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Indicative Regional Spatial Strategies - Feedback January 2021

INTRODUCTION

A strong collaborative approach has been adopted towards exploring and developing indicative Regional Spatial Strategies (iRSS) such that early thinking can help inform the preparation of the draft National Planning Framework (NPF4). Learning from this will also help to shape the Statutory Guidance that will enact the new Duty to prepare Regional Spatial Strategies (RSS).

It is evident that the iRSS submissions received in September 2020 are founded on a strong place-based understanding and provide a solid basis for taking this work forward. We intend to support further development by enabling the preparation of a more consistent picture that is informed by the collective contributions to date.

Once a more complete picture is assembled we will aim to integrate and prioritise opportunities within a national context. A national overview will seek to promote proposals that reflect national significance and add value by framing them within a coherent national spatial strategy. There is the option for priorities identified by regional groupings to be embedded in their formal, finalised and adopted Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) and, where appropriate, we recommend proposals should align with national policy and be supported by evidence based appraisals.

This is an emerging area of work and this feedback is intended to assist further development of indicative Regional Spatial Strategies (iRSS) prior to a submission by the end of April 2021 that will inform preparation of the draft NPF4. Alongside this the Scottish Government will be considering the ideas and issues from a national perspective. Further information on iRSS is provided in [an update note](#) and earlier development work is available on the [HOPS KHub](#).



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A CONSISTENT BASIS FOR PROVIDING FEEDBACK

Feedback recognises that the early stages of producing the first generation of RSSs is a work in progress, with each contribution being taken forward in ways that are appropriate to each RSS authority/grouping. A diversity of approaches has been adopted as evident in the adjacent 'mash-up' diagram of initial iRSS submissions (September 2020).

In order to now provide a degree of consistent 'read-across' as a platform to share and compare ideas, a [summary of the iRSS submissions](#) (September 2020) has been produced which shows the emerging themes and priorities from each iRSS to date.

In addition, an integrative cartographic exercise has been carried out that maps projects and proposals in relation to seven overarching themes (derived from the initial submissions) which are indicated in the following pages with associated observations and comments.

We trust that this feedback will be of assistance in engaging more widely and taking forward the development of each iRSS. Feedback is offered in terms of: A] general reflections, and B] comments in response to the themed mapping work

Clarification: some iRSS include proposals for housing delivery including estimates of numbers of homes required and potential strategic sites. We would ask that authorities bear in mind that work on NPF4 and housing is progressing and that we will be in contact in due course to set out how this will be achieved. In the meantime it would be premature to comment on proposals put forward at this stage.



A ['mash-up' diagram](#) of all initial iRSS submissions



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GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

1. It may be helpful to check against the requirements of the new RSS Duty to identify:

- Need for strategic development (*development that is likely to have a significant impact on future development within an area of more than one planning authority*)
- Outcomes to which strategic development will contribute
- Priorities for delivery
- Proposed locations in form of a map or diagram

2. NPF4 will co-ordinate across key SG policy areas; there is an opportunity to consider how projects align with key policy drivers, such as:

- **National Transport Strategy (NTS2) and the second Strategic Transport Projects Review (STPR2)**
- **Infrastructure Investment Plan (IIP)**
- **Economic Development / Growth Deals**
- **Climate Change Plan**
- **Capital Investment Plan**
- **Other/s** - In addition there is opportunity to align with other regional / cross boundary policy areas that were evident in discussion sessions, such as: Regional Land Use Partnerships / Frameworks, Forestry & Woodland strategies, Tourism strategies, other/s, etc

3. NPF4 considerations

Where appropriate, it would be helpful to identify and reference how iRSS are responding to specific NPF4 considerations that include:

- National Performance Framework / Outcomes and / or UN SDGs
- Statutory Outcomes – Carbon, Housing (elderly / disabled), Inequalities, Rural Re-population, Bio-diversity, Health & Wellbeing
- Main thematic considerations – Climate Change, People, Work, Place

4. Working to longer / 2050 timescale

The iRSS should distinguish between **short term commitments and longer term ‘aspirations’** that are consistent with national policy and which are intended to deliver against net zero ambitions.

With this in mind, and recognising an infrastructure first approach to delivery, proposals should be supported by **evidence based appraisal** and identify lead & support delivery bodies / agencies if known.

As noted in the IIP, proposals should be **resilient to change**, particularly climate change projections (extreme weather, flooding etc), demographic change (age, growth in single occupant households, disability, etc) and technological change. Strategies should also respond positively to the pandemic.

5. Strategy v projects

It may be helpful to reflect on the extent to which the current iRSS presents a cohesive long term Regional Spatial Strategy direction to 2050, and the degree to which it currently represents a ‘collection of projects’.

6. Mapping / spatial alignment

There is an opportunity for iRSS to consider the extent to which **strategies spatially align with neighbouring iRSS areas** and where there may be scope to optimise that alignment (also considered in ‘mapping’ comments provided below).

7. Synthesis and consistency

There is an opportunity to consider how a more consistent approach might be achieved. E.g.:

- The degree to which **context, background and supporting narrative** are required
- The extent to which a spatial strategy is expressed through a **diagram with brief supporting narrative**
- **Consistency of key** / legend / representation / format (the mapping work suggests a legend that might be commonly adopted?)





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MOVEMENT INFRASTRUCTURE

Observations

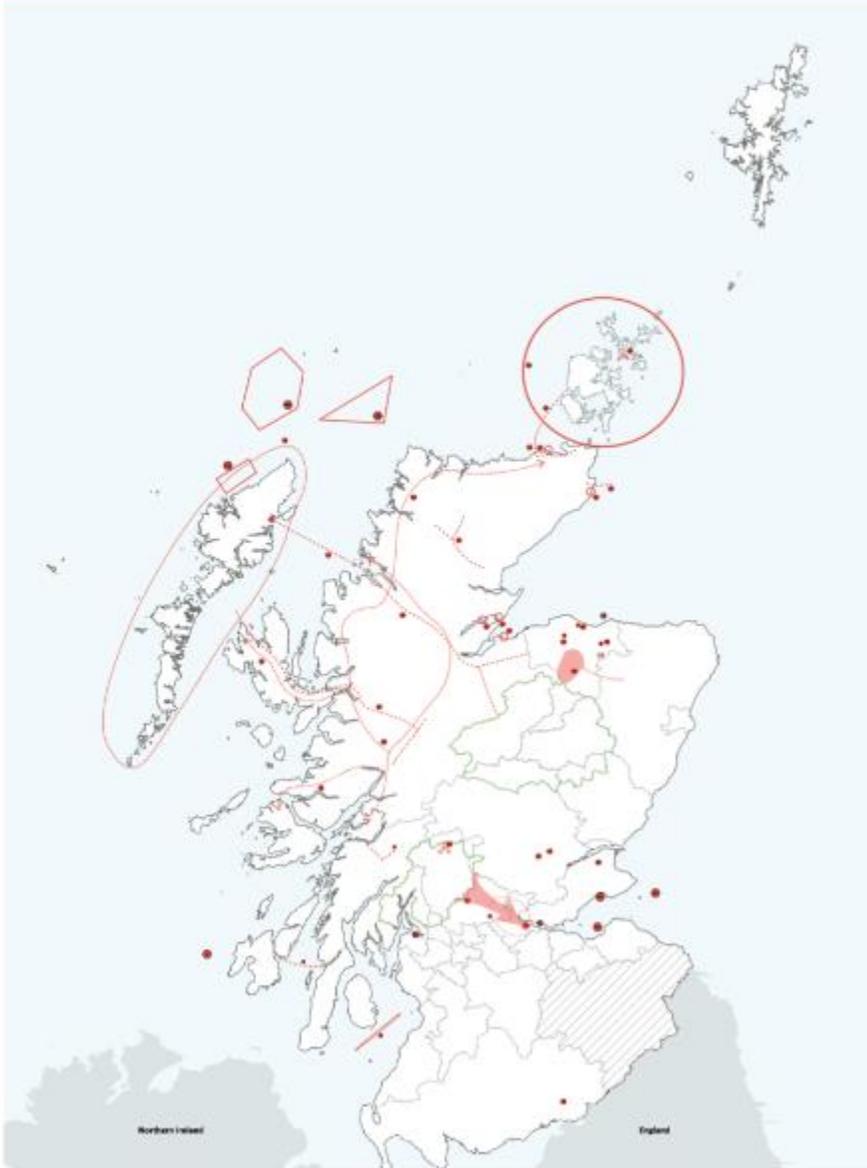
- Priorities cover all modes of transport.
- There appears to be more attention to connectivity in rural / island locations.
- Some priorities reflect existing links and infrastructure (i.e. the 'current' situation), some focus on committed projects and others indicate long term aspirations.
- In some cases, strategic links identified by one grouping stop at their RSS border.

Questions

- Does the spatial strategy (land use and transport infrastructure proposals) support NTS2 priorities and outcomes, particularly in relation to Climate Change?
- Do proposals avoid 'locking in' higher carbon travel and transport?
- What are strategic implications for public transport (if any)?
- Have NTS2 travel and investment hierarchies been considered, and how?
- How will plans assist in reducing car kilometres by 20% by 2030?
- Have transport infrastructure projects emerged from a transport appraisal?

- Have cross LA boundary travel needs been considered?
- Is there scope to look across boundaries to provide more strategic connectivity?
- How do projects align with the infrastructure first approach?
- Having viewed the collective input, is there anything groups would wish to add/remove?
- Are groupings considering implementing a regional electric vehicle charging strategy?
- Is there a need for consistency in how strategic assets are considered and/or represented? i.e. ports, airports, etc
- Has the scope for virtual/digital connectivity been fully considered to reduce the need for 'unsustainable' physical connectivity?
- Is the strategic importance of localised 'connectivity' represented? – i.e. walking / cycling / 20 minute neighbourhood concept.
- Should inter/regional thinking seek to join up long distance walking / cycling opportunities whilst identifying associated infrastructure requirements?





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UTILITIES, ENERGY & DECARBONISATION

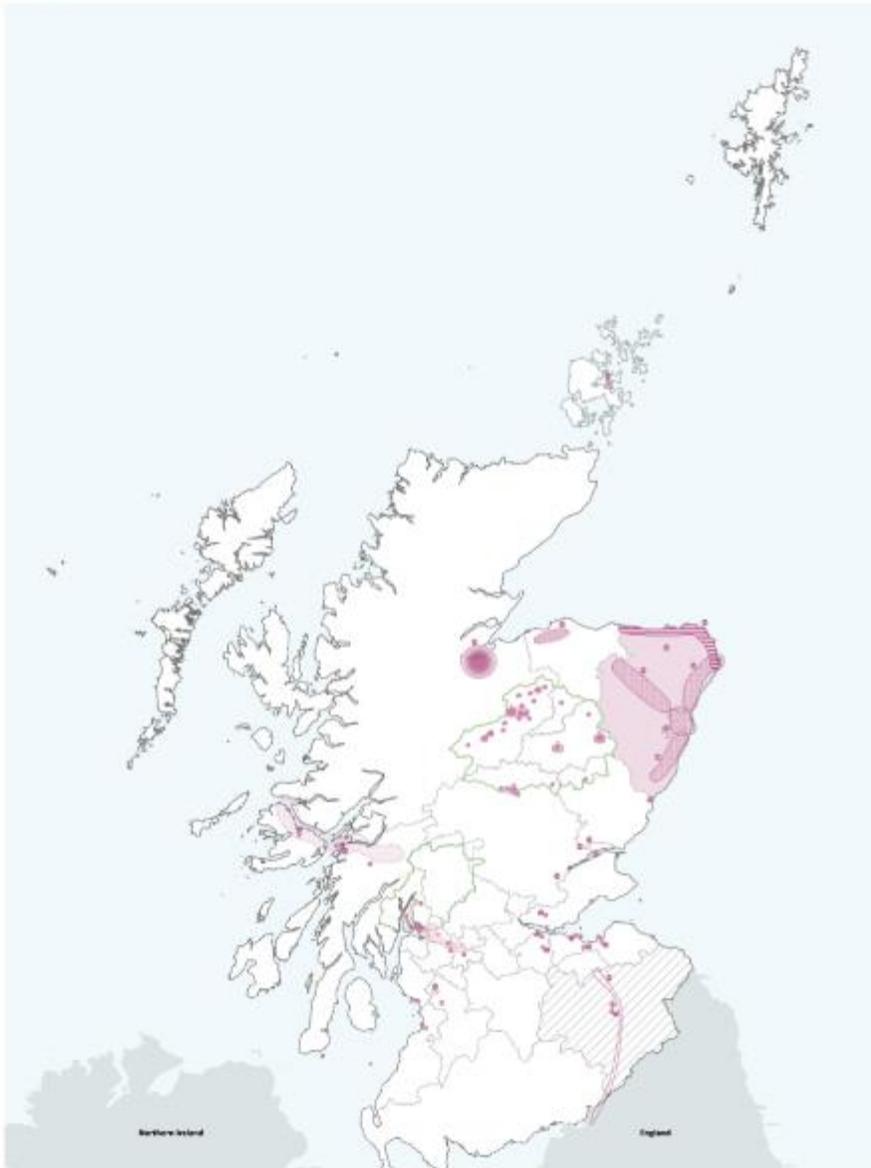
Observations

- Priorities include grid connections, renewable energy generation, and energy related development / innovation projects.
- Digital is also important, with fibre connectivity across Highland.
- There appears to be an emphasis on energy in more rural and island areas.
- There seems to be less emphasis in cities / major urban areas, and in the south.
- Offshore links are important.
- There are various opportunities emerging relating to hydrogen.
- Digital might have been expected to feature more prominently (particularly in rural areas).
- Interesting that LLTNPA and Moray illustrate strategic relationships with adjacent areas.

Questions

- Is this a complete picture of priorities? We are aware that energy and the transition to low carbon are priorities for the North East for example, but this is not currently represented graphically.
- Are there other energy related projects which should be highlighted? (e.g. solar?)
- Are there strategic issues around water that should be included?
- Can we build a more complete picture of opportunities around hydrogen infrastructure?
- Are groupings considering implementing a regional electric vehicle charging strategy?
- Is there potential for projects to join up across different RSSs?
- Do projects / proposals align with the IIP?





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SETTLEMENTS

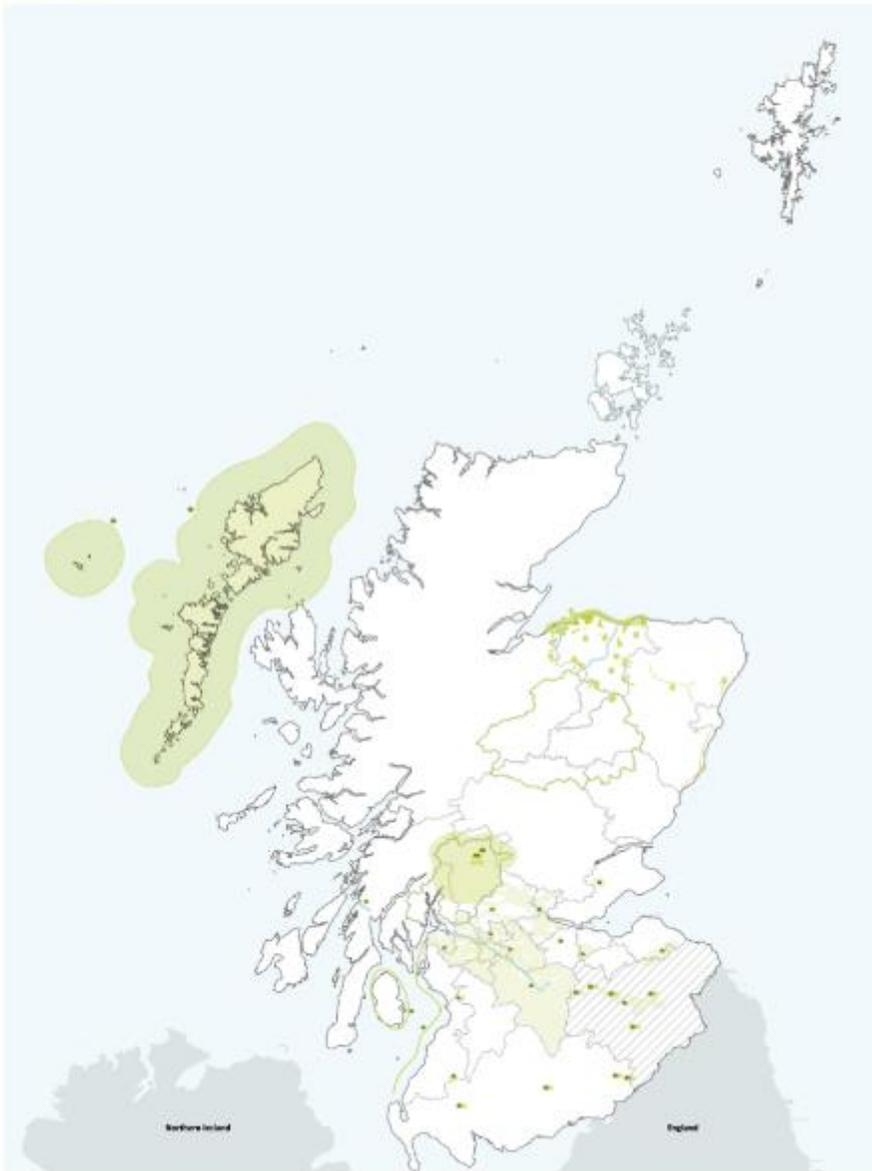
Observations

- There is a diverse approach - Some areas identify individual settlements, some focus on strategic settlements / growth corridors. Others have not focused on this aspect.
- The current picture suggests priorities for the Inverness and the North East, the central belt and Argyll and Bute.
- Interesting that National Parks have identified areas for new homes.
- Is rural repopulation likely to be a priority which might be shared more widely?
- Focus of this map skewed by CNPA and North East (both plans to be updated).
- A variety of terminologies are used – ‘growth hub’, ‘growth area’, ‘strategic regional hub’, ‘growth corridor’, etc
- Sense of hierarchy of settlement message not clear (apart from Inverness).

Questions

- Would groups wish to revisit contributions having seen the collective input of others?
- Does an infrastructure first approach underpin the spatial strategy/growth areas? And is this underpinned by NTS2 sustainable travel and NTS2/IIP investment hierarchies?
- Could strategic growth priorities be identified?
- To what extent are past trends / existing pressures being identified?
- Is development proactively guided to locations that demonstrably meet climate change targets and inclusive growth ambitions?
- Could groups consider strategic regeneration priorities?
- Is there scope to identify areas for rural repopulation that are strategically significant?
- Is ‘regeneration’ (renewal / re-invigoration) of settlements a ‘strategic’ consideration for all?
- Are any settlements under threat / re-imagining? E.g. coastal climate action?





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ENVIRONMENT, LANDSCAPE & LAND USE

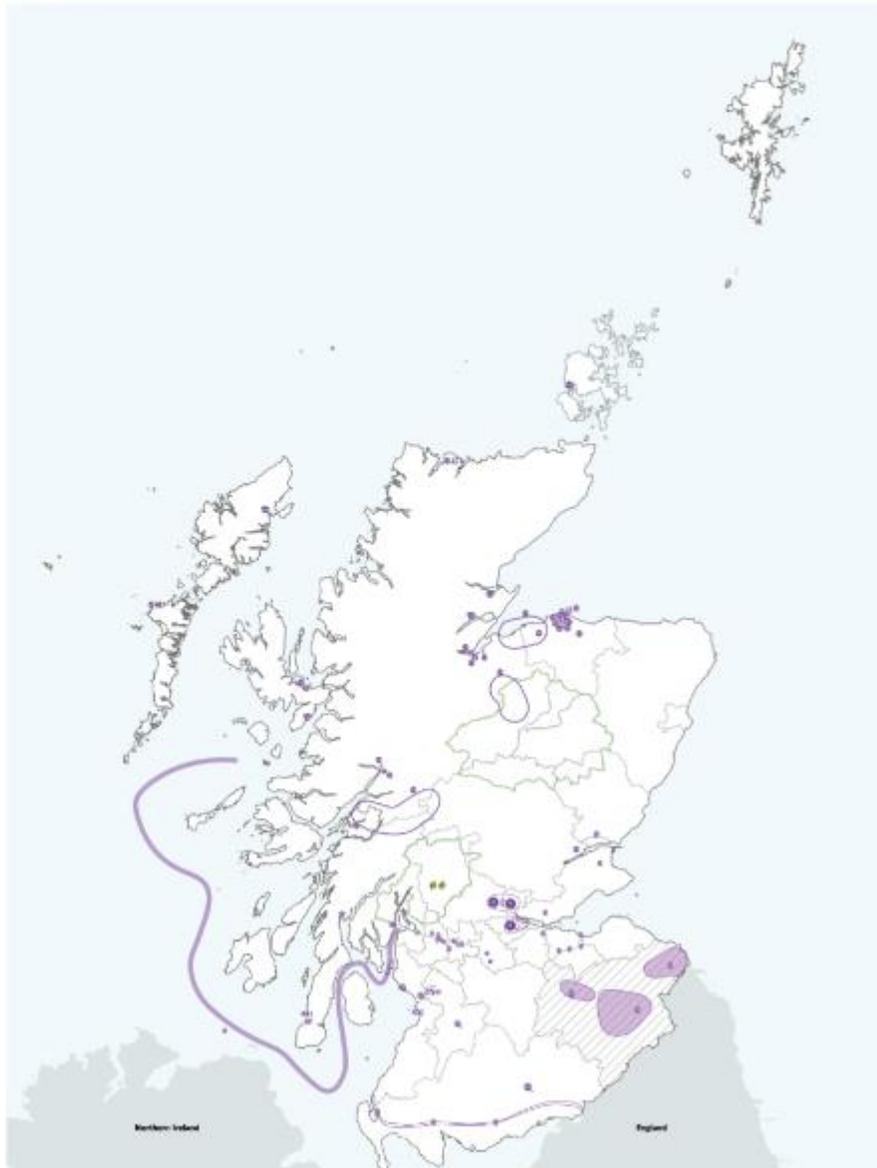
Observations

- Priorities include green networks, flood management, woodland / afforestation, canals, land management, agriculture and food production, marine links.
- This appears to be particularly strong in the South of Scotland, Ayrshire, Clydeplan, SESplan, Forth Valley, North East, Moray, and Western Isles.
- Surprising that this theme isn't more of a strategic consideration more generally.
- Large areas are unrepresented – could be considered in terms of catchment / habitat / ecological networks / eco-systems, etc?
- There may be opportunities to align with other regional / cross boundary policy areas that were evident in discussion sessions, such as Regional Land Use Partnerships/Frameworks.

Questions

- To what extent are we showing protection / recognising existing assets rather than identifying future priorities?
- Are there strategic spatial priorities that might emerge with some further co-ordination?
- Need to think cross-boundary to capture catchment scale priorities?
- Scope to work with the key agencies to build a fuller picture of this?
- Are there aspects – i.e. peatland / carbon sequestration; green networks – that are strategic considerations?
- Is coastal management a strategic consideration for all? Or is there a need to identify / focus on specific 'at risk' areas?
- Should flood mitigation, currently noted as projects, be considered as a wider strategic land management / catchment issue?
- Is there potential for woodland / forestry carbon sequestration to be identified at scale?





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ECONOMY & EMPLOYMENT

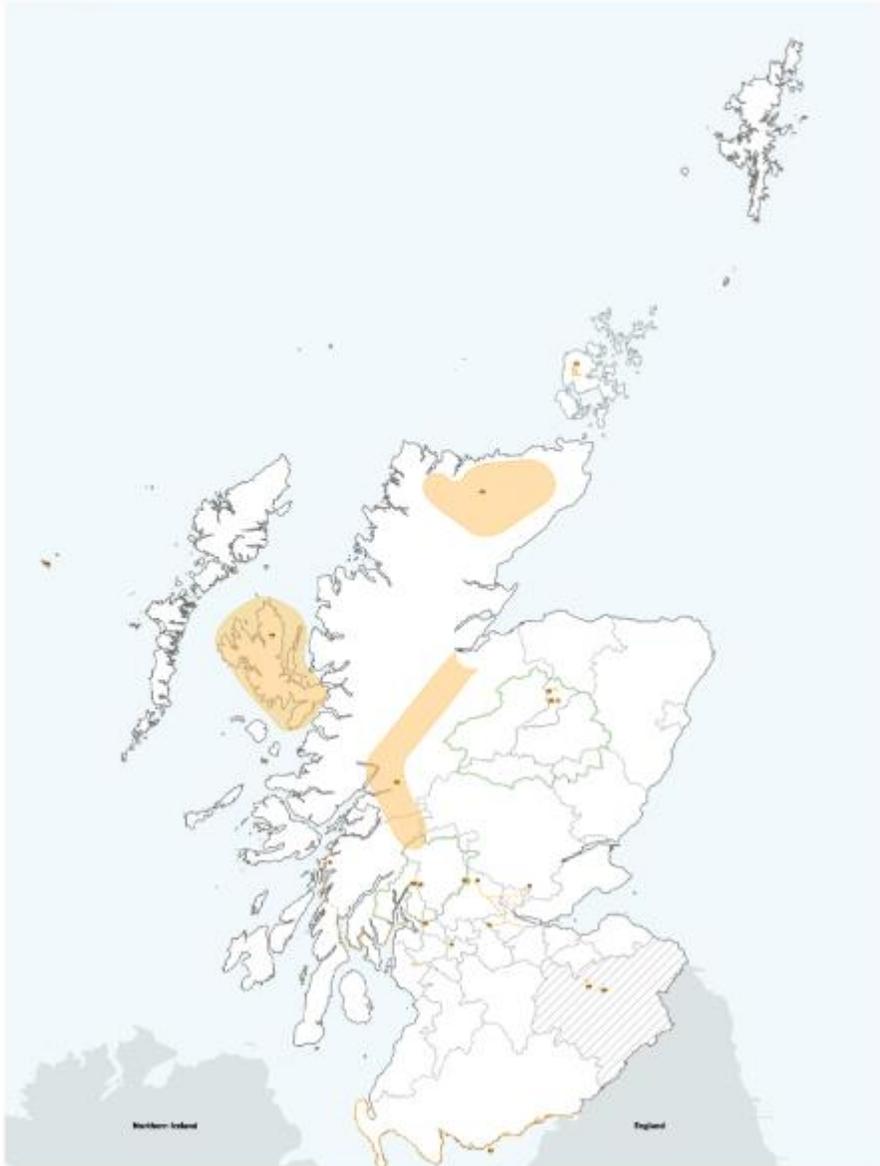
Observations

- Priorities include: sectoral developments (e.g. advanced manufacturing, spaceports, marine, aerospace, culture, innovation and research).
- Other priorities cover business generally – strategic employment sites, economic development zones.
- Some areas cover services – e.g. health and education.
- Green recovery specifically noted in LLTNPA.
- There is uneven geographic representation.
- Spatially there is a focus on the Central belt, south of Scotland, Moray, Inner Moray Firth, Argyll and Bute and Western Isles.
- Uncertain about the extent to which strategies are responding to implications from the COVID pandemic.
- Opportunities to align with the Infrastructure Investment Plan (IIP) and Economic Development / Growth Deals .

Questions

- Does iRSS support a wellbeing economy? ...and/or how is this represented?
- Are the 6 economic strategy sectors covered – culture/creative, food and drink, financial and business, life sciences, tourism, energy?
- Represented mostly as projects – what about spatial intent/strategy?
- Are the iRSSs covering strategic investment corridors and focusing on a spatial strategy? E.g. South of Scotland focusing investment along the A75 / hubs in the Borders, etc.
- Is there a fit with the Capital Investment Plan / nationally significant investment sites?
- Is there a need for more fuller coverage of City and Growth Deal projects?
- To what extent are projects considered to be regionally significant rather than national?
- Need for consistency? Some referenced as City Deal; others as nominated projects?
- Implications for rural / remote economies?
- Are there implications for public estate programmes? (i.e. rationalisation strategies?)





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TOURISM & WORLD HERITAGE

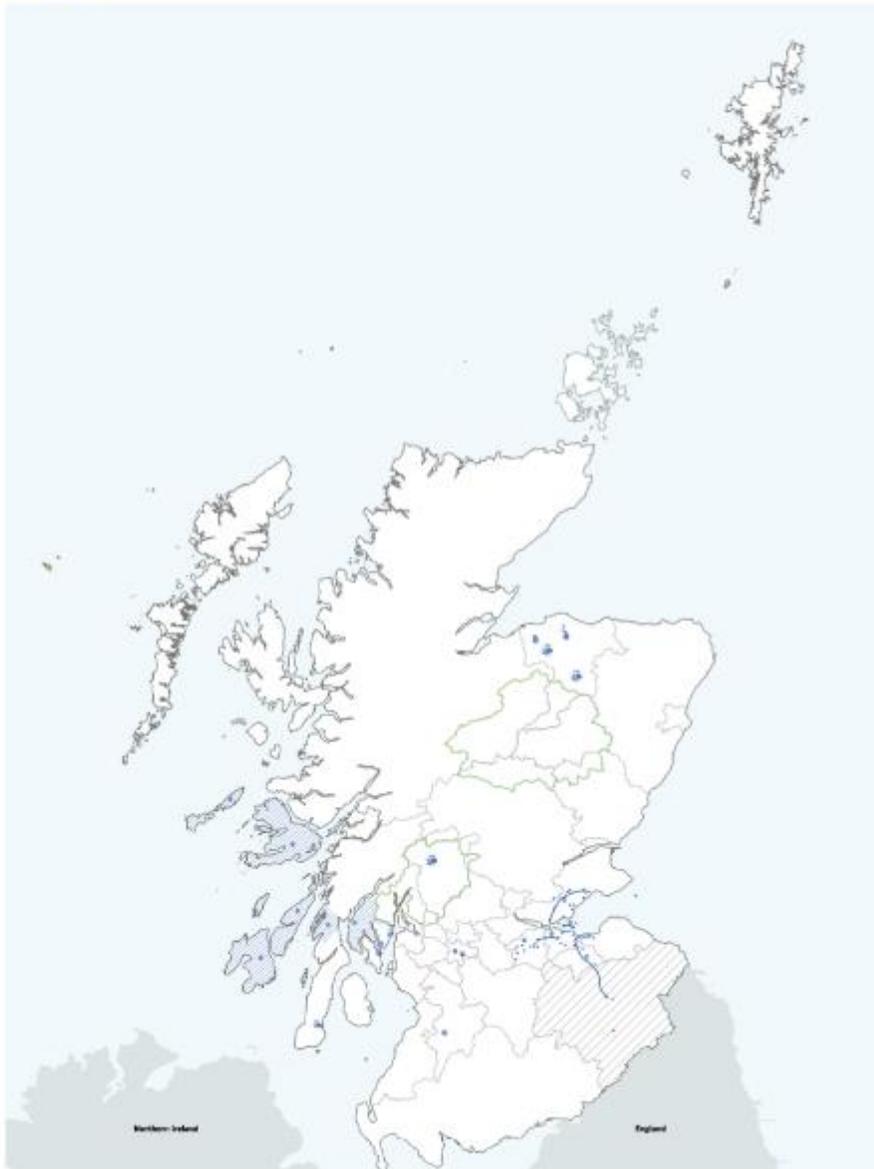
Observations

- This appears to be a particular priority for National Parks, and Central Belt (perhaps because of proximity pressures from large centres of population?), Argyll and Bute, Highland, South of Scotland and Orkney.
- Some World Heritage Sites have been recorded, others have not.
- Unclear what is being represented – is this ‘static’ / what currently exists ... or ‘dynamic’ / what could be?
- Highlights a dilemma between ‘projects’ and ‘strategy’ – i.e. mountain bike trail v outdoor recreation opportunities that include and link with other aspects (e.g. accommodation, employment, servicing, etc)

Questions

- What is missing from this? Opportunities and pressures?
- Is there scope to involve VisitScotland and others in developing a fuller strategy?
- How does this reflect the National Tourism Strategy?
- Could a more complete tourism network with hubs support a low carbon strategic approach to future tourism infrastructure?
- Scope for further integration with tourism strategies, coastal / cultural programmes? e.g. festivals, ‘year of...’, changing perceptions and mindsets about innovative possibilities?
- ‘Tourism’ = includes long distance walking / cycling networks? ... what supporting infrastructure is required?





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REGENERATION

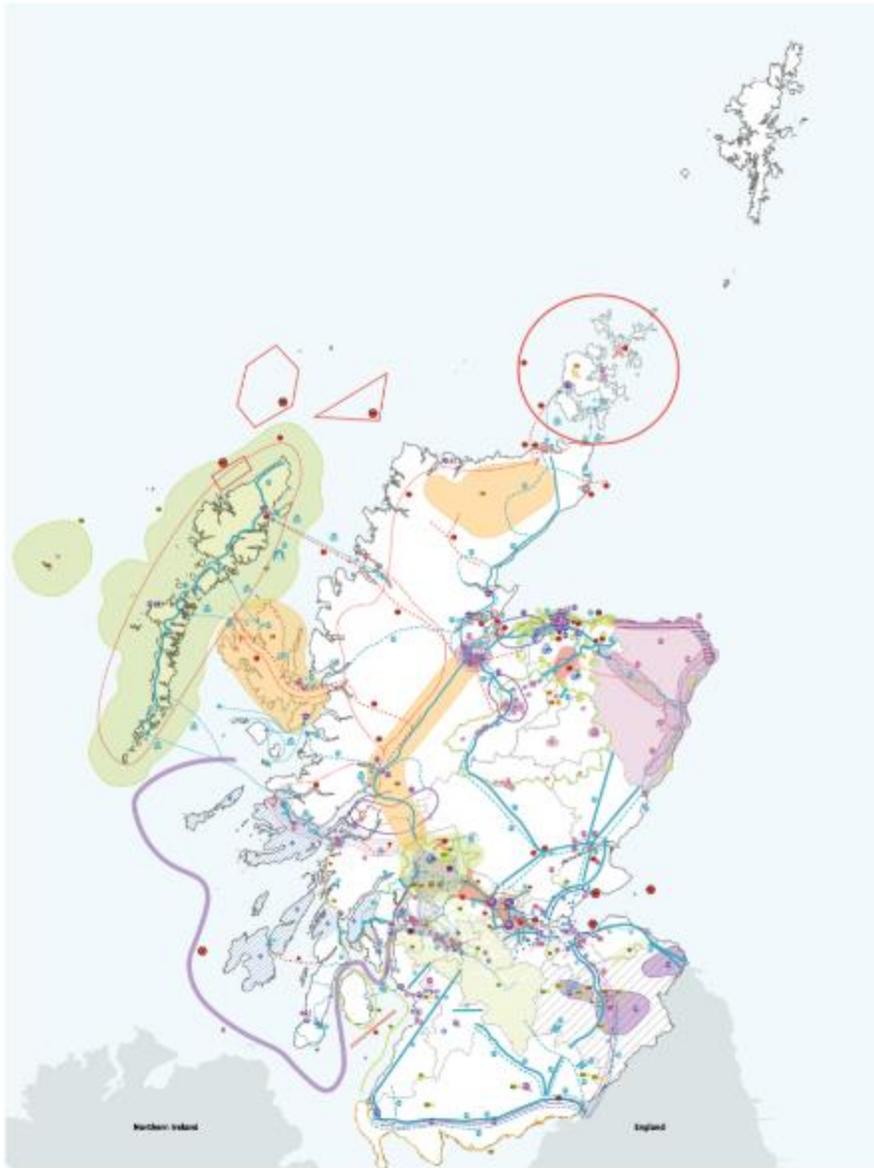
Observations

- Spatially / visually, this appears to be a priority for Moray, South East Scotland, Argyll and Bute and Clydeplan
- Priorities include addressing urban deprivation / inequality, focusing on economically fragile areas, rural development and coalfield regeneration.
- Is there an opportunity for more consistent interpretation?
- For some it appears to be about projects; for others it's about connectivity.
- The topic of 'regeneration' covers different aspects e.g. an equalities agenda; links to economic development; connectivity; access to opportunities.

Questions

- Coverage appears to be partial – should other geographic priorities be identified?
- Is there a strategic overlap with prioritising the reuse of Vacant & Derelict Land? ... might this be illustrated?
- Can we provide a fuller picture of remote rural / repopulation issues in spatial terms?
- Should this theme ('regeneration') amalgamate with Settlements? ...and / or Economy? (depending on land use proposed.)
- Is this a mapping of what exists? ...Or what is intended to happen as part of a strategic ambition?
- Spatially, what will change / what will happen?





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COMBINED MAP

Observations

- This is a complex picture combining emerging national and regional priorities.
- There would be value in considering how regional inputs better link and work together.
- Areas of growth appear to focus around existing cities and populated areas. There are opportunities around the central belt and east coast, as well as along key corridors.
- There is strong emphasis on rural innovation.
- Connectivity is currently a priority - a national spatial strategy will need to be underpinned by the NTS2 travel and investment hierarchies and aligned with STPR2, and the IIP.
- The map underlines the interdependence of urban and rural Scotland and the need to plan both in a coherent and complementary way.
- The mapping highlights issues of joining up / connectivity over wider areas.
- Overall it appears as a collection of projects rather than a clear set of spatial strategies.

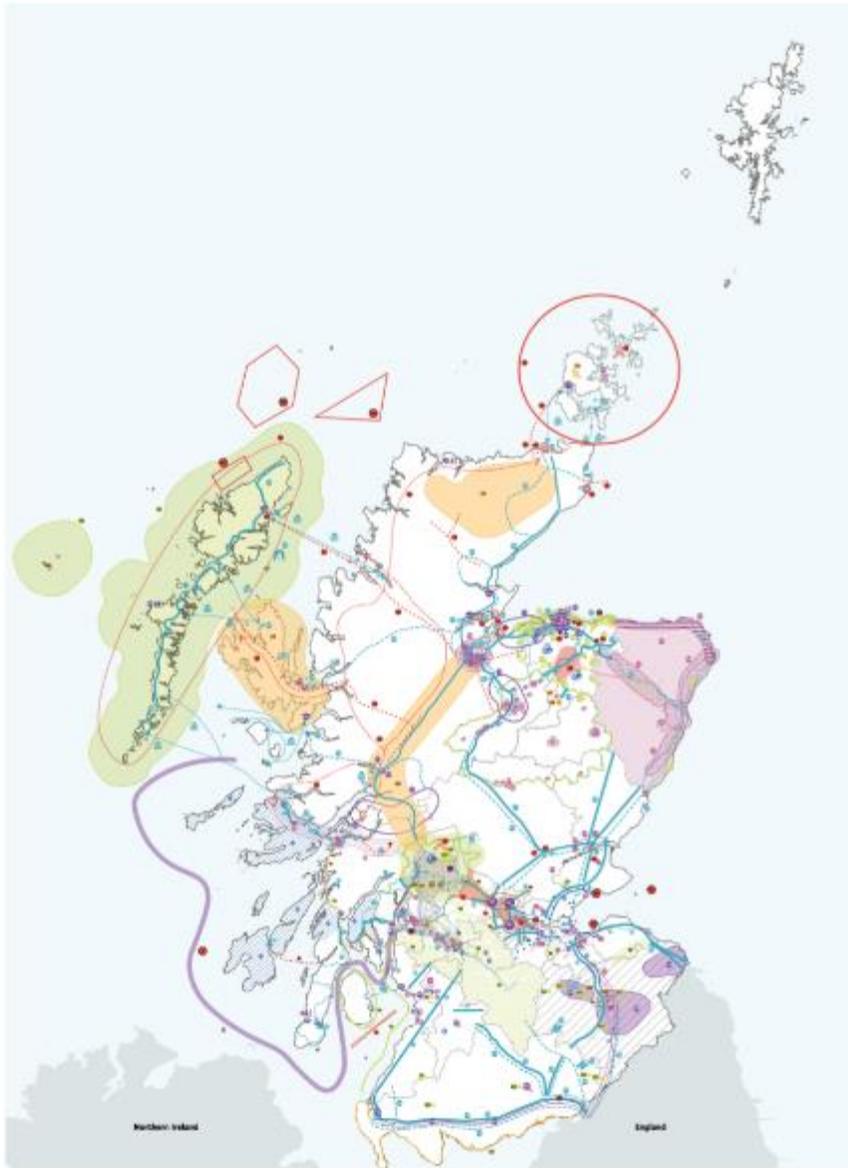
Questions

- Spatial strategies are key to delivering our challenging climate change targets. Has this been adequately considered in iRSSs? Is there a need to be more ambitious?
- To what extent is this map describing / capturing existing assets and trends, or identifying future priorities and shifts?
- Can groups develop further representation of specific projects in the context of a coherent spatial strategy?
- Are there opportunities to 'scale up' strategic thinking? – i.e. across central belt; eastern seaboard; A9 spine; island arc; etc...
- Could we jointly consider connections and gateways to and from Scotland more fully?
- Are proposals resilient to future change, particularly climate change, demographic change and technological change? How are strategies responding to pandemic recovery?
- Is a 'coastal' theme specific to some areas or more widely consistent for all (e.g. coastal erosion; long distance paths / tourism; etc).





RSS Map: Combined map



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ISSS Region	Project Number	Project name	Project Type
Argyll & Bute	1
	2
	3
	4
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Aberdeen and Orkney	11
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Aberdeen City and Shire	21
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