

Scottish National Transport Strategy, Early Engagement Survey – RTPI Scotland Response

31 March 2017

Overview

RTPI Scotland welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the early engagement survey as a part of a comprehensive and collaborative review of the National Transport Strategy (NTS). Long-term development of Scotland's transport infrastructure cannot be viewed in isolation from related land use planning considerations. RTPI Scotland believes that greater use of strategic and integrated planning is essential to guide the delivery of the strategic outcomes set out in the current NTS; increased quality, accessibility and affordability of transport, and reduced journey times and emissions. The review of the NTS offers a significant opportunity, through collaborative working, to better align spatial community and transport planning. Those responsible for planning and designing future transport infrastructure should ensure that individual schemes are integrated into broader strategies for inter-modal transport at the national, regional and local scales. Cooperation amongst key delivery partners and their stakeholders is essential to support the successful delivery of transport infrastructure projects and infrastructure-led developments.

The current strategy sets out the three key strategic outcomes of improved journey times and connections; reduced emissions; and improves quality, accessibility and affordability. Do you think each of these will still be relevant over the next twenty years?

Yes.

What do you think are the main transport challenges and opportunities over the next 20 years?

The Scottish Government is currently undertaking a major review of the planning system. This includes changes to the way that plans are prepared and delivered at the national, regional and local scales. This will clearly have implications for Scotland's transport, and it will be important for the renewal of the NTS to take changes to process and governance into account.

National Planning Framework

The review of the planning system includes proposals for strengthening the National Planning Framework. The intention is to create stronger links to other relevant strategies, for example the Infrastructure Investment Plan and the NTS. This collaborative, integrated approach will make it easier to link up infrastructure provision with expanding and new communities and economic initiatives.

RPTI Scotland has proposed that this strengthening of the NPF should include incorporating the NPF and SPP into one National Development Plan (NDP). This would create a framework for Scotland's future spatial development, agreed by Parliament and with reference to other relevant government strategies and initiatives.

Alignment, including of timescales, with the renewed NTS, the Strategic Transport Projects Review (STPR), the Infrastructure Investment Plan and other national strategies will clearly be crucial to the success of a National Development Plan.

Strategic Planning

As stated in NTS 2016, 'Transport Scotland will review existing guidance on regional and local transport strategies, to ensure that it reflects an updated understanding of how transport is organised in Scotland and the challenges which it now faces.' RTPI Scotland believes the reviews of both the planning system and the NTS provide an excellent opportunity to create better alignment at strategic level. In the Scottish Government consultation paper *Places, People and Planning* the proposal is made to replace Strategic Development Plans (SDPs) with improved Regional Partnership working. This follows the conclusion of the independent planning review panel that SDPs have not been influential enough in all of their areas of jurisdiction across Scotland, including in aligning with Regional Transport Partnerships.

At the regional scale planning and planners have a vital role to play in facilitating collaboration between national and local government, agencies and other stakeholders. We believe that strategic planning has a critical role to play in facilitating collaboration both 'vertically' and 'horizontally'. Vertically, regional planning can broker conversations between the national and local levels, with the end goal of easing delivery of transport priorities at each respective scale. Horizontally, planning at the regional level has an important role in coordinating across the many sectoral strategies that direct development in Scotland. This includes of course the National Transport Strategy.

RTPI Scotland is advocating to Scottish Government a statutory framework for this new Regional Partnership Working. We believe that all relevant stakeholders, including those with transport responsibilities, should have a statutory obligation to participate in Regional Partnerships, and to find solutions on contentious issues.

Local Development Plans

Development plans and development management decisions have clear implications for travel patterns, traffic and road safety and vice versa. Therefore it is important that a renewed NTS pays close attention to proposed changes in the development plan process. In *Places, People and Planning*, the Scottish Government has recommended that the plan period for Local Development Plans (LDPs) be extended to 10 years. As a part of this strengthening and streamlining of LDP preparation an early gatecheck has been proposed to help to improve plan examinations by dealing with significant issues at an earlier stage. RTPI Scotland supports as much frontloading of the planning system as possible. This means as much collaboration and decision-making as possible should take place early on. We have therefore highlighted the need for statutory consultation with key agencies. Transport Scotland is a Key Agency and it is important to consider how transport appraisal gatechecks will sit within the new, frontloaded LDP preparation process.

If there was one thing that needs to change substantially now in transport, what would that be?

In line with the Scottish Government's ambitions to cut climate change causing emissions, and public health priorities, modal shift to active travel should be a major priority of this review.

Land use policy and planning has a major role to play in reducing private car use and travel-to-work distances, which RTPI Scotland believes should be a key strategic outcome of a renewed NTS. Following its recent scrutiny of the draft Climate Change Plan (Policies and Proposals 3) the Local Government and Communities Committee Report on the Plan stated, 'The Committee is disappointed that there is a lack of information in the Plan on how the planning system can contribute to a modal shift away from single vehicular use to more sustainable and active forms of travel.'

NTS 2016 states that planning can designate – '...land where there is capacity in the transport network, trying to reduce the need to travel and ensuring sustainable modes are catered for.' As well as location, planning can influence the density and design of development. When realised in developments, together these three factors can enable people to make more sustainable choices in their day-to-day lives. Local development plans play a major role in delivering these criteria, and Scottish Planning Policy outlines a number of principles regarding which types of locations and development are generally considered 'sustainable'. For example, there is a preference for developing previously-developed ('brownfield') sites before greenfield ones, and support for higher density development. Likewise, Scottish Planning Policy (paragraph 45) recognises the important role for design in making it easier for all people to move around a place by prioritising accessibility for people, not vehicles. Planning development in this way can help to ensure that cities, towns and villages grow to accommodate and support a changing population sustainably. Walking, cycling and use of public transport can be made easier while private car journeys are discouraged by informing the density of development, its location, and how it is integrated into other land uses such as employment areas and schools. It is possible to measure changes in the form of the built environment delivered in this way, for example by monitoring changes in travel-to-work distances over time.

The renewed NTS should be informed by the ambition to shape development that reduced the number of journeys needed to be made. As alluded to in the rest of our response, this could be achieved by closer alignment between transport and spatial planning at the national, regional and local scales.

How would you like us to engage with you during the development of the future strategy that will lead to a formal public consultation?

Moving forward it is key that collaboration is achieved between planning and transport strategy at the local, regional and national level. Therefore, RTPI Scotland would be pleased to be closely involved in the discourse as the new NTS is developed.