

Legislative requirements	
Considerations of development planning sections of the Act or the Regulations	Other statutory requirements
<p>This evidence will contribute to, and be included within the expected Evidence Report Topics(s) listed below, including: Topics listed in: Section 15(5) The principal physical and environmental characteristics of the district.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SEA (Environmental Report)
NPF4 policy advice - information likely required in taking account of NPF4 policy	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Locations of locally, regionally, nationally and internationally valued soils including land of lesser quality that is culturally or locally important for primary use. 	
Relevant sources of information	
Policies / strategies / plans / guidance / designations	Data sets and tools / spatial data resources
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scotland's Biodiversity Strategy and Delivery Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scotland's Soils website as the primary source of information on peat and soil information in Scotland James Hutton Institute land use classification map Peatland Action project Scottish Environment, Food and Agriculture Research Institutions (SEFARI) – Healthy Soils for a Green Recovery
Key policy connections	
<p>1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 11, 20, 29.</p>	
Considerations	
<p>South Ayrshire Council has examined a range of documentation and data presently available and associated with the theme of 'Soils' for two specific and inter-related purposes.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> I. The first is to consider the appropriateness (or otherwise) of NPF4 policies in so far as they would be applicable for, and integral to South Ayrshire Council's Local Development Plan 3; and, II. The second is to consider the adequacy of information and data presently available to prepare the Evidence Report for LDP3, and consequently to facilitate the preparation of LDP3. 	

Relevant documentation and data sources have been identified (and listed above), in the 'Relevant Sources of Information' section of this paper. It is the Council's view that the following observations will help determine the appropriateness and adequacy of information that has been identified at the time of preparation.

Scotland's Biodiversity Strategy and Delivery Plan

The Scottish Biodiversity Strategy contains a vision to restore and regenerate biodiversity, drive a sustainable economy and support thriving communities. A priority action to support this vision is to encourage and facilitate nature friendly farming, fishing, and forestry. The intent of the associated NPF4 policy for soils is to protect carbon-rich soils, restore peatlands and minimise disturbance to soils from development. It goes on to state that local Development Plans should protect locally, regionally, nationally, and internationally valued soils, including land of lesser quality that is culturally or locally important for primary [assumed agricultural] use.

The above vision and intent would be hard to counter with any alternative strategy, and indeed chimes with other national policy themes to reduce the amount of greenfield land lost to development without strong justification.

Soil Types

The predominant soil types are listed in Scotland's Environment's 'Scotland's Soils National Soil Maps', with different types distributed across South Ayrshire.

NPF4 highlights the importance and sensitivity of carbon rich soils, which contain varying quantities of peat, though not always characterised as being peatland habitats. The Scotland Soils database lists the peat [soil] resource under 5 classifications ranging from class 1 (nationally important) to class 5, peaty soil but with no peatland habitat evident). Within south Ayrshire, the [Scotland's Soils map](#) illustrates where the deepest / most important resources are located.

As illustrated in the above linked soils map, significant levels of peat rich soils are found in the Carrick (Remote Rural) parts of the district, and particularly in the most southerly reaches and continue into Dumfries and Galloway and East Ayrshire. Much of the peatland in South Ayrshire is covered by European and National Legislation protecting important natural habits (as shown in South Ayrshire Council's [Environment and Conservation web mapping](#) but are also important in terms of water flow regulators and carbon sequestration, indeed the office for national statistics estimates that peatlands can absorb 3.74 tonnes of CO₂ per hectare, per year.

Potential issues for consideration.

The map below illustrates the locations of wind energy developments – both operational and proposed. There is a notable overlap between the areas of carbon rich soils and wind energy proposals. Such development presents both a challenge to ensure that sensitive soil types are not damaged, but conversely also opportunities for such development to create opportunities and funding to implement long term restoration of deep peat habitats. Historically, commercial

forestry (typically monoculture) has had a detrimental impact on peatland resources (forestry map). Whilst forestry does not require 'planning permission' it is covered by separate regulatory measures which are now more sensitive to environmental concerns.

South Ayrshire Council's [Environment and Conservation web mapping](#)

Prime Quality Agricultural land

Soil quality is an important element of food security. Many factors affect the output of domestic production, including the availability and suitability of land for particular forms of food production; inputs such as labour, water, fertiliser, pesticides and seeds; and climate and environmental factors such as soil health and rainfall.

Prime agricultural land is defined as land identified as being Class 1, 2 or 3.1 in the Land Capability for Agriculture classification (James Hutton Institute). There are extensive areas of prime quality agricultural land within South Ayrshire, notably along the coastal strip from Culzean down to Ardwell Bay, but principally and mostly located around the main towns of Ayr, Prestwick and Troon. NPF5, as noted above, identifies a limited number of circumstances where development on (unallocated) prime quality agricultural land may be justified and, in all respects, also seeks to ensure that the 'layout and design of proposals minimises the amount of protected land that is required. Prime agricultural land is significant because it produces the highest crop yields with relatively lower inputs of energy and resources and is an important resource in relation to food supply.

Potential issues for consideration

Should the spatial strategy of LDP3 seek to allocate greenfield sites for development, there may be a focus and site search around the main settlements. As noted above, land around Ayr, Prestwick and Troon in particular is classified as being prime quality agricultural land, and careful consideration would be necessary in balancing the potential loss of such assets relative to any benefits that may accrue relative to alternative strategies which sought specifically and exclusively to minimise such loss.

Soil Compaction

Soil compaction reduces the pore space within soil, resulting in a poor soil structure that restricts the development of plant roots. It also affects the soil water status, causing waterlogging during wetter periods and drought conditions during drier periods, which in turn also limits root development. Poor rooting significantly inhibits plant growth on compacted soils and, in the case of trees, can also increase the risk of trees being blown over during storm events. The Scotland's Soils soil (topsoil and subsoil) [compaction risk maps](#) (NB only partial coverage of South Ayrshire) show the likelihood of compaction due to agricultural traffic, but this information is also relevant to development sites and the consequences of poor soil management on site during construction. Poor soil management on site during construction will have direct consequences for surface water management and green infrastructure in the long term.

Locally important / culturally important agricultural land

NPF4 states that locally important and/or 'culturally important' agricultural land should be

protected. There are no set standards against which to measure or qualify these classifications.

The Council would be particularly interested to hear opinion (and reasons) on what such qualification could be applied to this statement of general protection within South Ayrshire, but suggestions may include considerations relative to archaeological sites, or iconic /well known ‘agricultural landscapes’ which may (for example) be specifically associated with literature, events, individuals, buildings or historic farming practices.

SOUTH AYRSHIRE COUNCIL OPINION ON ADEQUACY OF EVIDENCE

- **Is there a requirement to prepare a Specific Evidence Report topic paper on Soils?**

At this point in time, based on the evidence available (including evidence to be obtained through consultation), referenced and considered above, South Ayrshire Council does not expect that the theme of ‘SOILS’ will be a separate specific topic paper in the evidence Report. However, it is anticipated that there may be particular focus on the implications or opportunities associated with additional renewable energy development and forestry proposals for carbon rich soils, and implications associated with prime quality agricultural land associated with site selection criteria should any additional land allocations be part of LDP3 strategy.

- **Is LDP3 likely to deviate from the provisions of NPF4 Policy 5 ‘Soils’?**

At this point in time, based on the evidence available (including evidence to be obtained through consultation) referenced and considered above, South Ayrshire Council does not anticipate that LDP3 will require deviation from the provisions of the policies of NPF4 on matters relating to ‘Soil’.

- **Is there enough information on Soils to facilitate the preparation of relevant associated Evidence Report(s)?**

Subject to consultation, South Ayrshire Council considers that the evidence and information available about ‘soils’ will be satisfactory for the preparation of the following Evidence Report topic paper(s) listed in Section 15(5) of the a997 Act, as amended, namely;

- The principle physical, cultural, economic, social, built heritage and environmental characterises of the District.

Stakeholders and consultees, the opinion of whom will be specifically sought:

- Community Councils
- Neighbouring Authorities
- SEPA
- NatureScot
- Historic Environment Scotland
- National Farmers Union, Scotland

CALL FOR EVIDENCE
NPF Policy No. 5 SOILS



South Ayrshire Council is particularly interested to hear opinion as to whether this is an appropriate list of consultees on the issue of 'soils' or of others should be added, together with any suggested or preferred methods of consultation.

SUBMIT YOUR COMMENTS ONLINE

[HERE](#)