- (ii) synergies between clusters of related industries are promoted in the Framework and clusters of forest industries and tourism are considered of particular relevance to East Ayrshire. The framework advocates that business and industrial land allocations should take account of opportunities to foster the development of such clusters and facilitate the development of supporting infrastructure.
- (iii) there is a need to spread the benefits of economic activity more widely and the framework recognises that this will involve providing more areas with the connectivity and environmental quality they require to participate in the modern economy. It is recognised that this will provide additional opportunities in areas such as Ayrshire, which is specifically mentioned in this regard; and
- (iv) in the Central Belt Market Area of Ayrshire, Glasgow and the Clyde Valley, it is stated that Authorities will have to work close together to ensure that Waste Management Facilities are sited in appropriate locations.

4. SPATIAL PERSPECTIVES

4.1 The National Planning Framework addresses four specific perspectives for the following areas; the Central Belt, the East Coast, Ayrshire and the South West, and Rural Scotland. The spatial perspectives for Ayrshire and the South West and for Rural Scotland are of particular interest and importance to East Ayrshire. In particular, it is recognised in the Ayrshire and the South West perspective:

- (i) 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 Economic Forum has responded positively to the challenges with its strategy for 'Ayrshire – Scotland's Western Gateway.'
- (ii) 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, realise the potential of deep water assets at Hunterston and strengthen strategic transport corridors between Ireland and the continent;
- (iii) that transport corridors linking Prestwick Airport and the ports of Ayr, Hunterston and Troon with the main urban centres of the central belt provide good locations for developing clusters of export orientated industries and stronger service centres;
- (iv) that the improved M77 is acting as a catalyst for new development in the Kilmarnock area, although the constraints imposed by a lack of capacity in water and drainage infrastructure require to be addressed;
- (v) that the area's good international links provide opportunities for the further development of cultural, business and activity based tourism;
- (vi) that action is required to improve the environmental quality of the former mining areas of East Ayrshire;
- (vii) that upland areas offer potential for renewable energy developments including biomass production; and
- (viii) that the Ayrshire and Arran Woodland Strategy places emphasis on the potential for enhancing landscape quality and creating multi-purpose woodlands.

4.2 The Rural Area perspective recognises that high quality rural environments offer opportunities for a wide range of recreational activities and provide attractive locations for creative and knowledge based industries, including those based on Scotland's distinctive environment and culture. With regard to East Ayrshire, the Rural Area perspective;

- (i) makes specific mention of the Southern Uplands Partnership which is promoting the integration of environmental, social and economic land use policies to keep people living and working in the upland areas;

- (ii) recognises that improvements to transport infrastructure may be needed to cope with the volume of timber generated by the increased levels of harvesting expected by 2020; and
- (iii) recognises that across rural Scotland, the aim should be to develop a diverse, modern economy with an international perspective based on environmental and cultural resources and knowledge and expertise.

5. GENERAL OBSERVATIONS ON THE FRAMEWORK

- 5.1 In so far as Ayrshire is concerned, and East Ayrshire in particular, it is gratifying to note the support given to the Ayrshire Economic Forum's Strategy for Economic Development within the document and to see the main provisions of that strategy reflected in the framework itself. It is also gratifying to note that the main spatial perspective for Ayrshire is also very much in line with the spatial development strategy proposed for Ayrshire in the Consultation Draft of the Replacement Ayrshire Joint Structure Plan. This is especially the case with the identification of the Central Ayrshire Economic Development Zone which corresponds to the Structure Plan's Core Investment Area, as a focus for major new development. It is now intended to incorporate, where it is considered appropriate, the provisions of the Framework into the Council's emerging Long Term Development Strategy and the forthcoming alteration to the East Ayrshire Local Plan.
- 5.2 However, it is disappointing that, although it is recognised that connectivity between Ayrshire, the central belt and Ireland requires to be strengthened, no specific mention is made of the need to improve Ayrshire's links with the M74 and the South.
- 5.3 It is also of concern that Ayrshire is combined with Glasgow, the Clyde Valley, Stirling and the Forth Valley and Edinburgh and the Lothians within the 'Central Belt Market Area' for waste management. It is not considered appropriate that the current Area Waste Planning arrangements should be sidelined in this way, nor that Ayrshire should be included as part of this wider waste management area without any prior consultation. It is a real concern that Ayrshire should be potentially identified as a suitable location for waste originating in the central belt. This is not in accord with current East Ayrshire Council policy and is particularly worrying as the National Planning Framework for Scotland is a material consideration which will be taken into account by the Scottish Executive when dealing with all planning related matters.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

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

7. LEGAL / AUTHORITY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 There are no legal or authority implications for the Council as a result of the Framework.

8. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

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

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

9.1 It is recommended that the Council agrees:

- (i) to authorise the Head of Planning, Development and Building Standards to consider the provisions of the National Planning Framework, in so far as they relate to East Ayrshire, in the preparation of the emerging alterations to the East Ayrshire Local Plan ;
- (ii) to authorise the Executive Director to send a letter to the Scottish Executive expressing the Committee's concerns about Ayrshire's links to the M74 and the South and, in particular, the contents of the plan in relation to waste management; and
- (i) to otherwise note the contents of this report.

James Lavery
Executive Director of Development and Property Services
31 May 2004

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

1. National Planning Framework for Scotland: Scottish Executive.

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

Implementation Officer: Alan Neish