

**RURAL ECONOMY AND CONNECTIVITY COMMITTEE**  
**SUBMISSION FROM THE ROYAL TOWN PLANNING INSTITUTE**  
**THE DRAFT CLIMATE CHANGE PLAN (RPP3)**

1. The Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) is the champion of planning and the planning profession. We work to promote the art and science of planning for the public benefit. We have around 2,200 members in Scotland and a worldwide membership of nearly 23,000. We:
  - support policy development to improve approaches to planning for the benefit of the public;
  - maintain the professional standards of our members;
  - support our members, and therefore the majority of the planning workforce, to have the skills and knowledge they need to deliver planning effectively;
  - maintain high standards of planning education;
  - develop and promote new thinking, ideas and approaches which can improve planning;
  - support our membership to work with others who have a role in developing places in Scotland; and
  - improve the understanding of planning and the planning system to policy makers, politicians, practitioners and the general public.
2. RTPI Scotland is grateful for the opportunity to provide written evidence to the Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee as a part its scrutiny of the draft Climate Change Plan (third Report on Proposals and Policies - RPP3). The RTPI believes that climate change is the most important issue of our time and RPP3 identifies planning as ‘an enabling element of transformational change’. The focus of the policy outcomes identified in the document is however in harnessing technological advancement in vehicles and building fabric to deliver the necessary cuts to carbon emissions. In addition to this, RTPI Scotland urges the Government to consider how through positive placemaking planning can also influence behaviour change that impacts emissions. For example, by improving access to public transport networks.

**Planning – ‘an enabling element of transformational change’**

3. RTPI Scotland welcomes the recognition of the role that planning can play in ensuring that decision-making takes into account the need to cut carbon emissions. RPP3 identifies local development plans, informed by the National Planning Framework, Scottish Planning Policy and Creating Places, as the site of policies which can ensure that new development contributes to reducing emissions. It is disappointing however that the document does not make explicit the connections from planning to wider local government decision-making, behaviour change, and the measurable policy outcomes included under each sector.
4. It is true that planning decisions should be taken in line with development plans which include ‘a presumption in favour of development that contributes to sustainable development’. The imperative to reduce carbon emissions is only one of the criteria included under an assessment of sustainable development, however. Also relevant, for example, would be the need for new housing, the need for development that supports economic growth, and potential flood risk. Planners must consider a huge range of

issues when making a decision about whether new development would 'contribute to sustainable development'. It is important that this complexity is recognised. The status of cutting emissions as a corporate priority of national and local government will help planners to attach weight to this issue in decision making.

5. The rest of our evidence is structured in two sections. The first makes connections between planning and the other 'enabling element of transformational change' identified in RPP3; behaviour change. The second section considers specific opportunities where planning is one of the key processes for delivering lower emissions, and suggests how the success of planning in delivering lower emissions can be measured.

## **Behaviour change**

### *Location, density and design of development*

6. RPP3 states that '...the most important decision the planning system makes is where development should be built'. As well as location planning can influence the density and design of development. When realised in developments together these three factors can enable people to make more sustainable choices in their day to day lives. Local development plans play a major role in delivering these criteria, and Scottish Planning Policy outlines a number of principles regarding which types of locations and development are generally considered 'sustainable'. For example, there is a preference for developing previously-developed ('brownfield') sites before greenfield ones, and support for higher density development. Likewise, Scottish Planning Policy (paragraph 45) recognises the important role for design in making it easier for all people to move around a place by prioritising accessibility for people, not vehicles.
7. Planning development in this way can help to ensure that towns and villages grow to accommodate and support a changing population sustainably. Walking, cycling and use of public transport can be made easier while private car journeys are discouraged by informing the density of development, its location, and how it is integrated into other land uses such as employment areas and schools. It is possible to measure changes in the form of the built environment delivered in this way, for example by monitoring changes in travel-to-work distances over time. It is disappointing that RPP3 anticipates having to cut emissions from vehicles via promoting technological advances, based on the assumption that the number of vehicle journeys made is going to increase. Travelling by vehicle not only has carbon emissions and air quality consequences. For example, promoting active travel is an important means of tackling the inactivity that contributes to poor health. And removing cars from our towns and cities frees up space for people to use for social and economic activities, potentially making our places more dynamic and prosperous. It is therefore important to prioritise infrastructure for active travel in rural areas as well as urban areas, as far as possible. Also clear, especially with regard to rural areas, is the need for new development to be connected to public transport networks.
8. RTPI Scotland supports a strong role for the planning system in promoting the sustainable pattern of development described above. It is important to acknowledge however that local development plans prepared by local government do not only consider environmental sustainability when allocating sites for future development. While development planning is a public function, delivery of the Local Development Plan is largely the responsibility of the private sector. Sites allocated for development

therefore must have a strong likelihood of being capable of being delivered by the market.

9. There are actions that can be taken by the government to try and ensure that the best sites for development in sustainability terms are also deliverable for developers, so called 'market-making'. This can be done through site assembly, site remediation and preparation and installation of supporting infrastructure, helping to overcome some of the financial barriers to developing more complicated sites.

The Royal Town Planning Institute  
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