

# Scotland planning news

APRIL 2017



## Headline news

### Spring Budget 2017

On 8 March, Chancellor of the Exchequer Philip Hammond delivered his Spring Budget 2017 speech in the House of Commons. A few days before, the House of Commons Library had published a briefing paper setting out the background.

As would be expected just one month after publication of England's Housing White Paper, mention of any measures to assist in building more new homes across the UK were almost completely absent on the day itself. The only potentially planning-related announcements instead covered education, skills and training, energy and measures to improve productivity.

Likewise, very little was announced on infrastructure and transport funds.

Spring Budget headlines relevant to planning in Scotland included:

1. The publication of the 5G UK Strategy (together with the Government's response to the National Infrastructure Commission's (NIC) report 'Connected Future'); and
  2. The negotiations that had opened on the Stirling City Deal, and the proposals considered for the Tay Cities Growth Deal.
- Scotland's Finance Secretary Derek Mackay voiced his concerns over the Spring Budget, saying:

"The real elephant in the room in this budget was Brexit. There was no mention of the UK Government's plans to protect and grow the UK economy as the Prime Minister gets ready to trigger Article 50. This is simply not acceptable. Brexit is a real threat to people across Scotland in so many ways. The Chancellor must tell us his plans."

LICHFIELDS

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## National News

### The Great Repeal Bill White Paper: Legislating for the UK's Withdrawal from the EU

Following the triggering of Article 50, the Department for Exiting the EU a day later published the Great Repeal Bill: Legislating for the UK's Withdrawal from the EU White Paper.

With reference to devolved administrations and legislative competencies, the White Paper states:

'In areas where the devolved administrations and legislatures have competence, such as agriculture, environment and some transport issues, [...] the Government intends to replicate the current frameworks provided by EU rules through UK legislation. In parallel we will begin intensive discussions with the devolved administrations to identify where common frameworks need to be retained in the future, what these should be, and where common frameworks covering the UK are not necessary.'

### £590m increase in affordable housing funding

The Scottish Government has announced that over £590m will be available to increase the supply of affordable housing for 2017/18; this represents an £18m increase when compared to 2016/17.

The funding allocation is mostly directed at councils, as these will share £422m of grant subsidy to deliver affordable homes in their local communities, while the remaining investment will support national schemes, such as for increasing home ownership, and for rural and island housing.

Scotland Communities Secretary, Angela Constance, commented:

'We are committed to delivering at ►►

## QUOTE OF THE MONTH



And I have heard, too, the calls by North Sea oil and gas producers and the Scottish Government to provide further support for the transfer of late-life assets. As UK oil and gas production declines it is essential that we maximise exploitation of remaining reserves and so we will publish a formal discussion paper in due course.

Chancellor of the Exchequer, Philip Hammond, delivering his Spring Budget 2017 speech

## THE LICHFIELDS PERSPECTIVE

New guidance issued for consultation (on landowners and land managers engaging communities in decisions relating to land) does not directly relate to development projects and planning but its approach is laudable. The aim is to enable communities to understand how landowners and managers have to operate within market constraints, legislation and environmental limitations.

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least 50,000 new affordable homes over this Parliament backed by £3 billion. This major and increased investment for 2017/18 that I'm announcing today supports our ambitious commitment.'

## Housing statistics show increase in annual completion but decrease in starts

The quarterly statistical publication on housing for Scotland (July-September 2016) has revealed an 8% decrease in new homes' completion, when compared to the same quarter in 2015. However, the overall annual figure (to end September 2016) shows a slight increase (157 homes) when compared to the 16,152 completions in the previous year.

On the other hand, new homes' starts show an increase of 3% more than the same quarter in 2015; the overall annual figure (to end September 2016) is down by 5% (880 homes), when compared to the 17,750 homes started in 2015.

Finally, while yearly approvals for affordable housing (to end December 2016) are up by 20% (1,448 homes), affordable housing completions decreased by 6% (422 homes) from the previous year.

## Consultation launched on guidance on engaging communities in decisions relating to land

The Scottish Government has launched a new draft guidance on engagement between land owners and local community; the guidance includes best practices for land owners and land managers in relation to decisions they could take and that are to impact on their local community.

The draft guidance consultation is part of the implementation process of the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2016, specifically in relation to Part 4 'Engaging communities in decisions relating to land'. The consultation, which seeks the views of key stakeholders, closes on 16 June.

## Two Scottish areas among bidders for UK City of Culture 2021

Paisley and Perth are among the eleven

areas that have made bids to be awarded the UK City of Culture 2021 title; other bidders include Coventry, Portsmouth, Swansea and Sunderland.

Alongside the announcement of the official bidders, the Heritage Lottery Fund has committed £3m to the winning bidder for the UK City of Culture title (from 2021 onwards, to boost local heritage.

Ros Kerslake, Chief Executive of the Heritage Lottery Fund, commented:

'Heritage [...] is so important to a city's identity, as well as making a huge contribution to tourism, jobs and the local economy. Building on the support we have given to Hull 2017, this funding will allow the UK City of Culture 2021 to showcase its heritage to the world.'

A shortlist of the bidding areas will be revealed in the summer, while the winning bid will be announced in December.

## Floating demonstration wind farm granted consent

The Scottish Minister for Business, Innovation and Energy, Paul Wheelhouse, has granted consent for a floating demonstration wind farm.

The Dounreay Tri Floating Wind Demonstration Project, which will be located off the Caithness coastline, will generate up to 12MW (enough to power almost 8,000 homes) and will support the creation of around 100 jobs during assembly, installation and ongoing operations and maintenance activities.

The Energy Minister said: '[...] With the consent for this project, the Scottish Government has now approved a total of 92MW of floating offshore wind, enough to power almost 60,000 homes. This not only highlights our commitment to exploring this innovative technology, but offers real scope for the development of wind energy projects in deeper water, in Scotland and across the world.'

## Increased support for low carbon rural energy innovations

A total of £10m has been made available to support 'innovative local energy projects' in rural areas of Scotland, through the Low Carbon Infrastructure

Transition Programme (LCITP); the funding is aimed at supporting the development of 'investment-ready business cases'.

Innovative projects that have the potential to improve energy efficiency, reduce carbon emissions and boost local economies will be eligible to apply for up to £100,000 from LCITP.

Minister for Business, Innovation and Energy Paul Wheelhouse said:

'The low carbon and renewable energy sector has been a major driver of Scotland's economy in recent years, supporting 43,500 jobs. Many of these are in rural areas, where we have developed expertise in solar, wave, offshore wind and tidal, as well as more established technologies such as hydro and onshore wind.'

## Scotland's digital strategy launched

On 22 March, the Scottish Government published its new digital strategy, which is expected to boost digital jobs to 150,000 by 2021.

The strategy, 'Realising Scotland's full potential in a Digital World', underlines how the Scottish Government recognises digitalisation as a cornerstone in many fields - from public services to economic growth.

Planning features among the actions to re-design Scotland's digital public services, as the Strategy highlights the intention to 'drive the future transformation of Scotland's planning system to provide a simpler and more consistent online experience across Scotland'.

Launching the Strategy, Finance Secretary Derek Mackay commented:

'Our vision is for Scotland to become even more digitally competitive and attractive. By developing our existing workforce and increasing our digital capabilities across society and the business community, we will ensure that our citizens have the opportunity to improve their digital skills with everyone who wants to get connected able to do so, and public services designed by and for citizens that are secure. This will in turn have a positive impact on growing our economy.' ■