

AGENDA ITEM

FALKIRK COUNCIL

Subject: NATIONAL PLANNING FRAMEWORK 2
Meeting: ENVIRONMENT AND HERITAGE COMMITTEE
Date: 15 April 2008
Author: DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

1. INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

- 1.1 The Scottish Government has published a consultative draft National Planning Framework 2 (NPF2). Local authorities and other stakeholders are asked to make their comments by Tuesday 15th April 2008. The final version of NPF2 is expected to be published before the end of 2008.
- 1.2 The Government sees the second National Planning Framework as an important vehicle for guiding Scotland's spatial development to 2030, setting out strategic development priorities to support the Scottish Government's central purpose – promoting sustainable economic growth.
- 1.3 Members will recall that a report on the then forthcoming draft NPF2 was presented to Policy and Resources Committee in June 2007. At that time the Government was seeking views on the scope and issues which should be included in the new Framework. It was emphasised in the pre-consultation phase that this second NPF would help deliver developments of national importance and that the draft NPF2 would identify strategic transport, water and drainage, waste management and energy-related infrastructure projects of national significance.
- 1.4 The Council took that opportunity to highlight a number of issues surrounding development activity in Falkirk/Grangemouth which were felt should be addressed at the national level. The report highlighted:
 - the expansion planned for container traffic and new warehousing at Grangemouth port;
 - the growth of the intermodal road/rail terminal at Laurieston Road,
 - the development of a biodiesel plant at INEOS,
 - the impact of consequential increased lorry traffic on the road network,
 - the need to strengthen coastal defences protecting the industrial area and the town in the light of climate change.
- 1.5 Meetings were held between officials of the Scottish Government and the Council to discuss these concerns and in October 2007 a tour of the Grangemouth area was organised by the Council and key partners for Scottish Government planning and transport officials, which looked particularly at the port and petrochemical plants and transport connections to the M9.

2. SUMMARY OF NPF2 AND IMPACT ON FALKIRK COUNCIL AREA

- 2.1 NPF2 develops the first National Planning Framework, drawing on the commentary and analysis contained in the 2006 Monitoring Report and the contributions of stakeholders, such as Falkirk Council, who made submissions during last year. It describes Scotland as it is in 2008, identifies key issues and drivers of change, sets out a vision to 2030, and identifies a wide range of priorities and opportunities for different parts of the country.
- 2.2 NPF2 is more than the spatial development strategy for Scotland. The identification of national developments is seen as an important signal of long-term infrastructure priorities that will contribute to Scotland's sustainable economic growth. While the Framework is not itself a spending document, it is closely linked to the Government's Infrastructure Investment Plan and is intended to inform the investment programmes of public agencies and infrastructure providers.
- 2.3 The Planning, etc (Scotland) Act 2006 makes provision for the Framework to be used to designate certain developments as national developments and establishes specific procedures for the consideration of such developments. In a statement to Parliament on 13th September 2007, the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Sustainable Growth announced that projects which may be identified as national developments are those which:
- make a significant contribution to Scotland's sustainable economic development;
 - strengthen Scotland's links with the rest of the world;
 - deliver strategic improvements in internal connectivity;
 - make a significant contribution to the achievement of climate change, renewable energy or waste management targets;
 - are essential elements of a programme of investment in national infrastructure; or
 - raise strategic issues of more than regional importance
- 2.4 On the basis of an assessment against these criteria the draft NPF identifies nine infrastructure projects as National Developments in the fields of transport, energy and the environment which Ministers consider to be essential elements of the strategy for Scotland's long-term development.

Grangemouth Freight Hub

- 2.5 Of particular significance to Falkirk Council is that one of these national developments is Grangemouth Freight Hub. This is described in the draft NPF2 as:
- Improvements in road and rail infrastructure to support Grangemouth's role as Scotland's largest container port and main freight distribution centre.*
- 2.6 The main elements covered by the designation of the Grangemouth Freight Hub are described as:
- Expanded freight storage and handling facilities;

- Improved railhead access within the port and electrification of the rail link through Falkirk Grahamston;
 - Better connections to the M9 motorway;
 - A better link to the M8 and the south via an improved A801;
 - Improvements to the local road network, including separation of community and dock traffic;
 - Any measures necessary to protect the area from coastal flooding.
- 2.7 In a statement of need the draft NPF2 states that designation as a national development signals the national significance of the intermodal freight hub at Grangemouth and recognises the importance to it of improved road and rail infrastructure and any additional flood protection measures.
- 2.8 The draft Framework goes on to state that development of the Freight Hub is justified because Grangemouth is Scotland's busiest container port, handling around 10% of Scotland's total cargo. It is also home to most of Scotland's petrochemical industry. There is the potential for Grangemouth's port facilities to deal with substantial increases in freight movements. Improvements to strategic road and rail infrastructure are needed to allow the area to function to its full potential as an intermodal freight hub.
- 2.9 It is estimated that improved rail facilities, including electrification of the Grangemouth branch line, could reduce by half the projected 10% annual growth in lorry movements around the port. Moving more freight by rail could help to improve the reliability of logistics chains by reducing exposure to the risk of delays caused by road congestion.
- 2.10 The inclusion of the flood protection is welcomed. The Council area contains the highest number of properties in Scotland at risk from coastal flooding, including industrial plant of strategic importance to the country. The Council has been working in partnership with other stakeholders, such as Forth Ports, Ineos and BP, to investigate flood risk around Grangemouth and the feasibility of workable flood risk reduction measures, and looks forward to the contribution of the Scottish Government to tackling the issue.
- 2.11 The upgrade and improvement to the A801 has been identified as an element covered by the designation of the Grangemouth Freight Hub as a national development. This signifies that although the A801 is a local road linking the M8 and M9 it is recognised as a link of national importance that will require improvements so that Grangemouth will realise its full potential as an intermodal freight hub.
- 2.12 The A801 River Avon Gorge improvement scheme has been progressed through detailed design by Falkirk Council with help from West Lothian Council and funding from the Scottish Executive and SEStran. Land acquisition is 80% complete with terms agreed with the remaining landowner. The latest cost estimate for delivering the scheme is between £18m - £20m which includes risk and contingencies.

Other initiatives related to Falkirk Council area

- 2.13 The draft Framework discusses other initiatives within its Development Strategy likely to make progress over the next decade. It identifies the Upper Forth area as an area which offers strategic economic growth potential where investment in infrastructure improvements as outlined above should reflect economic development priorities. The Central Scotland Forest, the Millennium Canal Link and the Falkirk Helix are also identified as initiatives contributing to achieving a step change in environmental quality in the area.

3. NEXT STEPS

- 3.1 The Scottish Government wants to use this consultation to seek views on the deliverability of the NPF strategy and the national developments identified within it. Over the next 6 months the Government intends to have discussions with local authorities and other key stakeholders to identify the tasks and timescales required to ensure effective delivery of the Framework. To take forward the development of the Grangemouth Freight Hub the Government will hold meetings with Transport Scotland, Ineos, Forth Ports and Falkirk Council. The first of these meetings is rescheduled for 31st March 2008.
- 3.2 The final Framework will contain a programme of action for implementing the framework, identifying how, when and by which agencies key elements will be taken forward. The draft Framework contains a draft action programme for the Grangemouth Freight Hub which sets out broad timescales and the roles of key organisations as follows:

Timescale	Lead Organisations	Action
2008	Forth Ports / Falkirk Council / Transport Scotland	Refine proposals
2009	Transport Scotland / Network Rail / Falkirk Council / Forth Ports	Co-operate to prioritise and programme the necessary improvements
Post 2010	Forth Ports / Falkirk Council / Transport Scotland	Implementation

4. CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1 The Council made considerable efforts last year to bring to the attention of the Scottish Government the range of transport issues arising from increased development activity around Grangemouth. The Council took the view that the expansion plans of Forth Ports and Ineos in particular raised challenges which were of national rather than local importance.
- 4.2 As a result of the series of meetings and study visit organised by the Council the recognition of Grangemouth as a location with national scale issues had been achieved through the designation of Grangemouth Freight Hub. All of the issues over which the Council was concerned have been incorporated into the

designation within the draft NPF, although some clarification of the priorities between the various elements is likely to be required.

- 4.3 While achieving the national designation can be seen as a success the next phase of the process will be crucial. This entails the Scottish Government bringing together the various agencies to prepare a workable Action Programme for identifying and implementing the necessary infrastructure works. This process is expected to commence in March 2008.

5. RECOMMENDATION

- 5.1 **That committee agree to recommend to the Policy and Resources Committee the content of this report and its submission as the Council's consultation response to the Scottish Government; and**
- 5.2 **that committee further agree to pass the submission to the Scottish Government as a draft, in order to meet the consultation deadline, subject to final approval by Policy and Resources Committee.**

DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

Date: 8th April 2008

Contact officers: Colin Hemfrey, Development Plan Co-ordinator, ext 4720

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

Scottish Government: National Planning Framework 2: discussion draft