

Kevin Stewart MSP

Convenor

Local Government and Regeneration Committee

Room T3.40

The Scottish Parliament

Edinburgh

EH99 1SQ



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Thank you for your letter of 4 September to Marco Biagi, Minister for Local Government and Community Empowerment, asking for more information about the forthcoming review of the Planning system in Scotland which was confirmed in the recent Programme for Government. I am responding because I have Ministerial responsibility for Planning issues in Scotland.

The objective of the review is to identify the scope for further reform with a focus on delivering a quicker, more accessible and efficient planning process, in particular increasing delivery of high quality housing development. The review will consider 6 key issues:

- Development planning
- Housing delivery;
- Planning for infrastructure;
- Further improvements to development management;
- Leadership, resourcing and skills; and
- Community engagement.

The review will be undertaken initially by an independent panel. We expect to confirm membership of the panel shortly.

The process will focus on these key issues at a strategic level, as I believe they are central to delivering better outcomes from the planning system. I expect that the independent panel will report their recommendations in spring 2016. I will then consider their findings and subsequently set out our response and intended actions, including a more detailed programme for further targeted improvements to the planning system. While I do not wish to pre-empt the outcome of the review, I would be willing to consider introducing legislative changes if this is required to deliver the necessary improvements.

The detailed approach to facilitating stakeholder engagement in the review have yet to be agreed with the panel. However, I fully expect that there will be opportunities for all of those with an interest in planning to share their views on the review topics. Of course, following conclusion of the review, there will be further opportunities for wide public, and indeed Parliamentary, engagement in the consequent proposals for changes to the system as they become more fully developed.

ALEX NEIL