

Arctic Circle Forum – Edinburgh 19-21 November



A conference is taking place in Edinburgh today and tomorrow which hints that perhaps our future lies with countries nearer the Arctic Circle than the Mediterranean. The two day event is the very first Arctic Circle Forum to take place in Scotland. It will explore partnerships and hear about examples of sustainability in these societies.

“It will provide an opportunity for policy makers, academics, professionals and wider civic society to participate in discussions focused on areas of common interest between Scotland and Arctic region.”



The Scottish Government hopes that they will learn new ways approach policies to combat climate change, form education policies, transport and planning strategies.

We already have baby boxes based on the Finnish model but what else can we learn from our northern neighbours? We spoke to [@ScotGovFM](https://twitter.com/ScotGovFM) [#ArcticCircleScotland](https://twitter.com/ArcticCircleScotland) pic.twitter.com/0eSFn31aK1

– Edinburgh Reporter (@EdinReporter) [November 20, 2017](#)

We heard this morning that in early 2018 the Scottish Government will begin work on the new national planning framework. This uses an inclusive process which allows input from all interested parties, from members of the public to corporations.

John McNairney who is Chief Planner with the Scottish Government explained that they rely on evidence-based mapping as an important part of that work.

He said : “Peatlands for example are an important consideration in thinking about climate change. Cities, towns and rural areas have different issues and pressures to consider. Each of our Scottish cities is distinct, but they are all situated on rivers and all have different problems when addressing the climate change challenge.

“Scotland has ambitious targets and significant resources in renewable energy, but carbon capture and energy storage must be developed in the future.

“We must make the most of our natural areas in a sustainable way : for example by a walking network across the country And finally he explained that all kinds of connections across Scotland whether transport or digital will be needed to support rural economy and that all of these factors are taken into account when framing up the overarching planning strategy.

Stuart West, Planning Manager Development and Marine Planning with Orkney Islands Council explained the approach used in Orkney where the small team recently won a national award for its planning.

Orkney is made up of 100 islands, 20 of which are inhabited and the population is around 22,500 people. The main town Kirkwall is built partly on reclaimed land which Mr West demonstrated with maps showing where the sea and river used to be. As a result of the reclamation it has been necessary to construct coastal defence works and that has been done over this past year.

Mr West said: "These steps which we have taken will allow for over half of brownfield sites to become developed. Our harbours which we have extended allow Kirkwall and Stromness to welcome cruise ships which is crucial for the economy.

"There are also two enterprise sites already prepared with infrastructure in place. This means that Orkney is proactive and we hope to capitalise on that."

Cathy Johnston a Group Manager with Glasgow City Council explained that some of the results they want to achieve are not necessarily building based. There is a difference of 14 years in expected lifespan between those living in Glasgow and Edinburgh, and some of the outcomes that the council want are related to those health concerns.

Ms Johnston explained that formerly developed areas which now lie vacant have many problems before new developments can be built there. The industrial past in Glasgow has not been

without its legacy. She showed the 700 houses built in 700 days which were used as the Commonwealth Games village as an example of what can be done.

Nonetheless Ms Johnston said : "Our city has really high aims, wanting to become a connected place to move around and do business. "We want it to be a compact city form with placemaking and design considerations being thought about first. We are thinking about how to get real human outcomes from this.

"We are considering questions like whether we should ban diesel cars? And we have a bike sharing scheme.

"Emissions in the city centre are quite high but now the Scottish Government has challenged Glasgow asking it to become a low emission zone. To do this we are looking at bus routes and types of buses to make changes to the emissions levels."

This is a wide-ranging conference with sessions on environment, climate change, northern cargo transport solutions and energy innovation all taking place today.

Tomorrow Dr Alasdair Allan MSP will make the keynote speech in the morning and there will be sessions on marine and coastal tourism as well as global aviation.

Tomorrow afternoon we hope to catch up with the Digitally Connected Communities session and the session about Young People.

2018 will be the Year of Young People in Scotland when a major programme of events and activities to celebrate Scotland's young people will take place