

ECONOMY AND INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE

BULLETIN ITEM

Subject: Highland Local Development Plan and Development Plan Scheme

Date: 16 November 2023

ECO: Infrastructure, Environment & Economy

1 Purpose/Executive Summary

1.1 This bulletin item provides the Economy and Infrastructure Committee (E&I) with a brief update on the Highland Local Development Plan (HLDP) and Development Plan Scheme (DPS) for information, further to [Report No. ECI/41/2023](#) considered by the Committee on 17 August 2023 and ahead of a report targeted for the E&I Committee on 15 February 2024.

2 Highland Local Development Plan and Development Plan Scheme

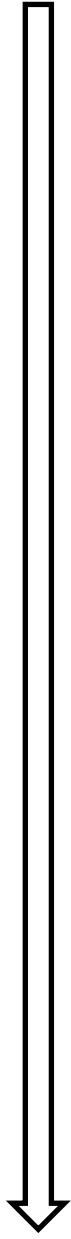
2.1 As previously explained in [Report No. ECI/41/2023](#), the initial stage of work on the new-style Highland Local Development Plan is the gathering of evidence required to inform subsequent plan preparation. As well as the Evidence Gathering stage involving the collection of data, it includes seeking views from those who will be affected by the plan and involved in its implementation. In essence the focus of such engagement is to be on what evidence is required, what useful data people and organisations can contribute and whether there is agreement on the suitability of the evidence base emerging. This leads to the preparation of the Evidence Report which will be considered by this Committee and require recommendation to and approval by Council, before submission to the Scottish Government's Directorate for Planning and Environmental Appeals for the 'Gate Check' stage. That stage checks that there is a sound evidence base on which to prepare the Local Development Plan. The Evidence Report itself is not subject of consultation.

2.2 [Scottish Government's Local Development Planning Guidance \(May 2023\)](#) indicates:

"A robust Evidence Report should make it easier to prepare a strong, place based, people-focused and deliverable Local Development Plan that is rooted in an infrastructure first approach.

The Evidence Report should form the foundations of the LDP. It should include a proportionate summary of the baseline data and information. This early stage is to establish what to plan for, with specific locations being the focus of the later Proposed Plan. Site specific matters should not be included in the Evidence Report, but it is expected to include spatial information, such as baseline mapping, which supports an understanding of the place(s), its characteristics, and needs."

2.3 There are a number of steps that officers are intending to work through, leading to a report to the Committee’s meeting on 15 February 2024:



STEP:	INCLUDES OR LINKS TO:
Conclude initial ‘evidence scoping’ by topic – officer’s scoping (in progress) and Development Plans Team discussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gaps analysis and prioritisation; • Implications for our Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) and priorities for formalising it; • Monitoring of previous plans’ success; • Outcomes focus; • Identify specific ‘asks’ to put to the Key Agencies Group (KAG).
Core HLDP project and planning teams’ workshop with Key Agencies Group (place-based collaboration on evidence gathering and reporting)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gaps analysis, prioritisation, RSS dimension, monitoring, outcomes focus – ongoing; • ‘Asks’ of KAG; • Identify what national evidence is available, will be produced and shared – and when; • Identify what cross-service resourcing of the HLDP project looks like.
Develop ‘big issues’ material (‘topic’ or ‘place’ focussed as appropriate) to stimulate engagement on evidence requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop platform for internal and external sharing of material and hosting engagement for evidence gathering stage; • Prepare skeleton of Evidence Report.
Wider corporate team workshop with Key Agencies Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify what corporate/partner resourcing of the HLDP project looks like.
Prepare report for E&I Committee meeting of 15 February 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Progress update on the above steps; • Annual update of the Development Plan Scheme (including Participation Statement); • Launch/ promote the HLDP engagement platform widely; • Engage with Community Planning Partnership; • Commence preparation of the Scoping Report for Strategic Environmental Assessment.

2.4 Planning Authorities, Key Agencies and others are gaining further understanding of the requirements of the evidence gathering stage and the need for a proportionate approach and perhaps also pragmatism are frequently referred to in discussions, given the need for effective project management for a new-style Local Development Plan and increasing resource constraints and financial pressures upon Local Authorities. This points to the value of sufficiently developing ‘evidence scoping’, ‘gaps analysis’ and ‘prioritisation’ as indicated above – especially through the initial work of the Development Plans Team – before seeking to advance much further with other steps. The iterative approach to evidence gathering which we have begun outlining in the table above will help to project manage this. This can also put us in a position to demonstrate to internal and external ‘partners’ the value of engagement and collaboration in the Local Development Plan process. Officers will look to identify optimum stages and arrangements for providing information to and seeking input from Members, aside from formal Committee consideration.

Work commenced by the Key Agencies at national level to identify evidence they hold, by National Planning Framework 4 'topic', should be useful but has yet to report. Similarly, work of the Heads of Planning Scotland's 'Evidence Report Working Group' has yet to produce clear outputs but again could be helpful if helps to deliver valuable, proportionate evidence to a consistent approach and with savings when compared to the alternative of individual local authorities each doing their own thing. Overall, we consider that it is appropriate to allow more time for the evidence gathering stage for the Highland Local Development Plan than previously envisaged, with the Evidence Report now likely to be towards the end of 2024. We intend to reflect this within the annual update of the Development Plan Scheme, to be brought to the Committee's meeting on 15 February 2024 for approval.

- 2.5 [The Council's Local Place Plan Register](#) has now been established. As recently [announced](#), following submission to the Council and successful validation, the Stratherrick and Foyers Local Place Plan has become the first Local Place Plan (LPP) to be registered in The Highland Council development plans area. We understand there to be several other community bodies preparing Local Place Plans in Highland and others that intend to do so or are interested in doing so. We intend to add information to the map element of the register, to indicate such intent/interest where the community body is happy for us to do so. We may also add to the map, information for other types of place plan, noting however that they would not be part of the formal Local Place Plan Register itself.
- 2.6 Following our review of the requirements and timelines for the evidence gathering that the Council and other organisations are undertaking for the new Local Development Plan, we have announced that we are giving communities a further three months to prepare their Local Place Plans. To enable Local Place Plans to be taken into consideration as part of the evidence for the new Local Development Plan from the outset of its preparation, they must be capable of being registered by The Highland Council by the extended deadline of Friday 27 September 2024. This has been communicated directly to Community Councils and a wide range of other Community Bodies and we continue to promote the opportunity for communities to prepare LPPs.
- 2.7 The report on the Scheme of Delegation being prepared for Council consideration at its meeting on 26 October 2023 includes a number of recommended changes to reflect changes to Scotland's development planning system.
- 2.8 Further to the previous reporting to Committee of there being resource implications of the revised development planning system, the Development Plans Team has input further detail on anticipated specific resource pressures and proposals to the Service's ongoing wider look at resourcing.

Designation: Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment & Economy

Date: 16 October 2023

Author: David Cowie, Principal Planner – Development Plans

Background Papers: None

Appendices: None