

DTAS webinar summary – Local Place Plans in context

By Beth Landon

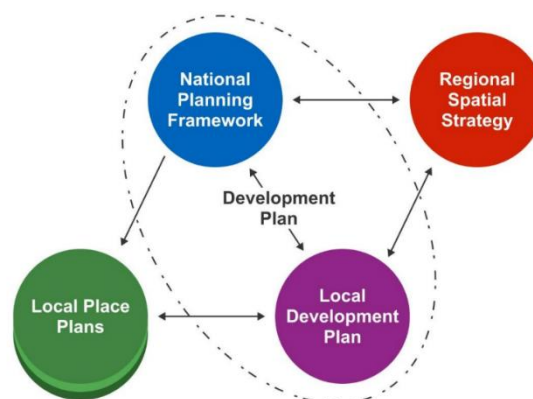
Across the whole of Scotland communities and local authorities are getting to grips with recent changes in planning law. At a community level, this means the development of Local Place Plans (LPPs), which are essentially community action plans, but which have a spatial (map based) element, for example plans for community ownership or management of land, buildings or other assets.

In the Scottish Borders community involvement in developing and implementing these plans has had several different labels such as “placemaking”, “place plans” or “community-led planning” (our personal favourite!). We are not alone in finding these changes confusing, and so in May 2023 DTAS (Development Trust Association Scotland) held a webinar to help shape learning between communities.

There were four speakers, three from Development Trusts leading on developing LPPs, one of which was our very own Anne McNeill from A Heart for Duns, who is coordinating the development of a LPP for Duns and District, and I was the fourth speaker. For the last two and a half years I have been studying a Sustainable Rural Development MSc, and am currently undertaking my final research project, focussing on LPPs and their potential to lead to increased community ownership. I was invited to share my learning on how LPPs fit into the legislation framework and their policy context, and the following is a summary of what I shared, adapted for our membership at Borders Community Action:

The LPP regulations were passed in January 2022 and enabled by the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019. They are intended to enable community-led development to align with Scottish Government (SG) aims of encouraging communities to own and manage land and to have a greater participation in land use decisions. They therefore align closely with Land Reform and Community Empowerment policies.

The Planning (Scotland) Act sets out a plan-led approach to planning, with four levels from national to local. [The National Planning Framework 4 \(NPF4\)](#) is the national level of the statutory planning framework. The Local Development Plans (LDPs) produced by the local authorities are also part of the statutory planning framework and need to take regard of any registered LPPs, but LPPs themselves are not part of statutory planning. Regional Spatial Strategies too are not statutory. The following diagram is a helpful visual of how these plans relate to one another, with the plans within the dashed line forming the statutory planning framework.



The secondary legislation relating to LPPs (The Town and Country Planning (Local Place Plans) (Scotland) Regulations 2021) came into force in January 2022 and the guidance relating to these is [here](#).

The secondary legislation relating to LDPs (The Town and Country Planning (Development Planning) (Scotland) Regulations 2023) came into force on 19 May 2023, but we are awaiting further guidance and regulations on how LDPs can be amended (e.g. to ensure they have regard to LPPs as they are registered) after they have been adopted (details can be found in the guidance for the new style LDPs [here](#)).

Scottish Borders Council's new Local Development Plan (LDP) is due to be adopted in the autumn, and the draft plan is available [here](#). Registered LPPs have the potential to present a case for amendment of the LDP, and therefore influence statutory planning, for example by identifying land or buildings of particular significance to the community and then facilitating community ownership.

When developing LPPs it is key to ensure they align with the NPF4 and doing so will build a case for amending the LDP. To understand why this is, it is helpful to understand more about the NPF4. The NPF4 is the spatial interpretation of the NPF National *Performance* Framework (NPF), which is illustrated in the graphic below. The NPF is the Scottish interpretation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The NPF4 therefore aims to integrate the SDGs into the planning policies of local authorities.



Around the edge of the circle in the above visual of the NPF are the National Outcomes and place has a relationship with all of them – some more directly than others. The [Place Standard Tool](#) is designed to check alignment with the NPF4, and is even referred to in this directly (see [annex D](#)). Planning authorities are required to use the Place Standard Tool in their own planning. This is therefore a key tool for communities developing LPPs, to build a case for amendment of the LDP.

Other tools will also be helpful for developing LPPs, for example mapping tools such as [Parish Online](#), which can be accessed via community councils for free in Scotland (this was highlighted by one of the other speakers at the webinar).

The main benefits which I can see in developing LPPs or converting community action plans to LPPs are:

- a) To attract funding for projects - funding streams tend to align with government policy and the process of developing LPPs should ensure alignment with the national outcomes and this place-based, community-led, joined-up approach to planning.
- b) To facilitate planning permission for community-led projects, in particular community ownership of land and assets, through amending the LDP.
- c) To contribute to a better working relationship with the local authority - as we grapple with these changes in partnership with SBC the community sector will facilitate a culture change to a more community-led, collaborative way of planning for the places we live.