



**RTPI  
Research  
Paper**

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# **Transforming Planning, Places and Scotland: The benefits of investing in a digital planning service**

## **POLICY IMPACT ANALYSIS**

# Contents

<b>1. Acknowledgements</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>2. Document Series</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>3. Executive Summary</b>	<b>5</b>
3.1 Overview	5
3.2 Findings	5
<b>4. Digital Planning to Support Policy Priorities</b>	<b>6</b>
4.1 Scottish Planning Policy	6
<b>5. Digital Planning Supporting Policy Priorities</b>	<b>9</b>
5.1 A Digital Future	9
5.1.1 A Digital Strategy for Scotland	9
5.1.2 National Performance Framework	9
5.1.3 Programme for Government 2020/ 21	11
5.2 The Place Principle	12
5.3 The Planning Review	14
5.3.1 Empowering Planning to Deliver Great Places	14
5.3.2 Planning Review: Scottish Government response	14
5.3.3 Places, People and Planning Consultation	15
5.4 National Planning Framework 4	15
5.4.1 Vacant and Derelict Land Task Force	15
5.4.2 Scottish Water	16
5.4.3 Zero Waste Scotland	16
5.5 Infrastructure	17
5.5.1 Infrastructure Investment Plan	17
5.5.2 The Infrastructure Commission for Scotland	17
5.6 Economy	18
5.6.1 Economic Action Plan 2019-20	18
5.6.2 Advisory Group on Economic Recovery	18
5.6.3 City Region and Regional Growth Deals	19

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5.7	Town Centres and Regeneration	19
5.7.1	Town Centre Action Plan and 20 Minute Neighbourhoods	19
5.8	Housing and Communities	20
5.8.1	Housing to 2040: stakeholder engagement report 2018	20
5.8.2	Community Funds	20
5.9	Climate Change	20
5.9.1	Climate Change Plan	20
5.10	Rural, Marine and Remote	21
5.10.1	Land Use Strategy	21
5.10.2	National Marine Plan	22
5.10.3	Islands Plan	23
5.11	Transport	23
5.11.1	National Transport Strategy	23
5.12	Health	24
5.12.1	Public Health Priorities	24

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We would also like to thank David Pendlebury and Adam Mason at KPMG<sup>1</sup> who undertook discreet pieces of work during the project which resulted in the economic impact analysis and the case study reports.

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<sup>1</sup> KPMG is a global network of professional services firms providing Audit, Tax and Advisory services. They operate in 147 countries and territories and have more than 219,000 people working in member firms around the world

## 2. Document Series

The Benefits of Investing in a Digital Planning Service research series is funded by Scottish Government. In commissioning RTPI to undertake this work Scottish Government aimed to explore the evidence base in implementing a Digital Planning Strategy through examining:

- the economic and societal benefits arising from digital transformation
- efficiencies that accrue within the planning system from investment in new technology and validation of the estimated cost and time savings
- the costs (financial and other) of not taking forward digital approaches across the planning service.

For this research RTPI Scotland has coordinated a programme of work analysing the need, demand and possible impacts of supporting a digital planning strategy. This comprises:

- An **economic impact analysis**, which was undertaken by KPMG, to assess the potential efficiencies that could be provided from a digital planning service
- A **user and customer impact analysis** setting out the benefits for planning authorities, planning applicants and communities
- A **policy impact analysis** setting out the range of policy ambitions that rely upon a digital planning service
- **Case studies**, which have been written by KPMG, analysing the impact that digital planning could have on Scottish Government aspirations on its net zero carbon targets, in tackling health inequalities and as part of post Covid-19 recovery.
- A **summary document** setting out the key findings across the papers
- An **infographic**

This paper sets out the policy impact analysis.

## 3. Executive Summary

### 3.1 Overview

This report looks to identify those policy ambitions within Scotland that will rely upon new investment in a digital planning and place based analysis. These will come about primarily from:

- better integration of spatial data from a range of sources providing the ability to better undertake spatial analysis in the plan-making process
- better facilitated engagement from individuals and communities that ensures greater understanding of the welfare impacts from planning
- more efficient processes and operations of the 'planning system' that tie together these effects and support the planner to plan effectively.

### 3.2 Findings

This report concludes that a digital planning system could facilitate the move towards better place-based approaches to planning, supporting the Scottish Government's commitment to implementing the Place Principle approach of a shared purpose to support a clear way forward for all services, assets and investments which will maximise the impact of their combined resources.

In doing this it is considered that a digital planning system can add value to Scottish Government policy ambitions contained in the following plans and strategies:

<b>Digital Strategy for Scotland</b>	<b>Programme for Government 2020/1</b>
<b>National Performance Framework</b>	<b>The Place Principle</b>
<b>Infrastructure Investment Plan</b>	<b>City Region Deals</b>
<b>Economic Action Plan</b>	<b>Town Centre Action Plan</b>
<b>Advisory Group on Economic Recovery</b>	<b>Housing 2040</b>
<b>National Transport Strategy</b>	<b>Climate Change Plan</b>
<b>Land Use Strategy</b>	<b>National Marine Plan</b>
<b>Public Health Priorities</b>	<b>National Planning Framework</b>

## 4. Planning Supporting Policy Priorities

### 4.1 Scottish Planning Policy

Scottish Planning Policy<sup>2</sup> (SPP) outlines how the planning system has a vital role to play in delivering high-quality places and sets out policies for plan making, planning decisions and development design. It includes a vision for planning, which is:

"We live in a Scotland with a growing, low-carbon economy with progressively narrowing disparities in well-being and opportunity. It is growth that can be achieved whilst reducing emissions and which respects the quality of environment, place and life which makes our country so special. It is growth which increases solidarity – reducing inequalities between our regions. We live in sustainable, well-designed places and homes which meet our needs. We enjoy excellent transport and digital connections, internally and with the rest of the world."

The SPP is structured around achieving 4 outcomes:

- A Successful, Sustainable Place, through
  - through promoting town centres
  - promoting rural development
  - supporting business and employment
  - enabling delivery of new homes
  - valuing the historic environment
- A Low Carbon Place, through
  - delivering heat and electricity
  - planning for zero waste
- A Natural, Resilient Place, through
  - valuing the natural environment
  - maximising the benefits of green infrastructure
  - promoting responsible extraction of resources
  - supporting aquaculture
  - managing flood risk and drainage
- A Connected Place, through
  - promoting sustainable transport and active travel
  - supporting digital connectivity

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-planning-policy/>

Achieving these outcomes relies upon planning working across other portfolios, strategies and outcomes. The diagram below, which is contained in SPP, attempts to show these relationships and interdependences.

SG Purpose	To focus government and public services on creating a more successful country, with opportunities for all to flourish, through increasing sustainable economic growth.										
SG National Outcomes	The planning system and service contribute to all 16 National Outcomes										
SG National Plans, Policies & Strategies	Government Economic Strategy										
	Infrastructure Investment Plan										
	Scotland's Digital Future	Electricity & Heat Generation Policy Statements	2020 Challenge for Scotland's Biodiversity	Scottish Historic Environment Strategy and Policy	Housing Strategy	National Planning Framework & Scottish Planning Policy	Land Use Strategy	Low Carbon Scotland: Report of Proposals and Policies	National Marine Plan	Regeneration Strategy	National Transport Strategy
Planning Vision	We live in a Scotland with a growing, low carbon economy with progressively narrowing disparities in well-being and opportunity. It is growth that can be achieved whilst reducing emissions and which respects the quality of environment, place and life which makes our country so special. It is growth which increases solidarity – reducing inequalities between our regions. We live in sustainable, well-designed places and homes which meet our needs. We enjoy excellent transport and digital connections, internally and with the rest of the world.										
Planning Outcomes	Planning makes Scotland a successful, sustainable place – supporting sustainable economic growth and regeneration, and the creation of well-designed places.			Planning makes Scotland a low carbon place – reducing our carbon emissions and adapting to climate change.			Planning makes Scotland a natural, resilient place – helping to protect and enhance our natural and cultural assets, and facilitating their sustainable use.		Planning makes Scotland a connected place – supporting better transport and digital connectivity.		
National Planning	Scottish Planning Policy (SPP)										
	Principal Policies										
	Sustainability					Placemaking					
	Subject Policies										
	Town Centres	Heat and Electricity	Natural Environment		Travel		Cities and Towns Rural Areas Coast and Islands National Developments				
	Rural Development		Green Infrastructure								
Homes	Aquacultural										
Business & Employment	Zero Waste	Minerals		Digital Connectivity							
Historic Environment		Flooding & Drainage									
COMMUNITY PLANNING											
Strategic	Strategic Development Plans										
Local	Local Development Plans										
Site	Master Plans										

The remainder of this document looks to explore some of these relationships and set out where digital planning approaches can enhance them to support joined up working, consistency, effectiveness and efficiency.



# 5. Digital Planning Supporting Policy Priorities

## 5.1 A Digital Future

### 5.1.1 A Digital Strategy for Scotland

The Scottish Government published Scotland's refreshed digital strategy in March 2017 to set out its vision for "Scotland as a vibrant, inclusive, open and outward looking digital nation". The strategy Realising Scotland's full potential in a digital world: a digital strategy for Scotland<sup>3</sup> outlined the government's plans for "ensuring that we put digital at the heart of everything we do - in the way in which we deliver inclusive economic growth, reform our public services and prepare our children for the workplace of the future." The vision aims to make Scotland a country that:

- stimulates innovation, welcomes investment and promotes its digital technologies industries
- develops internationally competitive, digitally mature businesses across all sectors
- designs and delivers digital public services around the needs of their users
- shares and opens up non-personal data as a source of innovation and efficiency
- has a public sector that operates on contemporary, digital, platform-based business models
- is led by a Government that "gets digital" and supports its staff to operate in digital ways
- provides high quality connectivity across the whole of our country
- is recognised internationally as a natural test bed for innovation in connectivity
- focuses its education and training systems on expanding its pool of digital skills and capabilities
- tackles the current gender gap in digital skills and careers
- enables everybody to share in the social, economic and democratic opportunities of digital
- creates the conditions which safeguard workers and enables Scottish society to address concerns about the digital world
- is secure and resilient to cyber threat and risk.

The digital strategy also says that Scottish Government will create the conditions which encourage continuous innovation and improvement in public services, highlighting the importance of data in unlocking innovation in public services, and how this can deliver potential savings to the public sector of more than £1billion.

Furthermore, it commits to "Drive the future transformation of Scotland's planning system to provide a simpler and more consistent online experience across Scotland".

### 5.1.2 National Performance Framework

The Scottish Government's National Performance Framework<sup>4</sup> has a purpose to:

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.gov.scot/publications/realising-scotlands-full-potential-digital-world-digital-strategy-scotland/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://nationalperformance.gov.scot/what-it>

- create a more successful country
- give opportunities to all people living in Scotland
- increase the wellbeing of people living in Scotland
- create sustainable and inclusive growth
- reduce inequalities and give equal importance to economic, environmental and social progress



As seen in the diagram above, to help achieve its purpose, the framework sets out ‘National Outcomes’ a number of which have direct relevance to the planning system. Each of these have indicators to measure performance that may well rely upon the gathering, sharing and analysis of spatial data. These include:

National Outcome	Relevant Indicator
people live in communities that are inclusive, empowered, resilient and safe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Places to interact</b> - The percentage of adults who agree that, in their neighbourhood, there are places to meet up and socialise</li> <li>• <b>Access to green and blue space</b> - The proportion of adults who live within a 5 minute walk of their local green or blue space</li> </ul>
a globally competitive, entrepreneurial, inclusive and sustainable economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Carbon footprint</b> - Scotland's carbon footprint expressed in million tonnes of</li> </ul>

	<p>carbon dioxide equivalent.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Natural capital</b> - The Natural Capital Asset Index (NCAI) monitors the quality and quantity of terrestrial habitats in Scotland, according to their potential to deliver ecosystem services now and into the future.</li> </ul>
people value, enjoy, protect and enhance their environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Visits to the outdoors</b> - Proportion of adults making one or more visits to the outdoors per week.</li> <li>• <b>State of historic sites</b> - The percentage of pre-1919 dwellings (sites) classified as having disrepair to critical elements.</li> <li>• <b>Condition of protected nature sites</b> - Percentage of natural features on protected nature sites found to be in favourable condition.</li> </ul>
people are healthy and active	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Journeys by active travel</b> - The proportion of short journeys less than 2 miles that are made by walking. This indicator also includes the proportion of journeys under 5 miles made by cycling</li> </ul>
tackle poverty by sharing opportunities, wealth and power more equally	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Wealth inequality</b> - The Gini coefficient is a measure of inequality where 0 expresses perfect equality (every household has the same wealth) and 100 expresses maximal inequality (one household has all the wealth and all others have none)</li> <li>• <b>Persistent poverty</b> - The proportion of people in Scotland living in relative poverty after housing costs for three out of the last four years.</li> <li>• <b>Satisfaction with housing</b> - The percentage of households who report being either "very satisfied" or "fairly satisfied" with their house or flat.</li> </ul>

### 5.1.3 Programme for Government 2020/ 21

Protecting Scotland, Renewing Scotland: The Government's Programme for Scotland 2020-2021 was published on 1 September 2020<sup>5</sup>. It sets out the actions the government will take in the coming year and includes the legislative programme for the next parliamentary year. It commits to:

- a national mission to create new jobs, good jobs and green jobs - with a particular focus on our young people, supporting retraining and investing in a Green New Deal to tackle climate

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.gov.scot/publications/protecting-scotland-renewing-scotland-governments-programme-scotland-2020-2021/>

change

- promoting lifelong health and wellbeing - by tackling COVID-19, remobilising and reforming the NHS and social care and tackling health inequalities
- promoting equality and helping young people fulfil their potential

The document sets out how the government will place "a new emphasis on technology to underpin our recovery" as part of its aspirations to "help more people engage with the digital economy, create jobs, and help more businesses increase productivity and grow more quickly."

Importantly the document outlines how the government aims to "drive forward digitalisation of planning as a key public service" saying that the government aims to "transform the planning system by making it much more inclusive, efficient and - through collaboration and opening up data -, a vital enabler in economic and societal recovery." The government says that this will "enable local people to play a more active role in the development and re-imagining of their places and create greater opportunities to influence positive change" and that it will provide greater clarity for business and industry that can help attract and target investment more effectively. The Programme for Government therefore commits to publishing a digital planning strategy that will provide a long-term vision and direction, followed by a five-year digital transformation programme in early 2021.

The government says that it will establish a Scottish programme to transform places that will be focussed on promoting place-based economic development and cohesion, helping communities across Scotland to improve key economic, social and wellbeing performance indicators. It will also support economic recovery and boost long term inclusive and sustainable growth, and continue to deliver the city region and regional growth deals.

## 5.2 The Place Principle

In 2020 the Scottish Government and COSLA agreed to adopt the Place Principle<sup>6</sup>. This aims to "help overcome organisational and sectoral boundaries, to encourage better collaboration and community involvement, and improve the impact of combined energy, resources and investment."

It promotes a shared understanding of place, and the need to take a more collaborative approach to a place's services and assets to achieve better outcomes for people and communities. The principle is outlined in box 1 below.

The Place Principle relies upon integrated approaches from a range of partners, including communities, to ensure that a more collaborative approach is taken to allocating resources, agreeing how to make best use of services, assets (such as buildings and land) and having a shared understanding of what a place is for and what it needs. Scottish Government and COSLA believe the Place Principle can:

- consider the benefits of planning, investment and implementation activity at the regional level of place - where that focus could drive faster rates of sustainable and inclusive economic growth

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.gov.scot/publications/place-principle-introduction/>

- ensure that place based work at the local or regional level being led by Scottish Government and its agencies is taken forward in a way that is integrated between both levels of place and cognisant of all complementary work being taken forward in associated policy areas
- exemplify the behaviours reflecting the core of the principle, working and planning together with our partners and local communities to improve the lives of people, support inclusive growth and create more successful places

### **The Place Principle**

We recognise that:

- Place is where people, location and resources combine to create a sense of identity and purpose, and is at the heart of addressing the needs and realising the full potential of communities. Places are shaped by the way resources, services and assets are directed and used by the people who live in and invest in them
- A more joined-up, collaborative, and participative approach to services, land and buildings, across all sectors within a place, enables better outcomes for everyone and increased opportunities for people and communities to shape their own lives.

The principle requests that:

- all those responsible for providing services and looking after assets in a place need to work and plan together, and with local communities, to improve the lives of people, support inclusive and sustainable economic growth and create more successful places.

We commit to taking:

- a collaborative, place-based approach with a shared purpose to support a clear way forward for all services, assets and investments which will maximise the impact of their combined resources.

An important part of taking forward the Principle is the potential of digital technology in supporting data collection, sharing of information and engagement. Support is already provided through digital tools including The Place Standard<sup>7</sup> which can allow a range of stakeholders to assess the quality of place, the Understanding Scottish Places (USP)<sup>8</sup> portal which brings together data for places in Scotland with populations higher than 1000 into a typology and the USP Your Town Audit<sup>9</sup> that supports organisations to measure the health of towns.

<sup>7</sup> <https://placestandard.scot/>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.usp.scot/>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.usp.scot/StaticPage/UspAudit>

## 5.3 The Planning Review

New legislation and a number of Scottish policy ambitions and strategies show a dependency upon a digitised planning service.

### 5.3.1 Empowering Planning to Deliver Great Places

The independent review of the Scottish planning system<sup>10</sup> was published in May 2016 and set out the views of the 3 panellists after their call for evidence and discussion with a wide range of stakeholders with an interest or dependency in the planning system. The panel comprised three people, each 'representing' a different interest in the system, They were Petra Biberbach, Chief Executive of Planning Aid Scotland; John Hamilton from the Scottish Property Federation; and Crawford Beveridge, Economist and former Chief Executive of Scottish Enterprise.

The report highlighted the important role of digital approaches to planning with four of its recommendations touching on this.

Recommendation 10 said that an IT task force should be established to explore how information technology can make development plans more accessible and responsive to 'live' information. It outlined how "digital innovation, such as the use of big data, specialist systems (such as for minerals and aggregates), Geographic Information Systems and 3D visualisations, should be actively rolled out across all authorities." The panel strongly recommended that a co-ordinated investment in technology was taken forward quickly.

Recommendation 33 outlined how the use of information technology to improve accessibility and allow for more real-time data to inform decisions should have an important role to play in development management processes saying that it could have a "game changing impact". In particular the report pointed to the potential to replace resource intensive methods of advertising and neighbour notification.

Recommendation 36 said that planning services should become leaders and innovators within the context of public service reform and that Scottish Government and key agencies should lead by example.

Recommendation 43 stated that there should a continuing commitment to early engagement in planning, though this needed to improve. It suggested that planning authorities and developers needed to be more creative in actively involving communities to allow them to shape their places and that this could be supported by smarter use of information technology, visualisation and social media.

### 5.3.2 Planning Review: Scottish Government response<sup>11</sup>

The Scottish Government responded to the Independent Panel's findings in July 2016 where it said that it would appoint an IT task force to explore the recommendations on digital planning. This

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.gov.scot/publications/empowering-planning-to-deliver-great-places/>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.gov.scot/publications/planning-review-sg-response/>

would include examination of how to improve information management and the use of innovative techniques such as the use of 3D visualisations in community engagement.

The government set out how it planned to publish a planning White Paper which would seek views on, amongst other things, “embedding IT and innovation to achieve a digitally transformed planning system.”

### 5.3.3 Places, People and Planning Consultation<sup>12</sup>

The Scottish Government’s position statement, issued after the consultation paper paving the way for the Planning Bill, was published in June 2017. In discussing “innovation, designing for the future and the digital transformation of the planning service” it outlined how there was considerable backing around the importance of digital technologies and innovation to support the future planning service saying that:

“Many feel that better use of digital technology, whether in the form of 3D visualisations or improved use of digital communication tools, could provide a step change in the way the planning system operates. Some concerns relate to resources and there have been calls for a central resource to support local authorities in moving to maximise opportunities through digital transformation. Some also expressed concerns about potential for digital exclusion. We recognise the huge potential that exists through harnessing use of digital technologies and data more effectively and will be setting out our ambitions for a future digital planning service in Scotland shortly. We are moving forward with establishing a Digital Task Force to lead and shape these broad and transformational aspirations, as well as inform on more specific ideas and innovation in this key area.”

## 5.4 National Planning Framework 4

As part of the development of the 4<sup>th</sup> National Planning Framework, Scottish Government issued a ‘Call for Ideas’ January 2020. The analysis of this was published in August 2020<sup>13</sup>. Despite this focusing the spatial priorities that the NPF should have, the policies it should contain and the national developments that it should include, a number of respondents highlighted the importance of embracing a digital planning service.

### 5.4.1 Vacant and Derelict Land Task Force

An example of this includes the submission from the Vacant and Derelict Land Task Force<sup>14</sup> which suggested that there was a need to include vacant and derelict land (VDL) data on a digital mapping tool and include information available to prioritise sites for reuse. It said:

“A repositioning the VDL register to inform the planning process would be welcome. The VDL register currently includes sites such as vacant sites that are likely to be part of overall land supply and tend to be reused in the short-term. This tends to mask a hardcore of sites that are persistent, problematic and are long-term occupants of the register which should be

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.gov.scot/publications/places-people-planning-position-statement/>

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.gov.scot/publications/npf4-analysis-reponses-call-ideas/>

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.transformingplanning.scot/media/1623/209-vacant-and-derelict-land-taskforce.pdf>

tackled as a national priority. A reformed register and updated guidance for the Scottish VDL Survey can help improve the quantity and quality of information and transform the register from what is currently a statistical exercise into a meaningful and a useful planning tool.”

It continued:

“Presenting this data on a publicly accessible map-based opportunity portal would align with the Scottish Government’s Digital Planning objectives and would more effectively inform the planning process. To facilitate delivery, NPF4 should be supported by a Digital Planning strategy that creates a system of open, accessible data and resources for VDL that is readily accessible and usable by all stakeholders ranging from public bodies, local businesses to community groups. This should reinforce statutory development plan processes and support Local Place Plans allowing regeneration to happen across different scales.

### 5.4.2 Scottish Water

In responding to the NPF4 call for ideas<sup>15</sup> Scottish Water also pointed towards the potential of digital planning approaches, saying that digital infrastructure will play a key role in achieving both the NPF4 objectives and the ambitions they had to provide effective services. Their response stated that they “are looking forward to the launch of the Digital Strategy for Planning which will be instrumental in making the planning process more efficient and inclusive.”

Key benefits identified included the ability to better facilitate engagement with residents/customers, businesses and communities in decision making processes; to support the NPF to become fully digitally connected with communities; and to support the implementation of new technologies that will allow Scottish Water to manage their assets more efficiently.

### 5.4.3 Zero Waste Scotland

Zero Waste Scotland’s submission<sup>16</sup> to the call for ideas outlined the measures they felt were required to ensure consumers and users had better information relating to the performance and impacts of the built assets they are using or purchasing. This included information on energy performance, performance information, flood risk, water use, building material life spans, maintenance schedules and costs, air quality, and operating instructions of any technology or systems.

This also highlighted opportunities arising from digital infrastructure, citing Building Information Modelling (BIM), digital twins, materials and buildings passports, augmented and virtual reality, robotics, drones, and modular off-site manufacture.

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.transformingplanning.scot/media/1889/218-scottish-water.pdf>

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.transformingplanning.scot/media/1627/227-zero-waste-scotland.pdf>



## 5.5 Infrastructure

### 5.5.1 Infrastructure Investment Plan

This government's Infrastructure Investment Plan<sup>17</sup> outlines priorities for investment and a long term strategy for the development of public infrastructure in Scotland. It sets out why the Scottish Government invests, how it invests and what it intends to invest. It aims to maximise investment in infrastructure through capital funding, revenue-funded infrastructure, a range of finance initiatives and by using the capital borrowing powers. It covers a wide range of infrastructure including transport, digital, energy, water, waste, health, education and housing.

Progress is reported<sup>18</sup> annually whilst six-monthly updates are provided on projects with a capital value of £20 million<sup>19</sup> or more where Scottish Government have a lead role in procurement or funding; on infrastructure projects with a capital value of £20 million or more which are at outline business case, approved stage or beyond<sup>20</sup>; and ongoing major infrastructure programmes with an investment of £50 million or more<sup>21</sup>. These are generally published and spreadsheets which can be difficult to analyse and do not give a good indication of the relationships between projects, socially on a spatial basis.

There are slightly more sophisticated approaches taken to this through, for example, the Irish Government's Investment Projects and Programmes Tracker<sup>22</sup> that reflects the portfolio of projects with estimated costs above €20m in the pipeline to support their Project Ireland 2040 ambitions.

It is considered that there is much that digital planning approaches can offer in this field to provide a coherent overview of infrastructure projects and the pipeline. Making better use of data capture, analysis and mapping could help to provide more engaging, spatial, real time updates for government, its partners and stakeholders.

### 5.5.2 The Infrastructure Commission for Scotland

The Infrastructure Commission for Scotland was established in early 2019 to provide independent advice to the Scottish Ministers on a 30-year vision of infrastructure for Scotland, and to consider options for delivery. It's Delivery Findings Report, 2020<sup>23</sup> outlines the need for place – based approaches to future planning and deliver of infrastructure.

It contains a recommendation that “From 2020, the Scottish Government should consider the future data requirements and data potential for all new publicly funded infrastructure as well as the potential for the use of digital services associated with the assets.”

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.gov.scot/publications/infrastructure-investment-plan-2015/>

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.gov.scot/publications/infrastructure-investment-plan-2015-progress-report-2019-20/>

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.gov.scot/publications/infrastructure-investment-plan-2015-major-capital-projects-update-march-2020/>

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.gov.scot/publications/infrastructure-investment-plan-2015-project-pipeline-update-march-2020/>

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.gov.scot/publications/infrastructure-investment-plan-2015-programme-pipeline-update-march-2020/>

<sup>22</sup> <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/6db7c4-investment-projects-and-programmes-tracker/>

<sup>23</sup> <https://infrastructurecommission.scot/page/key-findings-report>

The report outlines how the Commission's engagement with players in this field had found agreement on the need to develop and make better use of digital data, especially geospatial data. Good data was felt to cut through political barriers to the right investments.

It was felt that a central 'repository' was required as this can help decision makers at different levels to be better informed. It was also their view that having a horizon scanning component as part of this will help ensure that infrastructure is appropriate for future needs.

The report outlined how information sharing is seen as an important factor in facilitating better partnership working which could help to better align the work of different players, such as local authorities and utility companies. For example, utility companies said they would like early information on proposed projects - such as housing or business developments - before planning decisions are taken. This will allow them to align with council requirements, rather than put up barriers to projects that have already been granted permission on cost grounds. It can also allow local authorities to benefit by unlocking upfront investment for priority sites.

## 5.6 Economy

### 5.6.1 Economic Action Plan 2019-20<sup>24</sup>

The Government's Economic Action Plan for 2019-20 has an aim to support "thriving places throughout Scotland: in our regions, cities, towns and the rural economy". It highlights the commitment to launch a programme of digital transformation to support the planning system and planning services to make better use of digital technologies and data, including a digital mapping prototype to support co-ordinated and sustainable development. This will "outline the future projects and services we will seek to deliver to help facilitate a planning system that is more inclusive, efficient and a key enabler of economic growth."

### 5.6.2 Advisory Group on Economic Recovery

The Advisory Group on Economic Recovery (AGER) was established in April 2020 to provide expert advice on Scotland's economic recovery once the immediate emergency created by coronavirus has subsided. Specifically, the Group was asked to advise the government on:

- measures to support different sectoral and regional challenges the economy will face in recovery
- how business practice will change as a result of coronavirus, including opportunities to operate differently and how Government policy can help the transition towards a greener, net-zero and wellbeing economy

In discussing the public sector's rapid adoption of new ways of working and regulating during lockdown, the report says that change and the ability to be 'fleet of foot' was needed and that is well positioned to become more agile and innovative in this regard. It highlights how a number of

<sup>24</sup> <https://economicactionplan.mygov.scot/>

regulatory agencies and planning authorities are testing new ways of becoming active drivers of business and community innovation, investment and jobs.<sup>25</sup>

The report recommends that “The Scottish Government, regulatory bodies and local authorities should review their key policy, planning and consenting frameworks, especially for key infrastructure investments such as marine renewables, to accelerate projects.”

In the Scottish Government’s response to the Advisory Group on Economic Recovery<sup>26</sup> it outlined how it intended to review national planning policies and the extension of permitted development rights to support economic recovery, and, that it would explore options to “alleviate planning restraints, build capacity and deal more quickly with complex applications”. It committed to publishing a Digital Planning Strategy that would outline a five-year transformation programme to deliver digital tools to realise benefits across business, infrastructure and utility providers, public sector organisations and communities. The response went on to outline how Scottish Government would seek to invest in digital capabilities to support economic recovery.

### 5.6.3 City Region and Regional Growth Deals

One of the recommendations of the Advisory Group on Economic Growth focused on the need for the economic development landscape to become more regionally focused so as to address the specific new challenges of economic recovery. It stated that this should be tasked to “drive delivery of place-based and regional solutions, especially the City-Region Growth Deals”. It said that this would require closer alignment horizontally across organisations and vertically at different scales.

As with the discussion above on the Infrastructure Investment Plan, it is considered that there is a possible transformative role for digital planning to support the coordination of City Region and Regional Growth deals to ensure that they complement one another by providing a coherent overview of infrastructure projects and capturing data capture to provide spatial, real time updates for those involved.

## 5.7 Town Centres and Regeneration

### 5.7.1 Town Centre Action Plan and 20 Minute Neighbourhoods

The Scottish Government’s Town Centre Action Plan<sup>27</sup> was published in 2013. It supports the concept of a 'town centre first principle' which aims to 'put the health of town centres at the heart of decision-making processes'. This intends to ensure that when making decision on the location of facilities and services public bodies considered the short, medium and longer term impacts on town centres. Despite this principle being in place there was been no formal monitoring or reporting on its application, use or impact on town centres across Scotland.

<sup>25</sup> <https://www.gov.scot/publications/towards-robust-resilient-wellbeing-economy-scotland-report-advisory-group-economic-recovery/>

<sup>26</sup> <https://www.gov.scot/publications/economic-recovery-implementation-plan-scottish-government-response-to-the-advisory-group-on-economic-recovery/>

<sup>27</sup> <https://www.gov.scot/publications/town-centre-action-plan-scottish-government-response/pages/1/>

It was announced in the Scottish Government's Programme for Government that it intended to take forward ambitions for 20 minute neighbourhoods. This may provide a broader impetus for ensuring the town centre first principle is implemented given its focus on creating "liveable, accessible places, with thriving local economies, where people can meet their daily needs within a 20 minute walk." An important element of this will be an ability to gather, manage and interrogate data spatially to track development and change in places over time, which in turn points to a need to ensure this connected with digital planning services.

In a broader sense town centre regeneration is already making good use of digital services to manage, store and disseminate data through, for example, the Understanding Scottish Places (USP) tool which shows how every town in Scotland with a population of 1,000 or more is interacting with its surrounding settlements and performing against a range of indicators and inter/dependency relationships.

## 5.8 Housing and Communities

### 5.8.1 Housing to 2040: stakeholder engagement report 2018

As part of Scottish Government's work to develop approaches to housing up to 2040 it undertook an exercise with a range of organisations to explore the issues to be explored and possible ways forward<sup>28</sup>. A number of stakeholders suggested further research into need and demand for affordable housing going forward, taking account of the ageing population, adaptations, and household and property size. They emphasised the need for data to inform decision-making highlighting how the importance of enhanced data analysis needed to account for the fact that nationwide trends might vary from local need and demand.

### 5.8.2 Community Funds

Digital planning's role in Scotland's recovery from COVID-19 has also supported communities through bringing together data from a range of sources to display and map out the £350 million funding provided to communities across Scotland affected by coronavirus.

It is thought that potential value and power of bringing this data together is huge and that it may be useful in other settings. Collating, analysing and disseminating clear information can bring clarity to what can often be complex information, thereby supporting communities and support organisations to gain a better understanding of what is being invested where.

## 5.9 Climate Change

### 5.9.1 Climate Change Plan

Scotland's climate change legislation<sup>29</sup> sets a target date for net-zero emissions of all greenhouse gases by 2045. The government is updating its Climate Change Plan<sup>30</sup> to reflect this through aims including:

<sup>28</sup> <https://www.gov.scot/publications/housing-2040-report-stakeholder-engagement-2018/>

<sup>29</sup> <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2019/15/contents/enacted>

<sup>30</sup> <https://www.gov.scot/publications/draft-climate-change-plan-draft-third-report-policies-proposals-2017/>

- reducing greenhouse gas emissions through a Just Transition to a net-zero economy and society
- driving Scotland's adaptation to climate change
- supporting decarbonisation in the public sector
- engaging with business and industry on decarbonisation
- encouraging individuals to move towards low carbon living

The planning system has a role to play in these, primarily through:

- supporting the development of renewable energy and the expansion of renewable energy generation capacity
- guiding development to appropriate locations to minimise the need to travel
- helping to reduce emissions and energy use in new buildings and infrastructure
- enabling development at appropriate locations

A digitised planning service can support planning services through, for example:

- a gateway website to become the entry point to all information and services relating to planning
- providing digital planning tools to support community engagement on the future of their places
- creating a smart and data-driven planning system through shared data platforms
- establishing an Innovation Lab to research, test and implement new technologies
- supporting better collaboration and support for local authorities

## 5.10 Rural, Marine and Remote

### 5.10.1 Land Use Strategy

Getting The Best From Our Land: A Land Use Strategy for Scotland 2016 – 2021<sup>31</sup> sets out the government's vision for land use to 2050:

“A Scotland where we fully recognise, understand and value the importance of our land resources, and where our plans and decisions about land use will deliver improved and enduring benefits, enhancing the wellbeing of our nation.”

The strategy aims to reflect the varied nature of the interactions between different interests and land use. It is equally applicable across a wide range of interests for example land and water management, health, recreation, education and cultural heritage.

The strategy is clear in that it sits alongside and informs the National Planning Framework, Scottish Planning Policy and the National Marine Plan to support Scotland's Economic Strategy. The Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 requires Ministers give due regard to relevant policies and strategies

<sup>31</sup> <https://www.gov.scot/publications/getting-best-land-land-use-strategy-scotland-2016-2021/>

when revising the National Planning Framework. National Planning Framework 3 refers directly to the Land Use Strategy and the Principles for Sustainable Land Use. The Land Use Strategy highlights the importance of delivering multiple benefits from land and the need to recognise that the environment is a functioning ecosystem within decision making. Scottish Planning Policy is clear that application of planning policies should have regard to the Principles for Sustainable Land Use.

The strategy also highlights how the planning system and local planning authorities help to deliver the objectives of the strategy and how the application of the strategy's principles is a matter of good planning. Policy 3 in the strategy says the government will undertake a programme of information and awareness-raising to provide more detail and clarity on the relevance of the Land Use Strategy to the planning system; to show the added value the Land Use Strategy can bring, particularly to development planning; and information on the use of an ecosystems approach in Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA).

A number of opportunities are also mentioned that can help to deliver the Land Use Strategy, including community engagement and policies on flood risk, landscape, biodiversity, green networks, and renewable energy. However the strategy recognises that there is a need to improve the understanding of the role of the spatial planning system in supporting the strategy.

Creating an open, smart and data-driven planning system through a new shared data platform can support better joint working and engagement.

### 5.10.2 National Marine Plan

Scotland's statutory National Marine Plan<sup>32</sup> (NMP) was adopted and published in March 2015. It sets out how marine resources are to be used and managed out to 200 nautical miles, applying to all decisions taken by public authorities which affect this marine area. The plan deals with development and activity in Scotland's seas and incorporates environmental protection into marine decision-making to achieve sustainable management.

It is supported by digital platforms including:

- Marine Scotland MAPS NMPi<sup>33</sup> (National Marine Plan interactive), an interactive tool which is part of the Marine Scotland Open Data Network that has been designed to support the development of national and regional marine planning. It allows people to view different types of information and as well as links to data sources to facilitate data download.
- Marine Scotland Information<sup>34</sup> is a web portal that provides access to descriptions and information about the Scottish marine environment while providing links to datasets and map resources that are made available by Marine Scotland and partners. Content is grouped into information organised into themes that are aligned with the Scottish Government vision for

<sup>32</sup> <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scotlands-national-marine-plan/>

<sup>33</sup> <https://marinescotland.atkinsgeospatial.com/nmpi/>

<sup>34</sup> <http://marine.gov.scot/>

managing Scotland's Seas; spatial data presented as interactive or downloadable maps; and datasets, statistics, downloadable documents, and links to other websites.

There is an obvious opportunity to learn from this work to inform support for the 4<sup>th</sup> National Planning Framework and to explore how these can complement one another.

### 5.10.3 Islands Plan

The National Islands Plan<sup>35</sup>, which was published in December 2019, provides a framework for action in order to meaningfully improve outcomes for island communities. The Plan sets out 13 Strategic Objectives, a number of which are relevant to planning such as:

- addressing population decline and ensure a healthy, balanced population profile
- improving and promoting sustainable economic development
- improving transport services
- improving housing
- reducing levels of fuel poverty
- improving digital connectivity
- improving and promoting health, social care and wellbeing
- improving and promoting environmental wellbeing and deal with biosecurity
- contributing to climate change mitigation and adaptation and promote clean, affordable and secure energy
- empowering diverse communities and different places

There is a need to ensure that the decision making process around planning and for the Islands Plan are based on a sound evidence base and are aware of the work underway on each.

## 5.11 Transport

### 5.11.1 National Transport Strategy

National Transport Strategy 2<sup>36</sup> was published in February 2020. It sets out Scottish Government's vision for Scotland's transport system for the next 20 years which is underpinned by four priorities.

- reducing inequalities, with the transport system providing fair access to services; being easy to use for all; being affordable for all
- tackling climate action, with the transport system helping deliver the net-zero carbon target, adapting, enable greener, cleaner choices
- delivering inclusive economic growth, with the transport system getting people and goods where they need to get to, being reliable, efficient and high quality, using beneficial innovation
- improving health and wellbeing with the transport system being safe and secure for all, enabling people to make healthy travel choices, helping make communities great places to live

<sup>35</sup> <https://www.gov.scot/publications/national-plan-scotlands-islands/>

<sup>36</sup> <https://www.transport.gov.scot/publication/national-transport-strategy-2/>

The document highlights how planning can help support its ambitions, though it points out the need for it to be “properly aligned with transport planning to realise its full potential”. In discussing how to tackle its priority on improving our health and wellbeing the strategy explicitly mentions planning and place in saying it will “ensure that transport assets and services adopt the Place Principle” and it aims to “embed the implications for transport in spatial planning and land use decision making.”

The strategy says

“Planning and development have a major influence on our transport system. We will continue to work collaboratively to ensure that, when planning decisions are made, as a priority they will consider the impacts on transport. In identifying sites for development of housing, employment, schools, offices, factories, hospitals, and tourist attractions transport considerations will play a crucial role and will do so as early in the planning process as possible. This will have a positive impact on the choices about the types of journeys we make, when we make them and how we make them.”

It goes on to say:

“Similarly, transport accessibility will influence the location and design of future development. Transport will help planning and development and also ensure our communities are sustainable. We will continue to create a planning system that puts in place options that will discourage people from owning or using cars. They will be designed so that workers in, and visitors to, an area are attracted to public transport or active travel options ahead of private cars. The transport system will also help ensure that places are convenient to get to without having to use a car.”

The strategy emphasises the need for strong links between transport and planning with spatial planning and how the benefits of place making and sustainable and active travel can support town centres. This is summed up when it says:

“Overall, the transport system and the consideration of the current and future transport needs of people will be at the heart of planning decisions to ensure sustainable places”

Key to this will be new, more collaborative ways of working, better sharing of information, data and intelligence, joined up engagement and decision making and consenting processes that work in harmony.

## 5.12 Health

### 5.12.1 Public Health Priorities

The Scottish Government and COSLA agreed six Public Health Priorities<sup>37</sup> in June 2018. These aim to support national and local partners to work together to improve healthy life expectancy and reduce health inequalities across Scotland. They include the priority

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<sup>37</sup> <https://www.publichealthscotland.scot/our-areas-of-work/improving-our-health-and-wellbeing/scotlands-public-health-priorities/>



“A Scotland where we live in vibrant, healthy and safe places and communities”.

This recognises the importance of place and how it can have an impact on people’s health and wellbeing.

This is already supported by the Place Standard Tool<sup>38</sup> which is developed by Public Health Scotland in partnership with Architecture and Design Scotland and the Scottish Government. This provides a framework to structure conversations about place and supports people to consider the physical elements of a place such as buildings, open space and transport as well as social aspects including how empowered they feel in influencing decisions. The tool helps to start and facilitate discussions and for these to be documented methodically. In doing this it looks to identify the advantages and disadvantages of that place to help agree possible future actions and it is enabled to work online which can help with analysis of results.

Public Health Scotland advocates a ‘whole system approach’ to tackling the Public Health Priorities which involves partnerships working between a broad-range of stakeholders including, for example community planning partnerships, alcohol and drug partnerships, economic development, health professionals, education, early years, housing, sports and leisure, spatial planning, active travel, greenspace and environment, transport, and local businesses. The success of this approach depends on effective collaboration to ensure:

- clarity amongst partners on the issues faced, the context and wider system
- partnership working and aligned action
- clarity amongst partners on roles and responsibilities
- ongoing shared learning, monitoring, evaluation and reflection.

Consideration is also being given to the role of Public Health Scotland in assessing the health impacts of planning applications, something that would require information exchange, consistency in data, complementary processes and an agreed understanding of the issues and context.

The public health sector puts a lot of emphasis on building an evidence base to inform policy and practice. Organisations such as, for example, the Glasgow Centre for Population Health<sup>39</sup> has, since 2004 aimed to provide evidence to support new approaches, and inform and influence action to improve health and tackle inequality. It does this through testing new models; bringing together researchers and analysts with policy makers; dissemination and learning; and supporting innovation and debate. It has also undertaken pioneering work through the GoWell<sup>40</sup> programme which has provided long term longitudinal analysis, research and learning on the impact of investment in housing, regeneration and neighbourhood renewal in Glasgow on the health and wellbeing of people and communities.

Taking forward the spatial implications public health can be enhanced by digital platforms support the gathering of data, is presentation, and sharing it with the range of partners who are involved.

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<sup>38</sup> <https://placestandard.scot/>

<sup>39</sup> <https://www.gcph.co.uk/>

<sup>40</sup> <https://www.gowellonline.com/>



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