

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

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COMMITTEE Enterprise, Planning & Infrastructure

DATE 18 January 2011

DIRECTOR Gordon McIntosh

TITLE OF REPORT A Draft Land Use Strategy for Scotland – a  
consultation

REPORT NUMBER: EPI/11/027

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1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

The purpose of this report is to present the draft response on behalf of the Council for the above consultation.

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

That the committee: -

- a) Approves the draft consultation response for submission to the Scottish Government.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications identified as a result of this consultation.

4. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

The Land Use Strategy provides a strategic direction which will help to optimise the use of Scotland's land. The strategy has a number of targeted actions that will be taken by the Scottish Government and filtered down to a local level, including local authorities, to ensure a land that is used in a sustainable way for a low carbon economy and sustainable economic growth. The strategy will guide, support and inform the Council in terms of how land is used but it is unclear at this stage how this guidance will be applied.

5. BACKGROUND/MAIN ISSUES

Scotland's land is important for people's lives so that they have fresh water, food production, and to build on for homes and businesses. It is also important for tourism, recreation, plus, overall quality of life.

This strategy has been developed and led by the Scottish Government to show how different policies relating to the use of land can work to provide the best outcome for Scotland.

The Council agrees on the Strategy's vision for 'a prosperous and sustainable low-carbon economy, underpinned by successful land-based businesses, flourishing natural environments and vibrant communities'. The Council also agrees with the associated objectives and principles that support the vision.

The Council is, however, concerned that there is a lack of reference to Scottish Planning Policy including the National Planning Framework 2. It is unclear how this strategy will influence local planning decisions. The Council would also like to see more clarity in terms of how the strategy helps to achieve the targets associated with the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009.

## 6. IMPACT

The actions from this strategy will assist the Council in delivering a number of Single Outcome Agreement National Outcomes including: -

1 - 'We live in a Scotland that is the most attractive place for doing business in Europe'.

2 - 'We realise our full economic potential with more and better employment opportunities for our people'.

10 - We live in well-designed, sustainable places where we are able to access the amenities and services we need.

11 - 'We have strong, resilient and supportive communities where people take responsibility for their own actions and how they affect others'.

12 - 'We value and enjoy our built and natural environment and enhance it for future generations'.

14 - 'We reduce the local and global environmental impact of our consumption and production'.

This report does not have an effect on people's equality and human rights, therefore, an Equality and Human Rights Impact Assessment has not been conducted.

## 7. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- i) Appendix 1 – 'Getting the best from our land; a draft land use strategy for Scotland' consultation. Aberdeen City Council Response paper.

## 8. REPORT AUTHOR DETAILS

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Appendix 1 – ‘Getting the best from our land; a draft land use strategy for Scotland’ consultation. Aberdeen City Council Response.

***Consultation questions and response***

**Introduction (Section 1 of draft Strategy)**

**Vision** - *A prosperous and sustainable low-carbon economy, underpinned by successful land-based businesses, flourishing natural environments and vibrant communities*

**Question 1a: Do you have any comments on the vision that we have proposed?**

Aberdeen City Council supports the land use strategy vision.

**Question 1b: Taken together, do the objectives and their accompanying strategic directions support the vision?**

Aberdeen City agrees that the objectives support the strategy's vision.

**Principles for sustainable land use (as set out in text of section 1)**

**Question 2a: Is it useful to set out principles for sustainable land use?**

Aberdeen City Council agrees that the principles are useful although this depends how they will be applied, and linked to decision-making at all levels.

**Question 2b: Do you think that these are the correct principles? If not, how would you like to see them changed?**

Aberdeen City Council has concerns in regards to how the strategy will link with land use planning. Currently, it is not clear how the land use strategy influences Scottish Planning Policy and National Planning Framework 2. Aberdeen City Council suggests that it should be a material consideration in the planning process.

The strategy's principles refer to land values and it is assumed that these values are in monetary terms. These values vary depending on the stakeholder. For example, to a land owner on a flood plain, the most valuable primary land use might be to sell it off for housing development, whereas the most valuable land use to the communities down stream and the wider economy may be to leave it as a floodplain. There are also other types of values other than economic, and these are social and environmental. This is a complex issue and needs further clarification.

**Successful land-based businesses in a low-carbon economy (section 3 of draft Strategy)**

**Objective** - *Successful land-based businesses contributing to Scotland's prosperity and wellbeing*

**Strategic direction** - *towards a low-carbon economy.*

**Question 3a: Do you agree with the objective and strategic direction for land-based businesses?**

The reference to low-carbon economy is not really reflected in the objective. The Scottish Government should consider rewording the objective. Aberdeen City Council suggests “Successful low-carbon land-based businesses...”

**Question 3b: Have we focussed on the right areas to achieve this objective and move us in this strategic direction?**

Aberdeen City Council has concerns that some of the less clear economic land uses issues (such as flood management) are not reflected in this objective.

**Question 3c: Are the actions identified the right ones to deliver the objective, and are there other actions which would be more successful or effective?**

Aberdeen City Council agrees that the actions identified deliver the objectives. It agrees on the approach to examine land use legislation and incentives to align with sustainable land use and a low carbon economy.

**Flourishing natural environments benefiting our lives (section 4 of draft Strategy)**

**Objective** - *Flourishing natural environments delivering the widest range of benefits to Scotland, and playing their part in mitigating global climate change*

**Strategic direction** - *better consideration of the natural environment.*

**Question 4a: Do you agree with the objective and strategic direction for natural environments?**

Aberdeen City Council suggests that the land use strategy can do more to address sustainable land use in regards to Flourishing Natural Environments.

**Question 4b: Have we focussed on the right areas to achieve this objective and move us in this strategic direction?**

The strategy needs to consider how it can influence agricultural subsidies to promote natural environments. The Scottish Rural Development Programme (SRDP) can be refocused so that private land owners have incentives to link designated sites and improve the environment and biodiversity.

Aberdeen City Council suggests that more can be done within the Urban Environment. Aberdeen City Council has recently identified its Green Space Network. This strategic network aims to link key environments and habitats but is also used to address potential flood risks associated with climate

change. This work links with the NFP2 and SPP and could be supported by the Land Use Strategy.

**Question 4c: Are the actions identified the right ones to deliver the objective, and are there other actions which would be more successful or effective?**

Aberdeen City Council agrees that the land use strategy should ensure that SRDP supports the vision for sustainable land use.

### **Vibrant communities, connected to the land (section 5 of draft Strategy)**

**Objective** - *Vibrant, sustainable communities in urban and rural areas, with people connected to the land, enjoying it and taking an interest in its future*

**Strategic direction** - *connecting people with the land.*

**Question 5a: Do you agree with the objective and strategic direction for vibrant communities?**

Aberdeen City Council agrees with this objective and strategic direction.

**Question 5b: Have we focussed on the right areas to achieve this objective and move us in this strategic direction?**

Aberdeen City Council suggests that this objective links with the Scottish Government's 'sustainable communities' agenda.

**Question 5c: Are the actions identified the right ones to deliver the objective, and are there other actions which would be more successful or effective?**

Aberdeen City Council suggests that the actions do not show how the land use strategy will materially change how communities are involved in land use planning decisions. There is an overlap with community engagement and community planning.

### **Delivering sustainable land use (section 6 of draft Strategy)**

**Question 6a: What would be the best way of placing the national objectives of the Land Use Strategy in a local context to assist land managers and local stakeholders?**

Aberdeen City Council suggests that the Land Use Strategy needs to link with Scottish Planning Policy and NPF2. These influence land use decisions at a local authority level.

The Land Use Strategy needs to consider how incentives address subsidies and how they relate to sustainable land use and low carbon economies.

**Question 6b: Are there other actions which would assist local decision processes?**

Aberdeen City Council suggests that the Land Use Strategy should be a material consideration within the planning process, and therefore needs to link the Scottish Planning Policy and the National Planning Framework. This will ensure that sustainable land use is considered in local decisions. Aberdeen City Council also suggests that the Land Use Strategy integrates with SRDP and other regional priorities.

In relation to the Land Use Strategy's vision, it is important that the wide range of roles Scotland's environment plays and their values to a successful low carbon economy are emphasised. For example, carbon storage, ecosystem services, and flood management.

**Question 6c: Are there measures additional to those already in place which should be considered to encourage the restoration of vacant or derelict land to economically, socially or environmentally productive use?**

Aberdeen City Council suggests that incentives are required to encourage the development of vacant and derelict brownfield sites. Given a choice, developers will always develop greenfield first because it is easier and cheaper. They generally have a blank canvas with greenfield sites and there usually aren't demolitions, clean up or renovation costs involved. Brownfield sites are considered much more sustainable as they are already part of the urban fabric and are closer to public transport and services.

The Scottish Government should consider applying tax incentives for brownfield development and/or tax burdens on greenfield development. This approach could ensure that brownfield sites are not left behind whilst greenfield development takes place.

**General questions**

**Question 7a: Do you see any conflicts, either within this draft Strategy or between it and other policies? If so what are they?**

Aberdeen City Council's main concern in regards to other policies is how the Land Use Strategy fits with SPP and NPF2. Will the strategy be a material consideration in the planning process?

Aberdeen City Council suggests that the strategy needs better definitions in regards to land use and climate change targets.

Aberdeen City Council has concerns on how the land use strategy will be delivered. Who will be responsible for ensuring its implementation and how will this be monitored?

**Question 7b: Do you see complementarities with other policy areas which have not been explored in the draft Strategy?**

Aberdeen City Council suggests that transport needs to be considered within the strategy. Sustainable transport in particular public transport must be part of land use planning decisions in order to encourage a low carbon economy.

**Question 8: Are there any equality issues that the Strategy needs to address (relating to race, gender, disability, age, sexual orientation, gender identity or religion/belief)? If so, how could the draft strategy be improved to meet those needs in a better way?**

No

**Question 9: Are there any other groups in society that may be adversely affected by proposals in this draft Strategy? If so, how could the proposals be improved to meet their needs in a better way?**

No.

**Question 10: Are there any other points you wish to make about any aspect of this draft Strategy?**

Aberdeen City Council has no other comments to make regarding this strategy.

### **Questions on the Environmental Report**

**Question 11: Is there any other baseline or environmental information which could be used to further inform the Strategic Environmental Assessment? Please provide details and evidence to support your response.**

Aberdeen City Council has no comments on the environmental report.

**Question 12: Do you think that the Environmental Report has captured the significant environmental effects of the draft Strategy? In your opinion has anything been overlooked? Please provide details and evidence to support your response.**

Aberdeen City Council has no comments on the environmental report.

**Question 13: Do you agree with the measures for enhancement already adopted by the draft Strategy and the additional enhancement and**



**mitigation measures proposed for the final Strategy? Please provide details and evidence to support your response.**

Aberdeen City Council has no comments on the environmental report.

**Question 14: Do you agree with the proposed arrangements for monitoring identified in the Environmental Report? Please provide details and evidence to support your response.**

Aberdeen City Council has no comments on the environmental report.