

*HLPF 2020*

*Accelerated Action and Transformative Pathways: Realizing the decade of  
action and delivery for sustainable development.*

**Theme 6: Bolstering local action to accelerate implementation**

**Response to Theme 6 Questions: Prof Brian M Evans PhD FRTPI FCSD FAcSS FRGS AoU**

## HLPF 2020

### *Accelerated Action and Transformative Pathways: Realizing the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development.*

#### Theme 6: Bolstering local action to accelerate implementation

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**Co-convenors:** UN-DESA, UN-Habitat, UNODC, UNECE and UNESCAP

**Corresponding GSDR Entry point:** Urban and peri-urban development

**Specific lens:** COVID-19 impact and responses

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#### Preamble:

The theme of the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) in July 2020 is *Accelerated action and transformative pathways: realizing the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development* and is based on the Political Declaration from the SDG Summit of September 2019, and the Global Sustainable Development Report (GSDR) to that Summit. In this first year of the second quadrennial cycle of the HLPF, 6 'entry points' have been identified in order to emphasize interlinkages across the SDGs and identify where interventions can: explore synergies across goals and targets; mitigate trade-offs between them; and, accelerate progress towards the overarching objective – 'leaving no one behind'. This submission provides a response to the questions posed to international experts in respect of *Theme 6: Bolstering local action to accelerate implementation*.<sup>1</sup>

For Theme 6, international experts are asked to respond to 6 questions within the GSDR entry point of *'urban and peri-urban development'*.<sup>2</sup> An initial consideration of the 6 questions reveals certain key commonalities:

(Q1) the **transparency** of urban planning, territorial planning, development and design systems as they contribute to housing, services and infrastructure, and to (Q2) economic growth (diverse, balanced, inclusive, safe, green and sustainable);

(Q3) how policies, plans, governance, investments and partnerships can contribute to **transparent**, inclusive healthy and safe cities and communities that are resilient to threats such as organized crime, terrorism and migration;

(Q4) the contribution of science, technology, communication and innovation in the pursuit of sustainable and equitable urban systems; (Q5) together with the **transparent** collaboration of local and national government to ensure adequate resources for sustainable, inclusive and safe urban development in order to achieve (Q6) connectivity for urban, peri-urban and rural areas through resilient and integrated infrastructure conceived of and delivered by **transparent**, urban and territorial development plans.

The 6 questions are therefore inter-related around an underlying proposition of **transparency**: of *planning, development and design systems*; of *policies and instruments* (e.g. approved plans) and of *governance both local and national*. In addressing these 6 questions, we are asked to consider 5

lenses: (i) *policies, actions and trade-offs*; (ii) *'leaving no one behind'*; (iii) *knowledge gaps*; (iv) *means of implementation and partnerships*; and (v) *science, technology and innovation*. These 'lenses' embrace an international **aim** ('leave no one behind'), **action** in terms of delivery of policy and implementation, and **agency** in respect of means (science, technology & innovation).

We are asked for a brief comment in response to each question based on our own experience. In my case I have worked internationally for 30 years and could make a synoptic comment against each question based on my experience of working in 20 countries all, with the exception of China, member states of the UNECE – in North America, Europe and Russia and former CIS states. However, I fear that this would be too general, and – given that Theme 6 is directed to local action and implementation – I have instead elected to provide a case-study of vertical integration of the SDGs in the country I know best: Scotland, one of the 4 nations within the UK.

### **Case Study, Scotland – Introduction:**

Within the UK, there are four countries – England, Scotland, Wales and Northern-Ireland. The latter three have devolved parliaments and governments. The functions of urban and territorial planning, development, design, health, housing and transport are devolved in entirety to these governments – in the current pandemic, this includes the statutory health response to COVID-19. The current population of Scotland is 5.50 million with a territory extending to 80,250 km<sup>2</sup>.<sup>3</sup> (Figure 1)

#### *Urban and territorial planning and development*

Scotland is a separate legal jurisdiction for urban and territorial planning and for the legal consideration of matters related to development and crime. This is enabled by Acts of the Scottish Parliament and implemented by legal instruments and policy made under these acts.<sup>4</sup> The Scottish Parliament and Government oversees the system of urban and territorial planning and development in Scotland which is then implemented and administered by the 32 local government authorities. The urban and territorial planning system has three principal activities: the preparation of plans; the regulation of development and the enforcement of development decisions.<sup>5</sup> A similar arrangement is in place for Scotland's housing, environment, health and transport systems.

There are currently three levels of plan-making in Scotland:

- 1) A **National Planning Framework** (NPF) prepared by the Scottish Government. The first NPF was published in 2004 five years after the establishment of the Scottish Parliament in 1999. It drew on the legacy of previous national planning in Scotland prepared by the former Scottish Office of the UK Government. The 4<sup>th</sup> iteration of the NPF is currently in preparation.<sup>6</sup>
- 2) **Development Plans** are prepared by each of Scotland's local authorities and updated and revised every five years.<sup>7</sup> Development plans are supplemented by non-statutory Regional Spatial Strategies which have replaced Strategic Development Plans at the regional level for Scotland's principal city-regions.
- 3) **Local Place Plans** (introduced in 2019) sit at the local level below Development Plans.<sup>8</sup> The implementation of local place plans is at an early stage.

The last 20 years has seen a progressively sophisticated policy for consultation and discussion around the preparation of both the NPF and development plans. This is a legally prescribed process that normally culminates in a formal local public enquiry.

### *Scotland and the implementation of the SDGs*

The Scottish Government adopted the 17 SDGs in July 2015 becoming one of the first countries to do so.<sup>9</sup> A network of 250 organisations has been established across public, private and third sectors in Scotland. A review carried out by the Scottish Government in 2019 is intended to meet the requirement to review national progress towards the implementation of the SDGs and report to the HLPF in New York as part of the UK Government's Voluntary National Review. The draft of this review concludes that thinking and planning around SDG implementation in Scotland should be used as an ambition to use the SDGs into a positive driver for social, environmental and economic change.<sup>10</sup> Key to this ambition has been the establishment of a National Performance Framework.

#### *The National Performance Framework (NPF)<sup>11</sup>*

The NPF for Scotland is directed to: opportunities for Scotland's people; an increase in wellbeing; sustainable and inclusive growth; and, reduction in inequality. It gives equal importance to economic, environmental and social progress. The outcomes are aligned with the SDGs, reflect the values and aspirations of the people of Scotland and track progress with reducing inequality. The NPF is intended to provide a common language across public, private and third sectors to assist in alignment of discussion and reporting of progress and change.<sup>12</sup> (Figure 2)

#### *The emerging importance of PLACE*

Over the last 20 years, there has been an extensive national discussion around the concept of 'place' and its significance to people and their identity and culture. This discussion has embraced the process of formal consultation and how this might be supplemented by more meaningful engagement of people in the processes that influence their places and their lives.

This has seen the emergence of two highly significant instruments: the establishment of a national policy for place and the development of a tool to facilitate the consideration of place by communities.

**The Place Principle:** The Scottish Government together with partners in national agencies and local authorities have adopted the Place Principle to help overcome organisational and sectoral boundaries, to encourage better collaboration and community involvement, and improve the impact of combined energy, resources and investment. The principle was developed by partners in the public and private sectors, the third sector and communities, to help them develop a clear vision for their place. The Place Principle promotes a shared understanding of place, and the need to take a more collaborative approach to a place's services and assets to achieve better outcomes for people and communities. The principle encourages and enables local flexibility to respond to issues and circumstances in different places.<sup>13</sup>

**The Place Standard:**<sup>14</sup> "The Place Standard tool provides a simple framework to structure conversations about place. It allows you to think about the physical elements of a place (for example its buildings, spaces, and transport links) as well as the social aspects (for example whether people feel they have a say in decision making). The tool provides prompts for discussions, allowing you to consider all the elements of a place in a methodical way. The tool pinpoints the assets of a place as well as areas where a place could improve." The Place Standard has been recognised, promoted and applied by the World Health Organisation (WHO).<sup>15</sup> (Figure 3)

### *The UNECE Centre of Excellence @ The Glasgow school of Art*

In the summer of 2015, the author was invited by Dr Joan Clos of UN-Habitat and the Committee of Housing and Land Management (CHLM – now CUDHLM) at UNECE to act as lead writer for the UN-Habitat Regional Report on the UNECE in preparation for Habitat III and to make a contribution to the discussions and deliberations around the New Urban Agenda in pursuit of the 2030 Strategy. The final document (*Towards a City-focused, People-Centered and Integrated Approach to the New Urban Agenda*<sup>16</sup>) was published in 2017 with a series of conclusions about future scenarios for cities across the UNECE Region, that over the two decades since Habitat II in 1996:

- Have experienced a paradigm shift from *the industrial city to the knowledge city* (Figure 4); and,
- Are subject to a cocktail of change involving *demographic* (ageing, low-fertility and migration), *technological* (automation and artificial intelligence) and *climate* changes that are inter-related and require political, technical and community leadership to endeavour to make the cumulative effect of these changes benign rather than toxic. (Figure 5)

The report also concluded that:

- The most successful cities across the UNECE are clustered into groups of ‘*supercities*’, where individual cities exhibit characteristics of models based on *the compact city, the resilient city and the competitive city* as means to address the changes identified above.<sup>17</sup>

At the conclusion to this work, the CUDHLM invited the Glasgow Urban Laboratory (Research Unit at the Glasgow School of Art ) to establish a *UN Charter Centre* as part of a growing network of centres across UNECE member states.<sup>18</sup> Since its establishment, the Centre @GSofA has, amongst other work, published research examining the implications of the Regional Report for the principal cities of Scotland within the UK. The report (*Scotland’s Urban AGE –Aberdeen, Glasgow and Edinburgh in the century of the city 2018*) has since been used by UNECE CUDHLM as training material with member states, particularly those with converging economies, and has provided evidence to the team leading the new National Planning Framework for Scotland.<sup>19</sup>

In turn, the further application of this work, within the context of Scotland’s adoption of the SDGs and its National Performance Framework led directly to the participation of the City of Glasgow in the UNECE Day of Cities in April 2019 when Glasgow’s Leader Cllr Susan Aitken stressed the “*crucial role that cities play in ensuring that the SDGs function from the global to the local and make a direct impact on communities and on people and ultimately making better places and better lives*”.<sup>20</sup> (Figures 6,7)

### **Scotland’s learning and relevance for Theme 6: Bolstering local action to accelerate implementation**

I return now to the questions posed in Theme 6 concerning the ‘entry points’ identified by the Global Sustainable Development Report (GSDR) from SDG Summit in September 2019 and to the review of these questions and ‘lenses’ from the preamble to this document. With a particular focus on “an underlying proposition of **transparency** [of *planning, development and design systems; of policies and instruments* (e.g. approved plans) and of *governance both local and national*]” and to ‘lenses’ of embracing an international **aim** (‘leave no one behind’), **action** in terms of delivery of

policy and implementation, and **agency** in respect of means (science, technology & innovation), we may draw certain conclusions from Scotland's approach.

- 1) A drive to vertical integration of the SDGs:** Scotland has adopted the SDGs into Government policy and prepared a National Performance Framework to align with the SDGs and to provide a common language for consideration of the implementation of SDGs at national, territorial and urban planning scales and at the local and community level through the Place Standard tool. Work is on-going to further explore the mapping and linkages between these different levels. (Figures 8,9).
  
- 2) A structured and intrinsically transparent jurisdictional system:** The commitment and drive of the Scottish Government to introduce and implement the SDGs within Scotland has been facilitated by a structured and intrinsically transparent jurisdictional system for governance, policy and for planning, development and design and has been enhanced by the adoption of the National Performance Framework and the Place Principle.
  
- 3) The Place Principle and the Place Standard:** The development and adoption of this principle and tool have been 'game-changers' for enhanced transparency in engagement with communities within the umbrella of the National Performance Framework and, above that, the SDGs.
  
- 4) Post COVID Action:** The consensus building between Government, national agencies, local authorities and the private and third sectors arising from the systems described herein has meant that (a) a remarkable behavioral consensus has been possible with a Scotland-wide response to the threats posed by the coronavirus pandemic and (b) rapid and efficient partnership building amongst key players in the actions necessary to ease the strictures of lockdown whilst at the same time maintaining appropriate measures remain in place to ensure public health and the integrity of the health system in Scotland. This has brought recognition from Dr. David Nabarro Special Envoy to the World Health Organisation on Covid-19 who has stated:

*"Comparing Scotland with other parts of Europe, other parts of the world, I'd say ... you are tacking it carefully and logically. You are thinking through how (to) make sure people are safe and how do we make sure the economy can restart? And you are layering these two together. It's not a choice. You are watching, learning, applying, coming to terms with it. And most importantly, you are levelling with the people what the government is trying to work through."*

Dr. David Nabarro, 15 May 2020

## ANNEX 1: THE PLACE PRINCIPLE

“Place is where people, location and resources combine to create a sense of identity and purpose, and is at the heart of addressing the needs and realising the full potential of communities. Places are shaped by the way resources, services and assets are directed and used by the people who live in and invest in them

“A more joined-up, collaborative, and participative approach to services, land and buildings, across all sectors within a place, enables better outcomes for everyone and increased opportunities for people and communities to shape their own lives.

*The principle requests that:*

“All those responsible for providing services and looking after assets in a place need to work and plan together, and with local communities, to improve the lives of people, support inclusive and sustainable economic growth and create more successful places.

*The Principle embodies a commitment to taking:*

“a collaborative, place-based approach with a shared purpose to support a clear way forward for all services, assets and investments which will maximise the impact of their combined resources.

*Scotland:*

“Faces significant challenges, fiscal, demographic and socio-economic. More of the same won’t do. We must adopt a more common-sense approach that focuses on what is important: people and communities. To maximise the impact of our combined resources we must work better together.

“Implementation of the Place Principle requires a more integrated, collaborative and participative approach to decisions about services, land and buildings. The principle is a way of bringing ideas about services, investments, resources and assets together.

“It is an approach to change based upon a shared understanding of what that place is for and what it wants to become with partners and communities collaboratively agreeing the joint actions required to make that happen and doing them.

“It provides communities and partners with a way to exercise local or regional accountability over decisions taken about the way resources, services and assets are directed and delivered.

*The Scottish Government promotes the Place Principle in order to strengthen the coordination and integration of all place-based activity in order to:*

“consider the benefits of planning, investment and implementation activity at the regional level of place - where that focus could drive faster rates of sustainable and inclusive economic growth.

“ensure that place-based work at the local or regional level being led by Scottish Government and its agencies is taken forward in a way that is integrated between both levels of place and cognisant of all complementary work being taken forward in associated policy areas.

“exemplify the behaviours reflecting the core of the principle, working and planning together with our partners and local communities to improve the lives of people, support inclusive growth and create more successful places.

Available at <https://www.gov.scot/publications/place-principle-introduction/>

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<sup>1</sup> Paper 'Consultations for informing HLPF 2020 thematic review sessions: Overview and timeline' issued by UN-DESA, UN-Habitat, UNODC, UNECE and UNESCAP to international experts.

<sup>2</sup> The six questions as framed in full in the paper are:

(1) How can transparent urban planning and design help in creating inclusive access to housing, basic services and infrastructure, environmental sustainability, improved air and water quality, and healthier communities? (2) How can transparent urban and territorial planning and development support economic growth which is diverse, balanced, inclusive, safe, green and sustainable? (3) Which kinds of policies, plans, governance, investments and partnerships can help create transparent, inclusive, healthier and safer cities and communities that are able to withstand destabilizing effects of negative social phenomena, such as corruption, drug and illicit firearms trafficking and terrorism, unregulated migration, lack of access to public goods, widespread public protests etc.? (4) What is the role of science, technology, communication and innovation in the transformation to sustainable and equitable urban systems, which also incorporate and address informality and help overcome the digital divide? (5) How can local and national governments work together to ensure adequate resources are available for sustainable, inclusive, safe and transparent urban development? How can local government financing be made more predictable and robust? (6) How can urban, peri-urban and rural areas be connected through infrastructure that is resilient and integrated with transparent, urban and territorial development plans, focusing on access, affordability, inclusivity, resource-efficiency and innovation?

<sup>3</sup> See <https://www.pas.org.uk/localplaceplans/> accessed 04May2020

<sup>4</sup> See <https://www.parliament.scot/visitandlearn/12506.aspx/>, accessed 05May2020

<sup>5</sup> See <https://www.gov.scot/publications/guide-planning-system-scotland/>, accessed 05May2020

<sup>6</sup> See <https://blogs.gov.scot/planning-architecture/2019/10/08/national-planning-framework-4-the-essentials/> accessed 05May2020

<sup>7</sup> See <https://www.gov.scot/policies/planning-architecture/development-plans/> accessed 05May2020

<sup>8</sup> See <https://www.pas.org.uk/localplaceplans/> accessed 04May2020

<sup>9</sup> Available at <https://globalgoals.scot>, accessed 07May2020.

<sup>10</sup> The draft of the review is available at <https://globalgoals.scot>.

<sup>11</sup> The *National Performance Framework* (NPF) is easily confused with the *National Planning Framework* which is known by the acronym 'NPF4' the version which is currently under preparation. This can cause confusion in discussions and correspondence.

<sup>12</sup> See <https://nationalperformance.gov.scot> accessed 08May2020

<sup>13</sup> Available at <https://www.gov.scot/publications/place-principle-introduction/> accessed 07May2020

<sup>14</sup> See <https://www.placestandard.scot> and [https://www.placestandard.scot/docs/Place\\_Standard\\_Strategic\\_Plan.pdf](https://www.placestandard.scot/docs/Place_Standard_Strategic_Plan.pdf) accessed 06May2020

<sup>15</sup> See <http://www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/environment-and-health/urban-health/who-european-healthy-cities-network> and <http://www.euro.who.int/en/media-centre/events/events/2019/06/international-making-place-conference-and-who-european-healthy-cities-network-flagship-training-the-place-standard-tool> accessed 07May2020.

<sup>16</sup> Available at [https://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/hlm/projects/HIII\\_Regional\\_Report/HabitatIII-Regional-Report-Europe-Region.pdf](https://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/hlm/projects/HIII_Regional_Report/HabitatIII-Regional-Report-Europe-Region.pdf) accessed 08May2020

<sup>17</sup> See: Brian Evans, Pietro Elisei, Orna Rosenfeld, Gulnara Roll, Amie Figueiredo & Marco Keiner (2016) Habitat III – Toward a New Urban agenda, *disP – The Planning Review*, 52:1, 86-91, DOI: 10.1080/02513625.2016.1171053 available at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/02513625.2016.1171053> accessed 08May2020. See also Reference in footnote 13, pp 66-70.



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<sup>18</sup> Available at <https://www.unece.org/urban-development-housing-and-land-management/housingcharter/geneva-un-charter-centres.html> accessed 08May2020.

<sup>19</sup> Available at: [http://campaigns.burnesspaull.com/urban-age/static/pdfs/Urban\\_Age\\_Full\\_Report.pdf](http://campaigns.burnesspaull.com/urban-age/static/pdfs/Urban_Age_Full_Report.pdf) accessed 08May2020.

<sup>20</sup> Glasgow's participation in the 2019 Day of cities available at:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IPiXyrnwwRY&list=PL889FD40CAFFC5B94&index=7> and  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3ajff\\_l7gs&list=PL889FD40CAFFC5B94&index=4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3ajff_l7gs&list=PL889FD40CAFFC5B94&index=4) accessed 08May2020