

Local Place Plans. A Scottish Community Position

LPPs have the potential to be truly transformative for Scotland because communities are well placed to fulfil the Scottish Government's Place Making Agenda, and support the [Place Principle](#). At the same time, collaborating in this way will help the Scottish Government deliver on the Climate Change, Planning, Land Reform and Community Empowerment Acts, and their National Outcomes.

As LPPs will be informed by specific local needs and contexts, they could provide a holistic detailed context for interpreting planning objectives and policy, and for addressing the challenges of creating sustainable, resilient and thriving Places. LPPs could help with community capacity-building and enable an effective local response to the Climate Emergency. They could also help break down organisational silos, bring sectors together and provide a basis for pragmatic devolution and strategic national investment in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity. This has the potential to transform currently adversarial and inefficient processes into joined-up efficient collaboration.

Most importantly, because resident-led LPPs are produced and understood from the bottom-up, they have the power to engage and motivate whole communities. **For us, this is the true meaning of community empowerment and sustainability.** LPPs have the potential to support sustainability because residents would feel ownership of their local vision and the actions needed to fulfil it.

To ensure LPPs fulfil their purpose and potential, we propose **10 essential conditions must be met:**

1. **LPPs must carry weight.** Towards fulfilling the National Outcomes and addressing Climate Change, should a conflict exist between local authority and LPP interpretations of National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) and Local Development Plans (LDPs), then the agreed community position must be granted due priority and weight as a material consideration and basis for deliberation.
2. **Existing LPPs** or the equivalent must be integral to the development of new LDPs, providing a starting point for negotiations between communities, authorities, landowners and other stakeholders with an interest in the Place.
3. **New LPPs** need mechanisms to enable them to interface with adopted LDPs and national policy, and have a meaningful influence on decision-making. Mechanisms we have seen with this potential include story maps and formal guidance (e.g. such as Land Use or Development Frameworks), which could sit between LPPs and LDPs and 'bridge the gap'.
4. **Defending LPPs.** Credible legal routes for communities to question planning decisions that conflict strongly with LPPs, for example, via the Aarhus Convention, or a right-to-appeal or a court independent of the Scottish Government to decide appeals.
5. **Deliberative processes.** Duties which require authorities to engage in conversation with communities around their LPPs in planning processes and to allow reasonable time for community deliberation within their schedules.
6. **Representativeness.** Guidance which can ensure LPPs are resident-led and reflect the requisite diversity of perspectives and experiences which make up a Place, including children and young people, and are not used to further the interests of specific groups or landowners.
7. **Flexibility.** The approach taken to develop LPPs, as well as their form, content, or language should not be constrained or stifled by authorities with predetermined approaches, rules and priorities. This would allow for the freedom of expression of communities and their values and include the scope to define community boundaries which work best for residents.
8. **Non-Political Affiliation.** LPPs should be entirely non-party-political and non-sectarian. There can be no requirement for Community Councils or residents preparing LPPs to take into account the views of the area of councillors or politicians, unless they are participating purely in their capacity as local residents.
9. **Unambiguous Guidance on these Criteria.** Planning Advice Notes or other guidance issued for Local Authorities by the Scottish Government should set clear requirements on the implementation of all of these essential criteria, and leave no room for alternative interpretations.

10. **Funding** must be responsibly delegated towards building capacity at a local level and leveraging community expertise. This is best allocated through community anchor organisations or community empowerment teams based in local authorities with knowledge of the local area and needs, rather than through a centralised Scottish Government fund. Communities receiving funding should be incentivised to work together on their LPPs to promote a joined-up approach to land use and development.

Unless these criteria are met, LPPs can have no substantive place or effect within the planning system, and therefore, communities will not invest time and effort developing them. We have genuine concerns that LPPs will not fulfil their purpose or potential because their function will be determined by the priorities, timelines and hierarchical processes of the planning system (i.e. the National Planning Framework 4, Scottish Planning Policies and Local Development Plans). For example, in our experience:

- The planning system consistently values individual or economic interests above the shared vision of a community and is seen primarily as a vehicle to deliver economic growth or housing targets.
- There are fundamental differences between the holistic way we experience and express our Places, and the fragmented way local authorities and statutory bodies compartmentalise priorities, i.e. into social services, economy, housing, education, environment, health, roads etc.
- The language ordinary people use to express their views and aspirations about a Place differs from the formal technical language of policy, which promotes exclusion, rather than inclusion.
- Government agencies and projects leading on the Place Agenda do not willingly support truly community-led initiatives and can even hold them back. They also do not achieve significant levels of engagement, consensus or change because residents do not feel ownership over processes or believe the outcomes will make any meaningful difference.
- These issues are being further aggravated by declining public resources. As authorities need to work harder for less and under the threat of job losses, they can impose tighter controls on things they cannot manage directly, and become more averse to taking risk or delegation.

As a result, across Scotland, Community Council and resident-led initiatives that engage with the Place Agenda are frequently frustrated in their efforts, or simply ignored or quashed. If truly community-led LPPs are not supported or taken seriously, it is likely to lead to deep-seated disengagement, divisiveness and discontent at the local level.

In April 2019, the First Minister declared the Climate Emergency, along with a commitment to become a zero-carbon country by 2050. The level of response required for this is of a scale, complexity and urgency not seen in the history of Scotland. The Scottish Government must engage and collaborate with its citizens in unique and novel ways in order to ensure that the changes that *must* happen *will* happen. The threats posed by Climate Change and biodiversity loss are critical to our survival, and the community-led approach to Local Place Plans (LPPs) proposed here must be seriously considered within the context of the Climate Emergency.

As such, LPPs must stand in their own right and language and have their own status as ‘community policy’ determining the appropriate local response to the Climate Emergency, The Place Principle, and local economic and housing development needs and duties. The development of Secondary Legislation and Local and National Development Plans must allow enough flexibility within the planning framework for communities to express LPPs in the way which works best for them, while also granting them the weight they are due. If it doesn’t, then communities will not come together to develop them, and the Scottish Government’s vision of delivering on Climate Change will fail. Equally, if LPPs are given status as ‘policy’ in their own right and communities are acknowledged as true and equal partners, then the Government will succeed by engaging and unleashing Scotland’s greatest untapped resource: its People.