



DEVELOPMENT PLAN SCHEME 2025

Report by Chief Planning Officer

PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of the Report is to seek approval of the 2025 Development Plan Scheme and draft Participation Statement.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2.1 There are no financial, equalities or other implications to the recommendations being implemented. It is a statutory requirement for Planning Authorities to prepare and publish a Development Plan Scheme (DPS) and to review and update it annually.
- 2.2 The DPS is a document that sets out the Comhairle's proposed programme and processes for preparing and reviewing its Development Plan including Local Development Plans (LDPs), and other associated and supporting documents. The DPS includes a draft Participation Statement, which sets out how the Planning Authority will engage with the public and other stakeholders in relation to the Development Plan. There is a statutory requirement to publicly consult on the draft Participation Statement aspect of the DPS regarding engagement for the new LDP.
- 2.3 The DPS, once approved, will direct the work programme for the Development Plan team and, in line with Regulations, the Participation Statement element will be subject to public consultation. The DPS will be published, and copies sent to the Scottish Ministers. Officers will report back to Committee on the consultation element and as the various pieces of work set out in the DPS are progressed.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 It is recommended that the Comhairle:

- (a) approve the Outer Hebrides Development Plan Scheme 2025 as detailed in the Appendix; and
(b) authorise the Chief Planning Officer to publish the Development Plan Scheme 2025, and draft Participation Statement for public consultation.

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Appendix: Outer Hebrides Development Plan Scheme 2025
Background papers: None

IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The following implications are applicable in terms of the Report.

Resource Implications	Implications/None
Financial	There are legal implications arising from the commencement of parts of the Planning Act and subsequent secondary legislation and regulations, including the Development Planning Regulations and in relation to the DPS.
Legal	Local authorities are required to maintain an up-to-date Development Plan and publish a DPS.
Staffing	There are a number of new and un-funded duties relating to delivery of Development Planning functions arising from the Development Planning Regulations.
Assets and Property	None
Strategic Implications	Implications/None
Risk	None
Equalities	None
Corporate Strategy	2.1.3 Economic investment, development and research is increased within the Outer Hebrides and people are provided with a safe, sustainable and healthy environment in which to live, work, visit or do business.
Environmental Impact	No EIA or SEA required for DPS. Individual elements of the Development Plan e.g. LDP, SGs will be screened for environmental assessment.
Consultation	The Development Plan Scheme will be published, and the Participation Statement element will be subject to public consultation.

BACKGROUND

- 5.1 A Development Plan Scheme (DPS) sets out the stages, programme and consultation arrangements for preparing a new Local Development Plan (LDP). The Planning (Scotland) Act 2019, and subsequent new Development Planning regulations, introduced specific new requirements around the preparation of new LDPs. Reforms of the Planning system have earlier and targeted engagement at their heart and task planning authorities to specifically seek the view of certain 'hard to reach' and identified groups including children and young people, the elderly, and gypsies/traveller communities, in addition to key agencies, stakeholders and the general public.
- 5.2 The LDP process has three key stages: Evidence Gathering, Plan Preparation and Delivery. In May 2023 the Scottish Government produced Local Development Plan Guidance which set out in detail each of these three stages. The purpose of the Evidence Report, which summaries the evidence gathered, is to provide a baseline for future monitoring and to inform the content of the Proposed Plan. The Proposed Plans are expected to be place based with an emphasis on maps and less policy wording than current Plans. There is also an increased emphasis on Plan monitoring and deliverability of proposal sites within the LDP. Further details of each stage are set out in the DPS in Appendix 1.
- 5.3 The Development Plan team are currently working on the Evidence Report stage for the new Plan. The programme for the preparation of the new Plan has been informed by an assessment of the work required to prepare the current Evidence Report stage of the Plan, benchmarking with other planning authorities' progress at the Government Gatecheck stage and identified good practice arising from that, and reflects the small team that is delivering this significant workstream. The cyber-attack continues to impact this work and data gathering and analysis.
- 5.4 Accordingly, the intent is now to brief Members on the emerging main issues, possibly through a workshop format, at the December 2025 series and then present the draft Evidence Report for approval in 2026 before submission to the statutory Gatecheck process thereafter.

CONSULTATION STRUCTURE

- 6.1 The Development Plan team commenced preparation of a new LDP in 2023. Work on the Evidence Report stage and Plan monitoring continues to be hampered by the cyber-attack the Comhairle experienced in November 2023 and resulted in having to restart some of the work and data gathering. In working towards a new LDP, the Development Plan team prepared a communication strategy addressing specific new requirements and opportunities. In addition to the established and new consultation and engagement requirements for the DPS and new LDP, there are new methods and opportunities for wider and more effective engagement e.g. social media, post covid ways of working and meeting etc., and engagement tools and skills we have acquired through support from Architecture and Design Scotland (ADS).
- 6.2 It is a requirement for the Comhairle to publish, and consult on, its programme of consultation and engagement for the preparation of a new Local Development Plan. The DPS and draft Participation Statement sets out the high-level programme of work for the new LDP and engagement anticipated to be undertaken during 2025-26.
- 6.3 Over the coming year the Team will: continue to liaise with the Members, stakeholders and the wider public on the preparation of the new LDP, including through a Call for Ideas, Local Place Plans, the Place Standard tool, and other policy or spatial topics; continue the monitoring framework; collation, analysis and presentation of primary data, and topic papers for the LDP's Evidence Report and other associated work.
- 6.4 Concurrent supporting statutory workstreams which underpin the LDP will be progressed and consulted on including Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) scoping, Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA), Play Sufficiency Assessment PSA, and a revised Regional Spatial Strategy.
- 6.5 In relation to the current LDP, any revisions to supplementary guidance will likely be incorporated into the new Plan process. The existing LDP Action Programme will be reviewed, updated and consulted on, and published as a *Delivery* Programme in line with legislation.

NEXT STEPS

- 7.1 Subject to Comhairle approval, the DPS will be published, copies sent to Scottish Ministers, and through the anticipated programme of work and engagement the DPS and embedded Participation Statement will be consulted on and adapted as appropriate, in order to deliver the Development Plan. Planning staff will continue to engage with stakeholders, including Members, to progress the preparation of the new Plan.