

INDICATIVE REGIONAL SPATIAL STRATEGIES FOR SOUTH OF SCOTLAND AND SOUTH EAST SCOTLAND

Report by Executive Director, Corporate Improvement and Economy

SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL

25 September 2020

1 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

- 1.1 The report presents Members with the proposed Indicative Regional Spatial Strategies (IRSS) for the South of Scotland and for South East Scotland.**
- 1.2 Scottish Borders Council is in the unique position of being involved in the preparation of two such strategies. The IRSS for the South of Scotland has been prepared jointly with Dumfries and Galloway Council and the IRSS for the South East Scotland in association with the five other SESplan authorities (City of Edinburgh, West Lothian, East Lothian, Midlothian and Fife Councils).
- 1.3 Once the strategies are agreed they will be submitted to Scottish Ministers and will inform the development of the draft National Planning Framework for Scotland (NPF4), which is due to be published in Autumn 2021.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 **I recommend that the Council:**
 - (a) agree the South of Scotland Indicative Regional Spatial Strategy as detailed in the Appendix 1;**
 - (b) agree the South East Scotland Indicative Regional Spatial Strategy as detailed in the Appendix 2;**
 - (c) note the next steps for submission of the strategies to the Scottish Government as set out in paragraphs 3.15 – 3.18; and**
 - (d) authorise the Chief Planning & Housing Officer to make minor changes to the documents, as required, prior to their submission to the Scottish Government.**

3 BACKGROUND TO REGIONAL SPATIAL STRATEGIES

- 3.1 The Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 establishes a duty for a planning authority, or authorities acting jointly, to prepare and adopt a Regional Spatial Strategy. These new arrangements will better align and integrate planning with wider strategies such as economic development, transport and other strategic infrastructure investment programmes. The new arrangements will also allow authorities to develop a tailored approach to strategic planning for their area that better reflects their local and regional circumstances.
- 3.2 The Act states that Regional Spatial Strategies are long term spatial strategies which identify:
- the need for strategic development
 - the outcomes to which strategic development will contribute
 - priorities for the delivery of strategic development
 - proposed locations, shown in the form of a map or diagram.
- 3.3 In the future, Scottish Ministers will have to have regard to adopted Regional Spatial Strategies in the preparation, revision or amendment of the National Planning Framework (NPF). The Scottish Government is currently reviewing the NPF to produce NPF4, which when adopted will become part of the statutory development plan along with the Local Development Plan. As the duty to prepare Regional Spatial Strategies has not been enacted and there is no statutory guidance available to inform their preparation, the Scottish Government is encouraging planning authorities to develop an Indicative Regional Spatial Strategy (IRSS) which will inform the NPF review.
- 3.4 In the absence of statutory guidance, the Scottish Government has produced a factsheet to help authorities. The factsheet advises authorities that it is for them to self-determine how best to prepare an Indicative Regional Spatial Strategy and what should be included in it but reiterate the points set out in paragraph 3.2 above. They have also indicated that it is perfectly reasonable to build on existing strategies, though authorities may want to take the opportunity to consider their long-term evolution and how this might inform the NPF4 vision for 2050, and to focus on issues which are clearly “strategic” in nature. The review of the NPF therefore provides an opportunity for authorities to identify their strategic development priorities to inform the review. It also provides the opportunity to bid for investment for strategic projects.
- 3.5 The absence of statutory guidance and the short timescale available in which to produce the IRSS, means it is a ‘light touch’ document that reflects existing projects, programmes and strategies such as SESplan, Scottish Borders Local Development Plan, the Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal and the Edinburgh and South East Scotland City Region Deal. The IRSS is not promoting any new policies or projects beyond those about which Elected Members will already be aware and it is the opportunity to bring together existing strategic planning issues, economic development strategy and connectivity projects.

- 3.6 Planning authorities can decide whether they want to produce Regional Spatial Strategies individually or in collaboration with other authorities. Scottish Borders Council is in the unique position of being involved in the preparation of two such strategies. The IRSS for the South of Scotland has been prepared jointly with Dumfries and Galloway Council and the IRSS for the South East of Scotland in association with the five other SESplan authorities (City of Edinburgh, West Lothian, East Lothian, Midlothian and Fife Councils).

South of Scotland Indicative Regional Spatial Strategy

- 3.7 Given the commonality of issues, opportunities and strong working relationship, Dumfries and Galloway Council and Scottish Borders Council are working together to produce an Indicative Regional Spatial Strategy for the South of Scotland. The Councils have developed a strong working relationship over the years through the South of Scotland Alliance and latterly through the Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal and the establishment of South of Scotland Enterprise (SoSE) and the Regional Economic Partnership.
- 3.8 As the IRSS will be used by the Scottish Government to inform the review of the NPF, it is considered appropriate to use the proposed NPF4 themes to structure the IRSS. Those themes are as follows –
- **Climate** - What development will we need to address climate change?
 - **People** - How can planning support our quality of life, health and wellbeing in the future?
 - **Economy** - What does planning need to do to enable an economy that benefits everyone?
 - **Place** - How can planning improve and strengthen the special character of our places?
 - **Connectivity** - What infrastructure do we need to plan to realise our long term aspirations?
- 3.9 The above themes are invariably interlinked and cut across more than one theme. For example, promoting the South of Scotland as a place where people positively elect to live and work is certainly about 'People' and, specifically, responding to our demographic challenge. It is also about Economy, Connectivity and Place.
- 3.10 The IRSS identifies a number of strategic developments across the South of Scotland. The developments comprise a mixture of place based projects such as the green energy park at Chapelcross, Tweedbank Business Park and themed developments such as the Borderlands digital infrastructure programme. The majority of the developments are projects and programmes identified through the Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal.

South East Scotland Indicative Regional Spatial Strategy

- 3.11 Scottish Borders Council is also working with the local authorities of City of Edinburgh, East Lothian, Midlothian, West Lothian and Fife to prepare an IRSS for the South East of Scotland and as such, is the only authority to be within 2 IRSS partnerships. The IRSS has been developed under the auspices of SESplan governance and working mechanisms, which are well established, and uses the research and evidence base underpinning SESplan 2 as the starting point for the document.
- 3.12 The IRSS builds on the strategy set out in SESplan and takes into account the emerging City Deal Regional Growth Framework. The document is expressed in two sections. Firstly, the challenges and solutions that affect the whole region or are of a cross boundary nature. The second part deals with points that are specific to a distinct part of the region. The delivery of both sections is required to successfully achieve the environmental, economic and accessibility themes.
- 3.13 The key themes identified in the document relate to:
- **Regional Recovery and Renewal** - Tackling inequality, environmental improvement, economic renewal
 - **Adaptable, a more resilient region** - Tackling climate change, building design and conservation
 - **Accessible Region** - Tackling connectivity, infrastructure delivery, sustainable housing sites
- 3.14 There is a clear message in the IRSS that that the strategy must benefit the whole of the city region and that to achieve inclusive sustainable development major investment in infrastructure will be required.

Next Steps

- 3.15 The Scottish Government has requested that Indicative Regional Spatial Strategies are submitted to them by 18 September 2020. However, due to the short time scales available to prepare the documents, the impacts of COVID-19 and the necessary governance arrangements for each of the local authority groupings, it will not be possible to have the documents agreed and ratified fully by that date. Scottish Government officials have been advised accordingly and are comfortable with the arrangements set out below.
- 3.16 In terms of the South of Scotland IRSS, as there is no formal governance arrangements in place between the authorities, it is merely necessary for each authority to sign off the proposed document. Dumfries and Galloway Council will be presenting the IRSS to their Economy and Resources Committee on 15 September 2020 and once SBC agrees the IRSS at the meeting on 25 September 2020, it will be formally submitted to Scottish Government.

- 3.17 As an interim measure, it has been agreed that once agreed by their Members, Dumfries & Galloway Council will send a copy of the draft South of Scotland Indicative Regional Spatial Strategy to the Scottish Government before 18 September 2020 with the caveat that Scottish Borders Council still needs to agree it.
- 3.18 The South East of Scotland IRSS requires firstly to be agreed by the SESPlan Joint Committee on 21 September 2020 and then to be ratified by each of the six constituent local authorities. It is likely that due to the different Committee arrangements and cycles that it will not be possible to have the document fully agreed until October/November 2020. Following ratification by the local authorities, the IRSS will be reported for information through the City Deal governance arrangements.
- 3.19 The Scottish Government has advised that it is going to use the process of preparing IRSSs to help inform the statutory guidance needed to prepare the formal RSS. The formal Regional Spatial Strategy process will involve consultation with key stakeholders, communities and Elected Members.
- 3.20 The Scottish Government has advised that there will be an update on the review of NPF4 this autumn 2020. The timescale for the draft NPF4 to be considered by the Scottish Parliament is autumn 2021, with the final document to be tabled for parliamentary approval in spring 2022. The issue of subsequent statutory guidance will influence the timetable for the formal RSS, the review of the Local Development Plan 2 (October 2019) and the requirement for Local Place Plans (LPPs). LPPs require to be developed in conjunction with communities and will provide a key element for both land use and community planning in future.

4 IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Financial

Any immediate financial implications of producing the interim Regional Spatial Strategies provided for in the Planning Act have been accommodated for through the £5,000 grant funding from Scottish Government. The Council is not required to make any financial contribution to the development of either the IRSS. Resources have been provided within the existing staff establishment to assist in the development of the strategies.

The adoption of the documents will not have any immediate financial implications for the Council.

4.2 Risk and Mitigations

The adoption of the documents will not have any immediate implications for the Council in terms of risk. The IRSS provides the opportunity to bring together existing strategic planning issues, economic development strategy and connectivity projects.

4.3 **Integrated Impact Assessment**

There are no direct adverse equality implications arising from this report. An IIA has been prepared to support the report.

4.4 **Acting Sustainably**

There are no direct economic, social or environmental effects arising from this report.

4.5 **Carbon Management**

There are no effects on carbon emissions arising from this report.

4.6 **Rural Proofing**

This report does not relate to new or amended policy or strategy and as a result rural proofing is not an applicable consideration.

4.7 **Changes to Scheme of Administration or Scheme of Delegation**

There are no changes required to the Council's Scheme of Administration or Scheme of Delegation as a result of this report.

5 **CONSULTATION**

- 5.1 The Executive Director (Finance & Regulatory), the Monitoring Officer/Chief Legal Officer, the Chief Officer Audit and Risk, the Service Director HR & Communications, the Clerk to the Council and Corporate Communications have been consulted and their comments incorporated into this report.

Approved by

Rob Dickson
Executive Director,
Corporate Improvement & Economy Signature

Author(s)

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Background Papers: None

Previous Minute Reference: None

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