



Nourish Scotland evidence on:

The Planning Bill (stage 1)

To the Local Government and Communities Committee

February 2018

About Nourish Scotland

Nourish Scotland is a civil society organisation campaigning on food justice issues in Scotland. We believe tasty and nutritious food should be accessible to everyone, be sustainable, and be produced, processed, sold and served in a way that values and respects workers. We campaign for solutions that work across the board: we take a systems approach toward food and health, poverty, fairness, workers' rights, rural economy, environment, climate change, land use, and waste.

Our comments on the Scottish Government's proposed Planning Bill

Nourish Scotland is concerned by the lack of attention given to food, and in particular healthy food environments, in the Planning Bill. We reiterate our previous call for Scotland's planning legislation to include provisions on food system planning.

Historically, our towns and cities have been built around the supply and distribution of food. Through changes in the way in which food is produced, processed and retailed, planning for food disappeared off the radar of planning authorities. Today, the role of planning in creating healthy and sustainable food environments is increasingly being documented and recognised.

The promotion of public health and sustainable, inclusive economic development must be set into Scottish law as overarching objectives of the planning system. The Planning Bill should ensure the inclusion of planning for healthy and sustainable food in the development plans prepared by planning authorities. This will require planners to develop this area of expertise.

Public Health

The Scottish Government already affirmed the role of the planning system to promote public health objectives in its 2010 *Obesity Route Map*, where it recognised the importance of Community Planning Partnerships in delivering a long-term strategy for obesity prevention.

A Healthier Future, the Government's draft new Obesity Strategy sought to address the link between planning and health by introducing a commitment to research good practice on using the planning system to control the density of unhealthy food outlets, in particular near schools.

Scotland's third National Planning Framework envisions: "Our living environments foster better health and we have reduced spatial inequalities in well-being."

Planning tools and guidance have been developed to further this vision. Examples include the recent *Place Standards Tool*¹ which aims to support the delivery of high quality places in Scotland and to maximise the potential of the physical and social environment in supporting health, wellbeing and a high quality of life. *Beyond the School Gate*² provides guidance for local authorities, schools, retailers, caterers and other partners on what they can do to influence the food environment around schools and support children and young people to make healthier choices.

However, overweight and obesity figures are stagnating at staggering 65% and 29%³, respectively; the evidence on the relevance of the planning system in the fight against obesity necessitates further action.

There is a large body of research on the importance of the food environment in relation to healthy diets and how it can be influenced by the planning system, with notable reports on this subject by NHS Health Scotland,^{4,5,6} Food Standards Scotland,^{7,8,9} the Town and Country Planning Association,^{10,11,12} and Public Health England.¹³ There is also an abundance of academic literature on the associations between food environments (consumption and production of food) and planning.

Notably, Townshend and colleagues in their article 'Obesogenic environments: current evidence of the built and food environments'¹⁴ propose that sufficient evidence exists for policy makers to act upon. This call for action was manifested in a Public Health England evidence resource¹⁵ providing advice on 'Spatial Planning for Health' principles to consider, including on the food environment. In Scotland, some academic research has demonstrated the clustering of fast food outlets around schools^{16,17} and their high density in more deprived areas^{18,19,20}.

¹ <http://www.healthscotland.scot/tools-and-resources/the-place-standard-tool>

² <http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0044/00449317.pdf>

³ <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Health/TrendObesity>

⁴ <http://www.healthscotland.scot/media/1088/27414-place-and-communities-06-16.pdf>

⁵ <https://www.communityfoodandhealth.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2011/04/nhshsfoodculturescotlandreport-2443.pdf>

⁶ http://www.healthscotland.scot/media/1394/place-standard-process-evaluation_may2017_english.pdf

⁷ http://www.foodstandards.gov.scot/downloads/Beyond_The_School_Gate_-_Report.pdf

⁸ <http://www.foodstandards.gov.scot/downloads/FSS- Final Report June 1st 2017.pdf>

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http://www.foodstandards.gov.scot/downloads/An_assessment_of_out_of_home_food_and_drink_in_Scotland.pdf

¹⁰ <https://www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/building-foundations-tack-f8d.pdf>

¹¹ <https://www.tcpa.org.uk/Handlers/Download.ashx?IDMF=841c7b10-ffb9-4020-87d0-e71f53512121>

¹² <https://www.tcpa.org.uk/Handlers/Download.ashx?IDMF=7166d749-288a-4306-bb74-10b6c4ffd460>

¹³

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/296248/Obesity_and_environment_March2014.pdf

¹⁴ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/28449616>

¹⁵

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/625568/Spatial_planning_for_health_an_evidence_resource.pdf

¹⁶ <https://academic.oup.com/her/article/20/4/458/632655>

¹⁷ <https://ijbnpa.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12966-015-0259-4>

¹⁸ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2898050/#b49-ijerph-07-02290>

¹⁹ <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0749379705002564>

²⁰ <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0195666306006519>

Planning tools and guidance have not had a significant impact on the health of food environments in Scotland. We urge the Scottish Government to take regulatory action, using the Planning Bill to set statutory public health objectives for planning and to create a framework for development planning that will promote those objectives.

Sustainable and inclusive economic development

Sustainable local food systems are associated with wide-ranging benefits for local economies, community regeneration, health and the environment. Yet, the current planning legislation and policies fail to comprehensively address this subject.

Economic recovery: The New Economics Foundation (NEF)²¹ estimated that for every £1 spent on local food £2.50 is generated for the local economy. This is significantly more than the £1.40 generated when £1 is spent in a supermarket.

Job creation: A CPRE study²² found that local food outlets create three times the number of jobs of national grocery chains. Local food outlets support on average one job for every £46,000 of annual turnover; by comparison at three national chains one job is supported per £138,000 to £144,000 of annual turnover.

Reducing greenhouse gas emissions: The preservation and restoration of fertile land, including in and around cities, and decentralised food processing and retailing are important for mitigating the effects of climate change. There is a need for effective mechanisms to protect prime agricultural land from development, and provisions to enable more food growing in cities.

In the UK, organisations such as the Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) have made recommendations on how the planning system can promote sustainable food systems. These principles also apply to Scotland and we hope they will be considered in the context of the Planning Bill:

- Planning can promote and protect the infrastructure and assets needed to buy, grow, produce and distribute local food.
- The planning system should ensure the vitality of town centres by enabling local authorities to set conditions on the location, scale and accessibility of retail as well as to restrict the dominance of particular operators in local market areas.

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²¹ New Economics Foundation (2001). Local Food Shopping better for Rural Economy than Supermarket Shopping, 7 August, http://www.neweconomics.org/gen/m6_i121_news.aspx

²² Campaign to Protect Rural England (2012). From field to fork: The value of England's local food webs <http://www.cpre.org.uk/resources/farming-and-food/local-foods/item/2897-from-field-to-fork>