
NORTH AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

27 January 2021

Planning Committee

Title:	Transforming Places Together: Scotland's Digital Strategy for Planning
Purpose:	To update the Committee on the digital transformation of the Scottish Planning System.
Recommendation:	It is recommended that the Planning Committee notes the content of the report.

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 As part of the wider programme of planning reform and the ambition to build a 'Digital Scotland', the Scottish Government wishes to develop a "world leading digital planning system" that helps connect people with their places to deliver a prosperous, green and fair country. To achieve this vision, a Digital Strategy for Planning has been published.
- 1.2 The strategy defines a long-term strategic direction for how Scotland's planning system will digitally transform, embracing the opportunities new digital technologies and data present. Benefits arising from the digital transformation of planning will include: creating an accessible, next generation online portal that provides easy access, in one place, to all information about planning, enabling communities to actively shape their places; improve the planning system for business and industry by creating more consistent, streamlined and coordinated planning processes; and the potential for local planning authorities to avoid costs and generate greater income.

2. Background

- 2.1 In 2015 an independent review of the planning system recommended that innovative use of data and technology in the planning system should be explored, with the potential for this to provide significant benefits for the system. Following this the Scottish Government established a Digital Taskforce to guide and shape a programme of digital transformation which underpins the broader package of planning reform.
- 2.2 A key milestone in the digital transformation programme was reached at the end of November 2020 with the publication of Scotland's Digital Strategy for Planning, *Transforming Places Together*. The Strategy is structured in three main sections: the Vision – which sets out the ambition, aims and benefits of this transformation; the Opportunity – which explains the foundation and scale of possibility; and the Transformation – which sets out the goals and priorities for delivering transformation.

2.3 The vision is for Scotland to have a world leading digital planning system that helps connect people with their places to deliver a prosperous, green and fair country; facilitating a planning system that is more inclusive, efficient and which supports sustainable economic development both locally and across Scotland. The Strategy establishes a framework of five missions, each with five-year goals and priority actions which Scottish Government believes will digitally enable Scotland's planning system and achieve whole-system digital transformation of planning over the next 5 years. A comprehensive approach to transformation is proposed where new technology, data and innovation sit alongside wider change priorities including culture, skills and process change.

2.4 The five missions are as follows:

Mission 1: Unlock the value of planning data

Mission 2: Deliver an end-to-end digital planning experience

Mission 3: Create the conditions for digital to flourish

Mission 4: Use digital tools to drive collaboration and engagement

Mission 5: Embed a culture of digital innovation

2.5 Digital planning can help how we make best use of data, information and opinion to tackle the needs and challenges together and bring our future places to life. In numbers, the digital opportunity will create 1600 new construction and development jobs, provide an economic boost of up to £200m; enable a £25k-35k saving per application for large house builders and save 28% time for planners and planning staff – through streamlining processes and workflow, removing time-consuming manual handling tasks and a reduction in inbound calls savings to planning authorities of up to £20.4 million are estimated.

2.6 The digital strategy for planning is supported by a funding commitment of £35m and reflects the broader ambitions set out within Scotland's national Digital Strategy refresh: *Renewing Scotland's full potential in a digital world*. In order to deliver successful, joined-up, digital transformation the policy remains closely aligned to the national strategy, ensuring greater coherence and supporting the ambition to build a Digital Scotland.

2.7 Scottish Government intend to launch the programme early this year, with the immediate actions set out to achieve the five missions taken over the next 18-24 months. These include a mixture of quick-wins that will build on the success of the existing eDevelopment service whilst also building the foundations for the large-scale transformation of which will take place in the longer-term.

3. Proposals

3.1 It is recommended that the Planning Committee notes the content of the report.

4. Implications/Socio-economic Duty

Financial

4.1 None

Human Resources

4.2 None

Legal

4.3 None.

Equality/Socio-economic

4.4 Digital transformation seeks to deliver a forward-looking planning system that works for everyone and assists all sections of communities to engage with the process.

Environmental and Sustainability

4.5 Digital transformation has the potential to significantly improve the evidence base available to planners to promote 'good' planning that delivers sustainable development, connected places and ensure progress towards climate change targets.

Key Priorities

4.6 The digital transformation of the planning system in North Ayrshire will support many of our key priorities including active and strong communities; an inclusive, growing and enterprising local economy; affordable and well-designed homes; vibrant, welcoming and attractive places and a sustainable environment.

Community Wealth Building

4.7 Digital Planning can assist local communities and support the aspirations of Community Wealth Building, including through regeneration and maximisation of our land and assets.

5. Consultation

5.1 *Transforming Places Together* lays the foundation for a user-centric transformation of the Scottish planning system based upon a detailed period of research and stakeholder engagement. The Scottish Government is committed to working in partnership with local governments, businesses, industries and community sectors, to realise the vision.

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For further information please contact **Alistair Gemmell, Strategic Planning Manager**, on **01294 324021**.

Background Papers

[Transforming places Together: digital strategy for planning – gov.scot](https://www.gov.scot/publications/transforming-places-together/digital-strategy-for-planning/pages/2.aspx)