

# Planning Committee

2.00pm, Wednesday, 24 April 2024

## Scottish Government Consultations on Development Plan Regulations, Masterplan Consent Area Regulations and Resourcing Planning

Executive/routine  
Wards

Routine  
All

### 1. Recommendations

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- 1.1 It is recommended that the Council responds to the Scottish Government's consultations on Development Plan Regulations, Masterplan Consent Areas and Resourcing Planning in accordance with the proposed responses set out in Appendices 1, 2 and 3.

**Paul Lawrence**

Executive Director of Place

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## Scottish Government Consultations on Development Plan Regulations, Masterplan Consent Area Regulations and Resourcing Planning

### 2. Executive Summary

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- 2.1 This report sets out proposed responses to the Scottish Government's consultations on Development Plan Regulations, Masterplan Consent Areas and Resourcing Planning (Appendices 1, 2 and 3).

### 3. Background

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- 3.1 The Scottish Government is consulting on the following matters:
- Development plan amendment regulations;
  - Masterplan consent area regulations; and
  - Investing in Planning: a consultation on resourcing Scotland's Planning System.
- 3.2 The Development plan amendment regulations consultation and the Masterplan consent area (MCA) regulations consultation form part of Scottish Government's wider work on planning reform and implementation of the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019. These regulations are necessary to provide additional detail to the requirements set out in the Act.
- 3.3 The Development plan amendment regulations consultation is seeking views on the proposed approach to regulations on the process from amending the National Planning Framework (NPF) and Local Development Plans (LDPs). Scottish Government aims to ensure the proposals for the amendment regulations are proportionate and that the process will be a more responsive and streamlined version of the full review process.
- 3.4 MCAs will have expanded powers in comparison with Simplified Planning Zones (SPZ). The regulations consultation sets out proposed procedures and includes two set of regulations: the first covering the main process for making MCA schemes and secondly separate regulations covering Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) provisions for MCAs.

- 3.5 The Investing in Planning: a consultation on resourcing Scotland’s planning system notes the challenges in resource planning and that there are no simple answers. It explores a range of potential solutions to support resourcing of the planning system with a view to identifying a set of short and medium term actions that could improve the capacity of the planning system by helping build resilience and strengthening cross sector collaboration.

## 4. Main report

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### Development Plan Amendment Regulations

- 4.1 The purpose of the draft regulation is to consult on how the provisions of the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 which allow for amendment of the NPF and for LDPs would be activated. They are not at this stage intended to facilitate any specific change to NPF4 and would apply to any new style LDP rather than ones made under the 2006 Act.
- 4.2 After the consultation, the Scottish Government will need to review and finalise the regulations and lay them before Parliament. After which, the regulations would come into effect according to the timescales for the type of statutory instrument which is used for them.
- 4.3 The proposals to allow for amendment of the NPF and for LDPs reflect the principles of the processes for the making of these plans whilst seeking to make them proportionate to the nature of the changes being made, for example, on who to consult with and timescales for consultation. This approach is generally welcomed, however, there are some issues which need careful consideration.
- 4.4 For amendments to the NPF, it is proposed to set a threshold for amendments and to have a clear trigger for a full review. It is suggested this be where 50% of national developments or 50% of national policies are to be changed. Whilst this is helpful, it does not address the circumstances where changes (particularly to the more significant policies) have far reaching effects on the policy direction of the NPF or for Councils and their LDPs (e.g. significant change to housing land supply or to its environmental policies).
- 4.5 It is silent on how the housing figures of NPF4 might be addressed and does not take account of the nature or depth of the policy or national development to be changed (e.g. significant change to policy 1 of NPF4 or to the Central Scotland Green Network as opposed to a less significant policy or a much more localised development).
- 4.6 On the matters of justification for change, engagement on this, parliamentary process, wider engagement, which issues should be considered, and this should be published, the approach seems reasonable and proportionate.
- 4.7 For LDPs, there is no proposal for a threshold as for NPF4. The Scottish Government considers that the process could be used to address a new local policy matter that reflects a new local issue or ambition. It may also be used to address

local place-based matters (such as incorporating content from one or more local place plans, MCAs, or local implications of a new national development in a revised NPF. The proposed changes do not anticipate LDPs being amended to add in single sites (for example for housing or business use). There needs to be consideration of the scale and nature of changes as for NPF.

- 4.8 As with NPF (paragraph 4.5), the other processes proposed for this seem reasonable other than the question of final approval. Given the rigor of approval for an LDP, the proposals here could be open to challenge as it refers to:

*not intending to require approval by the full council within regulations. By referring to the 'planning authority' rather than 'full council' this will enable the planning authority to decide on the appropriate level of approval/sign off for the proposed amendment to be consulted on (for example, it could be a decision of full council, or at Committee, or delegated to the Chief Planning Officer, depending on the nature of the amendment and the Council's internal delegation procedures.*

### **Masterplan Consent Area Regulations**

- 4.9 MCAs are similar to SPZs but refreshed with expanded powers. MCAs will be broader in scope, being able to give other types of authorisations than just planning permission, and the procedures for preparing a scheme have been modernised.
- 4.10 MCA schemes can give several types of consent, including planning permission, plus roads construction consent, listed building consent and conservation area consent – where provided for in the particular MCA scheme. The MCA scheme can include conditions, limitations and exceptions which may cover aspects such as development parameters, design and environmental matters. Within adopted MCA areas, development could be brought forward without the need for an application as long as it is in line with the agreed scheme.
- 4.11 The proposed response is that MCAs can offer several advantages in streamlining the planning process and promoting development in Scotland. However, the local context is particularly important, as are any cross-boundary issues with other local authorities. While the Council may not intend to adopt any MCA sites, there are important issues to be considered along local authority boundaries. Furthermore, additional clarity is sought from the Scottish Government through the formal consultation process in this regard.

### **Investing in Planning: a consultation on resourcing Scotland's planning system**

- 4.12 The consultation is split into two parts; part one focuses on 'working smarter' which seeks views on opportunities for streamlining, alignment or standardisation, actions to improve certainty, the use of existing tools such as processing agreements and actions around skills including exploring the concept of a 'planning hub' which is modelled on the Building Standards Hub.
- 4.13 The proposed response to part one highlights the reduction in availability of Planning Courses which has had an impact on bringing people into the profession,

and the need for greater interaction between higher education and local planning authorities to identify skills gaps. Furthermore, there needs to be opportunities to upskill existing planners to respond to challenges such as climate change and the biodiversity crisis.

- 4.14 In relation to streamlining, alignment or standardisation to improve certainty, there are opportunities. However, it is important to recognise the differing contexts and, the nature and scale of developments considered across planning authorities which will limit the scope of achieving standardisation. Whilst a degree of certainty can be given in relation to proposals, there may be material considerations which impact on this as well as the democratic process involving Development Management Sub-Committee.
- 4.15 It is proposed that the concept of a 'planning hub', which is based on being able to source specialists, assist with capacity and embedding good practice is not supported. There are existing forums in place to share good practice and it is unclear how this would be resourced or involved in the decision-making process.
- 4.16 Part two of the consultation 'raising resources' focuses on planning fees. It explores fee setting, where fees could be introduced and discretionary fees.
- 4.17 There is concern that the consultation focuses on fees in relation to development management and the processing of applications only rather than considering the requirements for the whole system to be resourced including development planning and enforcement which underpin the development management process.
- 4.18 The consultation seeks views on how fees should be set and whether this should be at a local or national level. It is proposed that support is given to fees being set nationally and increasing annually. Setting fees locally will create significant additional administrative burdens and may create competition in fees between councils.
- 4.19 Views are also being sought on the introduction of a fee for planning application appeals to either the DPEA or the planning authority. This is not fully supported. Planning fees should be set at a level which recognises the right of applicants to appeal a decision.
- 4.20 It is important to not lose sight of the purpose of planning which is to manage development in the long-term public interest. Whilst there is a desire to achieve a degree of certainty, there is a risk of perceptions of paying for a planning approval.

## **5. Next Steps**

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- 5.1 If the recommendation of this report is accepted, the consultation responses will be sent to Scottish Government.

## **6. Financial impact**

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- 6.1 There are no financial impacts arising from responding to the consultations.

## **7. Equality and Poverty Impact**

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- 7.1 As the report is not making recommendations which have equality or poverty impacts, there are no impacts on equality arising from this report.

## **8. Climate and Nature Emergency Implications**

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- 8.1 As the report is not making recommendations that have climate or nature emergency implications, there are no impacts on these matters arising from this report.

## **9. Risk, policy, compliance, governance and community impact**

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- 9.1 There is risk that the proposals create additional administrative burdens for the Council. It is therefore important that where this is considered a possibility that responses are sent to Scottish Government.

## **10. Background reading/external references**

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- 10.1 [Development plan amendment regulations: consultation](#)
- 10.2 [Masterplan consent area regulations: consultation](#)
- 10.3 [Investing in planning – resourcing Scotland’s planning system: consultation](#)

## **11. Appendices**

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- 11.1 Appendix 1 – NPF and LDP Amendments consultation response.
- 11.2 Appendix 2 – Masterplan Consent Areas response.
- 11.3 Appendix 3 – Investing in Planning consultation response.

# Development plan amendment regulations: consultation

## **Amendments to National Planning Framework: full review requirements**

Appropriate introduction to the subject of this consultation, including relevant background information and a broad description of our approach to this topic, is set out in pages 3 and 4 of our [consultation paper](#).

The context for the below questions is set out in paragraphs 15-26 of our [consultation paper](#).

The Scottish Ministers must by regulations set out the circumstances in which they consider that an amendment would result in a significant change to the policies and proposals for the development and use of land of the most recent National Planning Framework (NPF) such that would require that the National Planning Framework should be reviewed in full.

However, our aim across our proposals for both the NPF and local development plan (LDP) amendment regulations is to be proportionate. We understand the resource burden reviewing these documents as a whole will have. As such, we envisage that the amendment process will be a more responsive and streamlined version of the full review process, whilst balancing the need for due process, including appropriate justification and consultation on the proposed amendment.

While, in practice, we expect to exercise the power to amend NPF sparingly and only where the Scottish Ministers are satisfied that an amendment is required, there is a requirement to set out in regulation the circumstances or triggers in which a proposed change would require a full review.

We propose to set the bar for a full review fairly high to ensure it would take a significant change to the most recent document to make a full review mandatory.

**1.** To what extent do you agree that it is appropriate to adopt a broad and high-level approach as to when a full review of the National Planning

Framework is required? Where applicable, please give reasons for your answer.

Strongly agree

Agree

Neutral

Disagree

Strongly disagree

Please give us your views:

*The proposals to allow for amendment of the NPF reflect the principles of the process for making it, whilst seeking to make it proportionate to the nature of the changes being made, for example, on who to consult with and timescales for consultation. This approach is generally welcomed, however, there are some issues which need careful consideration.*

2. In cases where amendments would require changes to half or more of the contents of the National Planning Framework (NPF), to what extent do you agree that a full review of the NPF would be required? Where applicable, please give reasons for your answer.

Strongly agree

Agree

Neutral

Disagree

Strongly disagree

Please give us your views:



*Agree, however, it may be that a lower threshold is necessary. The proposal to set a threshold for amendments and to have a clear trigger for a full review makes sense in principle. However, the suggestion that this be where 50% of national developments or 50% of national policies are to be changed doesn't address the circumstances where changes, particularly to the more significant policies, have far reaching effects on the policy direction of the NPF or on LDPs, e.g. significant change to housing land supply or to its environmental policies.*

*It is silent on how the housing figures of NPF4 might be addressed. It doesn't take account of the nature or depth of the policy or national development to be changed e.g. significant change to policy 1 of NPF4 or to the Central Scotland Green Network as opposed to a less significant policy or a much more localised development.*

## **Amendments to National Planning Framework: engagement and preparation**

The context for the below questions is set out in paragraphs 27-38 of our [consultation paper](#).

We envisage the process for amending the National Planning Framework (NPF) having three main stages: engagement/justification, preparation and adoption.

At the engagement/justification stage, we propose that the Scottish Ministers provide an update on what engagement they intend to carry out, appropriate to the specific proposed amendment. Additionally, the 1997 Act sets out a series of issues that Ministers must consider when carrying out a full review of the NPF, and we consider these should also be considered for amendments.

At the preparation stage and when intending to amend the NPF, we propose that the Scottish Ministers are required to publish the proposed amendment for consultation along with an explanation as to why the amendment is being brought forward. We propose that, alongside the laying of a copy of the draft amendment before the Scottish Parliament, that the amendment be published for comment from the public at large, key agencies and planning authorities.

Whilst a Scottish Government consultation is typically 12 weeks, that length of time may not always be necessary or appropriate for amendments. We therefore propose to set a minimum timescale rather than a prescribed one,

which will provide flexibility and mean the consultation can reflect the nature and significance of the amendment. It would allow decision makers to set a suitable timescale, relative to the significance of the amendment and take account of Parliamentary recess and other timeframes.

3. In preparing an amendment to the National Planning Framework (NPF), to what extent do you agree that the Scottish Ministers should have the same considerations as they would for a full review of the NPF, where that is relevant to the proposed amendment? Where applicable, please give reasons for your answer.

Strongly agree

Agree

Neutral

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

Please give us your views:

*On the matters of justification for change, engagement on this, parliamentary process, wider engagement, which issues should be considered and this should be published, the approach seems reasonable and proportionate.*

4. To what extent do you agree with the list of those the Scottish Ministers should consult with on a proposed amendment? Where applicable, please give reasons for your answer.

Strongly agree

Agree

Neutral

Disagree

Strongly disagree

Please give us your views:

*The list is appropriate*

5. To what extent do you agree that a copy of the proposed amendment should be laid in the Scottish Parliament during the consultation period? Where applicable, please give reasons for your answer.

Strongly agree

Agree

Neutral

Disagree

Strongly disagree

Please give us your views:

*This reflects the full NPF procedure and is appropriate for any change*

6. To what extent do you agree with the proposed minimum 6 week consultation period, understanding that the timescale may be extended when deemed appropriate given the significance and nature of the amendment? Where applicable, please give reasons for your answer

Strongly agree

Agree

Neutral

Disagree

Strongly disagree

Please give us your views:

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*This is reasonable and proportionate, though if an issue is sufficiently important to justify an amendment then it would likely require a longer consultation period in any case.*

### **Amendments to National Planning Framework: adoption**

The context for the below questions is set out in paragraphs 39-44 of our [consultation paper](#).

We envisage the process for amending the National Planning Framework (NPF) having three main stages: engagement/justification, preparation and adoption.

Prior to the adoption of an amended NPF, we propose that the regulations will require that the Scottish Ministers have regard to any representations about the proposed amendment that are made to them by the end of the consultation period. The same as the procedure for reviewing NPF in full, we propose that this is done via a requirement to publish an Explanatory Report setting out a summary of representations and changes (if any) made as a result of these.

In terms of adoption, we propose that an amendment also mirrors the procedure for a full review. This would mean that any amendment to the NPF is required to be approved by a resolution of the Scottish Parliament, it takes effect once it has been adopted by the Scottish Ministers and it is published as soon as practicable after it has been adopted by the Scottish Ministers.

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7. To what extent do you agree that the Scottish Ministers be required to publish an Explanatory Report before the amended National Planning Framework is adopted? Where applicable, please give reasons for your answer

Strongly agree

Agree

Neutral

Disagree

Strongly disagree

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*if there is a justification for a change then that should be approved through the due NPF process. Anything else would have the potential to be legally challenged.*

8. To what extent do you agree that all amendments to the National Performance Framework should have to be approved by a resolution of the Scottish Parliament? Where applicable, please give reasons for your answer

Strongly agree

Agree

Neutral

Disagree

Strongly disagree

Please give us your views

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*As the full NPF needs this it is logical to require it*

9. To what extent do you agree that the amended National Planning Framework should take effect when it has been adopted by Scottish Ministers? Where applicable, please give reasons for your answer.

Strongly agree

Agree

Neutral

Disagree

Strongly disagree

Please give us your views

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*there would be no reason to delay the consideration of the settled view of parliament*

10. To what extent do you agree that the full updated version of the amended National Planning Framework, incorporating the amendment, should be published as soon as practicable after it has been adopted by Scottish Ministers? Where applicable, please give reasons for your answer.

Strongly agree

Agree

Neutral

Disagree

Strongly disagree

Please give us your views

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### **Amendments to Local Development Plans: preparation and considerations**

The context for the below questions is set out in paragraphs 45-62 of our [consultation paper](#).

Section 12 of the 2019 Act inserts section 20AA into the 1997 Act, which provides that a planning authority may amend their Local Development Plan (LDP) at any time. Whilst it will generally be at the discretion of the planning

authority, we would anticipate the power to amend a LDP could be used to address a new local policy matter that reflects a new local issue or ambition.

The principle of streamlining the process for amendments compared to that for preparing a full LDP is reflected in our consultation paper and our proposals aim to ensure appropriate engagement, consultation and scrutiny is incorporated throughout the process. This includes proposing that planning authorities are required to have regard to community engagement guidance issued by the Scottish Ministers and provide a statement outlining how they intend to engage with stakeholders on an amendment to a LDP.

However, given that amendments may be specialist or technical in nature, and relate to individual elements of the plan, we do not propose to specifically require the participation of children and young people for every amendment to a LDP.

Nonetheless, in preparing an amendment to a LDP, the planning authority must take into account the NPF and any local outcomes improvement plan (LOIP). We also propose that planning authorities must have regard to the information and considerations set out in regulation 9 of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland)(Development Planning) regulations 2023. This would ensure that the information given regard to mirrors that required when reviewing a LDP in full.

Existing legislation already provides that planning authorities may have regard to such other information and considerations as appear to them to be relevant, which could include other local strategies, action plans and registered local place plans.

11. To what extent do you agree that planning authorities should be required to have regard to community engagement guidance issued by the Scottish Ministers under section 16C when amending a Local Development Plan? Where applicable, please give reasons for your answer.

Strongly agree

Agree

Neutral

Disagree

Strongly disagree

Please give us your views

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*it would be questionable if the Ministers did not promote use their own guidance.*

12. To what extent do you agree that planning authorities should be required to provide a statement outlining how they intend to engage with stakeholders on an amendment to a Local Development Plan? Where applicable, please give reasons for your answer.

Strongly agree

Agree

Neutral

Disagree

Strongly disagree

Please give us your views

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*this reflects the principles of making an LDP, variance could lead to legal challenge.*

13. To what extent do you agree that not every amendment to a Local Development Plan should require specific participation of children and young people? Where applicable, please give reasons for your answer.

Strongly agree

Agree



Neutral

Disagree

Strongly disagree

Please give us your views

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*it would be potentially discriminatory to promote different extents of participation for different aspects or policies of a plan.*

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14. To what extent do you agree that, when preparing an amendment, a planning authority must have regard to the information and considerations set out in regulation 9 of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland)(Development Planning) regulations 2023? Where applicable, please give reasons for your answer.

Strongly agree

Agree

Neutral

Disagree

Strongly disagree

Please give us your views

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*For consistency and competency, the same approach to information sources and considerations should be taken.*

## **Amendments to Local Development Plans: justification**

The context for the below questions is set out in paragraphs 63-66 of our [consultation paper](#).

While Section 20AA(1) of the 1997 Act will provide that a planning authority may amend their Local Development Plan (LDP) at any time, it is important to establish the rationale for making an amendment. In preparing a new LDP, planning authorities are required to produce an Evidence Report and our local development plan guidance sets out a further Gate Check as part of the preparation.

However, in line with ensuring our proposals remain proportionate and appropriate to the amendment being made, we do not propose to require these steps in full. Instead, we propose that the planning authority collates evidence to justify and inform the proposed amendment and prepares a Justification of Amendment Statement, setting out the rationale for the proposed change and details of any evidence or engagement already collected/carried out. This is to be published alongside the draft amendment proposal and consultation.

Similarly, for the preparation of a new LDP and as part of the Evidence Report, planning authorities are required to provide a Play Sufficiency Assessment (PSA) and have regard to the list of persons seeking land for self-build housing. However, we do not propose to require a PSA for an amendment or require regard be had to the self-build list for an amendment.

This is in line with our aim of ensuring regulations for amendments are proportionate and appropriate, as it is unlikely that a PSA would be relevant to all amendments and, whilst we do not propose to require that regard be had to the self-build list for every amendment to a LDP, we would expect this to be taken into account where the information is relevant.

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15. To what extent do you agree that an authority should be required to collate relevant evidence to inform the proposed amendment and prepare a Justification of Amendment Statement? Where applicable, please give reasons for your answer.

Strongly agree

Agree

Neutral

Disagree

Strongly disagree

Please give us your views

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*this reflects the plan making process and could be challenged if this provision is not made.*

16. To what extent do you agree that a Play Sufficiency Assessment should not be required for an amendment to a Local Development Plan? Where applicable, please give reasons for your answer.

Strongly agree

Agree

Neutral

Disagree

Strongly disagree

Please give us your views

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*this would only be the case if there was no bearing of such an assessment - that can be considered under the principle of proportionate and relevant evidence.*

17. To what extent do you agree that an authority should not be required to have regard to the self-build list for every amendment to a Local Development Plan? Where applicable, please give reasons for your answer.

Strongly agree

Agree

Neutral

Disagree

Strongly disagree

Please give us your views

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*as above*

### **Amendment to Local Development Plans: consultation**

The context for the below questions is set out in paragraphs 67-74 of our [consultation paper](#).

We do not consider it necessary for a proposed amendment to a Local Development Plan (LDP) to be considered by the full council prior to consultation. Therefore, we propose that before a proposed amendment is published for consultation, it must be approved by the planning authority. By referring to the 'planning authority' rather than 'full council' this will enable the planning authority to decide on the appropriate level of approval/sign off for the proposed amendment to be consulted on.

While for a full LDP the 1997 Act requires the publication of the Proposed Plan, Evidence Report and Proposed Delivery Programme for consultation, for an amendment we propose an equivalent but proportionate package of material for consultation. We envisage the proposed amendment be published for consultation, alongside the Justification of Amendment statement, which is to be published for information and to clarify the evidence gathered. It would be expected that a statement on the consequences for any existing Delivery Programme would also be published at this time.

In terms of engagement, we propose to set out the requirement that planning authorities notify the Scottish Ministers, the public at large, key agencies and Community Councils of any proposed amendment open for consultation. We

would also expect the planning authorities to engage and consult those considered appropriate to the specific amendment being proposed.

With regards to the length of time a planning authority must consult for, similar to our reasoning in the consultation period for an amendment to the National Planning Framework (NPF), we consider that a set length of time may not always be necessary or appropriate and that setting a minimum rather than prescribed timescale will provide flexibility. Therefore, we propose that the timescale for consultation be a minimum of 6 weeks, with scope for the planning authority to extend the timescale for more complex amendments or those where significant numbers of people may have an interest.

18. To what extent do you agree that approval by the full council is not always required before the publication of a proposed amendment to a Local Development Plan for consultation? Where applicable, please give reasons for your answer.

Strongly agree

Agree

Neutral

Disagree

Strongly disagree

Please give us your views

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*if the amendment is justifiable then it is important enough to have the full consideration as the overall plan process to be a competent decision*

19. To what extent do you agree that the proposed amendment to a Local Development Plan should be published for consultation, alongside the Justification of Amendment statement and any statement on the consequences for the Delivery Programme which are to be published for information? Where applicable, please give reasons for your answer

Strongly agree

Agree

Neutral

Disagree

Strongly disagree

Please give us your views

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*No comment*

20. To what extent do you agree that planning authorities should be required to notify Scottish Ministers and to consult with the public at large and key agencies, alongside others they consider appropriate, when amending a Local Development Plan? Where applicable, please give reasons for your answer.

Strongly agree

Agree

Neutral

Disagree

Strongly disagree

Please give us your views

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*No comment*

21. To what extent do you agree with the proposed minimum 6 weeks consultation period, understanding that the timescale may be extended when deemed appropriate given the scale of the amendment? Where applicable, please give reasons for your answer.

Strongly agree

Agree

Neutral

Disagree

Strongly disagree

Please give us your views

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*This is reasonable and proportionate, though if an issue is sufficiently important to justify an amendment then it would likely require a longer consultation period in any case.*

### **Amendment to Local Development Plans: adoption**

The context for the below questions is set out in paragraphs 75-83 of our [consultation paper](#).

We propose that, following the consultation, the planning authority be required to take into account any representations made. Our proposal aims to ensure a reasonable approach which helps to reduce the time and resource burden for straightforward cases, whilst maintaining independent scrutiny as appropriate.

While we envisage that not all amendments to Local Development Plans (LDPs) will require comprehensive independent scrutiny, we understand that this is an important part of the decision making process. Our proposed approach seeks to balance streamlining of the amendment process with the need for independent scrutiny in some circumstances.

Therefore, we propose that the planning authority publishes a modifications report, providing the details and rationale for any changes subsequently made to the proposed amendment. This will include a summary of the representations made and the consideration given. Where there are no unresolved representations, we propose that the planning authority

may proceed to adopt the amendment without any further scrutiny. However, where unresolved representations remain that are not addressed via the modifications report, we propose that the planning authority must notify Scottish Ministers and request they appoint a person to examine the amendment.

In terms of adoption, we propose that an amendment to the LDP mirrors the procedure of creating a new LDP. This would mean that any amendment to the LDP takes effect when it is adopted by the planning authority and that the publication requirements follow those set out in Section 20A of the 1997 Act for a new LDP. This includes publishing it, including by electronic means, sending two copies to Scottish Ministers, placing a copy in public libraries within the authority area, notifying those who made representations to the consultation and advertising in a local newspaper that the LDP has been published. We also propose for the publication requirement to relate to the full updated version of the LDP with the amendment incorporated.

22. To what extent do you agree with our proposed approach to independent examination? Where applicable, please give reasons for your answer

Strongly agree

Agree

Neutral

Disagree

Strongly disagree

Please give us your views

*as with other considerations, there should be sufficient consistency between the amendment process and the overall plan process.*

23. To what extent do you agree that an amendment to a Local Development Plan should take effect when it is adopted by the planning authority? Where applicable, please give reasons for your answer.



Strongly agree

Agree

Neutral

Disagree

Strongly disagree

Please give us your views

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*this would be consistent with the plan process.*

24. To what extent do you agree that a full, updated version of the amended Local Development Plan (LDP), incorporating the amendment, should be published in the same way as the initial LDP? Where applicable, please give reasons for your answer

Strongly agree

Agree

Neutral

Disagree

Strongly disagree

Please give us your views

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*No comment*

### **Impact assessments**

The context for the below questions is set out in paragraphs 84-86 of our [consultation paper](#) and within the [Impact Assessments](#) published alongside this consultation.

The Scottish Government is required to consider the impacts of proposed policies, plans or strategic decisions in relation to equalities, various societal groups and sectors, data protection and the environment, under a range of legislation and commitments.

Given the amendment regulations will be procedural in nature, we have screened out most of the impact assessments, as the impacts of the wider documents and policies have been considered through previous assessments. Further details of this and the assessments themselves are set out in the [paper published alongside this consultation paper](#). The following questions relate to those impact assessments.

25. To what extent do you agree with our approach to the impact assessments for the proposed regulations? Where applicable, please give reasons for your answer.

Strongly agree

Agree

Neutral

Disagree

Strongly disagree

Please give us your views

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*this should be proportionate to the scale and nature of the changes proposed*

## **Appendix 2: Masterplan Consent Areas Consultation**

### **Question 1:**

**A) To what extent do you agree with the principle that regulations be kept to the minimum necessary and that more advice be offered in guidance and kept updated? a) Strongly Agree b) Agree c) Neutral d) Disagree e) Strongly Disagree**

**B) Please explain your view.**

**Response: a) – strongly agree**

Local Planning Authorities (LPA) need the flexibility to implement MCAs through mechanisms that respond to the local contexts and issues. The regulations can set the legislative framework but advice/guidance will be more useful to developers at a local level.

### **Question 2:**

**A) We are not proposing to regulate to exclude any form of development from having potential to be within a MCA. To what extent do you agree with this approach? a) Strongly Agree b) Agree c) Neutral d) Disagree e) Strongly Disagree B) Please explain your view.**

**B) Please explain your view**

**Response: c) - Neutral**

Developments can be locally contentious and there are other dynamics that affect development. How do MCAs deal with local place plans, changing local socio-economic context. There have not been any examples of successful masterplans within Edinburgh where the proposals have been built out as first envisaged. This leads to uncertainty and undermines the process.

### **Question 3:**

**A) We are not proposing any changes to the designations listed in schedule 5A (paragraph 3(4)). To what extent do you agree with this approach? a) Strongly Agree b) Agree c) Neutral d) Disagree e) Strongly Disagree**

**B) Please explain your view**

**Response: b) – strongly agree**

We believe that the designations listed are highly sensitive areas that require a bespoke approach, and treated with more scrutiny at the point of an application. However, this is also a

case for conservation areas to be within the exclusions, due to the sensitive nature of these areas. This is the same for listed buildings.

**Question 4:**

**A) To what extent do you agree that the matters above in relation to the statement be set out in guidance rather than regulations? a) Strongly Agree b) Agree c) Neutral d) Disagree e) Strongly Disagree**

**B) Please explain your view.**

**Response: a) – Strongly agree.**

This does not require further regulation.

**Question 5:**

**A) Draft Regulation 3(4) specifies that planning authorities must consult with community councils before determining the content of any MCA proposals which may be publicised. To what extent do you agree with this? a) Strongly Agree b) Agree c) Neutral d) Disagree e) Strongly Disagree**

**B) Please explain your view.**

**Response: a) Strongly agree**

It will be important to involve the community councils, particularly where there is a local place plan.

**Question 6:**

**A) Draft Regulation 3 provides how consultation for possible proposals for a MCA scheme is to be undertaken, including notification and the requirement to undertake two public events, with opportunity to make comments to the planning authority. To what extent do you agree with this approach? a) Strongly Agree b) Agree c) Neutral d) Disagree e) Strongly Disagree**

**B) Please explain your view.**

**Response: b) Agree**

This level of consultation should be a minimum. However, we are conscious of the burden this may place on local authorities.

**Question 7:**

**A) To what extent do you agree that the regulations should require reasons for conditions to be set out in the MCA scheme? a) Strongly Agree b) Agree c) Neutral d) Disagree e) Strongly Disagree**

**B) Please explain your view.**

**Response: a) – Strongly agree.**

This would seem fair in the interests of transparency.

**Question 8:**

**Are there any further aspects you consider should be required to be included in a MCA scheme? Please specify and explain why.**

**Response:** The MCAs need to be assessed on a case by case basis. The Local Planning Authority needs to consider each aspect within its local context.

**Question 9:**

**A) Draft Regulation 4(3) and Schedule 1 of the draft MCA Regulations specify those who a planning authority must consult with before determining the content of any MCA proposals which may be publicised. To what extent do you agree with these groups? a) Strongly Agree b) Agree c) Neutral d) Disagree e) Strongly Disagree**

**B) Please explain your view.**

**Response: c) Neutral**

This appears to relate to notification (as opposed to consultation) of the MCA to the land owner or any premises within the site of an MCA. Is the process to inform, or consult? These are not interchangeable phrases. If the intention is to inform land owners and existing proprietors, then the provisions seem adequate and consistent with the existing Regulations.

**Question 10:**

**A) Draft Regulation 4(2) provides how consultation in relation to a MCA scheme is to be undertaken. To what extent do you agree with this approach? a) Strongly Agree b) Agree c) Neutral d) Disagree e) Strongly Disagree**

**B) Please explain your view.**

**Response: b) Agree**

Agree in principle, but it would also be helpful to include consultation with community councils as a matter of course.

**Question 11:**

**A) Draft Regulation 4(5) sets a 30 day period for representations if they are to be treated as valid representations. To what extent do you agree with this period? a) Strongly Agree b) Agree c) Neutral d) Disagree e) Strongly Disagree**

**B) Please explain your view**

**Response: a) Strongly agree**

30 days would appear reasonable.

**Question 12:**

**A) To what extent do you agree with the required circumstances, i.e. that where the scheme would authorise a national development, that there be a requirement for a hearing, as set out within Draft Regulation 5(1)? a) Strongly Agree b) Agree c) Neutral d) Disagree e) Strongly Disagree**

**B) Please explain your view.**

**Response: b) Agree**

This is in line with NPF4 in relation to National Developments, so would be consistent.

**Question 13:**

**A) To what extent do you agree with the proposals for those who must be given an opportunity to appear before and be heard by a committee of the planning authority at a hearing as set out within Draft Regulations 5(2) and (3)? a) Strongly Agree b) Agree c) Neutral d) Disagree e) Strongly Disagree**

**B) Please explain your view**

**Response: b) Agree**

Agree in principle.

**Question 14:**

**A) To what extent do you agree that a Notification Direction be issued requiring that in the above circumstances such MCA schemes be notified to the Scottish Ministers? a) Strongly Agree b) Agree c) Neutral d) Disagree e) Strongly Disagree**

**B) Please explain your view.**

**Response: b) Agree.**

The proposals seem consistent with the current Regulations.

**Question 15:**

**A) To what extent do you agree with the proposed requirements in relation to the publication of MCA schemes and the decision notice as set out in Draft Regulation 7? a) Strongly Agree b) Agree c) Neutral d) Disagree e) Strongly Disagree**

**B) Please explain your view**

**Response: d) disagree**

This regulation is slightly confusing; it refers to the decision notice, however the provisions of the regulations also refer to the need to publicise “a statement that the masterplan consent area scheme has been made and how it may be inspected”. This seems like it would be irrelevant at the point of the decision notice being advertised, particularly where it is duplicated in (3).

**Question 16:**

**A) To what extent do you agree with the proposed requirements in relation to the planning register as set out in Draft Regulation 9? a) Strongly Agree b) Agree c) Neutral d) Disagree e) Strongly Disagree**

**B) Please explain your view.**

**Response: a) Strongly agree**

This seems reasonable.

**Question 17:**

**A) To what extent do you agree with the proposals for the procedures for altering a MCA scheme, as set out in Draft Regulation 8? a) Strongly Agree b) Agree c) Neutral d) Disagree e) Strongly Disagree**

**B) Please explain your view.**

**Response: c) Neutral**

It would be useful for further guidance to be issued in this regard. This regulation is particularly confusing and poorly worded.

**Question 18:**

**A) To what extent do you agree with the approach not to prescribe forms of notices within the Draft Regulations? a) Strongly Agree b) Agree c) Neutral d) Disagree e) Strongly Disagree**

**B) Please explain your view.**

**Response: d) Disagree**

Consistent wording of notices may be beneficial for agents and members of the public in order to make it clear what is being applied for. Similarly, it may reduce the risk of any legal challenges.

**Question 19: A) To what extent do you agree with the proposed process set out in the Draft Masterplan Consent Area Scheme (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2024 contained within Annex B? a) Strongly Agree b) Agree c) Neutral d) Disagree e) Strongly Disagree**

**B) Please explain your view.**

**Response: e) Strongly disagree**

The consultation states that it will be for planning authorities to carry out EIA for qualifying schemes. It further states that the Scottish Government want to promote a collaborative approach to the production of MCA schemes including EIA work, with planning authorities working in partnership with those who will benefit from the certainty of the MCA scheme (including developers and investors).

However, in practise, the preparation of an EIA is costly and requires resources that are not always readily available to planning authorities. While a collaborative approach is welcomed, it would be unlikely that costs would be recovered from third parties in this regard.



**Question 20: A) To what extent do you agree with our approach to the impact assessments?**

**a) Strongly Agree b) Agree c) Neutral d) Disagree e) Strongly Disagree**

**B) Please explain your view.**

**Response: b) Agree**

Agree in principle, however it is unclear whether the LPA would also require to carry out separate Impact Assessments during the preparation of an MCA.

## Appendix 3: Investing in Planning: a consultation on resourcing Scotland's Planning System

### Summary of Consultation Questions

*Highlighted sections reflect the Planning Service's response.*

*Question 1: Which assessments might benefit most from improved proportionality?*

#### **Answer**

In Edinburgh, a proportional approach is used across the service. Supporting information is assessed and requested on a case-by-case basis.

Stakeholders in terms of consultees often request technical information to support the consideration of a proposal. Significant technical matters may be required to be considered for complex applications. For example, the introduction of noise generating uses next to residential will require a Noise Impact Assessment.

As supporting information is assessed on a case-by-case basis to not impose burdens on applicants, this can impact on the time taken to determine an application. Furthermore, there can be considerable time and resource implications in requesting and justifying the need for reports and surveys. In some circumstances, information is not forthcoming and proposals are refused on this basis.

*Question 2: To what extent do you agree that processing agreements are an effective tool for creating certainty in planning decision making timescales?*

#### **Answer**

Strongly agree | **Partially agree** | No view | Partially disagree | Strongly disagree

Processing agreements are effective subject to applicants and the Planning Authority ensuring that information and amendments are submitted on time and review of timescales carried out to adjust the live application determination date.

It should be noted that applicants do not have to enter into processing agreements. Therefore, they are only effective when all parties agree to enter into one.

*Question 3: Do you consider that current resourcing issues are impacting on the use of processing agreements?*

#### **Answer**

Strongly agree | Partially agree | No view | Partially disagree | **Strongly disagree**

In Edinburgh, processing agreements for major applications are offered during the pre-application process. Dedicated planning officers are allocated to cases, and they would negotiate the terms of the processing agreement.

*Question 4: Would you be prepared to pay a discretionary fee to enter into a processing agreement?*

**Answer**

Yes | **No view** | No

This is for the development industry to reflect on. However, the additional administrative burden of collecting fees would potentially negate any additional resource benefit.

*Question 5: What additional actions can we take to improve certainty in the planning process?*

**Answer**

There is no certainty that can be given to the outcome of a planning application assessment due to other material considerations including letters of representation that must be taken into account. There is a risk of proposals being prejudged prior to the conclusion of this process. Each Planning Authority has its own democratic process that will limit the certainty in decisions that can be made.

Applicants could help improve certainty of proposals complying with policy prior to submitting applications by carrying out the necessary reports/surveys and ensuring the application responds to the findings, including mitigation measures rather than this being done during the application process which impacts on resources and performance.

Through the use of existing tools such as processing agreements and extensions of time linked with good communication between the developers and the Planning Authority, a degree of certainty can be established. However, this requires all parties to work collaboratively.

*Question 6: Do you have further ideas on opportunities for streamlining, alignment or standardisation?*

**Answer**

In Edinburgh, in the year 2023/24, 94% of applications were determined under delegated powers which shows that the correct level of complexity/ local issues are being addressed at Committee level.

The level of delegation is reviewed on an annual basis. Amendments to the scheme of delegation made recently included an alteration to increase the number of letters of representation required to trigger a committee decision. Given the differing nature of the scale of developments considered across the Planning Authorities it would be difficult to provide a standardised scheme of delegation.

There are opportunities to streamline the relationship with statutory consultees and the level of involvement and supporting information that is requested.

*Question 7: Are there any skills actions which you think should be prioritised?*

### **Answer**

The reduction in availability of Planning Courses within Scotland has significantly undermined the opportunities to bring people into the profession. A single undergraduate course within Scotland emphasises this position. Further work should be developed to allow an RTPI accredited route through an apprenticeship scheme.

There needs to be a greater level of interaction between the higher education establishments and Local Planning Authorities to identify skills gaps both for undergraduates and opportunities for established planning staff. For example, in recent years there has been a shift in emphasis on climate change and the biodiversity crisis. Engagement on this with education establishments to fully understand what this means in practice, the skills required and moving towards a national approach would be beneficial. This would also assist establishments and government in their consideration of where further research and funding is required.

*Question 8: Are there any skills actions not identified which you think would make a significant impact?*

### **Answer**

In Edinburgh, consideration is given to our workforce and people strategy which allows us to identify the skills required and areas where more resilience is needed. There is an internal training group which organises staff training in these areas.

Each year, Edinburgh recruit two student planners on a sandwich year planning courses and in many circumstances, the students have either continued on a part-time basis when they return to university or secure a full time position following graduation.

In recent years, there has been recruitment of assistant planning officer posts which are designed to give graduates experience and support to work towards achieving chartered membership of the RTPI.

Furthermore, we have invested and supported staff in further education opportunities in areas such as built heritage, urban design and leadership as well as continual professional development (CPD) training offered by external bodies such as RTPI or HES.

There needs to be coordinated approach and consideration of funding to support the upskilling of existing planning staff to deal with the increased complexity of applications and infrastructure delivery expectations. Bringing together Planning Authorities through HOPs and the Improvement Service alongside RTPI and educational establishments helps in sharing knowledge and experience.

*Question 9: Do you think that the concept of a 'planning hub', modelled on the Building Standards Hub would support authorities and deliver improvement in the system?*

**Answer**

Strongly agree | Partially agree | No view | Partially disagree | **Strongly disagree**

The model of the hub is based around being able to source specialist "people" in a time when there are limited resources across authorities. It is unclear where these specialists would sit and whether they would be drawn from the existing resource within Councils.

There are a range of existing forums in place to allow the sharing of good practice. The creation of a hub would duplicate the existing opportunities. It is unclear if this would just be targeted towards the Development Management functions or would also work within Development Planning.

*Question 10: Are there other ways a hub could add value and provide support in the short and longer term?*

**Answer**

It is difficult to provide answers on the following questions without a full understanding of the role in decision making the hub would have. For example, what is the role and function of the Improvement Service or HOPs linked with the Planning Hub.

There is also the context of the recently formed National Planning Improvement Champion and the peer reviews that are currently being piloted.

*Question 11: Which of the options do you think is most suitable, and why?*

**Answer**

- i. Within Scottish Government
- ii. Within public organisation
- iii. Within a host authority
- iv. Other**
- v. No view

*Question 12: How do you think a Planning Hub could be resourced?*

**Answer**

Resourcing should not be linked to planning fees or directly charged to developers or local authorities.

*Question 13: Do you agree that planning fees should increase annually in line with inflation?*

**Answer**

**Strongly agree** | Partially agree | No view | Partially disagree | Strongly disagree

*Question 14: Is a calculation based on the 12 month Consumer Price Index the most appropriate mechanism?*

**Strongly agree** | Partially agree | No view | Partially disagree | Strongly disagree

Consumer Price Index is a standard index and relates more appropriately to input costs of the service which are primarily salaries. CPI linked annual increase to fees will assist in ensuring the fee income keeps pace with the cost of delivering the service.

*Question 15: Should an annual inflationary increase apply to:*

**Answer**

- i. Individual fees and increments
- ii. Individual fees, increments and maximums**
- iii. No view

*Question 16: What would be your preferred approach to how planning fees are set in the future?*

**Answer**

A national approach to fees is an appropriate mechanism to ensure consistency across the development industry. Any other approach increases the administrative burden within authorities. Devolving fees to Planning Authorities could result in competition between authorities to lower fees resulting in a potential race to the bottom .

*Question 17: Are there key principles which should be set out in the event that fee setting powers are devolved to planning authorities?*

**Answer**

There would need to be significant legislative powers underpinning any amendment to the setting of fees locally.

*Question 18: What other processes that support the determination of a planning application could authorities be given powers to charge at their discretion?*

**Answer**

The current fee regulations allow for discretionary charging which Edinburgh has opted to apply in specific circumstances. It should be noted that there is an additional administrative burden associated with discretionary fees.

*Question 19: Do think the circumstances where a refund can be requested is set out as part of any published information regarding the introduction of a discretionary charge?*

**Answer**

There should be limited opportunity for any refunds for applications which have been made valid as work has already been carried out on a proposal including the costs associate with neighbour notification/publication in many circumstances.

If an applicant selects to withdraw an application, significant authority time may have been spent on the proposals. The fee regulations also allow for resubmissions within a specified period free of charge. Furthermore, there would be an associated administrative cost in managing refunds.

*Question 20: Do you agree with the principle that authorities should have discretionary powers to increase fees for a proposal on an unallocated site within the development plan?*

**Answer**

Strongly agree | Partially agree | No view | **Partially disagree** | Strongly disagree

It is unclear what an unallocated site refers to. There are benefits of windfall sites to the development of a City and the natural evolution of a Place as well as providing flexibility within the system.

If this was set at major housing developments level or the site is clearly outwith the urban area, then there may be an argument to be made. Sites within the greenbelt for housing developments may be one consideration. However, in principle, the fee applicable should be set at a national level.

*Question 21: Do you agree that planning authorities should be able to recoup the costs of preparing a Masterplan Consent Area through discretionary charging?*

**Answer**

**Strongly agree** | Partially agree | No view | Partially disagree | Strongly disagree

Please explain your view

There is significant work involved in preparing a masterplan consent area for a Planning Authority and therefore, recouping the costs would be beneficial. However, the fee applicable to applications in MCAs should be set nationally.

*Question 22: Do you agree with the types of appeals that should incur a fee?*

**Answer**

Yes | no view | **No**

*Question 23: Do you agree that setting the fee for applying to appeal the refusal of planning permission (to either DPEA or the planning authority) is set as a percentage of the original planning application fee?*

**Answer**

Strongly agree | Partially agree | No view | **Partially disagree** | Strongly disagree

*Question 24: If a percentage of fee approach to appeal charging was considered most appropriate, what level do you consider would be most appropriate to reflect volume of work by DPEA or the LRB?*

**Answer**

10% | 20% | 30% | 40% | **No view** | Other

*Question 25: Do you agree that an authority should consider waiving or reducing an appeal fee where they have offered such a waiver on the related planning application?*

**Answer**

Strongly agree | Partially agree | **No view** | Partially disagree | Strongly disagree

*Question 26: Do you have views on how a service charge for applying for planning permission or a building warrant online could be applied?*

**Answer**

A service charge set at a percentage of the application fee which is then invested in the eDevelopment website could be a positive step only if it is linked to measurable improvements to system.

There are opportunities to improve the submission of applications which would reduce the amount of time Planning Authorities spend on checking and validating applications. For instance, standardised location plans to be prepared within the



system, the submission of larger files and an automated check to ensure the minimum validations requirements have been submitted.

It should be noted that by setting fees locally or having a variation in discretionary fees will make it challenging for there to be a central online submission site which would be able to correctly calculate the required fee. There are issues at present with the ePlanning fee calculator and a significant number of applications are submitted with no fee or the incorrect fee resulting in a invalid applications and resource spent on resolving this.

*Question 27: What other options are there to resource the operation and improvement of the eDevelopment service?*

**Answer**

No opinion on this question.

*Question 28: Should the current threshold of 50MW for applications for electricity generation which are to be determined by authorities be altered?*

**Answer**

Yes | **No view** | No

*Question 29: Should different thresholds apply to different types of generating stations?*

**Answer**

Yes | **No view** | No

*Question 30: What would be the resource implications of increasing the threshold for the determination of applications for onshore electricity generating stations?*

**Answer**

No opinion on this matter.

*Question 31: If Scottish Government were to make a voluntary contribution equivalent to a percentage of the offshore electricity fee to authorities, what level of contribution would be appropriate to support some recovery of costs? Please provide justification for your answer.*

**Answer**

No opinion on this matter.

*Question 32: Should we introduce a new category of development for applications for hydrogen projects? If so, how should these fees be set/calculated?*

**Answer**

Yes | **No view** | No

*Question 33: Are there different considerations for hydrogen production when compared with proposals which are concerned only with storage and distribution?*

**Answer**

Yes | **No view** | No

*Question 34: Do you agree that the standard £100 which applies to most prior notification and approval applications is appropriate?*

**Answer**

Yes | No view | **No**

There can be significant time taken on an application under prior notification and in particular with the requirements for neighbour notification.

*Question 35: Are there particular PDR classes where you think the current fee should be amended? If so, please explain why that is considered to be the case.*

**Answer**

The burden on Planning Authorities for the requirements of Prior Notification for Telecommunications is extensive due to the requirements for neighbour notification.

Within built up urban areas this can be a significant financial burden which does not reflect the fees that are brought in. Rather than reviewing the fee structure associated with telecommunications a review of the telecommunications classes should be considered.

*.Question 36: Would a reduction of the current fee (£200 per 0.1 hectare) be an appropriate approach to resolving this issue?*

**Answer**

No opinion on this matter.

*Question 37: What would you consider to be a reasonable fee for shellfish farm applications? (Please elaborate on your answer using an average shellfish farm development (5 x 220m twin-headline longlines at 20m spacing with 30m end moorings) as an example.)*

**Answer**

No opinion on this matter.

*Question 38: Which proposal would you most like to see implemented?*

**Answer**

The most beneficial proposal in the short term would be the increase in fees annually.

*Question 39: Do you have other comments on the cumulative impact of the proposals?*

**Answer**

The above proposals cause considerable concern as there does not appear to be any consideration given to resourcing the planning system as a whole, including development planning and planning enforcement and not only development management.

In particular, there are concerns regarding setting fees at a local level and additional discretionary fees. Setting fees locally will create significant additional administrative burdens and may create competition in fees between councils.

It is important to not lose sight of the purpose of planning which is to manage development in the long-term public interest. Whilst there is a desire to achieve a degree of certainty, there is a risk of perceptions of paying for a planning approval.

*Question 40: Do you have other ideas to help resource the planning system? Please set out how you think the proposal could be resourced.*

**Answer**

No opinion on this matter.

*Question 41: Please provide any information on the potential impacts of our proposals to assist with preparation of the following impact assessments:*

*Business and Regulatory Impact Assessment*  
*Equality Impact Assessment*  
*Islands Communities Impact Assessment*  
*Child Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment*  
*Fairer Scotland Duty*  
*Strategic Environmental Assessment*

**Answer**

No opinion on this matter.