

14 April 2008

NPF2 Team,
The Scottish Government,
Victoria Quay,
Edinburgh.

Dear Sirs,

National Planning Framework 2 Draft -- A Response

The opportunity to comment on the above document is appreciated. The process of translating this Framework into action has been undertaken in an encouraging and inclusive way. However, I wish to stimulate you and the Scottish Government to be a bit more imaginative and inspirational. Such an approach would create a better balanced Strategy, leading to broader ownership geographically and link better to other sectors, such as the economy and health.

In particular, I wish that NPF2 placed greater specific emphasis on encouraging walking on a linked network of long distance trails, taking advantage of the existing network in Scotland. This would give recognition to the health and regeneration benefits for small and large communities across Scotland and link with the proposal from Natural England for a coastal path around the entire coastline of England. In addition the creation of the North Sea Trail, now way marked for some 5,000 km. along the coastline of 7 nations around the North Sea provides a local, international and cultural context to enable this proposal to be classified as a National Development in the finalised NPF2.

With some 7 out of 9 of the identified Infrastructure projects set out in Para.190 being of prime benefit to the Central Belt and the acceptance of the case to continue to support Sustrans to complete the National Cycle Routes as set out in Para.218, there is little innovative thought or action north of Dundee – only ‘Grid Reinforcement’ is promised – i.e. more larger pylons carrying power over sensitive landscapes – hardly a vision with which to inspire the Nation.

It is recommended that fuller reference than that given in Para.269 in the NPF2 Draft is given in the Final NPF to the creation and maintenance of a network of long distance trails, comparable to Grand Randonnees in France and Spain. Such a proposal ticks all the evaluation boxes;

- A) International in scale and tourist recognition – Imagine the slogan ‘Walk Scotland –See Scotland the Sustainable Way’ or ‘Explore Our Shared Coastal Heritage’ {used by the Nortrail Project)
- B) Wealthier and Fairer – All can participate. Start up costs are modest. There could be a long distance trail near you!
- C) Greener – Low environmental impact as routes can be devised to avoid areas of high sensitivity, ecological footprint small
- D) Healthier - Walking is good for you, both for your physical and mental well being. This is one of the few growth areas of the NHS and there are few references in NPF2 to this link
- E) Contributes to sustainable economic development – At national and local level, a greater number of visitors means more spending on services safeguarding often fragile communities
- F) Strengthens global links –Well marked and promoted Trails attract tourists from outside Scotland.
- G) Improves Internal Connectivity –Trails should be regarded as the top tier of the Core Paths Plans, linking nation to community and an essential part of the sustainable transport network – embedded in Development and Transport Plans
- H) Meets Climate Change etc. - More walkers on Trails results in fewer carbon emissions as any other mode of travel (except cycling) would generate some emissions.
- I) Essential element of national infrastructure programme – not yet. This proposal is one of the very few instances where a planning policy document can have international connections i.e. be part of how to regenerate some rural and urban communities, be part of the national tourist strategy and be part of a strategy of heritage interpretation and share the learning between nations from the E.U. Interreg III Programme and from the yet to be approved ‘Coast Alive’ Project in the new Objective 3 Programme.
- J) More than local importance – Yes - to at least half of Scotland’s communities, those north of Dundee who have only ‘Grid Reinforcement’ to look forward to in NPF2 unless the development and linking of long Distance trails can be the tenth National Project to rebalance the NPF2 strategy both geographically and sectorally.

I look forward to your consideration of the above suggestion for inclusion in the final NPF2. I should be pleased to meet with you and other interests to discuss how this concept can be taken forward, to provide some inspiration to those who are prepared to share the jewels of Scotland with others and connect the natural and cultural heritage of the past with social and economic regeneration of to-day to reap the benefits of a healthier and better educated nation fit for the future, a future enshrined in the National Planning Framework 2 and expressed in other relevant policy documents, and, of course, implemented on the ground.

Yours Sincerely,

Allan Garvie

