

# *Purpose of Structure Plan*

1.1 The purpose of this document is to set out a shared strategic statement about the future use of land in the North East. In particular, it should provide a long-term vision which takes into account the different functions of, and relationship between, settlements in the area.

1.2 A structure plan also ensures the settlement strategy for the North East is in accord with national planning policy guidelines. The role of the plan is:

- to focus national guidance on the area's land use issues;
- to co-ordinate activity by partners where it affects the use of land; and
- to set the scope, limits and objectives for detailed local plans which govern the use of land.

1.3 In addition to the long-term vision, the plan also sets out medium-term objectives which translate the vision into appropriate action for the North East. This requires positive, promotional policies to tackle the challenges and guide decisions on land use over the period of the plan.

1.4 To serve this purpose, we have taken the "1999 Strategic Forecasts" as a starting point for estimating future trends. However, the plan's policies are intended to take us beyond trends, in the direction of the plan's vision, rather than simply to verify self-fulfilling forecasts.

1.5 Similarly, we have relied on the information set out in the "Report of Survey" and its Addendum, in producing the plan. However, to keep the plan concise, we have avoided unnecessary duplication by making the Forecasts, the Survey and its Addendum available as separate publications.

1.6 This structure plan has been agreed jointly by Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire Councils for submission to the Scottish Ministers. Once approved, it will replace the Grampian Structure Plan and guide the development of land in the North East for the period up to 2016.

1.7 Although formally submitted by the two Councils, the plan is a shared statement of strategy and policies, with contributions from a wide range of partners, private interests and individuals.

1.8 The consultation draft of the plan was open to debate for three months, and the submitted plan has been revised extensively in the light of the comments received. In addition, a rigorous Sustainability Appraisal was carried out by independent consultants. The title of this plan - "North East Scotland Together" - is therefore even more appropriate.

1.9 Implementation of the plan will continue to be shared in the same way as its preparation. Its implications for land use planning will be interpreted by local plans, which in turn provide the policies to determine planning applications.

1.10 However, the plan is also a key element of the partnership we aim to forge with communities throughout the North East. It seeks to provide the Scottish Parliament, other tiers of government, and all private and public sector agencies with a clear view of how the North East is likely to evolve over the coming years.

1.11 It also aims to attract investment that will help meet the wider objectives we have for the area. In return it is equally vital to ensure that the Councils' many other plans, and the strategies of their partner organisations, also sit comfortably with the structure plan. Examples of these include Local Transport Strategies, Local Biodiversity Action Plans and the North East Scotland Economic Framework document.

1.12 The key mechanism to achieve this increasing harmonisation will be the continuation of dialogue through the same housing, business, transport and environmental forums and focus groups that have contributed to the development of the structure plan. A report on the progress of implementation will be completed annually.

1.13 Once the plan is submitted to the Scottish Ministers, there will be a period advertised for formal objection. It is then the role of the Ministers to approve the plan as they see fit, with or without modifications. Approval is expected within 40 weeks of the date of submission.

