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National Planning Framework Team
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Dear Sirs

National Planning Framework for Scotland 2 – Discussion Draft

At the meeting of the Infrastructure Services Committee on 13 March 2008, members considered a report on the second National Planning Framework – discussion draft.

This Council considers that the National Planning framework should recognise the area's existing knowledge and skill base in the field of all energy technologies and provide support for initiatives that will provide opportunities to build on these existing strengths and diversify the area's economy for the future, to compensate for the changing nature of activity and employment in the North Sea Oil and Gas Sector. A major regional initiative and a project which has national status within Scottish Enterprise is the Aberdeen City and Shire Economic Forum's 'Energetica'; which seeks to position the city region as a global hub for the development of all energy technologies and incorporates at its core an 'Energy related lifestyle corridor extending from the northern edge of the city to Peterhead'.

The Council considers that the NPF2 should recognise the importance of internal and external transport links to the region. Aberdeenshire is home to nationally significant industry sectors and infrastructure improvements in road and rail, to improve journey times, are essential for the long term development and expansion of these and emerging industries – including Tourism. The NPF2 should also attach more significance to the Aberdeen Airport Master Plan and the importance of air transport links to the region.

The Council considers the NPF2 should recognise the strategic importance of the North East's port industry and the expanding national role that it can fulfil. In particular, the Peterhead Port should be designated as a deepwater opportunity. There are many opportunities at Peterhead due to it being the deepest port in north-east Scotland; these include lifeline ferries, European ferry links, fast sea food ferries, container support, offshore oil and gas decommissioning, waste disposal, subsea North Sea support base centre of excellence. Development of these opportunities will require upgrading of the A90 Aberdeen to Peterhead transport corridor to increase capacity and reduce journey times.

The Council also considers that the National Planning Framework should make reference to the proposed offshore Aberdeen Bay wind farm.

The Council noted that the only National Development proposed for the area is reinforcing the 440Kv transmission network to support renewable energy. They considered the case made for this within the NPF2 to be not particularly strong, especially when a major sub-sea energy network from the Hebrides, through the Pentland Firth and round to Edinburgh, is identified as a potential project to deliver energy from those areas on the west coast, with potential to export marine generated energy to Europe.

The Council would like an explanation as to why none of the items put forward for inclusion in NPF2 in the Committee Chair's letter of 31 May 2007 have been included. A copy of the letter of 31 May is attached for ease of reference.

A more detailed explanation of the significance of the 6 areas of strategic importance provisionally put forward is enclosed and it remains the Committee's opinion that these should be included in NPF2.

I look forward to your response.

Yours faithfully



Councillor Peter Argyle
Chairman
Infrastructure Services Committee

Enc's

- (1) National Planning Framework for Scotland 2 – Discussion Draft – Explanation of 6 Areas of Strategic Importance
- (2) Copy letter to National Planning Framework Team dated 31.5.07

National Planning Framework for Scotland 2 – Discussion Draft – Explanation of 6 Areas of Strategic Importance

At the meeting of the Infrastructure Services Committee on 13 March 2008 members considered a report on the second National Planning Framework – discussion draft.

Aberdeenshire Council submitted a detailed response to the stakeholder engagement process in May 2007.

Within that response six areas of strategic importance were identified and Aberdeenshire Council sought to have them included within the National Planning Framework for Scotland 2 (NPF 2).

Following consideration of the NPF 2 Discussion Draft we wish to make the following observations in relation to the six areas Aberdeenshire Council previously identified, of which four relate directly to Connectivity.

1 Rail Improvements, including Aberdeen Cross Rail

The Committee welcomed the general support within the NPF2 for the improvement of rail journey times from Aberdeen, with a commitment to a 25 to 30 minute reduction to Edinburgh/Glasgow.

The general statement to also reduce journey times north to Inverness is also welcomed, however there is no detail of the actual improvements envisaged.

For travel further afield, the commitment to reduce journey times from the Central Belt to London to 4 hours is to be welcomed, however this should not adversely impact on the aspiration to improve journey times from Aberdeen and Inverness to Edinburgh and Glasgow as any failure to pursue better connectivity from Aberdeen to the north and south simply increases relative peripherality.

The Committee noted that the NPF2 does not appear to confer any National Government support for the development of the Aberdeen Cross Rail project, noting only that the Regional Transport Partnership, Nestrans, are considering proposals. The improvement of services on the line from Stonehaven to Inverurie, along with the reopening of stations, is a crucial plank of the aspiration to engender modal shift and additional support within the NPF2 would be welcomed particularly as this corridor experiences very significant commuter flows which are likely to remain and grow in the medium to long term as much of the region's population growth is also along this corridor.

The Committee is pleased to note the aspiration for the electrification of the East Coast Mainline has been recognised: however it would welcome a higher significance being placed on this improvement.

Recent updates to the Aberdeen line have improved the freight gauge of the line, allowing the potential for more goods to be moved by rail. This is an important step forward. With our peripheral location it is essential that goods can be moved longer distances in as efficient, and sustainable a manner as possible. The Committee would have welcomed recognition within NPF2 of the need for consideration to be given to establishing appropriate intermodal freight facilities within the area, allowing

all modes to play their full role in the distribution of goods to/from the area for the national good.

2 Recognise the need for improvements to Aberdeenshire's external transport links, such as the Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route and the Aberdeen Airport Master Plan

While Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route (AWPR) is referred to within NPF2, the Committee was disappointed to note that the project is not contained within the list of "National Developments". Improvements to the flow of road traffic into and around Aberdeen City is essential to the development of the area.

The Food and Drink Industry within Aberdeenshire is seen as regionally and nationally important in terms of value and scale. Effective and efficient movement of goods is a critical aspect of the continued success of this sector. Aberdeenshire is a relatively peripheral area and efficient linkages to the Central Belt and further afield, are essential in ensuring competitive access to market.

Aberdeenshire is well established as a world wide centre of excellence in the Oil and Gas Sub Sea Sector. The nature of this sector requires first class linkages around the globe as more and more people based in the region are used in an intervention basis in other theatres of the industry because of their unique skills and knowledge. Aberdeen Airport plays a crucial role in providing these services. Through its Master Plan the airport outlines how it will develop services to provide for the future needs of the region, while addressing the concerns regarding the potential impacts of increasing passenger numbers. Given the strategic role which Aberdeenshire plays in several business sectors, the Committee feel that the NPF2 should attach more significance to the Aberdeen Airport Master Plan.

3 Support Trunk Road upgrading, including the A96 and a new Forth Crossing

The Committee welcomes the inclusion of a new Forth Crossing as a National Development project. This crossing forms an integral part of external links on which Aberdeenshire relies and it plays an obvious national role.

The Committee also welcomes the support given to upgrading of the A96 corridor, however feels that it is somewhat limited. Across the North East Trunk Road network there are many "pinch points" which restrict efficient movement and impact at a national level on businesses which depend on connections between Aberdeen and Inverness including tourism, energy and the food and drink sector. Present road journey times are uncompetitive and restrict vehicle productivity as well as hampering motorists engaged in tourism, leisure and business activities.

Future development of the Energetica Corridor, the Sub Sea Sector, and pressures arising from housing demand, will put additional strain on the strategic road network. As well as referring to upgrades on the A96, the Committee would welcome reference to the need to consider addressing existing restrictions on the A90, such as the Haudagain Roundabout, and the need to dual the route from Balmedie to Tippetty.

Although outwith Aberdeenshire Council's area, the need to provide additional capacity to cross the River Don, is seen as essential for the long term development

of the A90 Aberdeen – Peterhead Corridor. The Committee would welcome support for transportation improvements that will assist in the long term development of this strategically important transport corridor which already is nearing capacity in supporting commuter flows and which will come under increasing pressure as these grow.

4 Recommend that the Scapa Flow deep water container port is retained to enhance the opportunities of east coast ports to contribute nationally

The Committee fully agrees with the inclusion of the Scapa Flow deep water terminal as a “National Development”, and sees this project as a catalyst to unlock the full potential of Scotland’s east coast ports.

Aberdeenshire Council is already heavily involved in establishing better maritime links, particularly with North Europe and the Baltic. Through stronger links with these areas and the development of Scapa Flow it is hoped that additional freight services can be established from North East ports. In light of this, the Committee would welcome stronger support for the role which maritime transport can play, particularly in North East Scotland.

Within Aberdeenshire, Peterhead Harbour has for over 30 years, fulfilled a significant role in servicing the Oil and Gas Sector on the UKCS, albeit the volume of goods moved has fallen as the sector has matured and the rate of new pipeline infrastructure development has slowed.

However Peterhead Harbour is ideally situated to play a significant role in the fast growing sub sea engineering market and the emerging decommissioning market. Significant investment will be required at the port to develop the necessary quayside infrastructure to take full advantage of the existing deep water available at the port. A recognition of the role which Peterhead can play and the importance of the sector to the region, and nationally, should be included within NPF2 particularly as over 90% of the world’s sub sea vessel fleet is controlled out of the area.

Already within Aberdeenshire, the town of Westhill contains the world’s greatest concentration of sub sea engineering expertise and recognition of the national importance of this sector within the NPF2 would be welcomed, along with a recognition that strategies must allow for further expansion of this industry which is critical in securing future supplies of hydrocarbon energy from below the sea bed, to allow Scotland to maintain its dominant position.

The Committee noted the only national development proposed for the area is reinforcing the 440Kv transmission network to support renewable energy. They considered the case made for this within NPF2 to be not particularly strong, especially when a major sub-sea energy network from the Hebrides, through the Pentland Firth and round to Edinburgh, is identified as a potential export route for marine generated electrical energy to Europe.

5 Developing Innovative Energy technology to promote Scotland as a centre of excellence

The Committee noted with disappointment that there is no reference within NPF2 to the Energetica Corridor, which has the potential to be the largest ever Scottish Enterprise Project in North East Scotland. The vision of Energetica to develop an

area of world leading technology in the energy sector with the Aberdeen – Peterhead corridor is of significant national importance given the importance in global terms of the oil and gas sector presence in the area.

The Energetica proposal aims to build on existing skills bases to move Aberdeenshire, and Scotland, to a world leading position within the low carbon energy economy. The NPF2 should highlight the linkages between these two sectors and recognise the importance of the infrastructure and knowledge linkages that are required to achieve the maximum synergies.

The Committee considered the National Planning Framework should make reference to the proposed offshore wind farm, which could generate a significant part of the area's electrical energy requirements.

6 Inclusion of major water and drainage infrastructure projects

The Committee is encouraged to note that the NPF2 gives a commitment that water drainage restrictions will not hinder development.

The Committee has particular concerns regarding the ability of these facilities to be delivered in a timescale, and in a manner, that allows development while protecting the special environment within Aberdeenshire. To this end the Committee would have wished to see more detail on the investments to be made in this area, and how the needs of the Community Planning Partnerships are to be built into the process.

COPY

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31 May 2007

Dear Sir/Madam,

National Planning Framework 2

At the meeting of the Infrastructure Services Committee of Aberdeenshire Council held on 31 May 2007 members considered a report on the Scottish Executive's proposals to prepare a second National Planning Framework.

The Committee considered that railway improvements to reduce the travel times to Edinburgh and Inverness and to implement the Aberdeen Crossrail Project are matters for the national Planning Framework. These improvements are necessary to improve the connectivity of the North East and to enable the area to continue to grow in a sustainable way with benefits for the economy of Scotland as a whole.

The Committee considered that the proposals for a carbon sequestration plant at Peterhead power station represent an important national economic development opportunity, which will place Scotland at the forefront of this emerging technology. The Committee agreed that because of the national implications of this project that the Scottish Executive should include this project in the second National Planning Framework.

The Committee also wish to see the proposals for a deep water container port at Scapa Flow retained within the next National Planning Framework, due to the considerable benefits that this could bring for east coast ports.

At this meeting the Committee was advised that the Aberdeen City and Shire Strategic Planning Committee proposed to make representation to you with a view to securing reference to the Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route and the Aberdeen Airport Masterplan and the Committee endorse these representations.

The Committee also support the upgrading of the A96 between Inverurie and Inverness and a new Forth crossing to improve journey times, particularly for haulage.

The Committee also requested that the Executive consider whether or not major water and drainage infrastructure projects be included in the NPF and whether or not engagement with Community Planning Partners should be carried out with a view to including matters of relevance for the Partners.

Yours faithfully,

Martin A Ford
Chairman
Infrastructure Services Committee