



**RTPI Scotland**

mediation of space · making of place

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2 May 2017

Dear Sir/Madam

## WRITTEN EVIDENCE ON CITY REGION DEALS

The Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) is the champion of planning and the planning profession. We work to promote the art and science of planning for the public benefit. We have around 2,100 members in Scotland and a worldwide membership of over 24,000. We:

- Support policy development to improve approaches to planning for the benefit of the public; maintain the professional standards of our members;
- Support our members, and therefore the majority of the planning workforce, to have the skills and knowledge they need to deliver planning effectively;
- Maintain high standards of planning education;
- Develop and promote new thinking, ideas and approaches which can improve planning;
- Support our membership to work with others who have a role in developing places in Scotland;
- Improve the understanding of planning and the planning system to policy makers, politicians, practitioners and the general public.

### Overview

RTPI Scotland is pleased to be able to provide evidence to the Committee. We welcome the definition of City Region Deals as set out Scottish Government<sup>1</sup>:

*“City Region Deals offer the potential for new collaborative regional partnerships, focused on long-term strategic approaches to improving regional economies. They can deliver positive outcomes in line with Scottish Government policy: they encourage Local Authorities to operate strategically at the regional level and they can support a long-term focus on the priorities required to deliver Scotland’s Economic Strategy. Each deal is bespoke to the city region and will include a package of measures designed to work as a coherent whole.”*

However, we have concerns that City Region Deals could be developed and implemented without taking regard of the broader context that they will function within. Even though City Region Deals are primarily about driving economic growth, they will have social and environmental impacts, whilst their delivery will be affected by social and environmental circumstances.

Given this, we believe that if City Region Deals are to provide transformational change in the short, medium and long term, they need to better integrate with, and complement, other strategies. We feel that there are opportunities to support this in emerging approaches to

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Built-Environment/Cities>

regional planning being taken forward as part of the Scottish Government's Review of the Planning System.

The planning system – if used to its fullest potential – can support the ambitions of City Region Deals. It can bring different interests together to ensure their investments and strategies support one another. This creates the conditions for an economically successful, community focused and environmentally sustainable Scotland. For this to happen the planning system needs to be used and seen as a corporate and collaborative service that supports and influences investment and policy across local and national government. It should be a frontloaded and proactive system to allow for community and stakeholder engagement and agreement on the priorities for an area and who is going to take them forward. It should be able to deliver development on the ground by ensuring the vision for an area is viable and resourced. In addition, it should be recognised as a valuable way of providing solutions to complex issues.

### **The Need for Integration**

The Scottish Government's Third National Planning Framework (NPF), published in June 2014, sets out a long-term vision for the development of Scotland. It is described as the spatial expression of the Scottish Government's Economic Strategy - with a focus on supporting sustainable economic growth and the transition to a low carbon economy. NPF3 should be taken into account in all strategic and local development plans in Scotland. Fourteen national developments across Scotland are identified to deliver the strategy. The NPF is focussed around 4 outcomes:

- a successful, sustainable place
- a low carbon place
- a natural, resilient place
- a connected place.

It says<sup>2</sup> that it

*“provides a flexible framework for sustainable growth and development which reflects the varied assets of our many distinctive places.”*

And that

*“Scotland's seven city regions are home to the majority of our population and economic activity. In the coming years, our cities network will continue to be a focus for investment. We will build on the collective strengths of the city regions and on the opportunities which are unique to each. We aim to transform cities into models of low carbon living, supporting growth, addressing regeneration and improving connections. Many of our largest and most vibrant towns are located close to our cities....Our spatial strategy provides a growth and development agenda for each of our city regions, and highlights where infrastructure investment will be a priority. Many nationally important developments are located in or close to our cities.”*

These aspirations are very similar to those that Scottish Government set out for City Region Deals. However, there appears to be no formal connection between City Region Deals and the NPF, and the majority of City Deal proposal documents do not reference the NPF. It is our view that to achieve truly transformational changes in city regions a planned approach that considers the issues in the whole, rather than sectorally, is required.

This will also allow for better integration through coordinating across the many sectoral strategies that direct development in Scotland and which City Region Deals should be supporting. These include, in no particular order:

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2014/06/3539/2>

- National Transport Strategy
- National Economic Strategy
- National Energy Strategy
- National Marine Plan
- Land Use Strategy
- Historic Environment Strategy
- City Region Deals
- Fairer Scotland Action Plan
- National Waste Management Plan
- Regional Transport Partnerships

We believe that this will provide a more effective platform to ensure that investments generated through City Region Deals will have longer lasting and sustainable impacts, given that it should embed approaches that look how one-off investments can contribute to long-term outcomes.

Furthermore, it should allow City Region Deals to be considered and delivered beside other programmes, thereby providing more scope for ensuring complementarity between the range of programmes and investments.

### **City Region Planning**

At the city regional scale planning and planners have a vital role in facilitating collaboration between national and local government, agencies and other stakeholders, with a view to delivery of development whose scope is greater than local. Importantly this can include finding solutions to contentious issues such as where certain types of development, which are in the public interest, should be located. The strategic overview that planning provides allows a perspective that goes beyond political boundaries to look at a variety of geographies including economic areas, housing market areas, landscape areas and flood risk areas.

As part of the Scottish Government's planning review, it has been suggested that current city region planning arrangements need to be 'repurposed'. RTPI Scotland has said that this could provide an opportunity to ensure that there is more effective integration and joining up of approaches aimed at planning, stimulating economic growth and providing infrastructure at the city region level. We believe that robust arrangements for strategic/ city region planning will be critical to this and have said that Strategic Development Plans should be re-aligned as a locus for a cross-government approach to tackling issues at the bigger than local level. This will include integrating regional action such as City Deals, Regional Transport Partnerships and decisions on infrastructure investments.

Given this, RTPI Scotland have suggested that in any new arrangements regional planning should be a statutory duty, and that there should be an obligation for new regional planning partnerships to prepare a high level Regional Spatial Strategy. Local authorities, Scottish Government and its agencies would have a statutory obligation to participate in regional partnerships, to agree investments and to find solutions on contentious issues. Arrangements should also be made for Regional Spatial Strategies to inform the National Planning Framework. We believe that these new arrangements will provide a means of better integrating city region deals, land use planning, infrastructure provision and transport.

Within a basic statutory framework as described above RTPI Scotland believes that some flexibility in the exact process for collaboration across local authority areas could be beneficial. This would allow each area to pursue the approach that is best based on their particular circumstances.

## **Community Planning**

It is also imperative that any new city region arrangements are better connected to Community Plans and Local Outcome Improvement Plans. At present Community Plans are not always articulated spatially. There is scope for joining up the development process for each of these plans to ensure that priorities, decision on investment and to better connect consultation. There are also opportunities for better integration in engaging with stakeholders and communities and on monitoring and research.

There should be a requirement to more closely link community planning and spatial planning, and vice versa. This will help to better connect public service provision with place development. It will also provide opportunities to better align community and stakeholder engagement across the public sector.

I trust that you will find these comments helpful. If you would like to discuss any aspect, or require clarification of any points raised, please contact me on 0131 229 9628 or by email to [craig.mclaren@rtpi.org.uk](mailto:craig.mclaren@rtpi.org.uk)

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in brown ink, appearing to read 'Craig McLaren', with a stylized flourish at the end.

**Craig McLaren**  
Director of Scotland and Ireland