

# **National Planning Framework 4**

## **Delivery Programme v3**

**October 2024**

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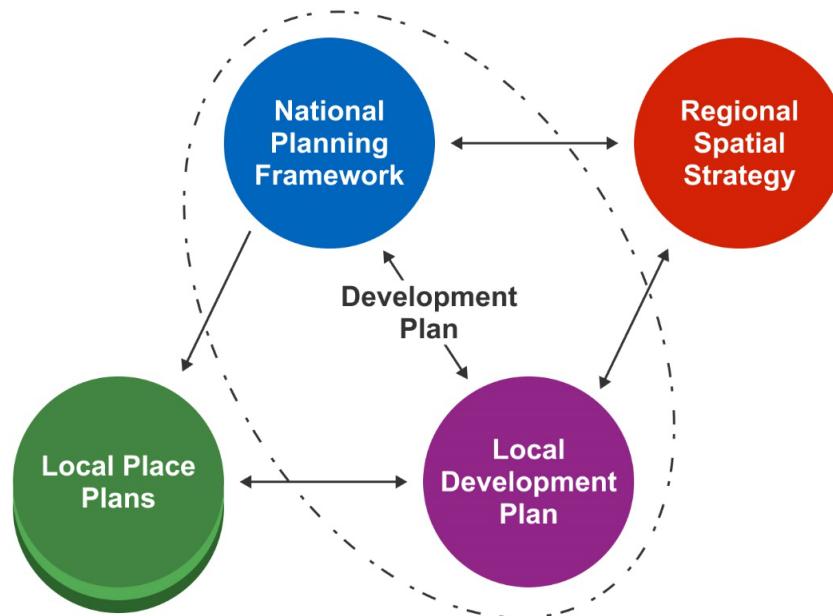
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## A. Introduction

National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4), approved by the Scottish Parliament and adopted and published by the Scottish Ministers in February 2023, sets out the Scottish Ministers' policies and proposals for the development and use of land. It includes our National Spatial Strategy for Scotland 2045, incorporating national developments and regional spatial priorities, and national planning policy to guide decision making on planning applications.



NPF4 and any relevant local development plan (LDP) form the statutory development plan for any given area of Scotland. The planning system in Scotland is plan-led and decisions on planning applications must be made in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.



The components of the development planning system

This is the third iteration of the NPF4 Delivery Programme. We will update the Delivery Programme annually.

## **Context for delivery of NPF4**

Delivery of NPF4 will be a significant contributor to addressing the four priorities of the new First Minister:

- eradicating child poverty;
- growing the economy;
- tackling the climate emergency; and
- improving public services.

The wider context for delivery of NPF4 has also evolved and will continue to evolve over the framework's ten year life cycle. Since NPF4 was adopted in February 2023, background shifts with particularly strong links to the spatial strategy include:

- An improving economic outlook, with modest growth forecast for the Scottish economy for 2024.
- On 15 May 2024 the Scottish Parliament passed a motion stating that Scotland is in a housing emergency.
- There has been progress in implementation of Green Freeports, with a new planning protocol published to support investment. And,
- We have published a new Green Industrial Strategy which recognises the importance of planning as a key enabler of development and investment.

In the context of commitments made in NPF4, and to reflect our priorities, we expect Scotland's planning system to:

- Make Scotland the most attractive part of the UK to invest in, by unlocking opportunities for economic growth and by improving planning practice and performance. We are open to working with all partners, including businesses, the development sector, planning authorities and key agencies, to ensure planning helps to unlock opportunities for growth. As part of this, NPF4 policies aim to provide greater consistency and predictability to applicants by making clear what is expected from development proposals.
- Contribute to our work to tackle the climate and nature crises. This includes ensuring planning plays an effective role in consenting by supporting planning authorities through increased capacity and learning on new technologies. And,
- Respond to the housing emergency by working with partners to facilitate the delivery of new homes that meet diverse needs in the numbers required. NPF4 takes a plan-led approach to development, to ensure new homes are in sustainable, well-serviced locations.

The realisation of these ambitions is being progressed through priority delivery actions by the Scottish Government programmed during the next year. This includes identifying scope for further investment in resourcing the planning system via the Planning Hub. Delivery is also being actively supported by progress in preparation of new style LDPs.

## **B. Monitoring and actions so far**

During the last year we have been developing our approach to monitoring and measuring progress on NPF4's impact. The speed of change will vary both across the country and between policy areas. It is important to monitor long-term change and for the monitoring framework to evolve over time. Given the significant lead-in time for development projects, trends will likely not emerge for some time and will not be wholly attributable to the impact of NPF4: A broad range of influences will be at work, among which planning has a key role in creating the circumstances for, and overcoming barriers to, change.

We have commenced work on an Interim Monitoring Report. Monitoring during the first year post-NPF4 adoption focused primarily on policy implementation. During the second year we are increasing emphasis on progress with national developments.

We have made considerable progress on the broad suite of actions designated in the second iteration of the Delivery Programme, as noted throughout this update.

### **Spatial Strategy**

Since its adoption, the NPF4 spatial strategy and national planning policies have influenced Scottish Government policy and action, as well as local decision-making.

The Planning, Infrastructure and Place Advisory Group (PIPAG) is helping to explore and test collaborative solutions to barriers to delivery of development that would support implementation of NPF4. Further detail about the activities of PIPAG is included in section D.

It is a statutory requirement to take the National Planning Framework into account when preparing an LDP, and LDPs are therefore an important mechanism for the delivery of NPF4. We will be monitoring the impact of the spatial strategy in emerging LDPs. At the time of publication, six LDP Evidence Reports have been submitted by planning authorities to Gate Check, and decisions have been issued on the sufficiency of four of these. Two Evidence Reports were judged sufficient, and two insufficient.

During the life of this Delivery Programme we expect to see a significant number of additional Evidence Reports pass the Gate Check. Annex A illustrates the expected timings of Evidence Reports and adopted new style LDPs, as reported by planning authorities in Q2 2024/25. Ministers have stated their expectation that a full suite of new style LDPs will be in place across Scotland by May 2028, and we will continue to work closely with planning authorities to help enable this. Progress towards adoption of new style LDPs marks a significant step forward for the implementation of a stronger plan-led and delivery-focused planning system.

### **National developments**

NPF4 identifies eighteen national developments; significant developments of national importance that will help to deliver our spatial strategy. Their designation means that the principle of the development does not need to be agreed in later consenting processes, providing more certainty for communities, business and investors. However, national development status does not imply any individual project will be

directly funded, and planning permission or other consents are still required before development can proceed.

The national developments include several single large-scale projects and networks of several smaller-scale proposals that are collectively nationally significant.

Since adoption of NPF4, the Scottish Futures Trust has completed initial baseline delivery templates for each of the national developments, and these will be updated over the next 12 months. These initial versions establish a baseline of where national developments are in relation to good practice delivery principles and the infrastructure life cycle.

Several of the national developments are supported by City Region Deals. There are further opportunities to bring planning together with city deal projects and wider opportunities for regeneration to take place-based approaches to delivery. Since NPF4 was adopted there has also been a change of UK Government. Planning in Scotland is fully devolved. Nonetheless, the new UK Government’s own ambitions for planning and development present an opportunity for Ministers and officials from the Scottish and UK Governments to work together to unlock investment and economic opportunity, and explore shared issues such as grid connections and capital investment.

We have carried out some initial progress monitoring of the national developments, with the table below showing recent activity relating to each:

National development number	National development	Recent activity
1	Energy Innovation Development on the Islands	There are several live applications for National Development 1 - Energy Innovation Development on the Islands at this time.
2	Pumped Hydro Storage	There are several live applications for National Development 2 - Pumped Hydro Storage at this time.
3	Strategic Renewable Electricity Generation and Transmission Infrastructure	There are several live applications for National Development ND3 - Strategic Renewable Electricity Generation and Transmission Infrastructure at this time.
4	Circular Economy Materials Management Facilities	The Circular Economy and Waste Route Map will be confirmed later in 2024, with actions complemented by provisions in the Circular Economy Bill.
5	Urban Sustainable, Blue and Green Surface Water Management Solutions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Glasgow</li> <li>• Edinburgh</li> </ul>	Architecture and Design Scotland has published <a href="#">advice on Green and Blue Infrastructure</a> .

6	<p>Urban Mass/Rapid Transit Networks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Edinburgh and South East Scotland</li> <li>• Clyde Metro</li> <li>• Aberdeen Metro</li> </ul>	<p>Edinburgh and South East Scotland: City of Edinburgh Council has approved work to begin on the Strategic Business Case for taking the trams from Granton to the Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh and the Bioquarter and beyond. A report is due in Autumn 2024.</p> <p>Clyde Metro: A programme to undertake the Programme Level Business Case / Strategic Environmental Assessment and Preliminary Engineering Services assessment is currently in development.</p> <p>Aberdeen Rapid Transport: A Technical Report Routing Analysis was completed by Stantec in May 2024.</p>
7	Central Scotland Green Network	The Central Scotland Green Network (CSGN) 'Growing Food Together' Fund is offering funding to community growing projects.
8	National Walking, Cycling and Wheeling Network	A steering group of representatives from the project partners, the Scottish Government, VisitScotland and others is coordinating and monitoring progress with delivery of the National Walking and Cycling Network Project Plan.
9	Edinburgh Waterfront	<p>We will work with City of Edinburgh Council on further defining the national development boundary. The Council has completed the Outline Business Case and Culture and Learning strategies to support wider regeneration activities.</p> <p>The Council, in partnership with Cruden Homes, has submitted a planning application for mixed use residential-led development including housing, flats, public realm, landscaping and infrastructure.</p>
10	Dundee Waterfront	<p>We will work with Dundee City Council on defining the national development boundary.</p> <p>Dundee City Council Planning Committee granted planning permission for the Eden Project in June 2024.</p>
11	Stranraer Gateway	Dumfries and Galloway Council is developing a number of regeneration

		projects within the Stranraer waterfront, with the aim of repositioning Stranraer and Loch Ryan as a successful marine leisure destination. The Council undertook a consultation in 2023.
12	Digital Fibre Network (current)	The Scottish Government published Digital Telecommunications: Planning Guidance (December 2023).
13	Clyde Mission	The administration of the Clyde Mission regeneration programme transferred from the Scottish Government to the Glasgow City Region in 2023. The new bridge connecting Govan-Partick across the River Clyde opened in September 2024. A high-tech district heating system extracting heat from the river water is operational in Clydebank and will be expanded.
14	Aberdeen Harbour	The £420m Port of Aberdeen South Harbour expansion officially opened in September 2023. A planning application in principle was subject to a pre-determination hearing in August 2024. This covers three linked areas, all allocated in the Aberdeen Local Development Plan 2023.
15	Industrial Green Transition Zones	There is a current UK Government funding process for decarbonisation. Acorn is a joint venture, comprising Storegga, Shell UK, Harbour Energy and North Sea Midstream Partners. Together with National Gas Transmission's SCO2T Connect Project, this would provide the critical CO2 transport and storage infrastructure to enable the decarbonisation of the Scottish Cluster.
16	Hunterston Strategic Asset	North Ayrshire Council, Peel Ports and Scottish Enterprise have signed a Memorandum of Understanding. The site also forms part of the Ayrshire Growth Deal. Planning Permission has been granted for a Subsea cabling factory (XLCC). A training hub for apprentices has opened in Irvine, and



		the factory at Hunterston is expected to open in 2027/28.
17	Chapelcross Power Station Redevelopment	Dumfries and Galloway Council has issued planning guidance for the site within the Local Development Plan 2 Chapelcross Development Framework. The Scottish Government included the site as a regional hub in the Hydrogen Action Plan, recognising the area has an emerging hydrogen supply chain cluster, including hydrogen enabled industrial boilers produced at nearby Cochran UK in Newbie. A Memorandum of Understanding has been signed by the three core partners, Nuclear Decommissioning Authority (NDA), Dumfries and Galloway Council (DGC) and South of Scotland Enterprise (SOSE). The CX project, comprised of the core partners has brought forward the Chapelcross Green Energy Hub masterplan.
18	High Speed Rail	This national development aligns with STPR2 recommendation 45. Transport Scotland is taking stock of the announcement from the UK Government regarding HS2 and what this means for Scotland.

Indicative timescales show that projects will come forward at various times in the coming years and that there are likely to be significant demands on the planning service at different points in time. Many of the national developments are being supported by private investment, although a number potentially involve significant public sector capital spend. Even where private sector investment is being levered in, the public sector is playing a significant role in supporting the delivery of most of the national developments, whether through consenting processes or more proactively as an enabler.

In 2024/25 the Scottish Government will support national development delivery, for example by facilitating liaison between lead partners and the wider Scottish Government and agencies, and by seeking solutions should barriers to delivery emerge.

### **National planning policy**

Monitoring has initially focused on the implementation of the new national policies set out in NPF4. Feedback on most policies has been positive. Where there would be benefit, we have convened discussions with planning authorities and wider stakeholders on how different policies are being applied in practice.

We are mindful of the need to read and apply NPF4 as a whole, and the challenges that this can present. The intent of each of the 33 national planning policies is clearly set out in NPF4 and can be used to guide decision-making. This has been reinforced in communication since NPF4 was adopted.

Support for implementation of national policy since adoption of NPF4 has focused on those issues that have arisen during monitoring. We have issued a number of [Chief Planner letters](#) to support the transition to NPF4.

Specific actions we have taken relating to some policies include:

- Policy 2: Climate mitigation and adaptation – We have continued to progress planning and climate change guidance as this has been raised as a priority by some planning authorities. To inform the guidance, we published [research findings identifying relevant information sources, tools, methods and approaches that can help demonstrate whether and how lifecycle greenhouse gas emissions of development proposals have been minimised](#). Over the coming months we will continue to engage with key stakeholders to inform the final guidance, and ensure the overall approach is proportionate, practical and contributes meaningfully to supporting delivery of NPF4.
- Policy 3: Biodiversity – In November 2023 we published our [Biodiversity: draft planning guidance](#) to support delivery of policy 3. The guidance was written with advice from stakeholders, and is designed to be a ‘living document’. It will be updated as practice beds in.  
In September 2023, the Scottish Government published independent research undertaken by SRUC into [Approaches to Measuring Biodiversity in Scotland](#). The findings and recommendations set out pragmatic next steps to ensure a consistent and cross-government approach to measuring biodiversity at site level. We have since commissioned NatureScot to develop an adapted biodiversity metric suitable for use in supporting delivery of NPF4 policy 3(b). In April 2024 NatureScot launched this work with the publication of a [Key Issues paper to inform the development of a biodiversity metric for Scotland's planning system](#). NatureScot has also launched a dedicated [information and updates](#) webpage.
- Policy 5: Soils – The Scottish Government has established the Peatland Expert Advisory Group, including representatives from industry, agencies and academia, to advise on how guidance can be updated to support our peatland and onshore wind aims.
- Policy 6: Forestry, woodland and trees – Scottish Forestry is progressing a review of the ‘right tree right place’ guidance to support planning authorities to produce Forestry and Woodland Strategies.
- Policy 11: Energy –We have hosted discussions with Heads of Planning Scotland and with the renewables sector to explore the application of policy 11(c) in relation to considerations for maximising economic impact, separate from the voluntary arrangements relating to community benefits that sit outside the planning and consenting systems.

The Scottish Government is progressing comprehensive guidance for hydrogen consenting across onshore and offshore regimes, expected to be published in Autumn 2024.

We highlighted to planning authorities, to inform resource planning, information on the pipeline analysis of forthcoming on-shore wind projects and on the National Grid ESO's recommendations for investment in Scotland's electricity networks.

- Policy 15: [Local living and 20 minute neighbourhoods – Planning guidance](#) was published in April 2024. The case studies in the guidance and further good practice can be updated as they develop.
- Policy 16: Quality homes – In June, following a Court of Session decision and the declaration of the housing emergency, we issued a call for action to planning authorities. We now expect to see an emergency-led focus in decision-making on plans and applications. A Ministerial / Chief Planner letter was issued that provides clarification on implementation of Policy 16, emphasises diversity of tenure and promotes more positive and constructive collaboration across sectors to support delivery. A further letter was issued to planning authorities requiring LDP Delivery Programmes are put in place by the end of March 2025, that will include the sequencing of, and timescale for, the delivery of housing sites allocated by the LDP. Previous versions of the NPF4 Delivery Programme indicated we would track indicative local housing land requirements as included in Evidence Reports. The most recent information is listed in Annex B.
- Policy 17: Rural homes – We convened a session in September 2023 with representatives of HOPS to facilitate a collective view of the implementation of NPF4 policies relating to rural homes. Clarification of the intended permissiveness of the policy has been provided in subsequent Chief Planner letters.
- Policy 21: Play, recreation and sport – we published [Guidance on preparing Play Sufficiency Assessments](#) in December 2023.
- Policy 22: Flood risk and water management – This policy has generated some debate. We have convened several discussions involving planning authorities, SEPA, developers and relevant professional bodies, and provided updates in Chief Planner letters. SEPA has published updated [Flood Risk Standing Advice for Planning Authorities](#), [Flood Risk and Land Use Vulnerability Guidance](#) and [Position Statement on Development Protected by Formal Flood Protection Schemes](#) to support NPF4 delivery. This guidance has been developed with input from planning authorities, the Scottish Government and wider delivery partners. The Scottish Government has commissioned a research project 'Future climate in today's decisions'. This aims to support the use of future climate scenarios and hazards in today's decision-making and is expected to report in November. The Scottish Government and SEPA will review and update relevant guidance, as appropriate, in light of the findings.
- Policy 24: Digital infrastructure – we published [Planning guidance on Digital telecommunications](#) in December 2023.

## Resourcing delivery

At the heart of our ambitions for planning is enabling and accelerating delivery. We know that this requires investment in planning resources and capacity, both now and for the long-term. Our [Investing in Planning consultation](#) explored ways to better resource planning services and ensure proportionality in planning processes to strengthen capacity within the system. Over the last year, we have also:

- Established the role of the National Planning Improvement Champion, hosted by the Improvement Service. In this first year the focus has been on piloting a new approach to performance and improvement monitoring through the national planning improvement framework.
- Introduced the requirement for planning authorities to appoint a Chief Planning Officer, supported with [Chief Planning Officers: guidance](#).
- Worked with universities, the Royal Town Planning Institute and other stakeholders to take forward recommendations in the Future Planners Report.
- Provided 10 x £5000 bursaries for students undertaking postgraduate planning degrees in Scottish planning schools in the current year.
- Established a short life working group looking at proportionality in the assessments required to accompany planning applications.
- Established an expert advisory group, co-chaired by Roseanna Cunningham and the Chief Planner, to help us to develop proposals for reform for Compulsory Purchase in order to make it simpler, more streamlined and fairer for all parties.
- Completed Phases 2 and 3 permitted development rights, to reduce the number of applications in the system.
- Supported the design and delivery of a CPD course entitled ‘An Introduction to Hydrogen for the Public Sector’ with the University of Edinburgh, University of Strathclyde and Aberdeen University, free of charge to local authority planning professionals across Scotland.

This work remains a significant priority and we are continuing to progress priority actions in partnership with stakeholders.

## C. Priorities for delivery 2024/25

<b>Productive places</b>	<b>Sustainable places</b>	<b>Liveable places</b>
Make Scotland the most attractive part of the UK to invest in by improving planning systems and performance.	Tackle the climate and nature crises by streamlining consenting.	Respond to the housing emergency by working with partners to maximise opportunities to build the right houses in the right places in the numbers required.

### Delivering our ambitions

The business plan for our planning teams for 2024/25 prioritises activity that will contribute to implementation of NPF4 and achievement of the ambitions outlined above. In addition to this, we are currently working with stakeholders towards a further programme of targeted actions focused on planning’s response to the housing emergency.

#### Productive places -

#### Enabling investment by improving planning systems and performance

This year we will:

- Establish Scotland’s first Planning Hub to build capacity and resilience, and to improve consistency and efficiency in decision-making.
- Launch a planning apprenticeship programme to invest in new talent to create a pipeline of skilled future planners.
- Take forward a planning skills campaign to address the requirements of NPF4 and our ambitions for planning.
- Progress changes to planning fees which will move them towards full cost recovery for planning authorities and cost recovery for Scottish Government planning services.
- Work with the National Planning Improvement Champion to help reduce decision timescales and improve service quality.
- With the short life working group on proportionality, identify key issues for improvement and good practice and communicate these findings to stakeholders.
- Take forward a Planning Skills Commitment Plan, identifying gaps for priority action and increasing skills capacity through intense training and sharing of good practice.
- Introduce Inspirational Recruitment Days, in which we will invite future planners into our Planning, Architecture and Regeneration Division to hear about the breadth and impact of planning and encourage careers in planning.
- Support efficient progress towards the roll out of new LDPs across Scotland.
- Bring into force new regulations on masterplan consent areas (MCAs) and support early adopters of this important new tool, which will offer developers greater confidence through upfront consent provided by the planning authority.
- Bring into force new regulations on procedures for amending the NPF and LDPs to ensure flexibility of the planning system where needed.

- Collaborate with lead partners to assess and drive forward delivery of national developments.
- Facilitate PIPAG to identify solutions to challenges with planning and infrastructure delivery in a range of places.
- Consider options for an infrastructure levy, following on from engagements on a discussion paper held over summer 2024 .
- Develop a robust compulsory purchase reform package through engagement with the Practitioner Advisory Group and wider stakeholders, working towards a public consultation in 2025.
- Work with Planning Aid Scotland to scope out elected member training in advance of the 2027 local government elections, and building on the [2023 consultation on this issue](#).

### **Sustainable places -**

#### **Tackling net zero and the nature crisis by streamlining consenting**

##### **Delivery of policies 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 11, 22**

This year we will:

- Work across the Scottish Government to improve the quality, consistency and pace of our consenting processes so that systems are quick, efficient and effective in enabling essential development to support net zero.
- Encourage use of MCAs, including to facilitate land-based elements of offshore wind and Green Freeports and addressing the need for additional housing.
- Produce guidance on planning and climate change.
- Produce guidance on planning and hydrogen.
- Produce guidance on biodiversity – version 2, incorporating work on a biodiversity metric.
- Support consistent application of Policy 11 relating to maximising economic impact from renewable energy development.
- Work with planning authorities, SEPA and the development sector to conclude work on applying policy 22 relating to flood risk.

### **Liveable places -**

#### **Responding to the housing emergency by working with partners**

##### **Delivery of policies 16 and 17**

This year we will:

- Secure additional capacity in the planning system through a number of measures as set out above.
- Advise planning authorities on responding to the housing emergency.
- Assemble evidence on reasons for sites stalling, with a view to supporting delivery.
- Work with planning authorities to support the introduction of a pipeline of housing land in LDPs.

- Put measures in place for consistent housing land audits, including publication of new guidance, and support planning authorities and stakeholders to work together to produce annual audits.
- Agree supporting evidence on need and demand for new homes, working with the industry, planning authorities and analysts.
- Work with SMEs to better support them to deliver new homes.
- Encourage and support wider recognition of community benefit to be achieved from new housing developments.

## D. Collaboration

Positive, cross-sector collaboration is needed to unlock investment and support the delivery of the high quality development that we need; where and when we need it. Implementation of NPF4 policies and national developments is by default collaborative. We rely on the skills, experience and commitment of all those within the planning and development sector to play their role and to facilitate and share good practice and learning.

We are proactively working with stakeholders across the planning sector, including public bodies, business and industry representatives and communities, to support implementation of NPF4.

This collaborative approach also requires the focusing of efforts across the Scottish Government to ensure alignment across national plans and programmes. This alignment will be an iterative process, building over time, and the actions included in this update to the Delivery Programme will contribute to progressing this. Work on new LDPs is also emerging which will put the spatial strategy and policies into practice in different local contexts across Scotland. Increased cooperation between the Scottish and UK Governments at Ministerial and official level on shared priorities can support resolution of barriers to delivery.

We will continue to support a number of governance tools which have a particularly important role in creating the conditions for collaborative delivery of NPF4, including engagement and close working through:

- The Applicant Stakeholder Group;
- Heads of Planning Scotland;
- The High Level Group on Planning Performance;
- The Key Agencies Group;
- The National Planning Improvement Champion; and
- The Planning, Infrastructure and Place Advisory Group (PIPAG).

### Applicant Stakeholder Group

The Applicant Stakeholder Group was established in February 2023 to provide an applicant perspective to the High Level Group on Planning Performance. The group meets quarterly and identifies their top priority issue to take to the High Level Group for discussion. In the past year this has included the declaration of the housing emergency, resourcing of the planning system and timescales for determining applications which are subject to a legal agreement. The latter included meeting with

HoPS and the Society of Local Authority Lawyers and Administrators to discuss potential improvement ideas.

### Heads of Planning Scotland (HOPS)

We meet with HOPS regularly, across divisional workstreams and priorities. This includes participation in the Development Management, Development Planning, Performance and Practice and Climate Change, Energy and Resources subcommittees, and regular meetings between the Chief Planner and HOPS Chair. These channels facilitate identification of possible barriers and solutions to delivery of NPF4.

The Development Planning subcommittee is focused on preparation of the first round of LDP Evidence Reports. Priorities include improving access to the required data and assessing the implications of feedback to the first Evidence Reports submitted to Gate Check.

The Development Management subcommittee's priorities over the next year include continuing to engage with, and providing feedback to, the Scottish Government on NPF4 policies and permitted development rights (and associated prior notification requirements). It also intends to work on the promotion and rollout of the biodiversity planning metric.

The Performance and Practice Subcommittee is focusing on the implementation of the National Planning Improvement Framework, sharing good practice and engaging with Scottish Government on issues affecting the resourcing of the planning system, including planning fees, recruitment and skills.

The work of the Climate Change, Energy and Resources subcommittee is a priority area for NPF4 delivery. It supports learning on new technologies, for example battery energy storage, shares innovative work and good practice, and works with the Scottish Government, providing feedback on implementation of relevant NPF4 policies.

A Scotwind working group has also been established under the Climate Change, Energy & Resources subcommittee, in conjunction with Scottish Government. The purpose of the group is to share information about the planning and delivery of onshore infrastructure linked to the expansion of offshore wind. The group includes representatives from the local authority planning departments most affected by the deployment of offshore wind, and will meet three times a year.

We will work with HOPS to:

- Roll out standard templates for Section 75 Planning Obligations.
- Produce a standard working template for common planning conditions, bringing consistency and predictability to the post consent process.
- Identify scope for improvement of cross council working to better align consents (outwith regulatory change). And,
- Input to the short life working group on proportionality in planning applications.



### High Level Group on Planning Performance

The High Level Group on Planning Performance is jointly chaired by the Minister for Public Finance and the COSLA Spokesperson for Environment and Economy, and meets on a quarterly basis. The group has a key role in overseeing the performance of the planning system, improving consistency and identifying areas for improvement. Group priorities for the coming year include driving forward the actions identified through the Investing in Planning consultation, increasing the financial resources available to planning authorities and streamlining processes to ensure efficiency.

### Key Agencies Group

The Key Agencies Group (KAG) has representation from across a range of public bodies which have a statutory role in development planning and development management processes. The Key Agencies have an influential role to play in helping to achieve our ambitions for a planning system which is more responsive and which offers more certainty, and KAG focuses on supporting delivery through improved joint working.

The Key Agency Chief Executives meet regularly with the Minister for Public Finance to discuss current priorities with regard to delivery of NPF4. Recent meetings have focused on Key Agency involvement in LDP Evidence Reports, resourcing and the role of Key Agencies in accelerating delivery.

KAG has provided a Collaborative LDP Offer and is working with five planning authorities: Dundee, Fife, Highland and Midlothian Councils, and Comhairle nan Eilean Siar. Workshops have supported services and agencies to discuss strategic and local matters, alongside using data and mapping to undertake joint analysis of evidence. This will help to inform later work on LDP spatial strategies and place briefs at the proposed plan stage.

### National Planning Improvement Champion

Scotland's first National Planning Improvement Champion was appointed in September 2023 to support continual improvement within the planning system. The Champion post is embedded within the Improvement Service and is funded by the Scottish Government.

The National Planning Improvement Champion aims to ensure that:

- The planning system enables the delivery of sustainable, liveable and productive places.
- Planning services are equipped to work effectively and efficiently, embedding continuous improvement. And,
- Users are able to engage constructively with the planning system and planning service.

The Champion is piloting a new approach to monitoring performance of the system with the introduction of the National Planning Improvement Framework (NPIF). The NPIF was developed in collaboration with stakeholders from a range of planning perspectives, interests and sectors. Guidance to support planning authorities with completing the NPIF process was published in April 2024. NPIF is a shift from the old

system of performance assessment: Instead of a process focused on self-assessment followed by marking by the Scottish Government, the new approach is focused on planning authority self-assessment and constructive challenge by peers. The National Planning Improvement Champion team will also play a 'critical friend' role, providing constructive advice and testing assumptions.

The NPIF will be tested over the course of 2024/25 by three different cohorts of planning authorities. The second cohort is now underway, and all planning authorities are expected to be involved at some stage in these pilots to allow for feedback, adaptation and to ensure preparedness.

### Planning, Infrastructure and Place Advisory Group

The Scottish Government has established PIPAG in collaboration with the Scottish Futures Trust. Meetings have been held quarterly. In 2024 the group's strategic objectives have been:

- Identifying and promoting innovation and best practice, strategic input to the development of the next infrastructure investment plan, and overcoming barriers to development and infrastructure delivery and gaps in funding and finance.
- Advice on integration of place-based and spatial thinking into public and private sector decision-making. And,
- Prioritisation and targeting of investment to optimise outcomes and achieve place-based transformational change.

Focusing on these objectives enabled the group to develop a full work programme for 2024, which includes:

- An in depth look at Winchburgh infrastructure delivery solutions and challenges.
- Presentations and discussions on town centre regeneration and low carbon energy systems.
- Discussions about the infrastructure required to support major development in rural areas (housing, services, access etc).
- Presentations and discussions on making vacant and derelict land a more viable investment proposition. And,
- End of year review and the production of an Annual Report.

To date, the achievements of the group are as follows:

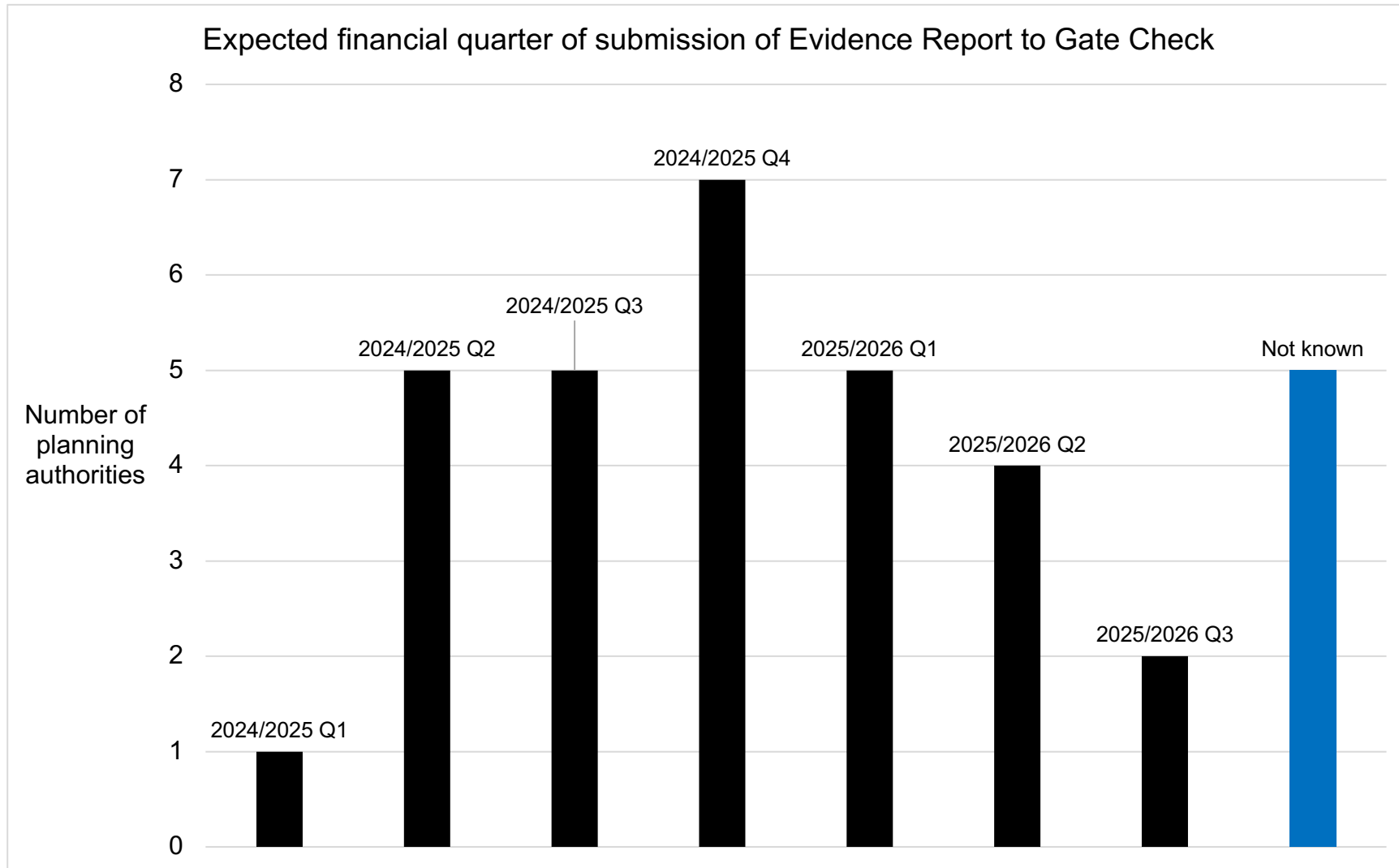
- Reports produced on each of the case studies and learning events, which champion good practice and make recommendations for more widely applicable solutions to explore.
- A short life working group has looked in detail at issues of funding and finance, producing a final paper which shares good practice on the approach to financial guarantees. And,
- Ad hoc meetings and papers have been prepared on issues arising from meetings including rural housing and the importance of quality data in infrastructure investment decisions.

The PIPAG reference group, including key agencies and infrastructure providers, has been informed of progress and consulted on the production of reports. The

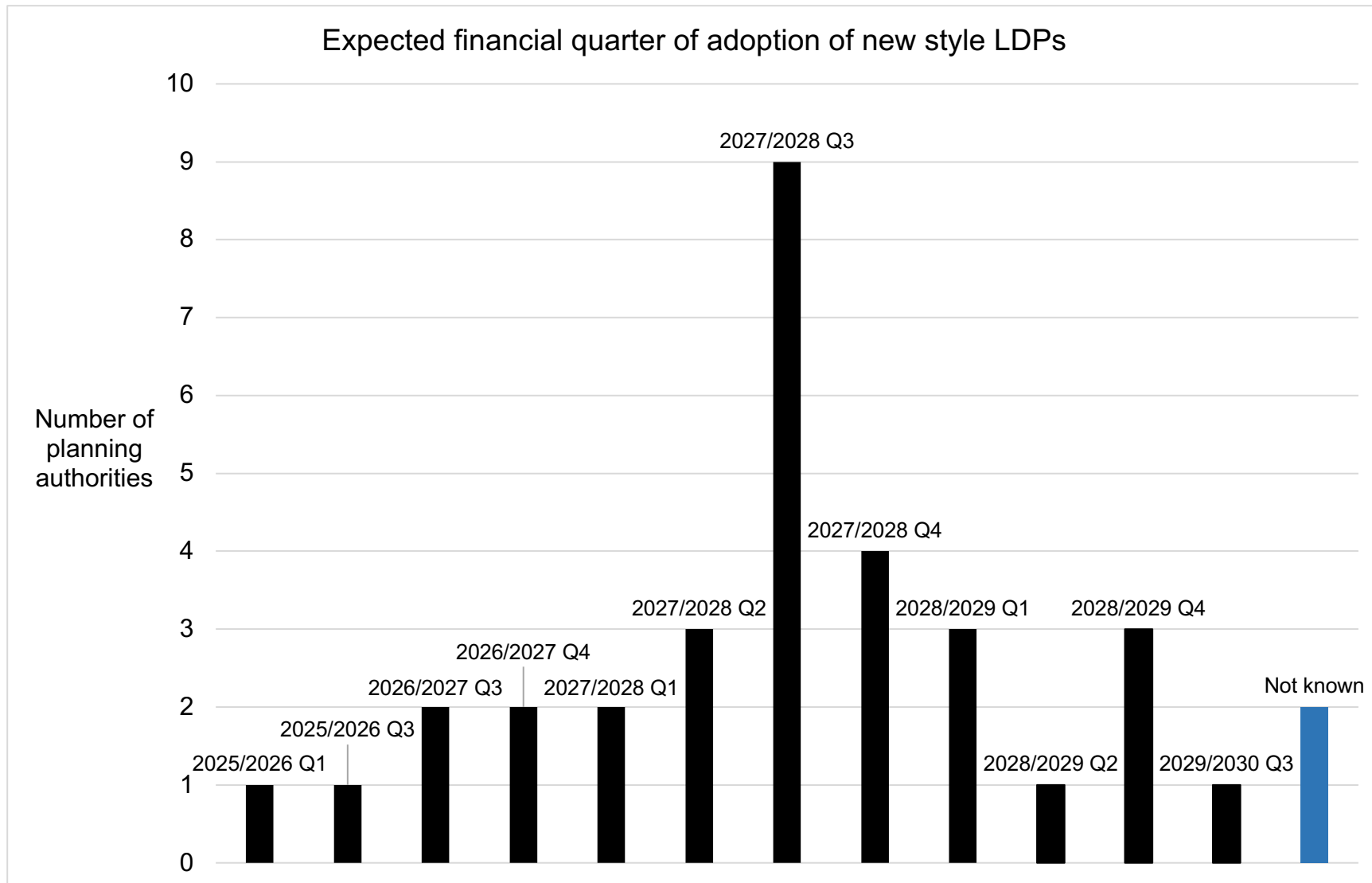
secretariat is considering how the wider group's expertise could be used to support NPF4 delivery objectives in the year ahead.

Progress towards adoption of new style LDPs

The charts below illustrate expected timings for planning authorities to reach key milestones in preparation of new style LDPs. The data is as reported by planning authorities in 2024/2025 Q2.



## Annex A – Progress towards adoption of new style LDPs



**Indicative local housing land requirements**

The table below shows indicative local housing land requirements as published in Evidence Reports either approved by the relevant Council or submitted to the Gate Check.

<b>Planning authority</b>	<b>MATHLR</b>	<b>Indicative Local Housing Land Requirement</b>	<b>Status of Evidence Report</b>
East Lothian Council	6500	6660	Approved by Council
East Renfrewshire Council	2800	3100	Submitted to Gate Check
Fife Council	7300	9430	Returned to Council following Gate Check
Glasgow City Council	21350	22000	Returned to Council following Gate Check
Midlothian Council	8850	8851	Passed Gate Check
Moray Council	3450	3730	Passed Gate Check



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Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to us at

The Scottish Government  
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Edinburgh  
EH1 3DG

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