# Summary of NPF4 – North & West and Northern

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## MENTIONS OF FOOD, AGRICULTURE, CROFTING

The word food is used 25 times in the document. Many of these relate to area specific strategies outwith North & West, and Northern. Some refer to fast food, food vending etc. The rest are listed below.

The word agriculture (or agricultural) is used eight times in the entire document.

The words croft, crofts, or crofting are used eight times in the entire document.

In contrast, the words tourism, tourist, tourists are used 44 times in the document. In just the North & West and Northern sections, food is mentioned 8 times (4 of these are “food and drink” which generally refers to the sector, not to actual food for local people), with croft(s/ing) 3 times and agricultur(e/al) twice. Touris(m/ts) is mentioned 13 times.

The Spatial Strategy mentions impacts on agriculture and food security as two of ten impacts of Climate Change. It also mentions Scotland’s natural environment providing essentials to survive, including healthier food (Pg 3)

The North & West strategy mentions “sustainable and fair access to affordable healthier food” as a goal to improve resilience (Pg 15 and 16). “Food and Drink” is mentioned as a key sector, but only in terms of aquaculture, distilleries, commercial fishing and seaweed farming. Whisky generates ~£5 billion to UK economy and salmon accounts for more than 40% of total food exports. The Food & Drink trail gets a brief mention. This section also mentions that the agriculture and fishing industries will need support to ensure the long term sustainability of communities.

The Northern strategy lists key economic sectors as tourism, food & drink, distilling and clean energy (Pg 19). The strategy to stimulate green prosperity says that food miles can be reduced with the help of local community-led food growing networks (Pg 21). This section also mentions “the area’s high quality environment and associated food and drink products” when discussing tourism. It is unclear which products this refers to but presumably they are talking about seafood, whisky and maybe venison.

Policy 14 (Health and Wellbeing, Pg 85) supports facilities for community growing and allotments.

Policy 31 (Rural Places, Pg 105) supports production and processing facilities for local food production. It also mentions “food and drink” as a key economic sector, but again, we assume that this usually refers to whisky, salmon, venison and high-end, niche products for tourism and export.

Policy 35 (Coasts, Pg 111) mentions the importance of “food and drink” in its introduction (refer to my comment above).

NPF4 Outcome Statement for improving the health and wellbeing of people living in Scotland (Annex A (b), Pg 115) recognises the importance of the natural environment for food growing, and notes Policy 14 supporting community food growing.

Items related to food, agriculture, crofts and growing have been highlighted in yellow in the remainder of this summary.

## SPATIAL STRATEGY

### GOALS

Places should be

* Sustainable (net zero and nature-positive)
  + Encourage low and zero carbon design and energy efficiency
  + Reduce unsustainable travel
  + Diversify and expand renewable energy generation
  + Create and strengthen nature networks
  + Invest in “nature based solutions”
  + Encourage sustainable design and use of resources, including circular economy approaches to construction and development
* Liveable (inclusive, empowered, resilient and safe. Be healthy, active, creative and diverse)
  + 20 Minute Neighbourhoods (quality housing with facilities and services close) **see SRA’s document for a comment on rural places and 20 minute neighbourhoods.**
  + Better use of space to support physical activity, relaxation and play
  + Bring people together to celebrate culture, diversity and heritage
  + We HOPE to empower more people to shape their places
* Productive (attract investment, entrepreneurial, globally competitive)
  + Build a wellbeing economy (that benefits everyone and every place)
  + Green Investment is a priority
  + Flexible to facilitate future businesses and employment that benefits communities and improves places
  + Play to economic strengths and opportunities of each part of Scotland
  + Encourage development that supports key sectors, builds community wealth, creates fair work and good green jobs where they are most needed
* Distinctive
  + Nature recovery and connected blue and green infrastructure must be at the heart
  + Rich, high quality natural and historic environment but some areas need changing
  + Value, enhance and preserve best places and build better places
  + Strong commitment to place-making
  + Ensure onshore development aligns with national and regional marine plans

### KEY STRATEGIES

* Compact growth (use brownfield, vacant, derelict wherever possible (*note that these sites are often contaminated and unsuitable for growing directly in soil and raised beds are used instead*)
* Local Living (20 Minute Neighbourhoods, including better open space and active travel links)
* Balanced Development (develop across Scotland so people have more choice where they live/work/study)
* Conserving and Recycling Assets (reuse existing sites, support circular economy)
* Urban and rural synergy (improve green infrastructure in urban areas)
* Just Transition (to net zero, ensure it is fair and creates a better future for everyone. Ensure local people are more able to shape their places and transition)

### NORTH AND WEST (Coastal Innovation)

* Create carbon-neutral coastal and island communities
  + Service hubs in key locations with good public transport links
  + Planned population growth on western seaboard of Argyll, and from Tobermory to Oban and on to Dalmally.
  + Ports and harbours focal point for employment
  + Innovative and equitable service provision (incl digital tech) to support dispersed communities
  + Refurbish existing building stock
  + More affordable, energy efficient new homes
* Support the blue and wellbeing economies
  + More renewable energy projects, bringing community wealth and sustainability
  + Key strategic sites include Dales Voe and Scapa Flow, Cullivoe, Arnish – Stornoway, Wick, Scrabster, Gills Bay, Kishorn, Oban and Hatston, Kirkwall. (Ullapool, Uig and Mallaig remain important as ferry terminals)
  + Space Ports – Shetland, Scolpaig (Uist), Machrihanish (also slated for an aquaculture research hub), Benbecula.
  + Food and Drink – aquaculture, distilleries, commercial fishing, seaweed farming.
  + Investment in Tourism – priorities are World Heritage Sites (Orkney). Also Hebrides (St Kilda, Iolaire Centre, Hebridean Way, Callanish, Food & Drink Trail). Also long distance routes (Kintyre Way, Argyll Sea Kayak Trail, Crinan Canal. Plus smaller investment for visitor management.
* Protect and enhance blue and green infrastructure
  + Peatland restoration and woodland creation (focus for investment to offset carbon)
* Strengthen resilience and decarbonise connectivity
  + Net zero islands air network & decarbonise ferries
  + Explore fixed links (e.g. across Sound of Harris, Sound of Barra, maybe even to connect Outer Hebrides to mainland)
  + Electric vehicle charging point network
  + Digital connectivity – ultrafast broadband and better mobile coverage. (Outer Hebrides Giga Fibre Network, North Isles Fibre Project)
  + Improved electical connections (incl high voltage connections to the mainland).
  + Locally distributed energy systems to reduce emissions from heating buildings, address fuel poverty and secure long-term resilience

### NORTHERN (Revitalisation)

* Strengthen networks of resilient communities
  + Reverse depopulation… innovation will be required (no detail provided)
  + Inverness – expand to east along Moray Coast.
  + Fort William, Grantown-on-Spey and Aviemore are key settlements
  + Place based approach, improving town centres, will support population recovery
  + Rural development through network of hubs (to be resilient and self-supporting)
  + Investment in strategic health, justice and education facilities is planned
  + Longer term = digital solutions: mobile and remote health services and virtual learning.
  + Community ownership can help housing provision. Also refurb existing buildings and stop the loss of crofts. Puts a heavy onus on community ownership as a main mechanism to do this.
  + Maintain connectivity through public transport, rail and active travel networks. **Note that one of the only examples of rail expansion in the Northern region is between Inverness airport and the city centre.**
* Stimulate green prosperity
  + “natural assets and environmental quality underpin the areas main economic sectors”
  + Flexible planning approach to attract investment, enable local entrepreneurship, micro enterprises, self employment and social enterprises.
  + Remote working
  + Continue roll out of high quality digital infrastructure
  + Local, community led food growing to reduce food miles. **Note that the focus on community food growing as a mechanism for the provision of local food doesn’t necessarily mean the creation of food growing paid work, rather relying on volunteer labour.**
  + Support locally driven public procurement
  + Protect higher quality agricultural land (planning guidelines expand this to include culturally or locally important agricultural land, but it does imply that only the best land (which is mostly on the east coast and in limited places) should be protected)
  + Possible low carbon future for tourism (NC500, Kintyre 66) – extend availability of transport services
  + Tourism – outdoor activities (mountain biking, walking, climbing, angling, winter sports)
  + Repower and extend existing windfarms, and increase offshore wind capacity
  + Community ownership of renewable energy projects could be key (resilience and empowerment of local people and reduction in food poverty.
  + Pumped hydroelectric
  + Electricity distribution network needs updating.
  + More community scale energy generation required.
  + Investment in research and development, reuse existing facilities (Dounreay, Lochaber Smelter)
  + Key Ports (fishing, cruises, marine leisure, offshore renewables) – Cromarty Firth (Port of Cromarty, Nigg, Highland Deephaven), Corpach, Ardersier, Gills Bay, Inverness, Kishorn, Buckie.
* Nurture nature based solutions. **Note the NPF4 does not mention agroecological practises as a nature based solution/ benefit to biodiveristy (e.g. managing pasture/grassland and moorlands)**
  + Programme of investment in forestry, woodland creation, native woodlands, peatland restoration
  + Other priorities – develop resilient nature networks, deer and moorland management, visitor management & recreation, rural housing, community empowerment, economic development.
  + Demand for development, in pressured areas….minimise impact of second homes, ensure new housing is affordable and meets local needs.
* Strengthen resilience and decarbonise connectivity
  + Continue to support investment in digital connectivity but need to go further….
  + Priority - satellite and mobile solutions for “not spots”
  + Priority – reduce the need to travel (local hubs, demand responsive travel, active travel networks). Focus development where infrastructure already exists. Strengthen commuter links to Inverness.
  + Charging points and improvement to A9, A96, A83
  + Investments in long distance walking/cycling networks (zero-carbon tourism AND options for local people to get around)
  + Inverness airport hub for air connections to dispersed communities – Wick, John O’Groats, Broadford Airstrip (Skye) are key connections. Also Oban.
  + Aerospace reseach Lossiemouth, Spaceport at Melness.

## PART 2 – NATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

There is a specific “Islands Hub for Net Zero” and the remainder of those below are listed as “All of Scotland”. Of these, some are still not relevant to rural areas in the North Highlands. There are 18 National Developments listed in total

Sustainable Places

* National Walking, Cycling and Wheeling Network
* Circular Economy Material Management
* Digital Fibre Network

Productive Places

* Islands Hub for Net Zero
* Industrial Green Transition Zones
* Pumped Hydro Storage
* Strategic Renewable Electricity Generation and Transmission Infrastructure

## PART 3 – NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY

These planning policies should apply to all decisions:

### SUSTAINABLE PLACES (Policies 1 to 6)

Policy 1 – Plan Led Approach to Sustainable Development

* Local Dev Plans should manage use and development of land in the long term public interest.

Policy 2 – Climate Emergency

* Significant weight should be given to global climate emergency when making decisions
* Developments must be designed to minimise emissions over their lifecycle
* Proposals that generate significant emissions should NOT be supported UNLESS they show that they are in the long term public interest and the emissions have been minimised.
* Proposals for buildings/infrastructure/spaces should be adaptable to future climate change

Policy 3 – Nature Crisis

* Development Plans should facilitate biodiversity enhancement (creating new, or restoring damaged, habitats, create or strengthen nature networks, measures to increase target species)
* Proposals should contribute to enhancement of biodiversity (see above)
* Potential adverse impacts SHOULD be minimised
* Proposals for national, major and of EIA development or development for which an Appropriate Assessment is required should only be supported where it can be demonstrated that the proposal will conserve and enhance biodiversity. **Farmed fish and shellfish developments are excluded from this requirement.**
* Proposals for local development should only be supported if they include appropriate measures to enhance biodiversity. **Individual householder development, farmed fish or shellfish are excluded from this requirement.**

Policy 4 – Human rights and equality (**Note does dot mention Right to Food ref. Good Food Nation Bill**)

* Planning should respect, protect and fulfil human rights, seek to eliminate discrimination and promote equality.
* Planning authorities, applicants, key agencies and communities have a responsibility to consult and engage others collaboratively, meaningfully and proportionately.

Policy 5 – Community Wealth Building

* Development Plans should reflect people-centred approach to local economic development, address economic disadvantage, provide added social value
* Proposals within National Development and Major Development categories should contribute to community wealth building objectives (Other proposals do not have to consider community wealth building)

Policy 6 – Design, quality and place

* Designed to high quality and incorporate key principles….
  + Designed for lifelong health and wellbeing (safety and physical & mental health)
  + Safe and Pleasant
  + Well connected, easy to move around (reduce car dependency)
  + Distinctive (housing vernacular)
  + Sustainable (resource efficient, future proofed)
  + Adaptable (change use over time)
* Proposals that do not incorporate the key principles or are detrimental to the area should NOT be supported.

### LIVEABLE PLACES (Policies 7 – 15)

Policy 7 – Local Living

* Decision makers can determine which facilities can be reasonably accessible from homes
* Local Dev Plans should support 20 Minute Neighbourhoods. (**see SRA’s note on 20MN in rural areas)**
* Proposals that support 20 Minute Neighbourhoods should be supported.

Policy 8 – Infrastructure first

* Think early about infrastructure – what is there, what is needed. Projects should mitigate their impacts on infrastructure and try to provide or work within existing (or planned) infrastructure.

Policy 9 – Quality Homes

* The planning system should support the delivery of more and better homes (energy efficient, net zero) in the right locations with a choice of tenures.
* Local Dev Plans should identify a housing land requirement (for 10 years worth of new houses). There should be a pipeline of short, medium and long term sites.
* New housing land should meet 20 Minute Neighbourhoods and Infrastructure First requirements.
* Rural and Island areas are encouraged to set out tailored approaches to suit local needs and delivery approaches.
* Proposals for more than 50 dwellings should have a “statement of community benefit” (e.g. does it meet local housing need, affordable housing, improve amenity, enhance local infrastructure/services). This can be extended to smaller developments in rural areas.
* Proposals for new homes that improve affordability and choice should be supported. (list of different ideas for potential gaps or options to offer)
* Proposals for Gypsy/Traveller/Showpeople sites should be supported where there is a need, unless… (unacceptable impacts on site, amenity)
* Proposals with provision for affordable homes (where need has been identified) should be supported. At least 25% affordable. **Local authorities can decide that less is required.**
* Homes on land not identified for that purpose should NOT be supported. UNLESS – progress of land in the pipeline is too slow, it is otherwise consistent with this strategy / 20 Minute Neighbourhoods / rural place policy, it is a small site within an existing residential area, or it is affordable housing of less than 50 units as part of a rural authority supported plan.
* Householder development proposals should be supported where they are not detrimental to environment or neighbours AND they provide adaptations relating to health conditions or climate change.

Policy 10 – Sustainable Transport (**Note a lot of the policies in this section are written for an urban environment and if applied to rural areas would effectively halt new developments (housing or employment prospects**)

Reduce inequalities, climate action. Support development that prioritises walking, wheeling, cycling, public and shared transport. Integrate National Transport Strategy 2. Make best use of existing infrastructure. Reduce unsustainable travel and goods transport. (Unsustainable travel presumably refers to fossil fuels driven, particularly where single occupant vehicles)

* Prioritise places for development that reduce unsustainable travel and have existing infrastructure.
* Local Dev Plans should have an assessment/appraisal of transport impacts and options. Must engagement early with Transport Scotland where trunk roads/rails affected.
* New developments or change-of-use that require more single person trips need a transport assessment.
* Proposals significantly increasing travel (and some smaller developments) MUST have a Travel Plan.
* Proposals with the POTENTIAL to affect operation and safety of the strategic transport network must be fully assessed. Costs may have to be paid to mitigate the impacts.
* New junctions on trunk roads may be considered, but ONLY where significant prosperity or regeneration benefits are shown.
* Proposals should put people and place before unsustainable travel WHERE APPROPRIATE
* Proposals should NOT be supported where they increase reliance on personal cars and are not within easy access of segregated walking/cycling networks or within 400m of public transport.
* Proposals must demonstrate how they support sustainable transport.
* Proposals to improve active, public or multi-modal transport network should be supported (but they must be demonstrated to be deliverable and effective at delivering transport targets)
* Proposals for new or upgraded transport must address ALL users’ (ages and abilities) needs.
* Cycle parking should be provided (unless sufficient facilities are nearby) and be more convenient than car parking.
* Low/no-car parking ambitions have a place in very accessible urban locations.

Policy 11 - Heating and Cooling

* Local Dev Plans must take into account the Local Heat & Energy Efficiency Strategy
* Proposals should be supported where they connect to existing heat networks. If there is no existing network, they should ONLY be supported where they show that they can effectively connect to a future (planned) one OR they are providing an alternative low or zero emission system.
* National / major development with high surplus heat SHOULD BE co-located in areas with heat demand, and are expected to have a heat & power plan that shows how this will work.
* Proposals for energy infrastructure should take into account heat maps and zoning for heat/energy.
* Domestic bio-mass systems should NOT be supported UNLESS networked systems are not available (in which case air quality and smoke effects on neighbours should be considered)
* Proposals to redevelop fossil fuel infrastructure SHOULD be supported.
* Proposals for buildings occupied by people should have sustainable temperature management, preferably natural or passive solutions (not reliance on air conditioning).

Policy 12 – Blue and Green Infrastructure, Play and Sport

* Local Dev Plans should identify and protect blue/green infrastructure and existing assets…. but development allocations should consider which areas can best contribute to enhancing and delivering key green networks and priorities.
* Local Dev Plans should IDENTIFY new, enhance provision or improved access to play opportunities for children.
* Proposals that cause NET loss in blue/green infrastructure should NOT be supported UNLESS it is demonstrated that the overall integrity of the blue/green network is maintained.
* Proposals which result in loss of outdoor facilities should NOT be supported (unless the proposal is part of the sports facility and won’t affect its use, or replaces in another location (or sufficiently upgrades a nearby facility), or CLEARLY exhibits there is an excess supply over demand for outdoor sports facilities)
* Proposals that result in a loss of childrens play areas should NOT be supported unless they replace it or CLEARLY show there is no current or future need for it.
* Proposals for permanent or temporary open/green/play space on unused /underused ground should be supported.
* Proposals should incorporate blue/green infrastructure wherever possible and consider the “6 qualities of successful places”
* Major dev proposals for new homes SHOULD incorporate good provision for relaxtion, play.
* Proposals including new streets and public areas SHOULD incorporate principles of “Designing Streets” to make them safe to move around and play in.
* New, replacement or improved play provision has a long list of suggestions.
* Long term stewardship of blue/green infrastructure should be addressed. Proposals should provide maintenance and management plans WHEREVER NECESSARY and demonstrate funding arrangements for their long term delivery.

Policy 13 – Flooding

Local Dev Plans should try to strengthen resilience against flooding, look for natural flood risk management solutions and generally avoid developments on the Future Functional Floodplain (or incorporate mitigations)

Policy 14 – Health and Wellbeing

* Local Dev Plans should tackle health inequalities and providing health & social care facilities & infrastructure should be a key consideration.
* Proposals should not be supported where they’re LIKELY to cause adverse health effects, should not be supported if they’ll have a SIGNIFICANT adverse effect on air quality and WILL NOT be supported if they result in unacceptable noise levels.
* Proposals for, OR INCLUDING, space or facilities for local community food growing and allotments SHOULD be supported

Policy 15 – Safety (Considerations near major accident/hazard sites or explosives storage)

### PRODUCTIVE PLACES (Policies 16 – 23)

Policy 16 – Business and Employment

* Local Dev Plans should set out proposals to meet requirements for employment land, infrastructure and investment in a way that supports a greener, fairer, inclusive wellbeing economy. Developments that align with this should be supported but net economic benefit (in context of wellbeing economy) should be taken into account.
* Micro-business, work-from-home, live-work units should generally be supported.
* Other developments should be supported where they are in keeping with the general use and character of the area, with NO unacceptable impacts on neighbouring uses or environment. They should consider amenity, health, wellbeing, historical, environmental and traffic concerns **but there is no particular onus to improve or contribute to them**.

Policy 17 – Tourism

* Local Dev Plans should support the resilience of the tourist sector, including identifying proposals for tourist development.
* Development for new/expanded tourist facilities/accommodation should be supported, where this can contribute to viability, sustainability and diversity of existing economy. They should NOT be supported where existing provisions are having an adverse effect on environment and/or community wellbeing (unless sufficient alleviating measures).
* Huts should be supported (where compatible and good practice is followed).
* Change-of-use of existing buildings as short term holiday accommodation SHOULD be supported UNLESS it results in an unacceptable impact on local amenity or character of the area OR the local economic benefit is outweighed by the loss of residential accommodation
* Change-of-use of a tourist-related facility to something else should ONLY be supported if it is no longer viable and there is no requirement for alternative facilities in the area.
* Proposals for tourist facilities should take into account contributions to economic prosperity, local employment, community wealth building, compatibility with surrounding area, impacts on communities (e.g. hindering provision of homes and services for locals), access, parking and traffic.

Policy 18 – Culture and Creativity

* Generally supported unless a proposal affects the viability of an existing facility.

Policy 19 – Green Energy

* Local dev plans should seek to ensure that an area’s FULL POTENTIAL for electricity and heat from renewable sources is achieved.
* Generally all renewable and low-carbon fuel proposals should be supported (unless impacts, including cumulative effects, are unacceptable), but wind farms in National Parks and National Scenic Areas should NOT be supported.
* Small scale renewables should be supported.
* There is a long list of things that must be considered, dependent on the scale of the project.

Policy 20 – Zero Waste

* Local Dev Plans should identify appropriate locations for new infrastructure to support circular economy.(**note in a large local authority area this may lead to facilities just being focussed in larger centres or visual areas, with smaller, more remote areas being overlooked**)
* Proposals must minimise waste and maximise re-use, sustainable materials etc during construction and explain how they will deal with it.
* Proposals that generate waste must “maximise waste reduction and waste separation at source” – focus on storing waste separately and making it easy to pick up, with appropriate recycling and local waste management facilities (as the 3rd item on the list).
* Proposals for new waste processing facilities should generally be supported, but there are a lot of things to consider which could make things difficult for small facilities. Landfill is generally not supported.

Policy 21 – Sustainable Aquaculture

* Further salmon and trout open pen fish farms on the north and east coast should NOT be supported.
* Otherwise, development should be supported where it complies with Local Dev Plans, National Marine Plan and appropriate Regional Marine Plan. Proposals should demonstrate that impacts are acceptable and farm and land based designs are appropriate for the location.

Policy 22 – Minerals

* Local Dev Plans should support 10 year landbank, and takes steps to ensure that minerals of economic or conservation value are not sterilised by other land uses.
* Proposals to develop fossil fuels WILL NOT be supported except in exceptional circumstances.
* Unconventional oil and gas (fracking, shale oil/gas etc) is not supported
* Extraction of aggregates SHOULD be supported as long as they meet a long series of criteria.

Policy 23 – Digital Infrastructure

* Local Dev Plans should support delivery of digital infrastructure, particularly in areas with gaps and barriers to digital connectivity.
* Generally very strong support (to the point that Planning Authorities should not question the need for a service) for digital infrastructure provision (except where it may have an adverse impact on existing digital infrastructure)

### DISTINCTIVE PLACES (Policies 24 – 35)

Policy 24 – City, town, commercial and local Centres

* 20 Minute Neighbourhoods, focus on vitality and viability and extend the mix of development types.

Policy 25 – City, town, commercial & local centres – Retail

* Retail sites that generate significant footfall should be supported in the centre but NOT at the edges or outside of towns.
* **In island and rural areas, “shops ancillary to other uses, such as farm shops that will help meet demand for fresh produce, craft shops and shops linked to petrol/service/ charging stations should be supported. They can serve a useful role, by providing new sources of jobs and services. The lack of public transport in some rural areas should not preclude small scale retail or service developments, where this would serve local needs. In assessing such proposals planning authorities should take account of the potential impact on nearby town and commercial centres or village/local shops; desirability of providing a service throughout the year; and likely impact of traffic generated and access and parking arrangements.”.**

Policy 26 – Town Centre First Assessment

* Other development (commercial leisure, community, cultural, public buildings, education, healthcare) which generate significant footfall should ONLY be supported in city centres UNLESS:
  + there are no suitable sites in the city centre, AND
  + the size of the development is appropriate and can’t be scaled down to fit in a city centre, AND
  + being outside the city centre won’t negatively affect the vitality of the city centre
  + AND there won’t be a large increase in private car journeys because of it.
* This should be applied flexibly to allow 20 Minute Neighbourhoods to work.

Policy 27 – Town Centre Living

* Planning authorities should SEEK TO provide a proportion of housing land requirements in city and town centres. Proposals for new residential and conversion of upper floors to residential in town/city centres should be supported. Support for ground floor residential is contingent on not affecting retail / vitality / dead frontages.

Policy 28 – Historical Assets and Places

* General protections for listed, recognised or special significance buildings, sites, places, monuments etc. “Development not supported unless no adverse affect on character etc”

Policy 29 – Green Belts

* Green belts can be used to help limit urban expansion and provide nature network and recreation access, but this will not be necessary for most settlements
* Only the following types of proposals should be supported within identified Green Belt areas: agriculture, horticulture (community growing and commercial & associated direct selling), woodland, forestry, residential worker accommodation for a primary industry in the immediate vicinity, recreation/leisure/tourism, essential infrastructure (e.g. digital, electrical), renewable energy, mineral operations, flood risk management, meeting a national requirement, intensification of an established use, and a couple of other things. All of these will need to provide extra justification as to why a Green Belt location is ESSENTIAL.

Policy 30 – Vacant and Derelict Land

* Priorities should be given to reusing buildings and facilities and developing on brownfields sites wherever possible. Generally, proposals on greenfield sites should not be supported unless they can show there are no suitable brownfield alternatives. Proposals on potentially unstable or contaminated brownfield sites need to demonstrate that it can be made safe.

Policy 31 – Rural Places

Our rural places provide valuable natural resources for key economic sectors, especially food and drink, but also energy, tourism, creative industries and life science. (**Note the NPF4 doesn’t mention that these places are also homes**). The planning system should encourage development that helps to support, sustain and grow rural areas, and stimulate a greener, fairer, more inclusive well-being economy. Safeguard and grow natural assets that underpin businesses and jobs. Encourage rural economic activity, innovation and diversification. Ensure that distinct character of rural areas, service function of small towns, natural assets and cultural heritage are protected and enhanced.

* Local Dev Plans should define remote, intermediate and accessible areas.
* Resettlement of previously inhabited areas should be supported (where consistent with climate mitigation targets)
* Proposals (any) should be supported where they will (any one of the below):
  + Reflect development pressures, environmental assets and economic needs of the area,
  + Address issues of need of the rural area and is suitably scaled and in character
  + Reuse a redundant or under used building
  + Provide (or enable future) appropriate use of a historic environment asset
  + Reuse vacant/derelict/brownfield land where it probably can’t be returned to a natural state
  + Provide affordable housing on a small site that might not normally be used for housing, where it is shown there is SIGNIFICANT unmet local need for affordable housing
  + Contribute to sustainable settlements and 20 Minute Neighbourhoods (**see SRA’s comment on 20MN in rural places**)
* Support for development contributing to viability, sustainability and diversity of local economy, including:
  + Diversification of farms and crofts, where use of good quality land is minimised and business viability is not adversely affected. (**Note, doesn’t necessarily stop croft land being developed into other ventures**)
  + Diversification of existing businesses
  + Production and processing facilities for local produce and materials, e.g. sawmills, local food production
  + Essential community services
  + Critical infrastructure to support transport or digital connectivity
  + Small scale developments that support remote working, home working, community hubs etc
  + Improvement or restoration of the natural environment.
* Housing outwith existing rural settlements, “accessible” areas or areas of pressure identified in local development plans should NOT be supported UNLESS it is (one of the following):
  + necessary to support the sustainable management of a viable rural business or croft AND there is essential need for a worker to live permanently at or near their place of work.
  + A single home for the retirement succession of a viable farm holding
  + Involves subdivision of an existing residential dwelling
  + Represents an appropriate use of a cultural heritage asset
  + Reuses redundant or disused dwellings or reinstates a former dwelling
  + Redevelops a brownfield site that is unlikely to be returned to a natural state.
* Development in accessible or pressure areas should ONLY be supported where they are consistent with the Local Dev Plan spatial strategy and do not contribute to more long distance car commuting.
* Development proposals in REMOTE rural areas can help sustain fragile communities so should be supported where they (one of the below):
  + Encourage sustainable development that provides employment
  + Support and sustain fragile and dispersed communities (e.g. housing, digital infrastructure)
  + Include provision for small scale housing (considering environmental, access, siting etc)
* Development on PRIME agricultural land, OR land of lesser quality that is culturally or locally important for primary use (**presumably inserts to protect croft land/machair however is weakly worded**) should NOT be supported, EXCEPT where it is essential for (one of the below):
  + Meeting an established need (e.g. essential infrastructure, where no other site is available)
  + Small scale rural development directly linked to a rural farm/croft business (or for an essential farm/croft worker to be able to live onsite)
  + Development of production / processing facilities associated with the land use, where no other local site is suitable
  + For generation of renewable energy OR extraction of minerals where there is secure provision to return the land to its former status.
  + ALL of the above cases must demonstrate that it minimises the amount of good land that is required for development.

Policy 32 – Natural Places

* Generally, we have a shared responsibility to manage our natural assets in a sustainable, regenerative way and the planning system should protect, restore and enhance Scotland’s natural assets. Protected, designated, identified areas should be protected (not necessarily no development, but nothing affecting the quality of that designation) and proposals must not have an undue effect on biodiversity or other targets.
* Development proposals in NatureScot’s “Wild Land Areas 2014” should only be supported if:
  + The proposed development cannot reasonably be located outside Wild Lands
  + It is small scale, directly linked to a rural business or croft or required to support a fragile population in a rural area.
  + There is a site based assessment, and all actions are taken to mitigate adverse impacts.

Policy 33 – Soils

* Development proposals must minimise disturbance to soils.
* Development on peatland, carbon rich soils and priority peatland habitat should NOT be supported EXCEPT:
  + Essential infrastructure (with locational need and no other suitable sites)
  + Renewable energy generation (**there is a obvious issues with carbon released from development on peat vs carbon saves by energy production**)
  + Small scale development directly linked to a rural business or croft
  + Supporting a fragile population in a rural or island area
  + Restoration of peatland
* Where peatland is identified for one of the above developments a detailed site specific assessment is required.
* Proposals for new commercial peat extraction should NOT be supported EXCEPT:
  + **Where extraction is to support a nationally important industry (e.g. whisky).**

Policy 34 – Trees, Woodland and Forestry

* Generally existing woodlands should be protected and proposals should not be supported if they result in loss or adverse impact on ancient woodlands, ancient trees, hedgerows, native woodlands, woodland habitats,
* Woodland removal should only be supported if the proposal will achieve significant and clearly defined additional public benefits.
* Sustainably managed woodland should be supported (they can provide carbon sequestration, improved air quality, enhanced energy efficiency, shelter, shade, opportunities for woodland play/recreation, improved biodiversity, reduction of flooding, other ecosystem services) (**Note the NPF4 does not mention food, housing, employment or agroforestry**)

Policy 35 – Coasts

Coastal areas and their communities support important economic sectors like tourism, outdoor recreation, food & drink. (**Note NPF4 does not mention the coastal area’s inherent value as their own communities/culture)**

* Lots of talk of flood risk, erosion and coastal protection
* Proposals for undeveloped coastal areas should ONLY be supported where necessary to:
  + Support blue economy or net zero emissions
  + To contribute to economic regeneration and wellbeing of communities whose livelihood depends on marine and coastal activities.

## DELIVERY

Work together and align resources. Target investment to where it will have the greatest impact.

Infrastructure first. “Regain confidence” in delivery of infrastructure. Greater coordination and cooperation between infrastructure and other developments. Local Dev Plans and delivery programmes crucial.

Delivery of National Developments by bringing together public and private investment

Development Plan Policy and Regional Spatial Strategies – there are lots of different levels and types of plans being developed. The NPF4 planning policies should help tie it all together and improve consistency and predictability across the Scottish planning system.

Regional strategies and Local Development Plans are crucial.

Other delivery mechanisms:

* Local place plans – Communities should be able to have an active role in informing their Local Development Plans through these
* Planning obligations (making developers contribute to infrastructure or mitigation of development impacts)
* Land assembly – incl. compulsory purchases, this can help achieve objectives in the public interest.
* Masterplan consent areas
* Investing in the planning service – increased planning charges so that planning departments can cover their costs and reverse a recent decline in capacity.

Monitoring.

## ANNEX A – OUTCOMES

Outcomes identified in Section 3A(3)(c) of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997:

* Meeting the housing needs of people living in Scotland, esp older and disabled people
  + Quality homes provision, and esp Policy 9 and Policy 7
* Improving the health and wellbeing of people living in Scotland
  + Recognise that natural environment is fundamental to health and wellbeing from food growing, clean air and water, and from being in nature.
  + Policy 14 and 20 Minute Neighbourhoods, support for active travel, recreation, etc
* Increasing the population of rural areas of Scotland
  + Local Dev Plans must set out an appropriate approach
  + Rural policies support resettling, development for housing and employment, and viability, sustainability and diversity of rural economies.
  + Policy 31 and 23 – supporting digital technologies.
* Improving equality and eliminating discrimination
  + Policy 4, and a couple of bits in Policy 5 about addressing inequality
* Meeting any targets relating to reduction of greenhouse gas emissions
  + Policy 2 – significant weight shall be given to the Global Climate Emergency in any planning decisions.
  + Also, lots of other stuff in here about this – reduce unsustainable travel, digital solutions, infrastructure first, circular economy, energy efficiency etc etc etc
* Secure positive effects for biodiversity
  + Policy 3 (Nature Crisis) supports nature networks and does not support proposals that reduce biodiversity. Policies 12, 32 and 34 also talk about biodiversity.