



## Planning Reform Panel Report

Following a selective consultation process an independent panel has reported to the Scottish Government with a variety of bold recommendations aimed at

**“empowering planning to deliver great places”**

### What are the main outcomes?

The review focuses on 6 key themes:

- Development planning
- Housing delivery
- Infrastructure
- Development management
- Community engagement and leadership
- Resources and skills.

48 recommendations were made, designed to achieve six outcomes, namely:

- Strong and flexible development plans
- The delivery of more high quality homes
- an infrastructure first approach to planning and development
- efficient and transparent development management

- stronger leadership, smarter resourcing and sharing of skills
- collaboration rather than conflict/inclusion and empowerment.

The panel suggests replacing strategic development planning for the 4 city regions with an 'enhanced' National Planning Framework – the NPF to be given a stronger national emphasis.

Development plans do require a faster, expedited process and the panel has raised some bold moves to modernise SDP and LDP processes.

This sits alongside a firm recommendation to elevate the importance of delivering homes and to innovate the means of infrastructure provision, with central cash funds mooted – again through more central control.



The panel's idea of a Development Delivery Infrastructure Fund seems a sensible way forward, whilst a stronger role for SFT in designing a much faster model for schools delivery is to be welcomed.

These are all good signs for the development and investment industry with perhaps a chance to see greater certainty, commitment and funding in Scottish planning – all centrally focussed.

Against this the panel has balanced its views and also recommends an attempt to bring more consensual planning in at early stages in the local development plan and to empower local communities to engage with local place plans and also a positive move to empower young people to engage in planning.

The term “culture change” returns in the panel's findings and they have made a telling leap to the idea of substantially increased planning processing fees. This could be a good start for the delivery of a better resourced system, but only if users of the system can be assured of corresponding improvements to the decision making process.

Overall, there is a mix of ‘top down’ and ‘bottom up’ in the reform panel's report and this will be the challenging ground for modernisers as the parliamentary and legislative / policy process takes on the next steps ie. how do you effectively square centralism with localism?

## What will the recommendations mean?

Based on the scope of the review we believe some very important highlights emerge in the 48 recommendations as noted below:

### Strong and flexible development plans

- Primacy of development plan retained; but simplified (e.g. greater role given to SPP, Strategic Development Plans replaced by an enhanced National Planning Framework and a more streamlined Local Development Plan process.
- The Delivery of more high quality homes.
- Defined housing targets within National Planning Framework to inform housing land requirements in local development plans, zonal approach to identification of ‘investment ready’ land for development.

### An infrastructure first approach to planning and development

- The creation of a national infrastructure agency or working group; the creation of a Development Delivery Infrastructure Fund; consideration of options for a national or regional infrastructure levy; greater consideration of education and schools building programmes in housing growth areas.

### Efficient and transparent development management

- Greater use of processing agreements for all major developments; the certainty provided by the development plan in development management should be strengthened; the review recognises that the quality and effectiveness of pre-application discussions with planning authorities and consultation by developers should be significantly improved; and a study of the scope for combined consents should be carried out

### Stronger leadership, smarter resourcing and sharing of skills

- Substantial increase of planning fees for major planning applications, as well as consideration of the scope for further discretionary charging e.g. for pre-application processes; skills development for those involved in planning; training in community engagement for the development sector and mandatory training for elected members.

### Collaboration rather than conflict – inclusion and empowerment

- Continuing commitment to early engagement but practice needs to improve significantly; empowerment for communities to bring forward their own local place plans – to form part of the development plan; statutory rights for Community Councils and young people to be consulted on the development plan. The review does not recommend that Third Party Rights of Appeal should be introduced.

### Contact:

Rob Newton (0131 469 6019)  
rob.newton@gvajb.co.uk

Peter Carus (0131 469 6007)  
peter.carus@gvajb.co.uk