

## REGIONAL SPATIAL STRATEGIES EVENT – 2 OCTOBER 2019

**Kevin Stewart MSP, the Minister for Local Government, Housing and Planning**, provided an opening address and spoke of the new duty to prepare regional spatial strategies and the opportunity for strategic planning to inform the preparation of the National Planning Framework. He stressed the importance of collaborative working and invited innovative thinking.



**Abel Schumann of OECD** provided an international perspective by drawing on experience from across 36 OECD member states. His presentation is [available here](#).

This illustrated that whilst land and property are the most important forms of capital, much development happens in the wrong places and this, in turn, inhibits economic growth. High land consumption combined with little densification, leads to high housing costs and lower GDP.

Common planning challenges across the OECD countries include:

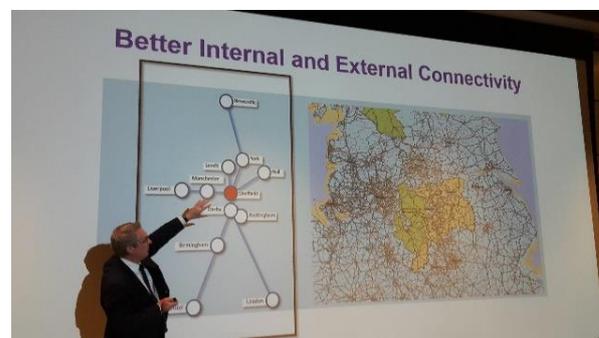
- Slow planning processes and rigid plans
- Insufficient regional / metropolitan co-ordination
- Weak vertical co-ordination across levels of government
- Limited co-ordination between planning and other policy areas
- Lack of monitoring and evaluation of plans

Abel described limited co-ordination between planning and other policy areas. An example of this was that tax deductible commuting expenses are thereby incentivising urban sprawl.

Evolving good practice trends include:

- More integrated spatial plans combining previously separated thematic plans
- Broader governance involving more actors and increased participatory planning
- Increased flexibility and responsiveness of planning systems
- Asymmetric decentralisation, granting authorities more rights and responsibilities

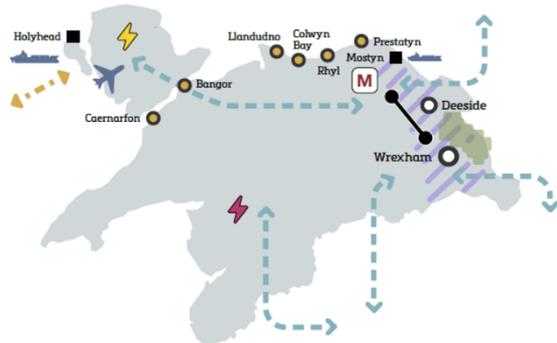
Abel noted how cultural influences are evident in different planning systems: Germany's co-operative approach sought consensus; France's approach was legally stronger and less flexible.



**Kevin Murray of Kevin Murray Associates** spoke about how regions are natural building blocks to consider planning issues and how regional spatial strategies were being produced in response to a desire for collaborative working to secure a stronger future together. His presentation is [available here](#).

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## Overview – North Wales



Kevin's highly graphic presentation covered examples that included:

- Wales – which integrates three regions with the overall national planning agenda
- Oresund – linking Denmark and Sweden illustrated a trans-national approach
- Greater Manchester – illustrated metropolitan partnership and transformation
- The West of England joint spatial plan - identifies strategic development locations
- Coastal West Sussex – presents a series of strategic objectives for the area
- Sheffield City region – considers health, education and economic factors as part of a collective vision

Kevin concluded by inviting the audience to consider a set of prompts when thinking about opportunities to produce regional spatial strategies:

- What is the geography?
- Which partners are involved?
- Which sectors are considered – land use, infrastructure, economy, health?
- What are the goals and targets?
- What are the delivery mechanisms?

A series of presentations [available here](#) provided information about tools to assist co-production:

- Kat White (SG, Infrastructure), Amy Phillips (Transport Scotland) and Stephen White (SG, Economic Development) spoke about ongoing SG work to align different strategies and policy interests.
- Fiona Simpson (SG, Planning and Architecture) described potential for regional collaborative working to inform preparation of the National Planning Framework (NPF4).
- Liz Pringle and Nathan Harris (SG Digital Planning) illustrated the potential of the digital mapping platform.
- Michelle McGuckin (GCC) and Sandy Robinson (SG Planning and Architecture) showed current work to consider how the Place Standard might be scaled up to assist regional discussions.



Following lunch, delegates moved into discussion groups to consider what essential ingredients of regional spatial strategies might be, and what might be done over the coming year so that strategic thinking could inform the preparation of the NPF4. Although directed to equally sized groups, the allocations were flexible and some opted to transfer to other groupings.

**VENUE: THE ENGINE SHED, STIRLING  
WITH THANKS TO HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT SCOTLAND**

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**Steve Dunlop, Chief Executive of Scottish Enterprise**, highlighted an urgent need to produce regional prospectuses to showcase strategic investment opportunities across regions, which in turn could be scaled up to become a national prospectus.



**Craig McLaren, Director of Scotland and Ireland at the Royal Town Planning Institute**, hosted a feedback session which gathered comments from each of the discussion groups.

He started by noting some key themes emerging from the group discussions:

- The importance of relationships – with NPF4 and SPP; how RSS relate to and work with each other; the linkage with other strategies
- Evidence – understand existing situation, developing new, or linking with city region growth deals?
- What should a RSS look like? A pitch to attract investment? How is it delivered?
- Governance – who are partners? Who owns the process? which Council/s manage it? Is there a fluid approach with different ownerships?
- What are priorities? Investment? Collaborating to compete? A need to overcome differing and competing priorities?

**Feedback from the groups included:**

## **'North East & Tay Estuary' grouping**

Need for buy-in and agreement about vision, purpose, content, partners.  
A chance to co-ordinate transport, infrastructure and economic development.  
How to deliver cross boundary strategy.  
Need to produce something in 6 months if want to influence the draft NPF4.  
Already have good north east strategic relations; know what the issues are.  
Governance – how to achieve sign off?

## **'Highlands & Islands & West Coast' grouping**

Is the group geography right?  
Recognise diversity, culture, identity.  
Willingness to look at opportunities.  
Timeframe - need a 'first stab' at it.  
Governance needs buy-in from members; not everyone is at same stage of maturity.  
Possible to coalesce around the 6 outcomes - opportunities for joint working.

## **'Central' grouping**

No current regional partnerships in place.  
Is the geography of the grouping right?  
Thematic spatial challenges. Look at different partnerships for different themes.  
Map relationships as part of evidence.  
What can be done? SG can facilitate a discussion.  
Got own city deals. Opportunities through negotiation to do things together.  
Look at 6 outcomes as a focus to consider how to do that at a regional level.

## **'Clyde Estuary' grouping**

Have experience, but shouldn't limit.  
Needs realism about timescales.  
Continuing to evolve as a city region. Stick with existing geography.  
Look at connections.  
Delivery – an Action plan for Clydeplan.  
Ask of SG – what should focus on?  
Housing figures and HNDA?  
What do in addition to current SDPA?  
In next 12 months share thinking with SG.  
Get political consensus.  
What, as a region, want to ask of NPF4?

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## ‘Ayrshire Coastline & South’ grouping

Noted two partnership areas in the group – Ayrshire and South Scotland. Scottish Borders links with south (D&G) and with South East Scotland.

Need for flexibility at regional level.

Purpose – what value would they add?

Key ingredients: clearly articulated vision agreed by partners.

Content – 6 key themes + renewables, town centres, economic growth, climate change, transport and connectivity.

Vary content based on needs of region.

Need to prioritise. Think of delivery.

Next 12 months – will have something, but extent of development depends on maturity of relationships.

Opportunity for joint ownership – not just that of planning authority.

## ‘South East’ grouping

A geography of economic development, public health, housing (targets) – need to link with density and use of VDL.

Transport integrated to support this.

Take co-ordinated approach to infrastructure delivery and utility providers.

Developing a regional growth framework – input to NPF4.

A subsequent **discussion** considered:

- Regional partnerships + a partnership of regions
- Exchange good practice ideas
- Many contacts / relationships – REP, regional transport, regional spatial groups
- Role of statutory key agencies
- Importance of collaboration
- Need for guidance

## John McNairney, Chief Planner,

closed proceedings by thanking everyone for participating in the event. He noted feedback and presentations would be provided from the day, and that draft guidance would be issued for comment to inform its development.

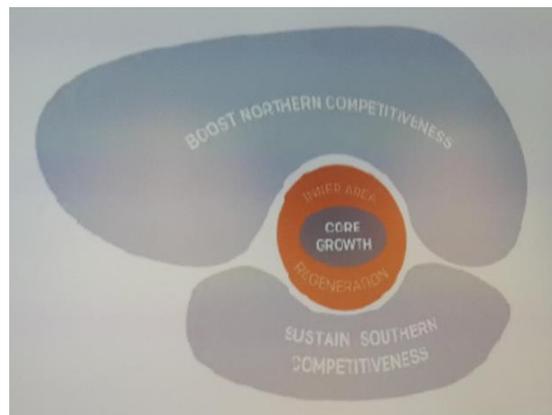
Following the event, feedback from the discussion groupings was assessed against twin heading of ‘challenges’ and ‘opportunities’.

Common **challenge themes** were:

- *governance + need to engage partners and achieve wider buy-in*
- *timescales and resourcing*
- *are there single or multiple ‘region/s’?*
- *what ‘big’ issues or themes to consider (need data / evidence?)*
- *produce final or part formed ideas within a year?*
- *what is format of RSS?*
- *need for clarity and guidance*

Common **opportunity themes** were:

- *opportunity to align strategies: e.g. transport, economic development*
- *think about possibilities – how to transition into the future / 2050*
- *look afresh & consider new approach (rapid ways of working?)*
- *see collaborative working benefit, establish regional working groups?*
- *use of the digital mapping tool*
- *explore what a RSS is – no one size fits all*
- *what does a RSS look like?*



Greater Manchester indicative spatial strategy  
Credit: Kevin Murray Associates presentation