

NATIONAL PLANNING FRAMEWORK 4 POSITION STATEMENT

The Council Executive considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Planning, Economic Development and Regeneration advising members of publication by Scottish Government of a Position Statement on National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) for informal consultation and to set out the council's response to that consultation.

It was recommended that the Council Executive:

1. Note the terms of the report; and
2. Agree the response as set out in Appendix 2 for submission to Scottish Government as the council's response to the consultation.

Motion

The public have gained a greater appreciation of nature during lockdown as evidenced in the wide media.

The British Trust for Ornithology established that in the last decades of the 20th century, 44 million birds have gone from the British countryside. Birds are warm-blooded invertebrates, high in the food chain, and are rooted in the wide divergence of small mammal, insect and plant communities. For many people they conjure up a great sense of pleasure and conversely sadness in loss of numbers and species with many being re-designated as 'red list' status.

Also, a vanishingly small amount of ancient woodland and hedges remain in Scotland not assisted by the little protection given by Scottish Planning Policy which is determined by Scottish Government. In this regard, ancient woodland is arbitrarily defined as woodland in which trees have grown for over 400 years and that in that period a rare and special ecology has evolved. Bacterial and fungal infection is waging war on our woodlands and in urban areas of West Lothian from pressure for housing development.

Over the last four decades, national and devolved governments in the UK have retreated extensively from state policy and protection of nature. It is left to voluntary agencies which require charitable and membership funds aided by caring volunteers to act as lead players.

Therefore, Council Executive agrees:

- To approve the recommendations in the report
- To instruct the Chief Executive to write to the First Minister to

request that Scottish Government without delay, in the vein of this amendment, introduce updated Scottish Planning Policy to give absolute protection to ancient woodland and hedges, and for developments exceeding 0.25 hectares, provide an ecological report carried out at a time of year when plant/mammal/insect and bird life are most readily identifiable.

- Moved by the Chair and seconded by Councillor Cathy Muldoon.

Decision

To unanimously approve the terms of the motion.