

# Scotland planning news



OCTOBER 2017

## Headline news

### Scotland's Programme for Government launched

The Scottish Government has launched its Programme for Government 2017-18, which is intended to 'shape the kind of Scotland we all seek – an inclusive, fair, prosperous, innovative country ready and willing to embrace the future' – as stated in the document's foreword by First Minister Nicola Sturgeon.

One of the stated key priorities for her Government is to phase out the need for petrol and diesel vehicles by 2032 and 'fast-track the development of a Scotland-wide charging network'.

Furthermore, among the confirmed 16 new pieces of legislation, there will be the already-expected Planning Bill 'to streamline the planning process', which will relate to the on-going review of the Scottish planning system.

Specifically, the Planning Bill is expected to:

'[...] ensure a greater focus on delivering the development Scotland needs with the infrastructure to support it. There will be a simpler, more effective system of development plans, to set a clear view of how areas will develop in future. Procedures for preparing plans will be improved and communities will have better opportunities to influence the future of their areas.'

Planning proposals, as set out in the Programme, include actions to support a new approach to Simplified Planning Zones, a modernisation of compulsory purchase orders, and a review of the

National Planning Framework alongside the strengthening of its alignment with wider strategies and programmes. Other proposed reforms include the use of new powers to restrict the over-provision of betting shops and payday lenders, and exploring how food outlets nearby schools can be better controlled.

Also of interest to land use planning are the intentions to:

- reform 'planning measures to create favourable conditions for infrastructure investment' in relation to telecoms connectivity;
- 'examine how, across the rural economy, we can use the planning and consents systems to fast-track sustainable developments – including housing – in order to generate new rural economic activity'; and
- 'include Simplified Planning Zones for housing, in recognition of the significant opportunities for the self-build and custom-build sector'.

### Scottish Government bans fracking

The Scottish Government has announced the decision to effectively put in place a ban on unconventional oil and gas (i.e. fracking) in Scotland, following a period of public consultations and engagements with relevant stakeholders and wider community.

The latest four-month consultation received over 60,000 responses, which widely opposed fracking developments (approx. 99% of the submission). To put today's decision into immediate effect, the Scottish Government has now informed all local authorities around Scotland to clarify that previous Directions that put in place the moratorium on fracking remain valid; this step will be followed by a parliamentary vote ('in the near future') and by a Strategic Environmental Assessment. ►►

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## QUOTE OF THE MONTH



We will introduce a Planning Bill to improve the system of development planning, give people a greater say in the future of their places and deliver planned development.

**The Scottish Government, in Programme for Government 2017-18, in the section on 'Building a fairer Scotland, reform of the planning system'**

## THE LICHFIELDS PERSPECTIVE

The new, Planning Bill, due by the end of the year, aims to streamline land use planning processes in the medium and longer term. In the meantime, the delivery of affordable homes remains high on the agenda, alongside taking a more coordinated approach to developing infrastructure, increasing investment and growing Scotland's economy

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LICHFIELDS

The Scottish Minister for Business, Innovation and Energy, Paul Wheelhouse, announced the decision via a statement to the Scottish Parliament:

'Having taken account of the interests of the environment, our economy, public health and the overwhelming majority of public opinion, the decision I am announcing today means fracking cannot and will not take place in Scotland'.

## Innovation Fund launched

As part of its Programme for Government (see headline news), the Scottish Government has announced the release of £60m of funding to support innovation in low carbon energy infrastructure by 2020.

The launch of the new Innovation Fund is part of the wider Scottish Government objective of ending the need for new petrol or diesel vehicles in Scotland by 2032.

## Stirling & Clackmannanshire City Deal bid progresses

Initial priorities for the Stirling & Clackmannanshire City Deal bid have been identified at different stages of the stakeholder engagement process, Clackmannanshire Council has revealed.

The range of potential projects has now been listed under three thematic headings, these being:

- Investor Confidence;
- Inclusive Growth; and
- Sustainable Place.

The first priority, 'Investor Confidence', explicitly refers to the objective of increasing private sector investments in the area, 'bringing forward new business premises, housing development sites, transport infrastructure and new schools; regenerating Alloa town centre and allowing access to enhanced digital infrastructure and digital skills to create a Smart County'.

The Scottish Secretary for Economy, Jobs and Fair Work, Keith Brown, said:

'The Scottish Government is committed to a city region deal for Stirling and Clackmannanshire, which is an opportunity to unlock investment, boost inclusive economic growth and

invest in infrastructure for the entire region. [...] We are currently working through the detail of the proposals with the regional partners to make sure that we get the best outcomes for businesses and communities and I look forward to agreeing a deal in due course.'

## Affordable Housing Supply Programme: guidance notes

The Scottish Government has published a list of guidance notes aimed at both councils and registered social landlords in relation to the Affordable Housing Supply Programme; as part of this document collection, a guidance note detailing process and procedures for planning the delivery of the majority of grant-funded homes through the Affordable Housing Supply Programme has also been published.

## Scottish Government supports Paisley's bid for UK City of Culture 2021

The Scottish Government has announced its financial backing for Paisley's bid for UK City of Culture 2021; the endorsement 'recognises the contribution Paisley makes to Scotland's culture and demonstrates its support of the ambitions and benefits the bid seeks to deliver'.

Paisley, the only Scottish town shortlisted for the UK City of Culture 2021 competition, will run against the other shortlisted cities of Coventry, Stoke-on-Trent, Sunderland and Swansea.

## Increase in renewable electricity generation

Figures released by the UK Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy (BEIS) show that in the first half of 2017, Scotland generated 17% more renewable electricity than it did in the same period in 2016.

The figures also show that Scotland generated the equivalent of 54% of its gross electricity consumption from renewable sources in 2016; furthermore, Scotland contributed around 25% of the UK's overall renewable energy generation in 2016.

## Wind farm development approved despite fears over impact on Loch Doon

The Scottish Government has granted consent for the construction and operation of the Benbrack Wind Farm (to access the case webpage, search for 'Benbrack Wind Farm' at the previous link), in Dumfries & Galloway Council's area.

Dumfries and Galloway Council, neighbouring East Ayrshire Council and Scottish Natural Heritage all raised concerns about the effect of the 18-turbine scheme, which will have a generating capacity exceeding 50MW, over the nearby Loch Doon.

In granting consent, the Scottish Government concluded that the Company has put in place the necessary measures to mitigate any effect on the 'natural beauty of the countryside' in the area.

## Outline business case for Edinburgh tram extension approved

The outline business case (OBC) for the expansion of the Edinburgh tram network to Newhaven has been approved by the City of Edinburgh Council; however, it is worth stressing that Edinburgh councillors will not make a final decision on the tram expansion until autumn 2018.

The project is estimated to cost £165.2m in capital cost, including risk and inflation, and its construction to last for three years.

## Vision for land rights announced

The Scottish Government has published the Land Rights and Responsibilities Statement, which details the principles that should inform policy and practices around land issues in Scotland.

The Statement applies to all urban and rural land, buildings and other infrastructure in Scotland and is of relevance to all - 'whether land owner, land manager, tenant or land user'; the Statement, combined with the Scottish Land Commission's Strategic Plan, underlines the Scottish Government's commitment to land reform. ■